

ConnectUs

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ABSTRACT

The research team decided to look into persons who suffer from social anxiety disorder in order to learn more about how they view social situations and discover a strategy to help them overcome their fear of interacting with strangers. A detailed analysis of existing records and online papers was made, as well as user studies and interviews with experts in the subject, to recollect as much information as possible.

Vital insights into the thinking of people suffering from social anxiety disorder were obtained as a result of this investigation. It was discovered that when people engage with others, their greatest concern is not looking unattractive, making a bad first impression, or becoming a target of mockery. Those suffering from social anxiety disorder have a high level of distrust because they come to believe that social activities can have harmful consequences.

With this knowledge, the team set out to create an app that would make meeting and introducing new people simple and enjoyable. The proposed answer was to develop an application that would allow people to generate personalized contact cards with interesting or vital information and browse the cards of others. "ConnectUs" is the app's name.

Numerous app features were brainstormed and evaluated, such as information on hobbies and passions, ease of sharing, and customization. The first approach was a PowerPoint prototype, and afterward used "Marvel App" to produce a second version. Although the second prototype was not tested with people, it was assessed by the team's school academy, which provided useful comments.

According to the feedback the second prototype got, the app was easy to confuse with a dating app and needed an onboarding screen, a tutorial for new users, and a monument to engagement, similar to Spotify's Rewind feature. As a result, the app's third

version was created, tested on users, and reviewed by the school academy as well.

The ConnectUs app functioned as expected, allowing users to get to know others before meeting in person. While the app does not eradicate individuals with social anxiety disorder's fear of connection, it does assist them in overcoming their fear by giving them a way to communicate with others in a more regulated and comfortable manner.

Keywords

Education, App, Social anxiety, Social interaction, Friendship, Contact cards, design thinking, Customization, Smartphone, Android.

1. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant influence on everyone's lives. One such example is the increased fears and challenges people encounter when approaching others, which the pandemic has only contributed to making worse. This is especially relevant for students who have recently changed schools during the lockdown, making it challenging for them to connect with new classmates, institutions, and teachers. This rising concern about the impact of the pandemic on social relationships and the challenges faced by people with social anxiety disorders served as inspiration for the investigation into the subject of "collective resilience."

The book "Trastorno de ansiedad social: Más allá de la simple timidez" (2022) Social anxiety is a common mental health condition defined by a strong fear of social interactions, which may significantly restrict an individual's capacity to build social relationships and engage in daily activities. For those who struggle with social anxiety, the pandemic has just made it harder for them to interact with others and get over their fears. Socially

anxious people may become even more isolated, since non-anxious people may not always know how to include shy people in their social circles.

But why is it just as crucial for college students to make connections and establish friendships as it is to study and graduate from college? Well, according to Heibutzki, R. (2021), socializing is a vital aspect of human life, and it is much more important during the university years. Universities are packed with a wide range of people from various backgrounds and experiences. Connecting with others can help students create new perspectives, learn about other cultures, and obtain valuable knowledge and skills that they wouldn't have otherwise acquired. Participating in social activities on campus can also assist students in developing a sense of community and belonging. Students are more likely to thrive academically and personally if they meet new people, share experiences, and form long-lasting relationships. Socializing with friends can also assist to relieve stress, battle loneliness, and promote mental health.

The investigation project's major goal is the development of a mobile app called "ConnectUs" which is aimed at assisting people with social anxiety establish relationships with new people. It offers a platform for users to share personalized contact cards with captivating or important information about themselves, allowing them to get familiar with each other before meeting in person. The mission is to encourage social engagement and assist people who suffer from social anxiety in overcoming their worries and creating meaningful relationships.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The COVID-19 epidemic has had a significant effect on the daily life, particularly social relationships. People who suffer from social anxiety or shyness have had to adapt to a new method of interacting as a result of social lockdowns and restrictions. While the pandemic has been difficult for everyone, people who suffer from social anxiety or shyness have found it more difficult to interact and connect with others.

According to Medina, E. (2021) for the New York Times:, the lockdown could have provided a brief break from potentially exhausting or awkward social situations in the beginning. However, as time passed, a sense of loneliness and isolation grew in. This is especially true for those who have had difficulty engaging with others and socializing. Because of the limitations of physical interactions, getting along with new people became harder.

One option is making use of online communities and social networks for interacting with people while avoiding the stresses of in-person contact. This method, however, doesn't come without its own set of problems. Online communication lacks the depth and meaning that face-to-face interactions provide. Also, speaking through a screen may appear to be an attempt to avoid rather than addressing the issue.

3. Concepts

3.1 Social Anxiety

According to the book "Trastorno de ansiedad social: Más allá de la simple timidez" (2022): "It is an emotional condition in which a person experiences tremendous dread and anxiety when confronted with the possibility of being examined, evaluated, or

rejected by others. Speaking in public, attending a party, eating or drinking in front of people, using a public restroom, and even making a phone call are examples of these scenarios." (p. 1) The degree of comfort in social circumstances varies from person to person, as it can also have different levels of intensity. Some people are inherently timid, while others are more open.

