

Gabriel Drozdov

Design + Community

Research Project

Overview Report

RISD Fall 2022 Semester
UX Research & Strategy Methods
Prof. Aaron Simmons

We have researched **online communities** to help designers and artists have **meaningful discussions about creative work** through a social media platform that employs a **unique user experience**.

01 Research

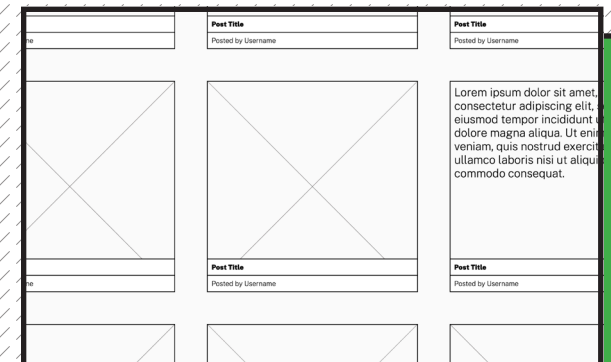
- 5-week phase
- 7 user interviews
- 7 expert interviews
- Survey of 12 users

02 Ideation

- 3-week phase
- Journey map
- Persona development
- In-person workshop with 3 users

03 Prototype/Testing

- 4-week phase
- Prototype development
- Testing with 6 users
- Development of new prototypes



01 Research

Our research phase involved 7 expert interviews, 7 user interviews, and a survey of 12 potential users. These processes helped build a strong foundation for our project.

The experts and users helped solidify the problem we hoped to solve in our work. We discovered a resentment for major social media networks, but a strong sense of community when the platform allowed for smaller scale, niche interest groups.



Ramon Tejada had a strong negative reaction to the mention of the word "metaverse." Ramon also discussed how the original purposes of social media sites have been distorted or forgotten over time.

"I don't use Reddit or Twitter because they're too fast for me."
— Kelly

Soo Min described her ideal website as a community of creatives that share her niche interests.

Laurel Schwulst brought up numerous newer technologies like Mastodon that met the needs of niche interest groups.

Lynne Yun talked about the difficulties of balancing work and online engagement.

Sam Drozdov described Roblox as thriving community for young creatives to socialize in.

Talia Cotton warned against atypical user experiences that might alienate new users.

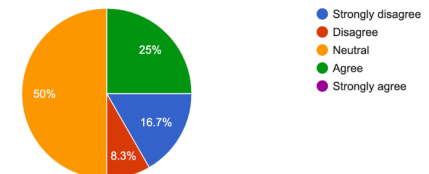
From our survey, Are.na and TikTok were voted most fun over other older social media platforms.

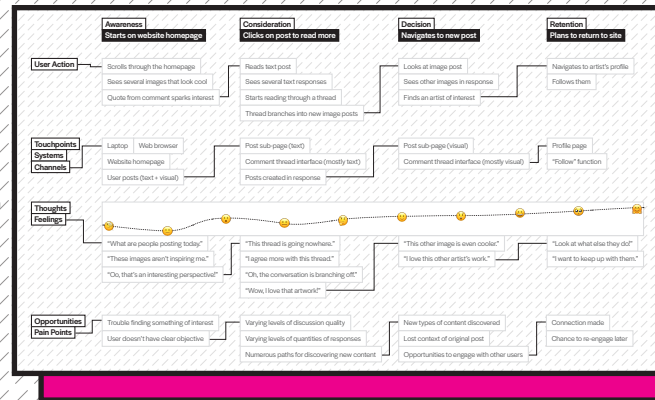
Husna described the community on Instagram as "performative" and not genuine.

"Sometimes when a community gets too big, it loses its sense of community... You don't find community in Reddit as a whole, but in certain Subreddits you do."
— Jonathan

From our survey:
92% associated negative emotions with social media use
0% associated happiness with social media use

Do you agree with the following statement: "Browsing social media is fun."
12 responses





02 Ideation

Our ideation phase involved the creation of a journey map and proto persona, as well as a workshop. These processes were focused on refining our question and proposed solution so that we could proceed with confidence into the prototype phase.

From these initiatives, we discovered an excitement about a new form of user experience, but at the same time a hesitation for anything that was too stark of a departure from typical user experiences.



Rebecca
she/her/hers
Age 30 Illustrator
Based in Chicago, IL

Hey! This is Rebecca.

