

Iteration 1 & Report

GBDA 402: Cross-Cultural Digital Business 2

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Introduction

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, many people have been impacted mentally with the elevated rates of stress, anxiety, and loneliness. As measures are frequently being set, such as strict quarantine rules and stay-at-home orders, it has affected many people's usual activities and routines. Some key ways to maintain a healthy relationship include being present with your loved ones, actively listening, and being listened to; share your feelings and welcome support from others (1). The goal of our product is to give people a place to connect in a meaningful way by opening up conversations, discussions, sharing stories and emotions.

So this brings us to ask, how might we foster genuine connection amongst people to improve relationships and combat anxiety, depression, and isolation?

In a nutshell, our product is a digital game that invites conversations. This would include thoughtful questions such as "What are three things you value most in a friendship?" or "What is one habit that has made a significant impact on your life?". The questions will be combined with mini games and challenges such as "play a round of charades" or "would you rather," and integrate arcade games to mix up serious conversations with some fun and play.

Value Proposition: Build genuine connections and relations with meaningful conversations.

Is there a demand, and how large is it?

Yes, there is a demand for this product. Even prior to the pandemic, a 2018 survey found loneliness levels reached an all-time high, with 40% of participants reporting they felt that their relationships were not meaningful and that they felt extremely isolated. There are many physical and mental health risks associated with loneliness. Humans need the companionship of others to thrive in life, and the strength of our connections has a huge impact on our health and happiness (2).

Additionally, there has been a steady increase in the video game industry, with a huge surge in video game use and consumption in 2020 due to COVID-19 as a way to keep busy, entertained, and connected to others. "In the year to date, \$29.4 billion of video games have been sold in the US - a 23% increase from the same period last year." (3)

Reflection

What did you build and accomplish in the iteration?

During this iteration, we focused on the major features of our product which includes the question game boxes, forms of communication such as video chats and messaging, and the add-ons of mini-games participants can play. In terms of deliverables, we were able to complete a rough draft of the business model canvas that we believe covers the majority of all operations we will be covering for this service, and some low-fidelity wireframes (see Appendix G) that represent the foundation of what our service will look like.

During user testing, we received overall positive feedback regarding the main features we wanted to focus on. Some suggestions included adjusting the frame size of the other participants to be larger compared to their own so that the user isn't too focused on themselves and to be less self-conscious.

Why did you choose this as your goal for this iteration?

When the first iteration week rolled in, we were overwhelmed with the amount of time, work, and research we had to put into our product. To pace the team, we started focusing on the major features of our product, which narrowed down our thinking processes onto essential questions to move forward with our idea (see Appendix C). By doing so, we were able to get solid answers to move towards gaming, which captured the industry our product was going to compete in, the target demographics, and the core value proposition of our product. As a result, completing work and research in the three main pillars in the following iterations will be more straightforward as general criteria (industry, user needs, etc.) are laid out to be built upon.

Who are you building this feature for?

During these unprecedented times, we wanted to create a social bonding platform that minimizes stress and amplifies happy hormones through a relay of games. We hope to target young adults (ages 18-35), who are yearning to meet with their friends and family, a virtual gameplay to socialize and be entertained to combat the limitations that quarantine has brought us. Our goal is to design the ultimate party game that takes your current emotion and recommends various types of game genre to choose from (Friends, family, couples, LGBTQ, NSFW, etc).

What roadblocks / issues did you face?

Determining what sort of industry we fit in also posed as an issue to overcome. We first started off with thinking of the “gaming” industry, but realized that that was too broad a term. First person shooter games are very different from association sports games, which are very different from life simulation games. We then considered board games as a subset, but decided that this also didn’t fit our service as it did not reflect the video chatting and promotion of discussing themes of life that our product aimed to do. Through brainstorming and a process of elimination we determined that the lifestyle video game industry appropriately represented our product.

Project management seemed to be the major roadblock for us in this first iteration. Agile UX design moved a lot faster than we thought it would, and we soon realized there were many deliverables for us to accomplish before being able to start his report. We knew that we had to conduct a survey to determine how the pandemic and isolation affected people and their various relationships (familial, romantic, platonic, themselves), but planning out whether to write the report as we made our findings or complete it at once was challenging. While it took a few days for us to find a regular work routine, we quickly realized that time is not a roadblock, but of the essence.