According to Mayo Clinic (2021), Since people with this condition experience severe physical and psychological symptoms like an abundant sweating, racing heartbeats, shakes, sickness, itchiness, and trouble with speech, it is more than just the ordinary discomfort we all come across from time to time. Such symptoms might be so extreme that the affected individual avoids social events completely, interfering with their everyday life, work, and personal relationships.

It has been demonstrated that in order for people with social anxiety to overcome their fear of social interaction, they must feel comfortable and confident when interacting with others. Otherwise, exposing them to negative social settings can worsen their current situation, leading them to stay away from these situations even further while reducing their capacity to develop and relate to others.

In this sense, the use of social networks can be a valuable tool for people who suffer from social anxiety. Since it allows them to interact with other people in a safe and controlled virtual environment where they may already know an individual and forge connections with greater confidence and security. As a result, the study of the relationship between social anxiety and the usage of social media is considered to be as an area of study.

Introversion differs from social anxiety disorder in that introverts may participate in social events, while people with social anxiety may see their performance at work and in interpersonal interactions limited and damaged.

3.2 Introversion and Extroversion

Extroversion is a personality trait characterized by sociability, high levels of energy, and a desire to be in the presence of others.

Extroverted persons like connecting with others and are at ease in social circumstances. They are frequently characterized as sociable, lively, and passionate individuals.

It is important to remember, however, that extroversion is not the opposite of shyness or social anxiety. Despite it might seem at first look, an extroverted person can become shy in specific settings or with certain people. Being extroverted does not always imply being assertive and confident in all social situations. In any event, the polar opposite of extroversion is introversion, which is just an aversion to social interactions that is unrelated to any irrational fear or anxiety. Extroversion is more closely linked to social attachment, happiness, and psychological well-being than anything else. It has also been linked to higher levels of joy at work and in interpersonal interactions.

3.3 Social Circle

A social circle is a group of people in which one interacts and has social relationships. This group could be large or small depending on each member's preferences and personality. Keeping a small social group might provide more unity, confidence, and emotional support. Having a larger social circle, on the other hand, can provide greater possibilities for socializing, cultural variety, and exposure to diverse ideas and opinions. It has been demonstrated

that the size and composition of one's social circle can have a significant impact on one's well-being and mental health. (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004).

People with social anxiety or shyness, on the other hand, frequently face a significant barrier with increasing their social circles because of the worries and challenges that interfere with them from relating to new or unfamiliar people. This difficulty can manifest itself in a variety of social circumstances, including public speaking, meeting new people, and attending social events. Those worries may be related to a fear of rejection, disappointment, or criticism by others, as well as a lack of social skills to deal with specific situations effectively

Therefore, it is common for people with social anxiety to avoid or limit their social interactions, which makes it difficult to develop meaningful and effective relationships. Fear and skepticism of others can lead people with social fear to doubt the sincerity and loyalty of their own relationships, which can generate even more anxiety and social isolation.

On the other hand, having a diverse and inclusive social circle can contribute positive effects, such as improved self-esteem, a sense of belonging, and greater resistance to stress (Ryff, Singer, & Love, 2004). Moreover, it has been suggested that exposure to different perspectives and ideas can stimulate cognitive flexibility and creativity, and enhance problem-solving abilities (Uzzi, 2005).

3.4 MBTI

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) has been widely used in personality research as a tool for understanding an individual's personality preferences. MBTI examines four dichotomies of personality, including extroverted or introverted, feeling or intuition, thought or feeling, and judgment or perception, via an online survey with approximately one hundred test-type questions.

According to the psychologist Díaz, J. (2021) "The application of MBTI can also be used for project management since it can provide insight into the worries, potential, anxieties, frustrations, and benefits of everyone on the team". By knowing the personality characteristics of each team member, the project leader can change the way they lead to improve the efficiency of the team, for instance, by delivering written instructions to introverted individuals, while encouraging a more collaborative and sociable approach for extroverted members.

Knowledge of the personality of users is only a vital component of completing the goal of promoting the interaction between unknown persons in a safe and pleasant way. That's why it was made indirect use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), incorporating the method of acquiring information about users' personality through questions (in addition to the capacity of entering information related to the 16 personality types directly). This information may help users to have a better notion of the personality of others, even if they are not familiar with the MBTI.

3.5 Customization

Customization of products and services is an important concept in the sphere of customer service, and in fact, it is a crucial role in the development of the proposal. This method consists of modifying products or services to the personal preferences, requirements, and needs of a client or user, which allows giving an individualized and different experience for each one.

In today's highly competitive industry, where customers have a wide range of choices and high expectations, personalization has

become more crucial than ever. It is no longer enough to offer a basic product or service; organizations must differentiate themselves by creating a unique and memorable experience that fulfills the demands of each customer.

Among the numerous approaches used for customizing products or services is adaptive personalization, which tries to adapt the product or service for a particular consumer, therefore enhancing their experience. Adaptive customization is based on the analysis of collected data about the consumer, such as their preferences and behaviors, in order to produce customized experiences.

The importance of customization in the contemporary era, known as the "era of personalization", lies in that it allows clients to feel valued and treated in a unique and special way. By offering individualized products or services, organizations may increase customer happiness, loyalty, and involvement, which in turn can lead to higher sales and revenue.

4. Methodology

First, it must be ensured that the suggested problem was, in fact, real and needed attention, as well as a potential solution.

