

FOOD TRUCKS

CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH PACKET

SPRING 2019

JULIE CHOI, KAREN BOWMAN, MICHAEL BECKER, SELENA ZHEN

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INTERVIEW/OBSERVATION PLAN

INTERVIEW/OBSERVATION PLAN

Trucks:

- Food cars outside tepper/ hunt - 4 interviews (customers)
- Joe's hot dog stand - 1 interview (customer) + 1 interview (owner)
- ~~Tartan express~~ - ~~1 interview + 1 interview (owner)~~
- 3 Trucks by the Soccer Fields - 2 interview (customer) + 1 interview (owner)

Types of Observations:

- 'Fly on the Wall'- Observe from far away
- 'Walk a Mile Inversion'- Pretend to get lunch & be a customer

Interview Process Plan:

- Take a Photo (ask permission)
- Opening:
 - Give an unassuming introduction
 - "We are working on a design project"
- Questions:
 - Customers:
 - "Why do you go to the food trucks"
 - "How do you pay"
 - "What menu items do you typically get?"
 - "Do you use any tools to order/find your food?"
 - If so, can you show us?
 - "What prevents you/dissuades you from buying food at the food trucks, if ever?"
 - "If there was one thing that you would change about your food truck experience, what would it be & why?" - OPTIONAL
 - "What is your relationship with the food truck owners?" - OPTIONAL
 - Workers (employees)
 - "How do you interact with weather - how do you decide whether to close or not? What impact does it have on your business?"
 - "Why a food truck instead of a store or a restaurant?" (pros and cons)
 - "What started delivering food out food the back of your car" - for car food deliveries
 - "How many meals do you sell?"
 - "How do you advertise yourself?"
 - "How do people pay for the food? How did you decide that?"
- Closing
 - Demographics
 - Frequency of visits
 - Age - approx (school year)

INTERVIEW/OBSERVATION DOCUMENTATION

FOOD CARS INTERVIEW #1

General Information:

- graduate student
- no meal plan
- Location: found eating food at tables outside of Hunt Library
- Ethnicity: asian

“Why do you go to the food trucks”

- prefer Chinese food, do eat campus food but the selection doesn't change often, food cars are a good change in the week
- usually gets and eats food for dinner, but got lunch this time

“How do you pay?”

- prepaid punchcard to pay (10 meals)

“Do you use any tools to order/find your food?”

- tools: wechat groups, convenient, will send a message when they are here, very fast

“What prevents you/dissuades you from buying food at the food trucks, if ever?”

- constraints for getting food: there's a time window for buying food, sometimes if you have class, you might miss it, then have to eat campus food

“If there was one thing that you would change about your food truck experience, what would it be & why?”

- one thing to change: longer time window, typically just a lunch time and a dinner time

FOOD CARS INTERVIEW #2

General Information:

- CS student
- no meal plan
- Location: found just after purchasing food
- Ethnicity: asian

“Why do you go to the food trucks”

- Mainly because of homesickness
- I can practice my Chinese
- food is pretty good

“How do you pay?”

- Venmo

“What menu items do you typically get?”

- Normally just whatever they have, unless there is a choice

“Do you use any tools to order/find your food?”

- Have friends who use WeChat, or know the general area where they will be

“If there was one thing that you would change about your food truck experience, what would it be & why?”

- Wish it was a bit closer to Gates
- use a credit/debit card instead of Venmo

FOOD CARS INTERVIEW #3

General Information:

- 2 students
- Students working and eating
- Location: found eating food in the basement of Hunt Library (often see students eating there during lunch time)
- Ethnicity: asian

“Why do you go to the food trucks”

- Chinese food

“How do you pay?”

- Venmo or cash typically

“Do you use any tools to order/find your food?”

- Use wechat groups, each restaurant has its own chat and announces their current location. The cars change location every 15 minutes because they cannot park for more than 15 minutes
- We normally just stay in one location and wait for them to change to that area instead of seeking out the cars' locations

“If there was one thing that you would change about your food truck experience, what would it be & why?”

- Change their parking allowances, since they cannot park for more than 15 min

FOOD CARS INTERVIEW #4

General Information:

- Architecture student
- Student who goes to the food cars every few weeks
- Asian

“Why do you go to the food trucks”

- Its good food
- Can't really get chinese food on campus
- Close to margaret morrison building (somewhat)

“How do you pay?”

- cash

“Do you use any tools to order/find your food?”

- No
- I just ask them to show me the food, then i order/buy

“What menu items do you typically get?”

- Whatever car is closest
- Whatever looks good

“If there was one thing that you would change about your food truck experience, what would it be & why?”

- Make it even close to Margaret Morrison

FOOD CARS INTERVIEW #5 - 'Walk a Mile Immersion'

Purchased food as a customer to go through the customer experience

Observations:

- Car owners call out when you walk near
- Car owners always offer to show you the food before you purchase
- Cash or Venmo payment options
- Options to choose meals and drinks
- Some cars have a small sign representing the restaurant
- Bi-lingual owners (speak english and chinese)

HOT DOG STAND INTERVIEW

Joe's Hot dog Stand - Worker (Thomas Lappas - Sophomore business major)

"How do you interact with weather - how do you decide whether to close or not? What impact does it have on your business?"