What did you learn from this iteration that will help you improve the business model?

After researching the gaming industry, we realized that it’s more different compared to the traditional app/website service industries we’ve explored. We had to think differently about advertising such as using streamers/influencers vs. simple advertisements. As mentioned in our Business Model Canvas (see Appendix B.1), there are several methods of revenue models such as freemium/premium which will create different types of users. We would have users interested in only the free trial of the platform using the basic question packs and features with the option of buying add-on “game boxes”.

In the future, we want to improve our business model by implementing the option for a subscription to get access to all “game boxes”. Some other forms of revenue would come from advertisements popping up in between games and microtransactions to extra customize features such as the main dashboard, avatar, and skins.

What did you learn from a UX perspective, in this iteration, that will help your team better understand your user needs?

A large takeaway from a user experience perspective is simplifying design. Many of our survey respondents reported that they played video games or watched movies together virtually to stay connected. However, these instances involved the usage of two platforms: the video game/streaming service itself, and a platform to connect both parties (Discord, Chrome extensions, etc.). As our selected service includes playing various types of games with video

chatting features, we debated how best to implement such a feature with gameplay: embedding it into our platform, or having partnerships with existing and popular services to handle that instead. From our survey results, we learnt that a centralized experience is in high demand, and thus decided we would focus on creating that kind of service.

In future iterations, once we begin to plan out each interaction and screen for different features, this will be an important learning/reminder for us. As mentioned in our Porter's Five Forces analysis (see Appendix B.3), there is high competition in the lifestyle video game market as there are many indie developers, few of which having strong brand recognition (like Jackbox Inc.). Therefore, it will be important to create something not only related to improving health and wellbeing in theory, but in practice and execution as well to be considered successful.

What did you learn from this iteration that will help you improve your visual design?

Although we spent more time focusing on the business and user research this iteration, we created a Pinterest board to start the ideation for our branding (see Appendix F). We learned that the branding for our product had to be important in order to provide the digital space our product needs. We hope to improve the overall cohesive definition and the legitimacy of our branding that ties in with the fonts and color palette we choose.

What will your team do differently in the next iteration to improve?

For our next iteration, we need to improve on making decisions for our product. We realized that endless pondering decreased the productivity of our meetings, and had to learn to move forward with what we had rather with what we were going to get.

What action item do you hope to accomplish in the next iteration?

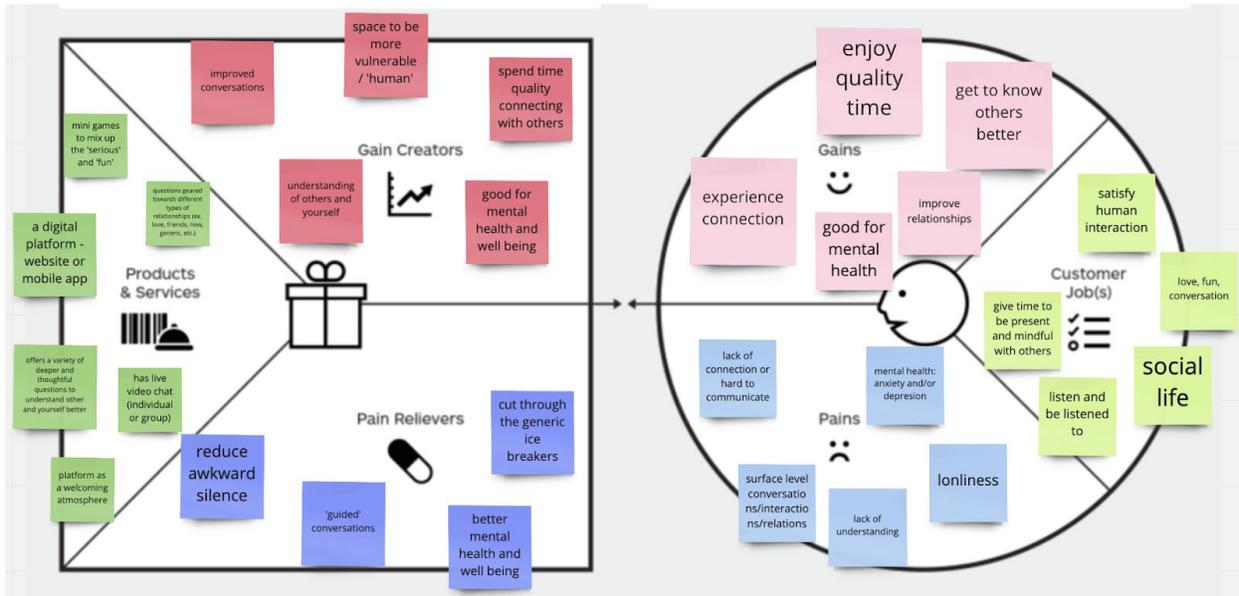
In a UX perspective, we hope to accomplish developing higher fidelity wireframes, mainly focusing on the user-game interaction screens. These wireframes would include features showing users how games would appear, sidebar chat systems, and the ability to still chat while on different screens. We would also like to have an established style guide completed for visual design, including things like fonts, colour schemes, font sizing, and asset styles (rounded buttons vs. square buttons, X & Y measurements for a drop shadow, etc.).