The investigation began by conducting various interviews with individuals of interest as well as experts on the subject of social anxiety.

A poll to document the magnitude of the problem was designed, as well as a guided narrative approach, to acquire a better grasp of its true extent. By taking this method, it was possible to learn more about social anxiety sufferers' experiences and how they handle various social situations. In addition, an image collage user approach was implemented, which allows the person using it to provide a more in-depth look into their daily activities and how the condition impacts them.

4.1 Design thinking

This is the methodology that was used during all the process of investigation and gathering information, as well as brainstorming solutions, writing a proposal and elaborating the prototypes.

According to Shedroff, N. (1994) "The design thinking is a human-centered problem-solving method that highlights creativity, empathy, and experimentation. It is a methodical technique to solving difficult issues that places the end-user at the center of the design process. The purpose of design thinking is to provide creative approaches that address the requirements and desires of those who will use them". (p. 10) The five stages of the design thinking technique are:

Empathize: During this stage, the design team works to comprehend the wants and experiences of the end-users or consumers for whom they are creating. Methods used include observation, interviews, and surveys.

Define: After establishing empathy for the end-users, the design team determines the main issue or challenge that they are attempting to solve. This entails synthesizing the facts gathered during the empathy stage and creating a problem statement to guide the rest of the process.

Ideate: The design team creates a wide range of ideas and potential solutions to the difficulty described in the previous phase during this stage. This is a time for brainstorming and creative thinking, where all ideas are accepted and explored.

Prototype: The design team builds tangible or digital representations of the greatest ideas created during the brainstorming stage. These prototypes are used to test and enhance concepts, as well as to solicit feedback from end users.

Test: The design team tests the prototypes with end users in the final stage to see how effectively they solve the problem described in the define stage. This stage enables the team to collect data on the effectiveness of their solutions and adjust their designs in response to feedback.

4.2 User approaches

The investigation team used a variety of ways to gather information about the needs and preferences of the target user group during the user research phase. The team used three user approach techniques: a poll, a collage, and a guided storytelling exercise, in addition to two direct interviews with students. The team was able to acquire important information on how users experience social interaction by giving users a chance to express their feelings and experiences linked to fear and social interaction.

Emmanuel Sotomayor, the first participant, shared crucial details about the difficulties he encountered when attempting to socialize with new people after switching schools during the pandemic. The second interviewee, Agustín Yoaat, talked about how lonely he felt during the pandemic and how eager he was to meet new people when the lockdown was lifted.

The survey that the research team conducted yielded significant information about user needs and social interaction-related worries. The survey's questions were designed to find out how common social anxiety is among college students and how the pandemic is affecting their social and mental health. The research team was able to identify significant areas of concern and create a clear picture of the challenges students encounter when it comes to socializing by asking focused questions regarding the students' experiences during the pandemic. The approach allowed the team to confirm the assumption that social anxiety is a problem that impacts many college students, and that it is, in fact, a topic that truly matters to our target audience.

With the assistance of Arturo Colonier, the “collage” approach allowed the user to tell their story through photos, providing special and intimate insights into how they dealt with social isolation and interaction before, throughout, and after the pandemic, as well as how he may have felt, and what was his routine during those moments.

A guided storytelling exercise was used to better comprehend the audience's anxiety while engaging with strangers and to identify the underlying causes of their anxiety. Mazapan took part in the exercise, where she was asked to act out several social situations while reflecting on her emotions and thoughts in each one. It has been determined that the main source of social anxiety in those who are affected is an excessive fear of being criticized or misjudged, as well as upsetting people simply by being among them.

The research team also conducted interviews with two psychologists in addition to using these user-centered design techniques. These experts talked about the needs of people with social anxiety and how to effectively serve them. While stressing the need for companionship for those who struggle with social anxiety, Dr. Teresa also made the point that extroverted people may find it challenging to approach and interact with them effectively. Dr. Morales, on the other hand, emphasized the

necessity for creative solutions to support students' mental health and wellness and gave details on how the pandemic had influenced students' social growth.

4.3 Insights.

In the field of market research, an insight is a discovering or deep understanding produced via the study of information gathered from a company's consumers or customers. An insight reveals characteristics of consumer behavior, wants, desires, or attitudes that can help a corporation make decisions about designing products, services, or advertising campaigns.

It used information from the categories and from the relations map to write the six “insights”. The meaning that this “insight” could have been thought, recorded in a different column, and based on these implications, opportunities and potential solutions were found.

There were 3 insight to which the investigation concluded with: the first one, was that

1: People who have never experienced social anxiety are frequently unclear about how to interact with people who do, which frequently results in invasive behaviors that make the sufferer feel even more uneasy and agitated.

2: Young people, especially those with social anxiety, slowly regained their social skills after returning to society. This was because they felt more free and less stressed after having restricted social interaction, which gave them the urge to socialize and extend their social circle.

3: When engaging with others, people are most afraid of coming across as unattractive, making a bad first impression, or even becoming the target of ridicule. When a person has social anxiety, they become extremely suspicious because they start to worry that social activities can turn out negatively.