There is no exact schedule for it.

But usually closes when

- Heavy rain
- Under 10°
- Extreme Snow

"Why a food truck instead of a store or a restaurant?" (pros and cons)

- Different from campus meal
 - But cant use dinex
 - Better food, cheap
 - Good deals

"What started delivering food out food the back of your car" - for car food deliveries

- He's been there for 18 years

"How many meals do you sell?"

- Average 150
- Bad 100- 120

"How do you advertise yourself?"

- Asher Blackburn (junior design student / another one of his workers) runs social media for joes
 - Instagram
 - https://www.instagram.com/joesdoghouse_cmu/
 - Facebook

"When did you start working? How did you find the job?"

- Worked since Freshmen fall
- Worked for 3 semesters

"Any price changes over time?"

- Consistent price
- Change → better burger
- Occasional special
- Through one of his Sigma Chi (fraternity) brothers
- Most workers are from Sigma Chi and the rugby team

“What is one special thing about this food stand?”

- Joe is very personable with his customers
- He remembers students' and faculties' first names
- He memorizes the orders very well
- He reaches out to customers first
- Therefore he has a strong bond with his customers
 - Some of his customers have been going to him for several years

FOOD TRUCK INTERVIEW #1

Food Trucks on Margaret Morrison Street

General Information

- Major: Masters in Information Systems Management
- From: India
- Customer 1 - Madhukar Mohda

“Why do you order from the food truck over campus food?”

- Much easier than CMU dining options, a greater quantity, more filling, and at a better price.

“How do you usually pay?”

- Through Venmo, or cash sometimes.

“What menu item do you usually get?”

- Falafel sandwich, vegetarian.

“Are you a regular customer?”

- Yes, I come once or twice a week.

“Did you use any tools to find this food truck?”

- I just come in person

“What prevents you from buying more, what would you change about your experience?”

- It's too far, spend most of time in Gates.

“Do you have a relationship with the owner?”

- No, regular customer relationship

“How does the weather affect you visiting this location?”

- When it's raining I avoid coming here because it is too far, I usually get the food and go inside, so it's not that huge of a factor.

FOOD TRUCK INTERVIEW #2

General Information

- Customer 2 - Kruti
- Ethnicity: Indian
- Major: Computer Science

“Why do you order from the food truck over campus food?”

- I don't come here that often, maybe once a month at most, just for some variety.

“What menu item do you usually get?”

- Now getting the vegetarian platter for the first time.

“What's one thing you would change about your experience here?”

- If there was a way for the customers to stay warm, question of whether it's safe is concerning.

“Do you have a campus meal plan?”

- No, not currently, but I will be getting one.

“How often do you come here?”

- Not that often, maybe once or twice a month, because I want a variety of food.

FOOD TRUCK INTERVIEW #3

General Information

- Customer 3- Roshan Nair
- Ethnicity: Indian
- Major: ECE

“Do you have a school meal plan?”

- No.

“Why do you come to food trucks?”

- Lives off campus, much more convenient to stay on campus and buy food from the food truck due to having to pick something up on campus. Cheaper than campus food.

“How do you pay?”

- Cash, and they also take Venmo.

“What menu item did you get today?”

- A large curry platter, rice, and Naan.

“Is this your first time ordering this menu item?”

- No, but I still don't eat it that often.

“What prevents you from buying food from food trucks?”

- It's too far, only really convenient when classes are happening or I'm on campus.

“What could you change about your experience at the food truck?”

- The location could be better, if they parked closer to the tartan express truck it would be better.