In terms of business and branding, we hope to start creating a tangible identity for this service. This includes a brand name, as well as names for the features we hope to include—something like calling the main question and conversation game “rekindling,” while referring to mini games as “kindl-packs,” for example. With these deliverables covering each of the capstone pillars, we will be able to continue to build a distinct identity that can once again be built upon in the final iteration.

References

- (1) Maintain Healthy Relationships To Improve Mental Health And Well-being . Mental Health Foundation, 2016, www.wechu.org/sites/default/files/workplace%20wellness/ease%20your%20mind/relationship_ebulletin_FINAL.PDF.
- (2) “The Risks of Social Isolation.” *Monitor on Psychology*, American Psychological Association, 2019, www.apa.org/monitor/2019/05/ce-corner-isolation.
- (3) Written by Adam Epstein. “Game on: How COVID-19 Became the Perfect Match for Gamers.” World Economic Forum, 2020, www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/09/covid19-coronavirus-pandemic-video-games-entertainment-media/.

Appendix



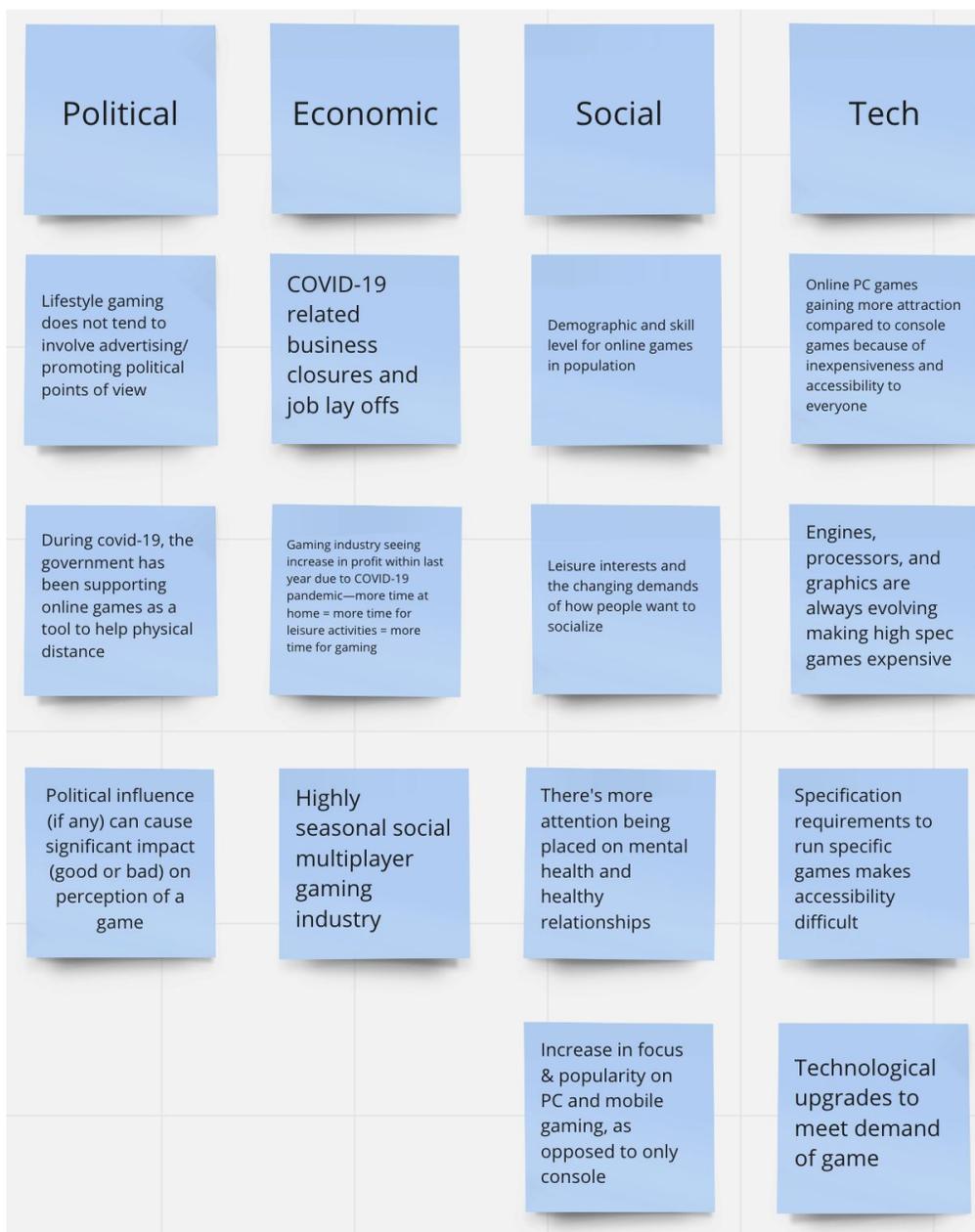
A Value Proposition Canvas

B: Business Analysis

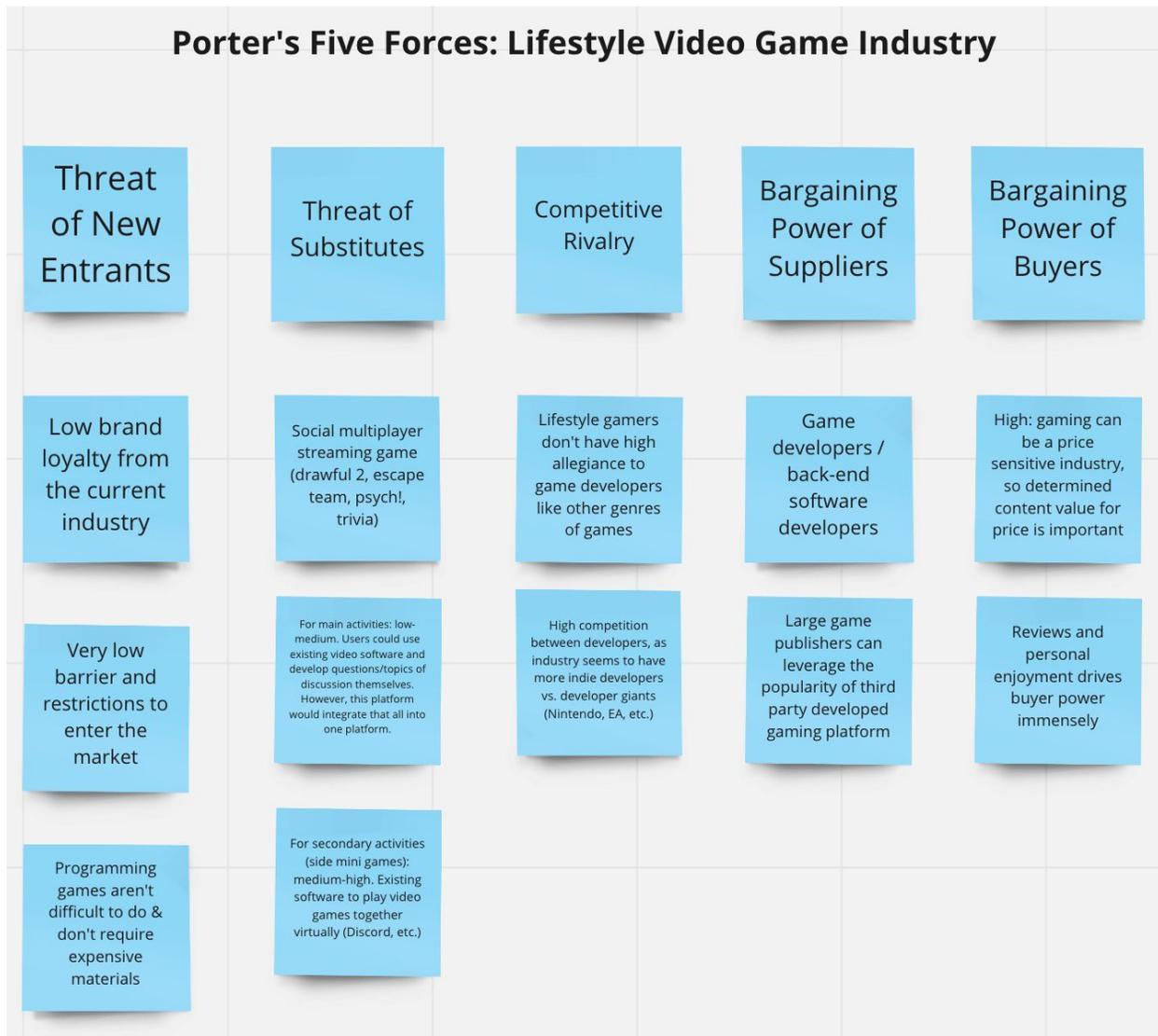


B.1 Business Tools: Business Model Canvas

- Difference here is that there will be **consumers** on Freemium usage/accounts, but **customers** will be purchasing premium gamepacks
- Customers & Consumers:
 - Primary target age: 18-30; Secondary target age: 30-50
 - Primary psychographics: online students, working remotely, self-intuitive/open to discussions about growth, emotions, life, etc.
 - Secondary psychographics: Looking for something outside of their traditional methods of staying in touch with the people they know



B.2 Business Tools: PEST



B.3 Business Tools: Porter's Five Forces

Some potential business questions are:

- What are potential barriers?
- How will success be measured?
- Is your service easily imitable? What is stopping others from copying you?
- What makes your product/service different from competitors?
- What is the business model?
- What problem are you solving?

C Business Questions to Ask

Assumptions that need validating through testing and research:

- People need a way to connect, maintain, and heal their relationships from increased isolation due to the pandemic
- People would want to relieve their stress or emotions that could have built up due to COVID-19
- The existing methods for solving needs for playing online and connecting with their relationships are either too complex/bothersome (involve using multiple platforms at once), or not heavily promoted
- People want to play card games online