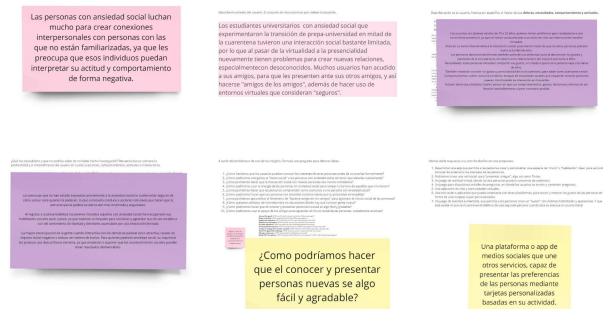
This last insight was the one with which the team decided to use as the base for the development of a possible solution for the issue of social anxiety post COVID-19.

4.4 Scheme of connections

It consists of six boxes: the problem, where the problem will be described; the context, which is where it develops; the users, that is, to whom the project is addressed; the insights, which are the key ideas that arise from the analysis of the problem and the context and are essential for the definition of the design challenge; that is the formulation of a specific problem that you want to solve through the design; and finally the proposal, a concrete solution to the problem raised.

What was found, after all the previously explained process, was that “People with social anxiety struggle a lot to create interpersonal connections with people they are not familiar with, as they worry that those individuals can interpret their attitude and behavior negatively. With this in mind, The design challenge was found: *“How could we make meeting and introducing new people something easy and pleasant?”*”

The team eventually came up with the solution suggestion during a brainstorming session: “A social media platform or app that unites other services, able to present people's preferences through personalized cards based on their activity.”



5. Proposal

The vision for ConnectUs was to build a social media platform that would connect people together and make it simpler for them to interact with one another, particularly those who are socially anxious. The software will generate customized cards for each user based on their activity and tastes, allowing them to instantly connect with new people who share their interests and hobbies. This would be an effective way to help people with social anxiety establish and maintain relationships with others.

5.1 Continuums of Interactivity

Continuums of Interactivity is a conceptual tool used in the design of user interfaces and in the user experience to describe and understand how users interact with a product or service over time. There are six “values” or “spectrum” that define how much feedback, control, creativity, productivity, communication, and adaptability a product possesses. Being “passive” in areas where it has a low value, or on the contrary, “interactive” if having a high value. The six values of continuous interaction are

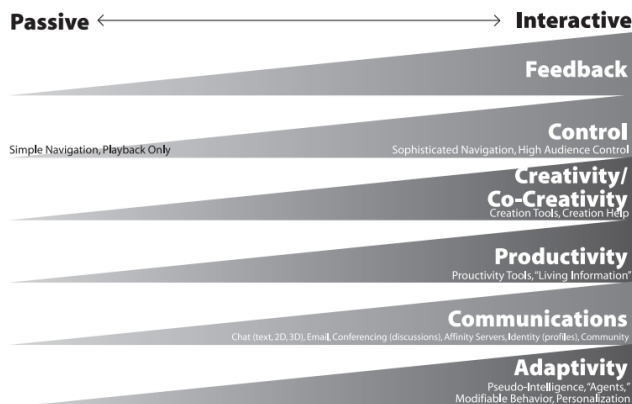
Feedback: The degree to which the product or service provides feedback on user actions.

Control: The degree to which users can control their experience with the product or service.

Creativity: The degree to which users can use the product or service to create something.

Productivity: The degree to which users can use the product or service to achieve their goals.

Communication: The degree to which users can

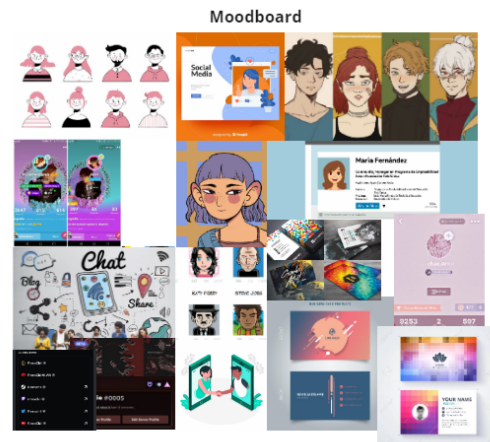


5.2 Design principles

The “Design Principles” are a set of guidelines established to guide the design process. These principles are based on the users' views and demands. These principles can apply to many areas of design, including usability, accessibility, aesthetics, coherence, simplicity, and innovation.

The principles shouldn't be taken as strict laws, but rather as a set of guidelines that designers should follow in order to develop a successful product. Designers can utilize these principles to ensure that the product they develop is of the greatest quality and satisfies the needs of their users.

5.3 Mood board



A mood board is a visual tool used to capture the essence of a design project. It is basically a collection of images and colors that contribute to the aesthetics and excitement of a project. The purpose of a “mood board” is to replicate the aesthetics of the project's final design, guaranteeing that design selections are consistent and connected with the overall goal of the app. Designers utilize mood boards to help them come up with concepts for their designs. They can also be utilized to obtain ideas from other projects, giving the designer a greater understanding of the design area. Designers can have a better idea of the overall aesthetic of the project and the interactions between elements by creating mood boards.

5.4 People, situations, and scenarios

“People” are generated as hypothetical representations of these consumers in order to better understand the needs of the “ideal” users and how they interact with the proposed product or service. Their lives, wants, goals, and habits are combined with demographic and psychological data to create those depictions. With the help of this strategy, the research team can gain an in-depth comprehension of the requirements and preferences of the target market, which in turn influences the creation of the product or service. By using this process, the team may acquire a comprehensive understanding of the consumers as well as relevant knowledge about their tastes and habits.