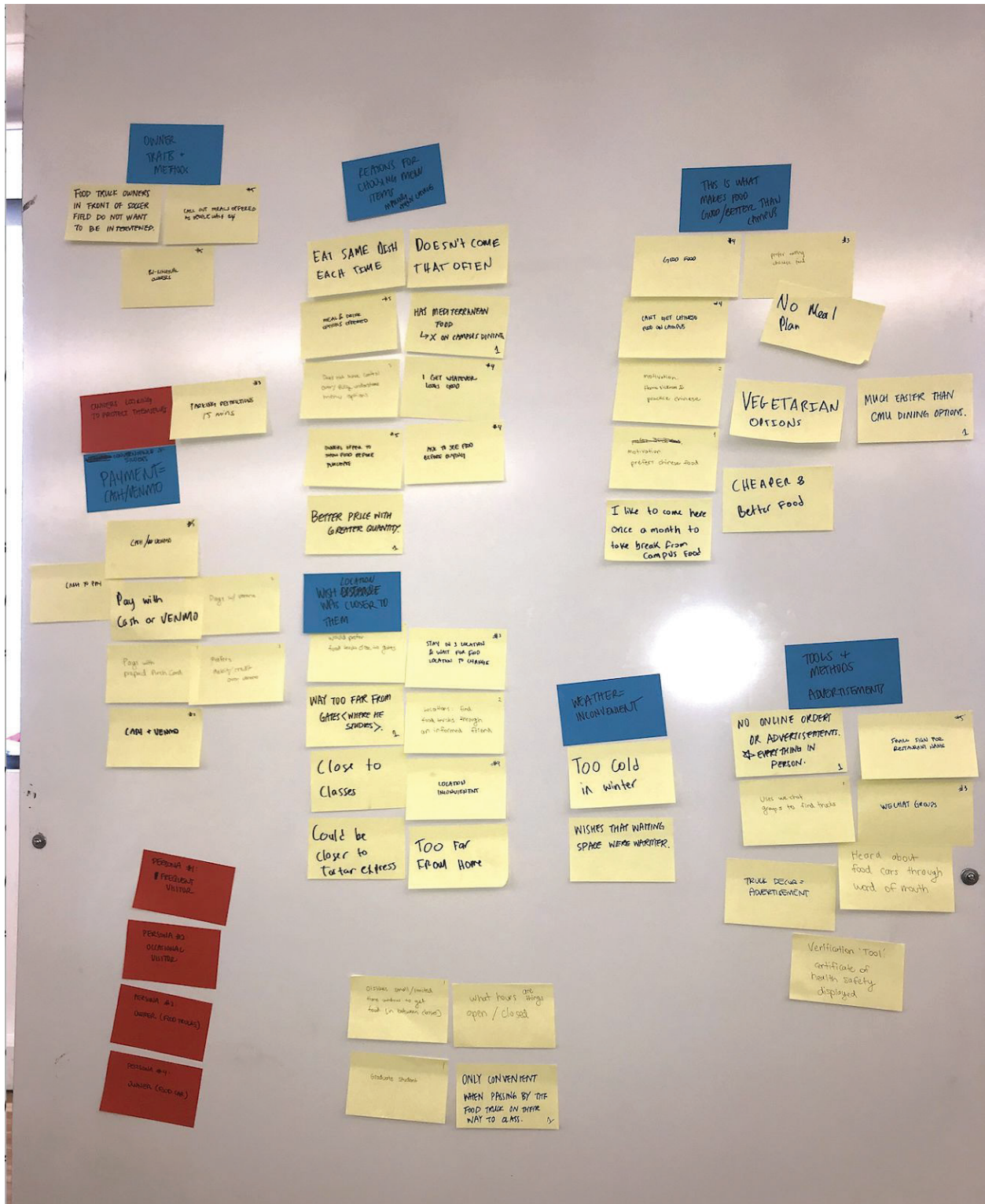
MINI INTERVIEW - We Chat

With Classmate

- Can scan to connect with a contact with QR Code
- Add people via phone number or email
- Regular Group Chat
- Image sharing (Stories) capabilities
- SPECULATION: if you know a friend, they will add you?

RESEARCH FINDINGS SUMMARY

IN CLASS INSIGHTS



RESEARCH FINDINGS SUMMARY

We developed several insights from our research findings. One of our insights was that people like to pay with venmo and cash because it is quick, easy, and convenient for the owners. Another insight is that people visit these food trucks less often when there is inclement weather because it is less convenient for them, particularly because they often are traveling a good distance to get to them (from Gates or Hamburg Hall). In general, people would prefer that the food trucks would be closer to Gates/the University Center because they would have to walk less to access them from where they spend most of their time. We also gathered that people choose to eat at these food trucks over campus dining options because they are cheaper most of the time and offer higher quality options than what is available on campus. People particularly appreciate the cultural authenticity of the food and the large portions that these food trucks offer.

We think that the tools and methods used to find these food trucks could be improved since the food trucks don't constantly update and post their menus online and the food cars use We-Chat, which you can only be added to through personal interaction with someone who is already in it. The personal marketing and advertising for each company could be improved, so they can receive more business throughout the week. We also think that the food trucks could be closer to Gates/Oakland since that's where the majority of their customers appear to be based. The food trucks could provide more shelter against the elements, however this would be difficult to implement as designers.

PERSONAS

Persona 1: Rahul Madan

Frequent food truck customer, upperclassman student at Carnegie Mellon University



"I want quick and convenient meal options to suit my busy lifestyle"

Rahul Madan hasn't had a campus meal plan since freshman year and doesn't plan on getting one anytime soon due to his discovery of better alternatives. Rahul spends most of his time in the Gates center because he is majoring in Electrical and Computer Engineering but doesn't mind having to walk across campus for a quick bite, especially due to the lack of good campus dining options. He regularly visits the food trucks on Margaret Morrison Street due to their relatively close proximity and appreciates the low prices, large portions, and ease of doing business. He usually pays with Venmo, but if he has cash on him, he is able to easily use it also. Rahul usually gets the same dish, but isn't afraid to try new things, he is open to anything that is available on the menu.