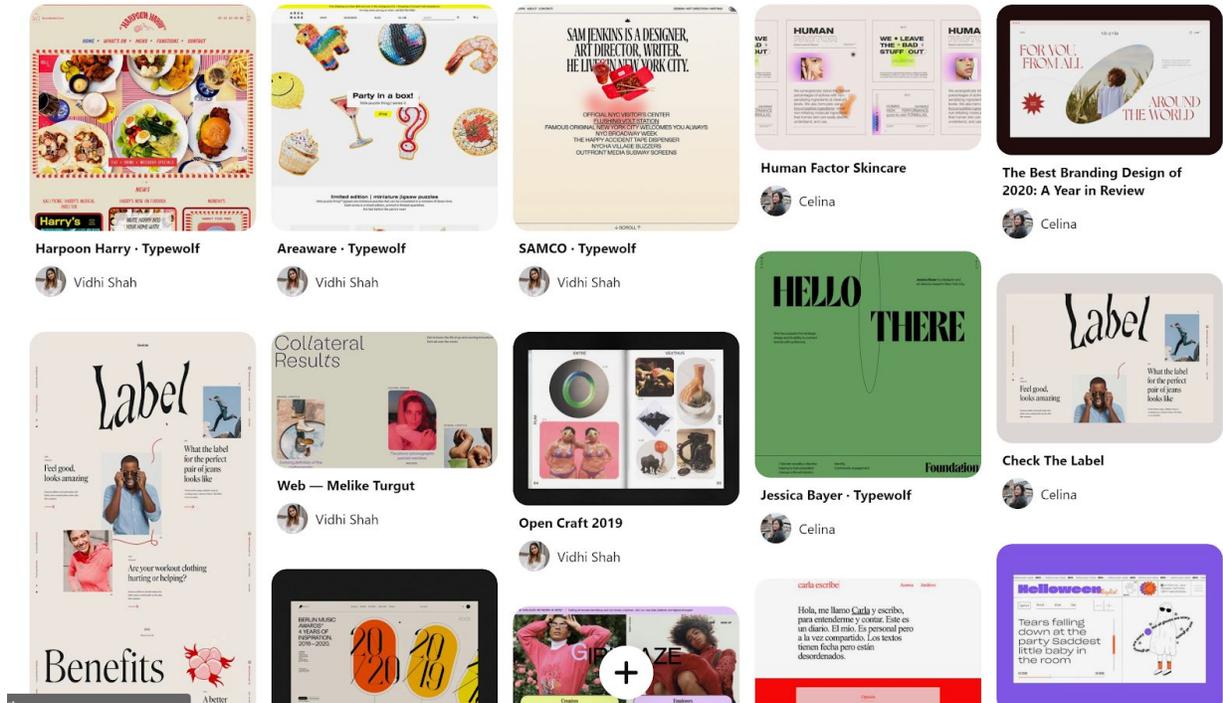
Location: North America

Product category: (Lifestyle/party) Video Games

D Assumptions

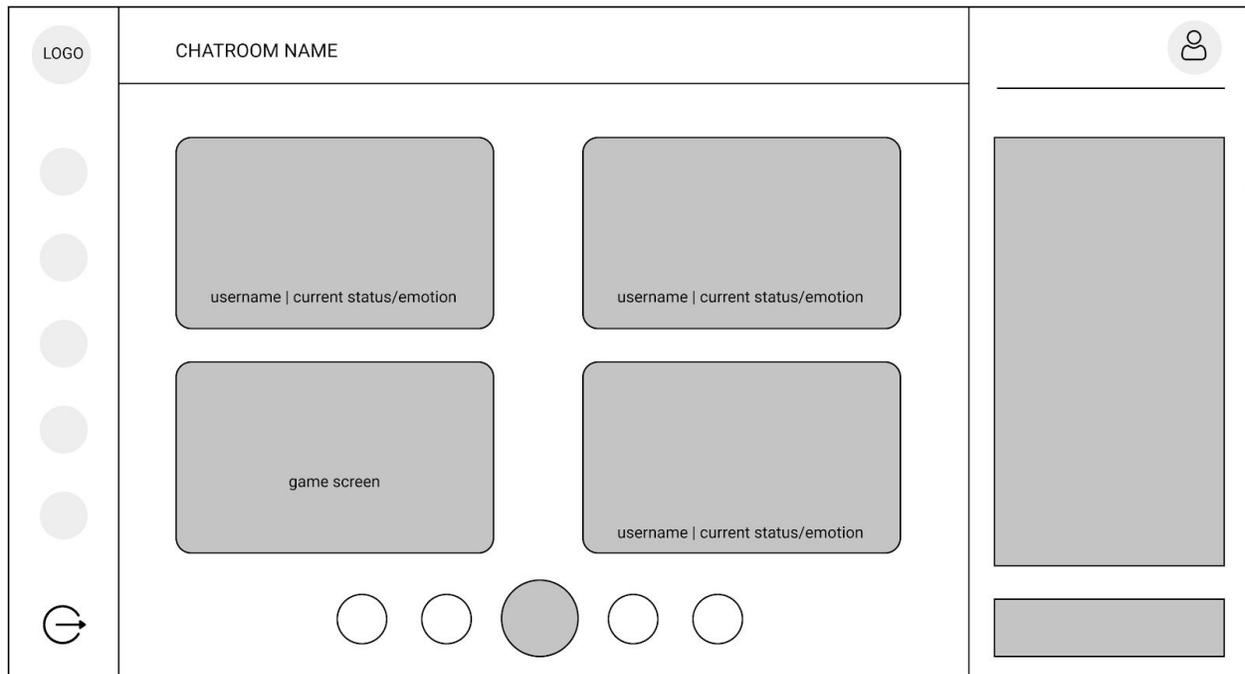
Direct Competitors	Indirect Competitors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical conversation card games like: We're Not Really Strangers, School of Life, Table Topics • Question apps: Party Qs, Gather, Long Walks, Kahoot • Other lifestyle, multiplayer online games: Backyard, Playing Cards, Jackbox, House Party, All Bad Cards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social multiplayer games • Online watch party platforms (Teleparty, etc.) • Existing video platforms: Discord, Zoom, etc.