The designated “person” was a college student named “Boche.” He struggled with a wide range of anxieties and insecurities when it came to interacting with others and meeting new people. In consideration of this, Boche needs a way to meet new people and a way to be confident that they won't make fun of his interests and passions.

This issue is resolved by “ConnectUs,” which assists Boche in learning about the interests and hobbies of those around him. Finally, finding that one classmate who has a few but essential shared interests and passions. This gives Boche the confidence that the other person won't mistake him for his preferences, and the opportunity to finally speak with them. It's perhaps possible that the other person will understand Boche's feelings more clearly.

BOCHE DERÓN
"¿Y SI LA GENTE EMPIEZA A MOLESTARME POR MIS GUSTOS?"

Edad: 22 años
Ocupación: Estudiante de programación
Estado Civil: Soltero
Origenario de: Puelo

CAUTELOSO **TIMIDO**
ANSIEDAD SOCIAL **INFP**

MARCAS MÁS UTILIZADAS
Instagram, Spotify, Outlook, Discord

TECNOLOGÍA
Software, Aplicaciones móviles, Redes sociales, Cargar (Fotos de perfil), Computadora (Fotos de perfil)

BIO
Boche es una persona que sufre de ansiedad social, por lo que su círculo social es muy pequeño mientras que la mayoría del tiempo actúa de manera cautelosa, procurando no llamar mucha la atención centrándose al final del salón. Actualmente estudia programación, y aunque sabe que sus compañeros tienen un gusto en general por las computadoras, sigue temiendo que sus gustos en específico puedan ser objeto de burla, por lo cual cuando convive se limita a dar respuestas "genéricas" a pesar de tener su computadora personalizada. La mayoría del tiempo se la pasa metido en redes sociales, especialmente en Discord o hace post para internet.

NECESIDADES
• Hacer más amigos en la vida real
• Tener un círculo social en su nueva universidad
• No sentirse excluido por sus gustos y saber que hay más personas que comparten los mismos

DESIOS
• No tener muchos amigos en la vida real
• No saber cómo romper el hielo con otras personas
• Sentir que no tiene con quien compartir o convivir
• La gente que lo persiga le pregunte sobre sus gustos

METAS/MOTIVACIONES
• Tener un mejor círculo social como el que tuvo en su anterior escuela

SITUACIÓN
Durante clases, boche entra a su salón, y ahí ve a varios grupos de personas que él conoce "de lejos", pero a duras penas recuerda los nombres, y menos aún conoce sus gustos. Boche quiere saber con cuál grupo empezar a relacionarse y acercarse, pero siente que si a escuchar o investigar sobre lo que sea que están haciendo estos grupos sería raro e incómodo, por lo que al final decide irse a sentar a comer solito y adichapado.

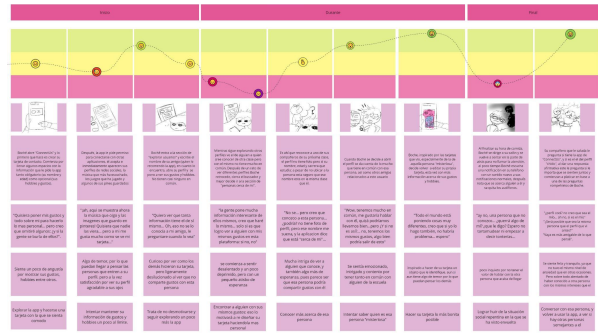
ESCENARIO
Mientras Boche saca su lunch, se acuerda que se había descargado ConnectUs, y decide entrar a ver la tarjeta de una de las personas cuyo nombre recuerda. Después de ver los intereses y gustos de esta persona, y ver que no comparten ninguno, entra mejor a la sección de "personas cerca de mí", y ahí logra ver las fotos de los integrantes de otro grupo: ese grupo resulta ser el que comparte una gran cantidad de gustos con Boche, por lo que decide sentarse cerca de ellos.

The “scenarios” provide hypothetical circumstances in which users are involved in events or encounter problems connected to the problem of the application, allowing to better understand the user wants and expectations and predict possible future issues or demands.

Situations are also imaginary narratives that show how users could use the proposal to address the concerns identified above, thereby demonstrating how the proposal can improve users' lives.

5.5 Journey Map

The journey map is a basic tool in user-centered design, allowing for an accurate representation of the whole user experience from beginning to end. Designers can acquire significant insights into the user's wants, desires, and pain points by mapping out each step of the user's journey, including their interactions, emotions, ideas, and behaviors.



The journey map showed to be a key tool in various ways throughout the development of the ConnectUs app. For example, it let obtain a better knowledge of the user's goals and motivations, as well as identify areas where the app may bring value. It was possible to identify specific pain spots, such as difficulty in finding meaningful activities or interacting with people who share similar interests, and design solutions to solve these challenges by mapping out the user's journey.

In addition, by giving a regular reminder of the user's perspective and needs, the journey map helped to guarantee that the development process stayed focused on the user constantly.