Persona 2: Matthew Moore

Occasional food truck customer, upperclassman student at Carnegie Mellon University



"I eat to live. I eat to maintain energy for my classes."

Matthew Moore is design major at Carnegie Mellon University. As it is his fourth year attending the school, he lives about fifteen minutes away from campus. He normally cooks breakfast and dinner at home but chooses to eat lunch on campus because of his classes. Since he normally works in his studio with his peers, they often grab lunch together from the same place. He prefers somewhere close, convenient, and good. At times, he enjoys exploring different types of food with his peers who occasionally suggest various menus on different days.

Michelle's daily challenge is to find affordable and convenient food for lunch since he believes that campus meal is extremely overpriced for the quality that it comes in.

Persona 3: Jake Dwight

Owner, Food Truck



"Don't fix what isn't broken!"

Jake Dwight is the owner of a Food Truck that has been on the same corner for 15 years. He is open rain or shine, and only moves or closes in extreme rain. Temperature does not phase him – he is out selling at 9 am, every day almost without fail. He has a loyal following of customers that can always expect him on the same corner.

He isn't affiliated or affected at all by CMU dining changes or regulations; instead, he worries only about following PA State Health Codes. His current system works for him, but he is willing to always try new menu options or change accepted payment styles to gain and keep new customers.

Jake's main hurdles are staying appropriately supplied despite fluctuations in business. He hopes for stable sales, and wouldn't mind higher numbers as well.

Persona 4: Kevin Yin

Food Car Service, Co-owner of Garden Tea



Kevin Yin is the co-owner of Garden Tea in Pittsburgh. He is 56 years old, originally from China, and manages the two Garden Tea locations with his brother and family. They've owned and operated these two branches of Garden Tea for almost 10 years, which often serves students from Pitt or Carnegie Mellon.

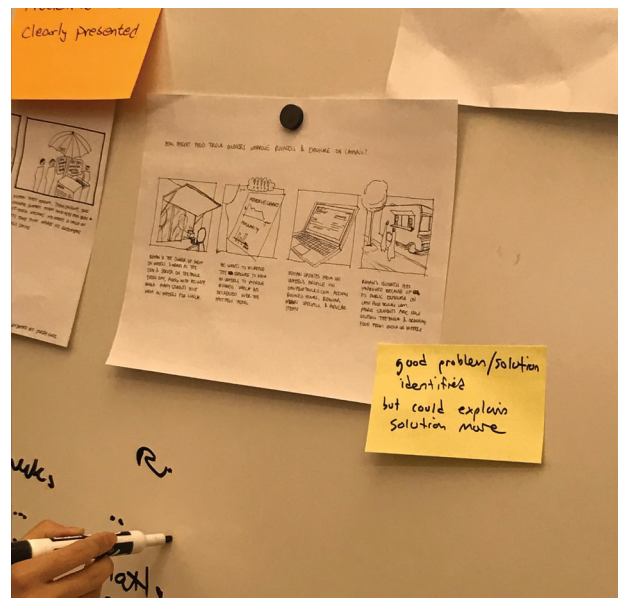
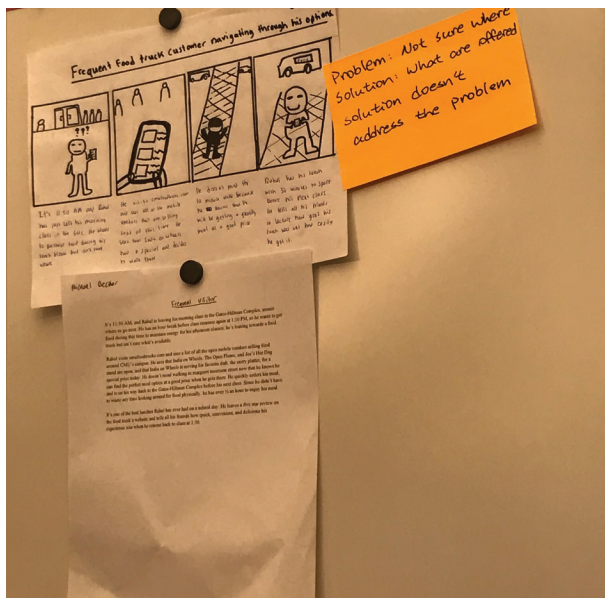
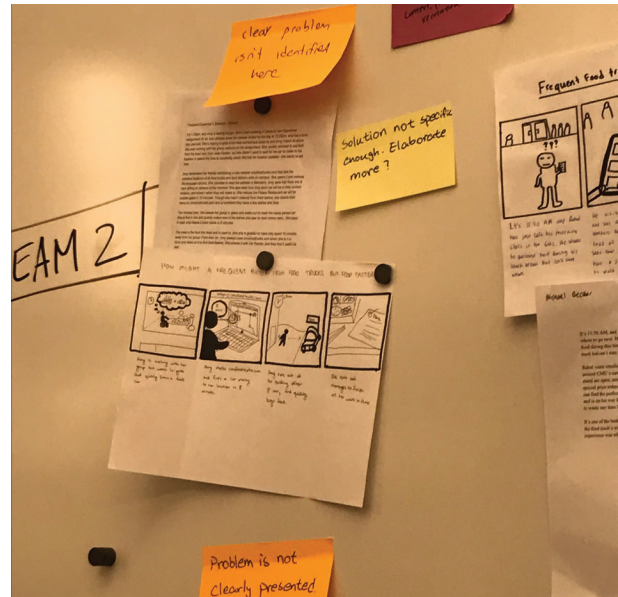
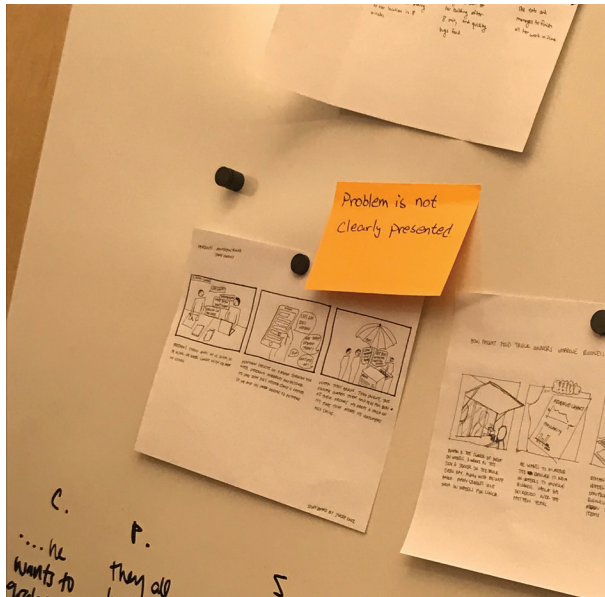
He mainly works on the food delivery service that Garden Tea provides to the Carnegie Mellon University campus for lunch and dinner on weekdays. Kevin drives the car to campus every day and is the main spokesperson and manager of the food service. He only takes cash or Venmo because of high credit card service fees.