E Competitors

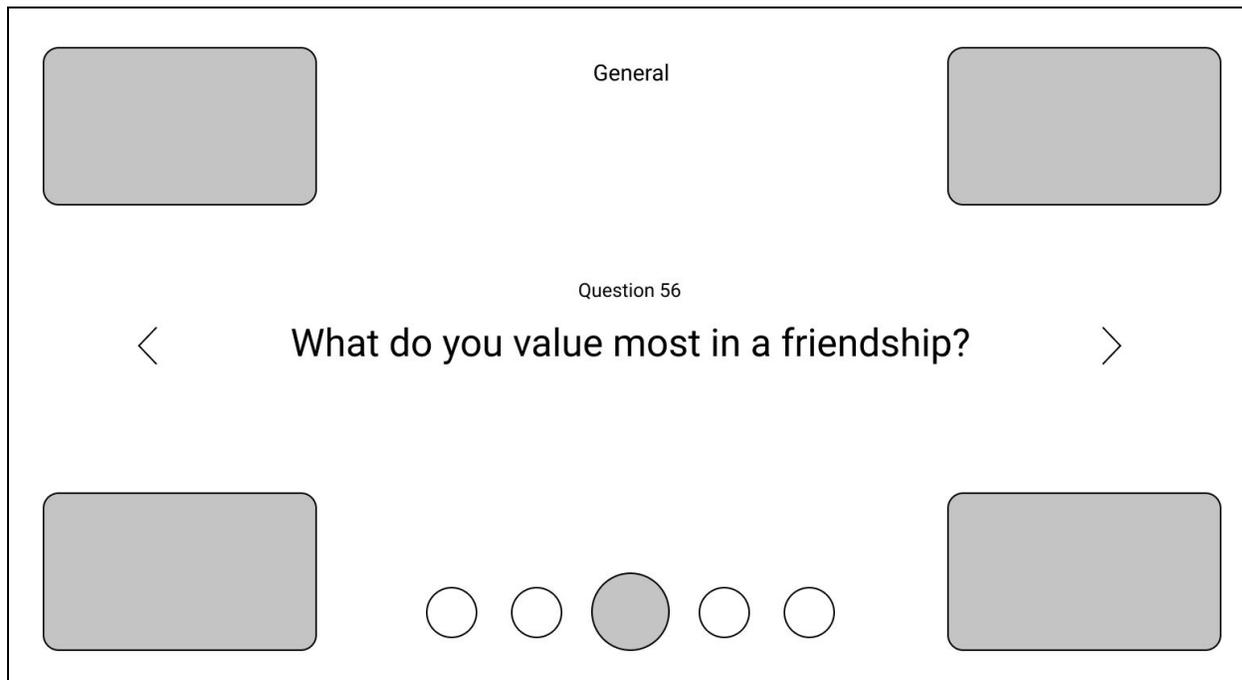


F Visual Design Inspiration Board

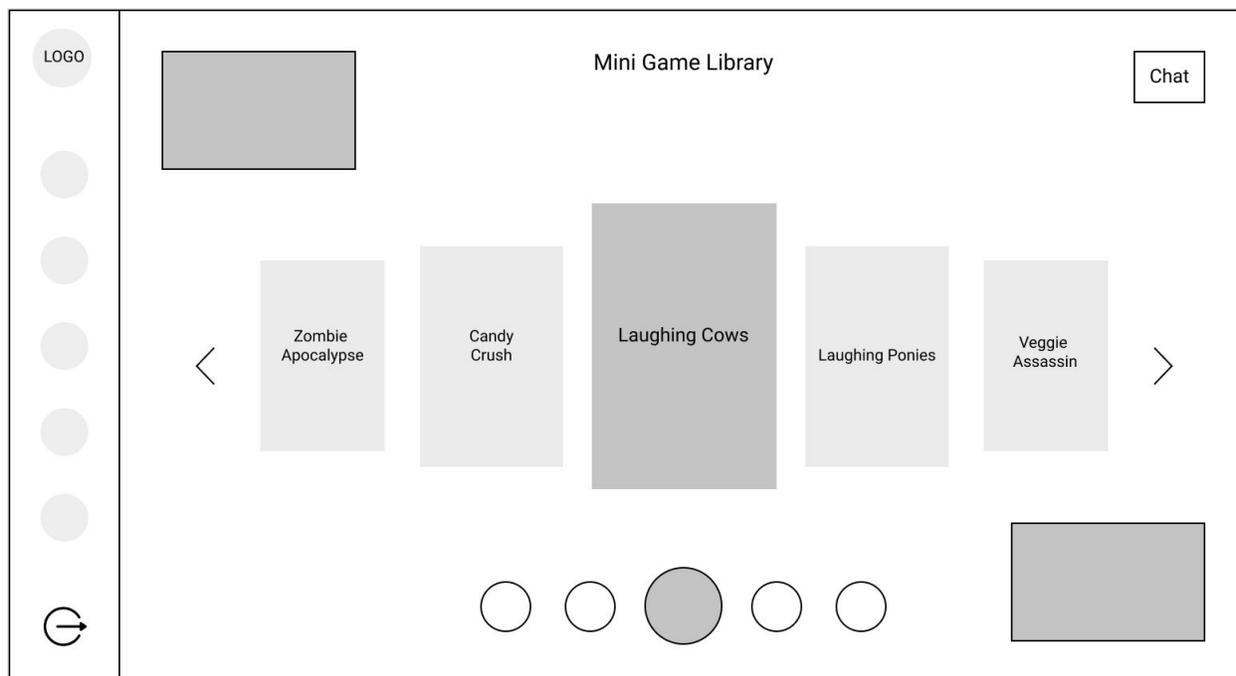
G: Wireframes



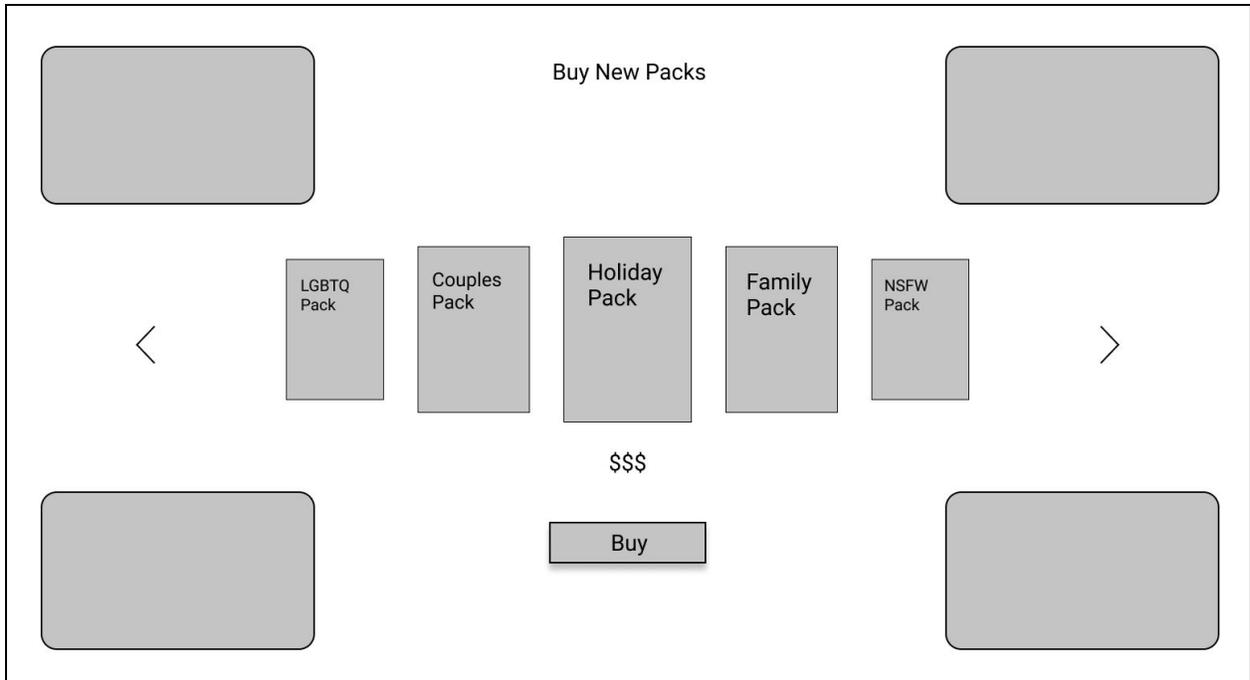
G.1 Wireframe: Main screen for video chatting/messaging



G.2 Wireframe: Full-screen question game



G.3 Wireframe: Mini Game Library



G.4 Wireframe: Question Packs