6. Low Fidelity Prototype

A low-fidelity prototype is an immediate design made from simple materials such as paper, glue, feathers, and cardboard, or using basic digital tools, that illustrates the design and functionality of a product or service in an early and simplified fashion. Since their main objective is to quickly test and explore alternatives ideas and solutions without committing a lot of time or resources to their development, they are usually noted by their simplicity. Low-fidelity prototypes are frequently used early in the design process to explore and evaluate numerous concepts before developing a high-fidelity prototype.

In addition to design principles, the following theories in the development of the prototype were applied.

Tajfel's social categorization theory: Humans have a tendency to organize people into groups based on different traits. As a result, they have a predetermined picture about those people. The information you have about someone might help you categorize them and influence how they relate to you.

The theory of Distributed Cognition: According to this reasoning, cognition and knowledge involve some cognitive effort, therefore the development of instruments that assist in this memory is important.

Theory of the Other: Humans construct mental images of people based on the information recollected about them.

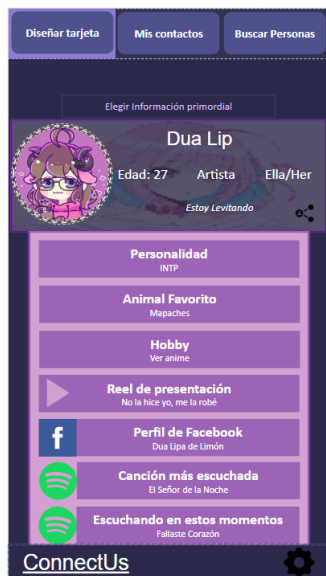
6. PowerPoint prototype

The app's first prototype was developed using PowerPoint. This tool was chosen since it allowed to put together a basic prototype that showcased the main concept of the app and its features, while also making it simple to share the app with others.

The prototype contained the app's main flow, as well as the app's core capabilities, such as login, the user screen, contacts, search,

and sharing screens, and personalized contact cards. A group of users tested the prototype, and several changes were made based on their feedback.

The goal of the current prototype was to evaluate the concept of the app's effectiveness and see if it could achieve its main goal of making socially anxious people more comfortable in situations with others. A group of volunteers who had previously received a diagnosis of social anxiety disorder took part in the testing. The app's general usability, ease of navigation, and contribution to social interaction were only a few of the parameters used in the review.



User testing

The app was tested on 3 users, all of them with some degree of social anxiety.

User 1: Arturo Colonnier Huesca

Arturo liked the software since it enabled him to personalize his contact card and express himself. However, he saw no reason to share a third-party contact with another person. He proposed including “stories” in profiles to enable people to get to know each other based on their preferences. Overall, he thought the app was an excellent concept that may help many people with social anxiety socialize and meet new people.

User 2: Bryan Alfredo Rossano Lazaro: Alfredo, unlike Arturo, brought up worries about the possible design, identity, and consistency issues that could develop from having fully alterable presentation cards with an abundance of backgrounds, colors, and typographies. He, too, suggested that adding states to the cards would be a fantastic way for people to get to know one other better. He did, however, believe that the feature for adding “reels” of presentation would be redundant. Despite his worries, Alfredo believes that the ConnectUs app may assist people with social anxiety increase their social circle by offering prior knowledge of others and making it simpler to connect with them.

User 3: Ernesto Ramirez Castelan:

Ernesto provided helpful feedback on the showed low-fidelity prototype. He proposed a hierarchization of the elements within

the cards, emphasizing the function of the reel. He also agreed with Alfredo on the importance of maintaining a consistent look on contacts other than the customized card. Ernesto also proposed rearranging the frames on the presentation slides and using iconography to improve visualization. He also recommended that even if the user does not want to create a presentation reel, they should be able to write a short phrase to express themselves. Finally, Ernesto pointed out that the start screen communicated an air of formality despite the app's casual nature, and he suggested improving it to make it more engaging.

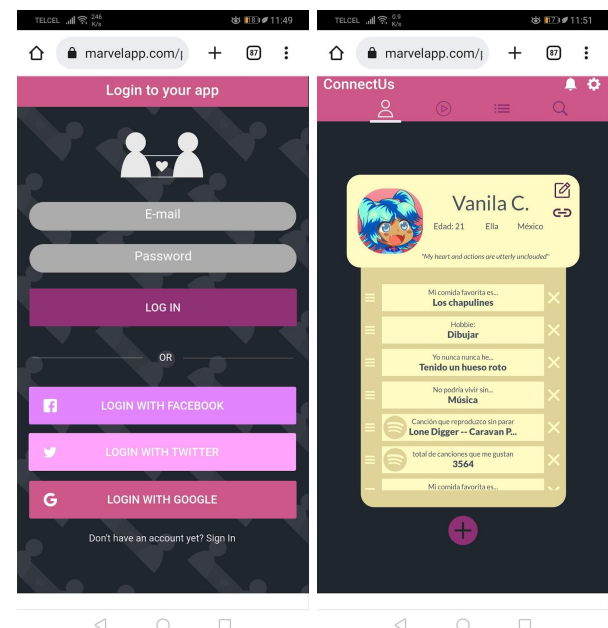
6.1 Results Analysis

The prototype achieved its main objective of making it easier for people who suffer from social anxiety to get to know those around them. It was also discovered that personalized cards assisted in the process of meeting strangers and encouraged users to get closer to other users without feeling awkward. However, the over-customization of user cards had an impact on the application's overall identity.