Kevin's main challenge is finding parking in and around campus for the food service, as well as maintaining their marketing and advertising each day. Many students depend on the food service for lunch and dinner every day. He wishes he had an easy way to advertise the food options and current location of the Garden Tea campus food service. A better way to advertise the current day's food option would give him an idea of what dishes are the most popular and would improve his delivery efficiency.

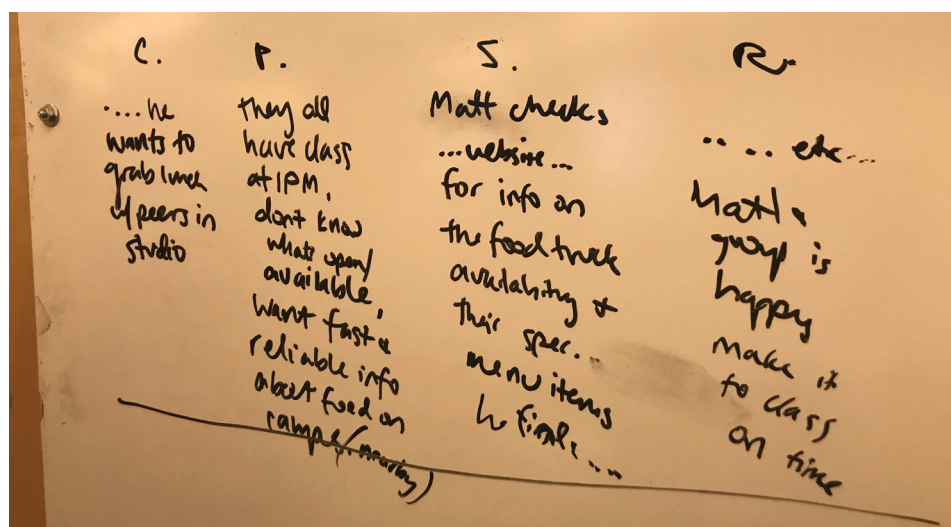
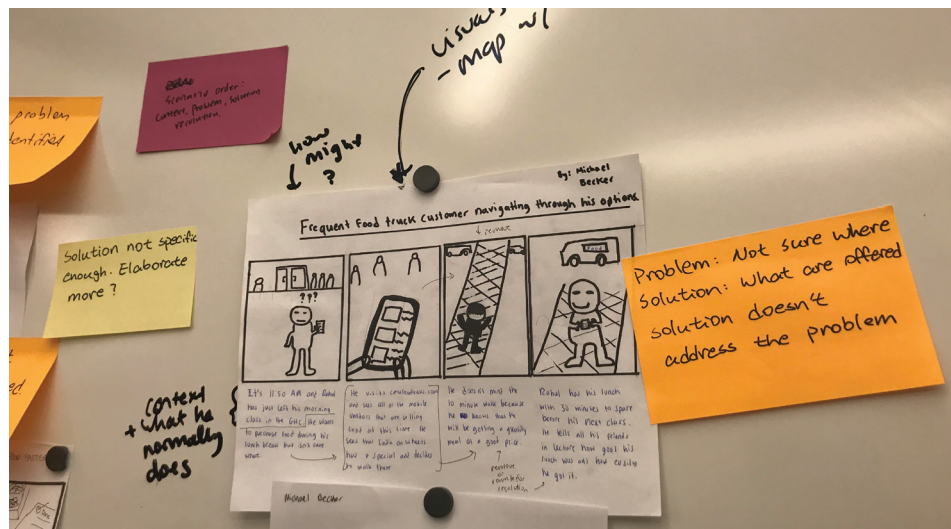
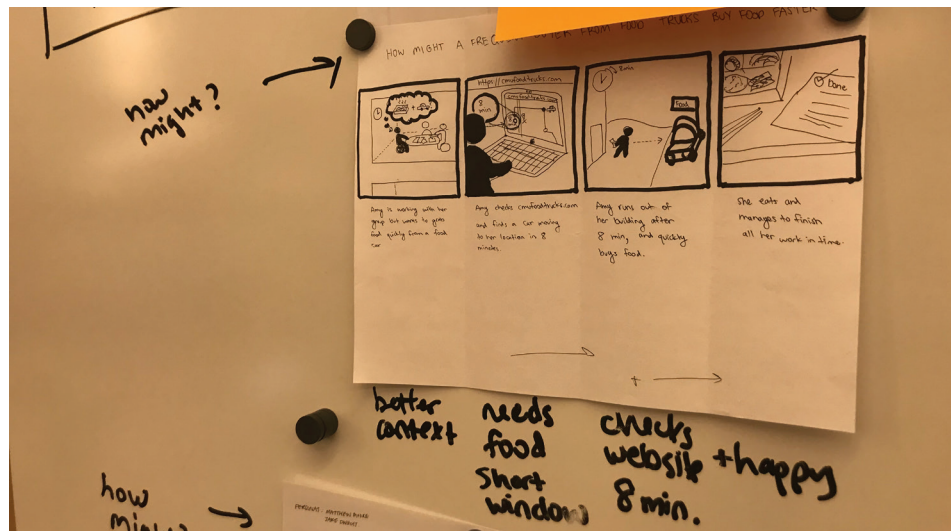
Kevin's long-term goal is to improve the popularity of the food service and grow the business over the next few years to encourage more lunch/dinner purchases from CMU students. If this is successful, he is considering expanding to other universities in the area, and adding more payment options to the service.