She's an illustrator working in Chicago, where she was born and raised. She creates drawings and graphics for brands and publications as a freelancer. On the side, she draws for fun and posts some of her work on Instagram. She also runs a web comic through Reddit.

Here's what you can't forget about her:

- Chicago plays a huge part in her identity and work.
- She thinks social media should be a place to relax.
- Like her peers, she stays skeptical of big corporations.
- She's built up her social media presence over ten years.
- Despite this, she's not the most tech-savvy.

Here's what holds her back:

- Often turns off comments on her posts to avoid hate.
- Puts on a persona when she posts online.
- Increasingly sees art as work, not pleasure.
- Gets jealous of other artists' work.
- Has trouble socializing and making friends.

Here's what inspires and motivates her:

- Community and kindness are her #1 priorities.
- Needs a safe space in order to feel genuine.
- Wants to find ways to reach people outside of Chicago.
- Hopes people relate to her work emotionally.
- Participates in online communities that bring her joy.

Visual/graphic cues were frequently meant with overwhelming positivity.

Over 2/3s of users compared the site to Instagram because of the square format of posts.

Around 50% of users wanted a way to trace their navigation.

Because of the stark departure in user experience, users don't initially perceive the prototype as a social media site.

Users have an expectation for infinitely-populated websites.

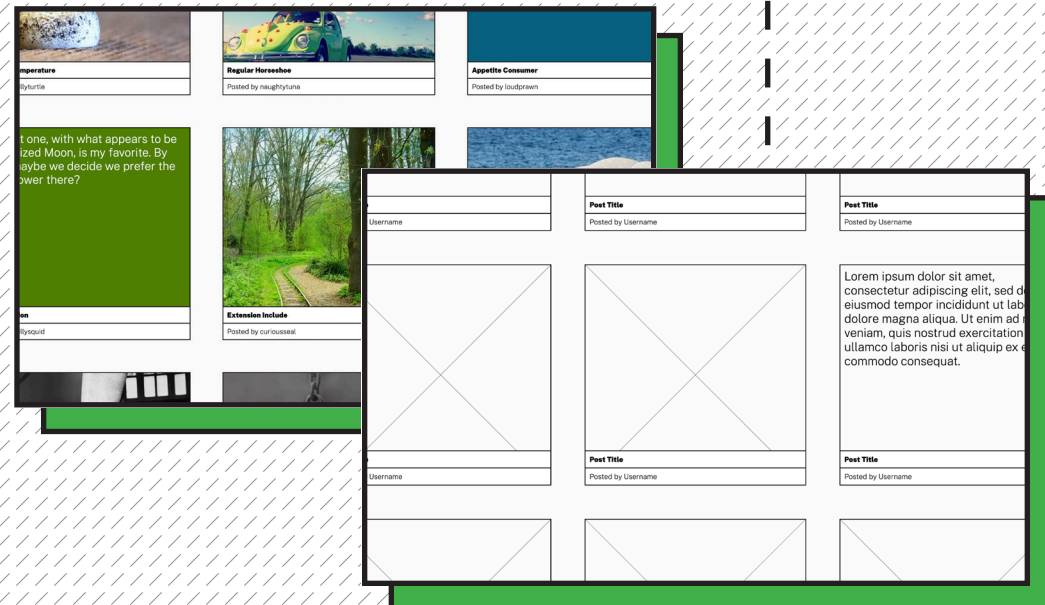
Users wanted more transparency about why they were seeing certain posts.

If functionality (e.g. comments, replies) is not explicitly denoted, users assume it doesn't exist.

All users initially tried to scroll on the website, but quickly grew to understand and enjoy the atypical navigation.

03 Prototype/Testing

Our prototype/testing phase involved the creation of 2 working prototypes. Both featured the homepage of a new social media concept, with and without content. We let 7 users test these prototypes and narrate their responses. They expressed joy and enthusiasm for the concepts, but also experienced confusion with the user interface. We used this feedback to refine our concept and come up with next steps.



Findings

- Current social media platforms **do not meet the wants and needs** of artists and designers.
- Artists and designers are gradually moving into more **niche communities**.
- User experience can **determine the kinds of communities and content** that form on a site.
- Users are open to trying a social media platform with a **unique user experience**.
- There is a **wide range of possible user interactions** that can be incorporated into a social media product.

Thank you!

For more information:

gabrieldrozdov@gmail.com