The concept of sharing a third-party card was irrelevant to consumers, instead introducing “stories” with brief videos would allow users to show themselves better and connect with other users more effectively.

7. Medium Fidelity prototype

Following user testing with the low-fidelity prototype and collecting feedback from the assessor. The team then worked on the “Connect Us” app's mid-low fidelity prototype. First, it was sketched the new look of the app, taking into account the design concepts that were created earlier as well as the feedback.



The objective was to design an app with several more screens and characteristics than the previous version, which had just a handful of screens. It was also needed for the app to look more professional, so the developing a logo and a distinct visual identity that would be instantly recognizable and had a more consistent appearance started. It was also wanted to ensure that

the app had a pleasing design while remaining simple to use, as well as to ensure that the user experience was as simple as possible.

7.1 Marvel App prototype

The Marvel App was used to construct the prototype for this situation, since it was intended that anybody could do the evaluation and have a more immersive experience.

Marvel App is a prototyping and design platform for the web that allows users to create and share interactive prototypes and designs. It is mostly associated with the design of user interfaces (UI) and user experiences (UX).

One of the most distinctive aspects of the Marvel App is its user-friendly interface, which enables users to easily create and customize prototypes and designs without the need for advanced technical expertise. The Marvel App also has a drag-and-drop interface, design collaboration, real-time feedback, and the ability to create animated transitions between displays.

This is why this tool ended up selected for prototyping the “ConnectUs” app, given that it was required a simple way to demonstrate the app's main features as well as the app's established design.

The objective of this prototype was to ensure that the application's functionality and design were reviewed to make sure they were appropriate and that the software could successfully fulfill their intended purpose. The app's usability was also tested to make sure it was user-friendly and capable of satisfying users' needs. The goal of the analysis was to find any potential problems that would frustrate users or impair their experience, such as glitches or bugs. Additionally, the review was intended to determine whether the app was successful in its goal of boosting social interaction between strangers. The usefulness of the app was evaluated by seeing if it could effectively serve as a platform for starting conversations and allowing users to connect with one another.

7.2 Characteristics

The software provides a login and sign-in screen where users are able to create an account and log in.

Users can view their user card after logging in, which is a customized profile featuring their personal information, likes, and interests. These cards can be modified, and new information can be added as needed. It included as well the stories on the interface.

The application preserves the original contacts panel, as well as the search screen, which allows users to search for other users by name, interests, or location. The app additionally provides a notification feature that alerts users of new connections, friend requests, or other important information.

The settings panel of the app gives you access to numerous app settings, such as notification preferences, account information, and privacy settings. A blocked contacts feature was added as well to allow users to prevent unwanted or problematic people from viewing their information. Finally, the application has been modified to link with other apps such as Facebook, Spotify, and Discord, allowing users to connect and share information between a variety of platforms.

7.3 Second prototype

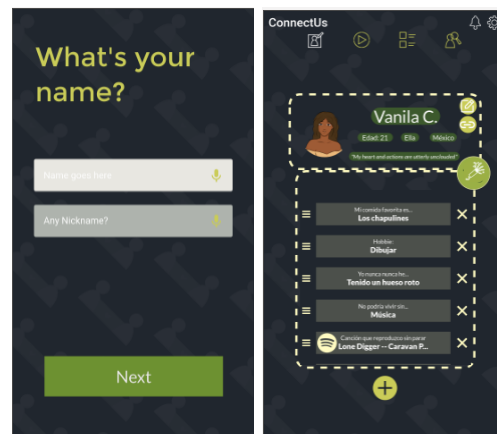
A second version of the mid-fidelity prototype was developed for the “ConnectUs” application after receiving feedback from the ASE Academy. Significant changes were made to the user experience when compared to the prior low-fidelity version. More screens were added to enhance the impression of authenticity while offering the user with more freedom and control when browsing the app. The main goal of this prototype round was to give users a more compelling and immersive experience. This revision also attempted to address the flaws and restrictions of the earlier prototype.

The objective was to develop a user-friendly, intuitive program that would motivate people who struggle with social anxiety to engage with more people. The development team worked to build an interesting and valuable experience that would aid people in overcoming their phobias of social interaction by incorporating user feedback and testing multiple layouts and features.

To enhance the user experience while making sure that the application achieves its primary objective. Larger fonts and buttons, as well as a more intuitive navigation system and a clearer hierarchy for the user's selections, were implemented as well. The color scheme was changed from red to green in order to prevent misleading the users into believing it was a dating app. It also used compatible illustrations and icons to improve the app's appearance and make it easy to identify every characteristic.

At the starting point of the prototype, a screen appears where the user can start entering their information. By doing so, the user can understand more clearly how the software works while also having fun creating his own user card.

Finally, some “Micro-interactions” were included, as well as a few animated icons. Including those in the onboarding screens, making the software more visually appealing and engaging to users.