SCENARIOS + STORYBOARDS

SCENARIOS + STORYBOARDS CLASS CRITIQUES



POST-CRITIQUE: GROUP DISCUSSION AND EDITS



FOOD CAR - FREQUENT CUSTOMER SCENARIO

Karen Bowman

It's 1:30pm, and Amy is feeling hungry. She's been working in Gates on her Algorithms assignment for an hour already since her classes ended for the day at 12:30pm, and has a busy day planned. She's hoping to grab a full meal somewhere close by and bring it back to where she was working with her group partners on her assignment. She usually chooses to eat food from the food cars from Jade Garden, but she doesn't want to wait for the car to rotate to her location or spend the time to constantly check WeChat for location updates - she wants to eat now.

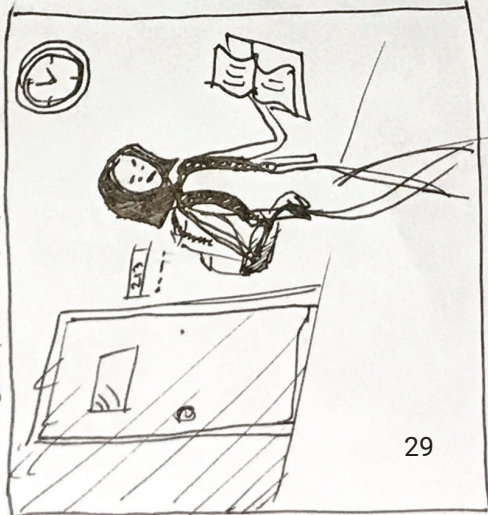
Amy remembers her friends mentioning a new website cmufoodtrucks.com that lists the constant locations of all food trucks and food delivery cars on campus. She opens it and notices the language options. She chooses to read the website in Mandarin. Amy sees that there are 8 cars selling on campus at the moment. She also sees how long each car will be in their current location, and where / when they will rotate to. She notices the Palace Restaurant car will be outside gates in 10 minutes. Though she hasn't ordered from them before, she checks their menu on cmufoodtrucks.com and is confident they have a few dishes she likes.

Ten minutes later, she leaves her group in gates and walks out to meet the newly parked car. She is first in line and quickly orders one of the dishes she saw on their online menu. She pays in cash and makes it back inside in 5 minutes.

The meal is the food she likes and is used to, and she is grateful to have only spent 10 minutes away from her group. From then on, Amy always uses cmufoodtrucks.com when she is in a hurry and relies on it to find food fastest. She shares it with her friends, and they find it useful as well.