8. Final user testing

Final user tests on the “ConnectUs” Prototype were run to evaluate its performance and efficacy. This was an important stage for us, since it was needed to ensure that the app was doing what it was supposed to do: relieve social anxiety. The team also carefully studied and evaluated users' interactions with the app, as well as their feelings towards it, as well as suggestions and

comments from them on how to improve the app and make it more useful for its intended purpose.

8.1 Diana Carrasco Morales

The goal of this user testing was to see if the app had any impact on how people interacted, and if it encouraged users to engage with more people and feel more comfortable around strangers. This was done by asking Diana how she felt while using the software and telling her to speak out loud while viewing the cards of other users.

Due to the heart in the logo, she initially thought it was a dating app. Diana appreciated the app's ability to link with other apps, such as Discord, as she spends a lot of time on that platform. However, she found it difficult to tell which buttons on the main screen were interactive. Diana appreciated the "Connectology" section, where her number of social interactions were showcased, and expressed her excitement at being recognized as a popular person.

The numbers were valuable for her, as she felt understood. Diana reacted negatively to a user card about eating "chapulines" and positively to a user card mentioning loving pizza. She enjoyed the option to switch to a dark app mode, which lessens the brightness of the display. On the other hand, she thought the feature that notifies you when a friend is nearby was invasive and stated she would disable it.

In summary, the app achieved its objective in the simplest way viable: it allowed users to learn about the interests and passions of others before meeting them in person. Users will thereby feel a little more safe and at ease while attempting to approach a stranger.

8.2 Miguel Ángel Salas Castellanos

This user testing's objective was to make sure the app's interface was user-friendly and comfortable. Additionally, it was checked to determine if the visual identity, color palette, and overall design had finally abandoned the initial romantic atmosphere and the evident detachment these components had from one another.

The user initially thought the software was a dating app, but subsequently realized it was a platform for quietly interacting with people, which may assist people who are not particularly sociable. The user recognized the majority of the app's icons, but had doubts about some of them, such as the "likes" and "favorites" ones. Miguel also proposed improving the possibility to temporarily "block" a user. Finally, the user praised the function of "the monument," but warned that it may discourage those who aren't seeing any progress.

The user test found that the app needed a lot of work in the areas of being user-friendly and aesthetically pleasing, even though it had finally given up the romantic vibe it had at first and that all components were now consistent with one another.

8.3 Emmanuel Sotomayor Herrera

The only objective of this third and final user testing was to determine how users felt generally about the ConnectUs app. The test was designed to be as unbiased and uninfluenced as possible this time.

Emmanuel provided feedback on the ConnectUs app's design and functionality, stating that it was appropriate for use as a social network. He enjoyed the friends counting feature and the ability to view socializing analytics. Emmanuel complimented the card editing button's usability as well as the design of the story. He did, however, have problems distinguishing between the contact search page and the global search screen.

He thought the icebreakers were helpful for initiating talks and proposed setting up a section of virtual communities to meet more people with similar interests.

With this user test, we made sure the app was functional and was encouraging its users to socialize and feel a bit safer near strangers. Additionally, similar to the previous test, it revealed several design flaws the app still had, such as a somewhat unclear general flow.

9. Animated trailer

In order to attract the intended audience, it was decided to produce an animated trailer that will also serve as an advertisement. Since the software is available to everyone, it was decided to make the trailer with figures that are not restricted to any one person or group. The trailer's objective is to show the audience how the application can help people who suffer from social anxiety and find it difficult to approach others.

The opening few seconds of the animation are meant to illustrate the emotions of isolation and fear that people who suffer from social anxiety may experience, as well as to illustrate the sense of melancholy and how connecting with others allows people to grow and adapt as individuals, with variety playing a vital role. The video concludes by showcasing the app and how it allows users to freely express themselves through their cards and interact with people that share similar hobbies or interests.

10. Overall conclusions

To begin, The team discovered that the ConnectUs app is still misinterpreted as a dating app, especially in its initial stages of use. This is possibly due to the app's icon, which features a heart.

Second, the app needs to be cautious when allowing users to display details on their cards. The team behind "ConnectUs" do not want to make the app overly disruptive, yet it is also desirable to make sure users have enough information to engage with others.

The fact that the software was at least partially accomplishing its primary goal, however, was possibly the most crucial factor of all. In addition to creating some hype around the desire to become well-known, it also enabled users to learn a little more about others they may not have previously known.

Although it is evident that the ConnectUs app is still in its early stages and has a long way to go before making an important contribution to the problem of social anxiety, we're convinced it does an excellent job of assisting consumers in overcoming their fear of interacting with strangers.

The research also provided a better understanding of social anxiety and why it is so prevalent. It was discovered that social anxiety is a serious condition that can have a negative impact on a person's mental and emotional well-being. The team also noticed

about the numerous methods and tactics for handling and tackling social anxiety.

Developing an app like ConnectUs was a collective effort that required a lot of teamwork and creative thinking. We've got to think of things like user experience, app functioning, and aesthetics. Developing the ConnectUs app, however, was an enjoyable and challenging experience that taught the team a lot about social anxiety, app design, and the significance of establishing an environment that encourages social interaction and community building. Hoping that an app similar to ours will arise one day.

11. Special thanks

The "ConnectUs" team would like to show gratitude to the assessor, Arturo Garcia, for his assistance and direction throughout the investigation. As well as all of the users who donated their time for user testing and data collection.

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