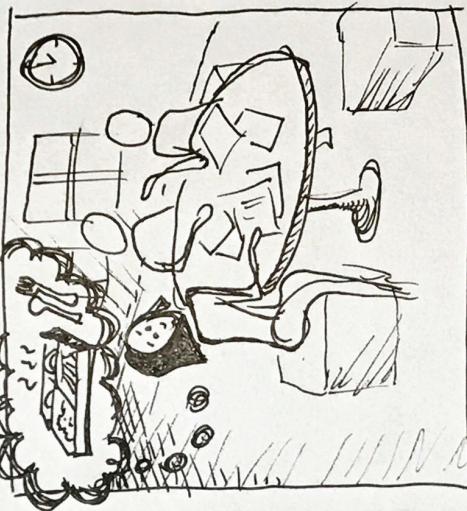
HOW MIGHT A STUDENT PRESSED FOR TIME EAT?

CONTEXT



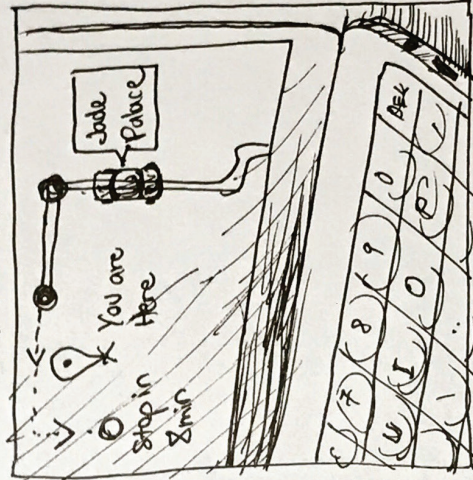
Amy is a very busy upperclassman who has to spend long hours studying this semester because of her workload. She has limited time, but still wants to take good care of herself.

PROBLEM



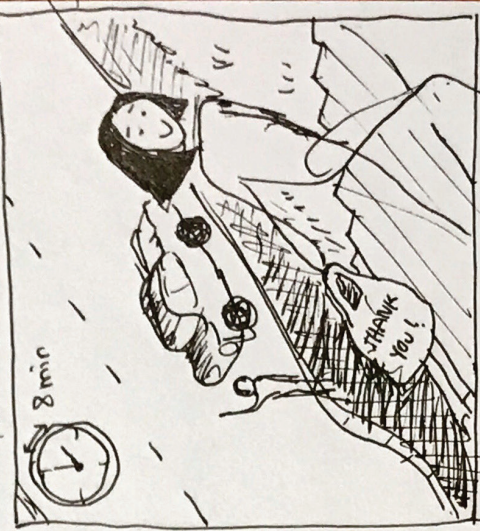
While working on a group homework, she feels hungry. Amy needs to pick up food, but can't leave for more than 10 min, from Room 201 in Gates-Hillman.

SOLUTION



Amy opens www.foodtrucks.com and finds she can pick a nearby food car and see if/when they will be outside Gates. She chooses the Jade Palace Car, and is able to leave exactly as the car parks outside.

RESOLUTION



Amy buys food and makes it back inside in 8 min - a personal record! She finishes her homework and feels satisfied she was able to feed herself well despite her work.

FOOD TRUCK - FREQUENT VISITOR SCENARIO

Michael Becker

It's 11:50 AM, and Rahul is leaving his morning class in the Gates-Hillman Complex, unsure where to go next. He has an hour break before class resumes again at 1:30 PM, so he wants to get food during this time to maintain energy for his afternoon classes. he's leaning towards a food truck but isn't sure what's available in terms of his options..

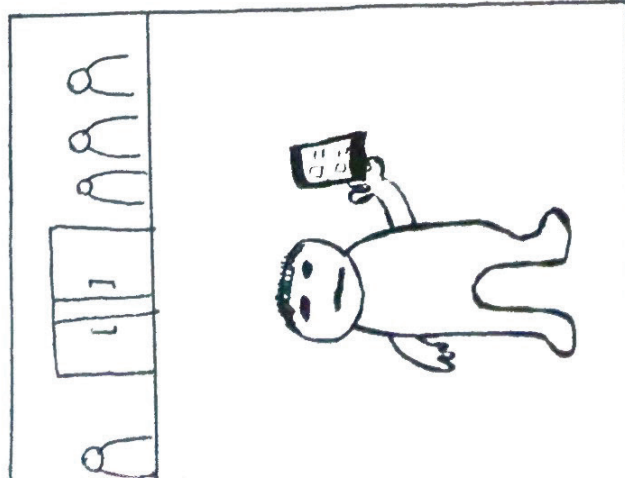
Rahul visits cmufoodtrucks.com and sees all the open mobile vendors selling food around CMU's campus. He sees that India on Wheels, The Open Flame, and Joe's Hot Dog stand are open, and that India on Wheels is serving his favorite dish, the curry platter, for a special price today. He doesn't mind having to walk to margaret morrison street now that he knows he can will the perfect meal option at a good price when he gets there. He quickly orders his meal, and is on his way back to the Gates-Hillman Complex before his next class. Since he didn't have to waste any time looking around for food physically, he has over ½ an hour to enjoy his meal.

It's one of the best lunches Rahul has ever had on a school day. He leaves a five star review on the food truck's website and tells all his friends how quick, convenient, and delicious his experience was when he returns back to class at 1:30.

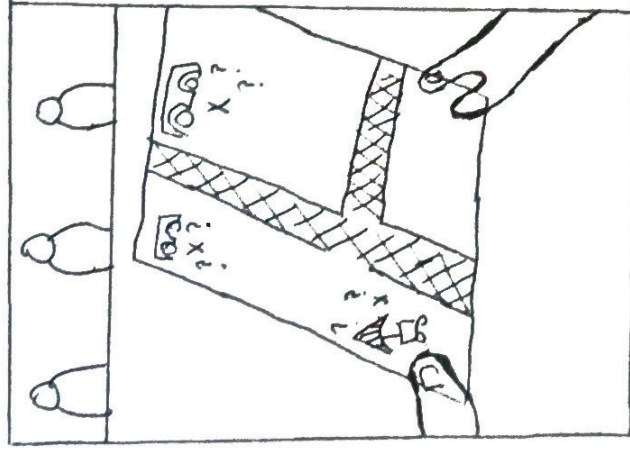
How might a frequent food truck customer navigate through his options with limited time?

By: Michael
Becker

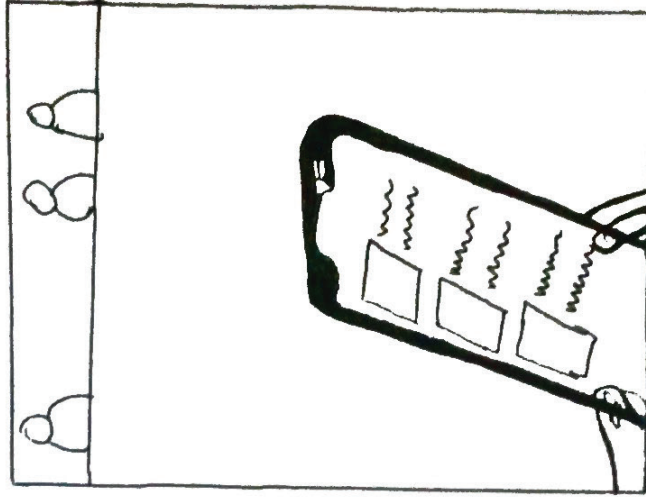
Michael Becker



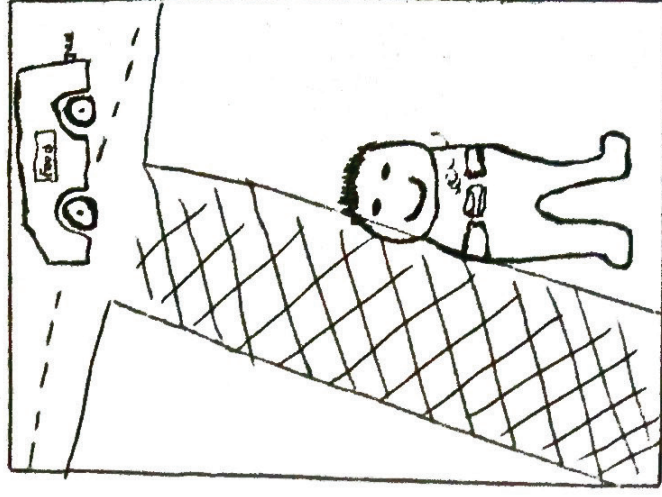
It's 11:50 AM and Rahul has just left his morning class in the Gates-Hillman Complex



He wants to purchase food during his lunch break but isn't sure what options are available



He visits omatoodtrucks.com on his mobile phone and sees all the vendors that are open and serving food at this time. He notices that Indian on wheels is having a special for his favorite dish and decides to go there



Rahul has his lunch with 30 minutes to spare before his next class and leaves a five-star review for Indian on wheels

HOT DOG STAND – INFREQUENT VISITOR SCENARIO

Julie Choi

Matthew had just ended his long morning studio class at 12:20 PM. Since his design peers have are in the same studio class, he usually eats lunch with his table mates.

One of his peers remind the group that they all have their next class at 1:00 PM which means that they only have 40 minutes to get food and eat. As upperclassmen, they do not prefer campus meals because they think it is overpriced compared to the quality of the food. For the time being, they want food that is close to their studio which is located in Margaret Morrison building. They are also worried about the availability of menus because off campus food is popular amongst both students and faculties.

Matthew pulls his phone out to find a solution to this confusion and uncertainty. He sees that Joe's Hotdog stand still has their favorite menus and is only a minute walk from their building. His peers and he decided that if they choose to get lunch at Joe's Hotdog stand, they will easily make it to their next class.

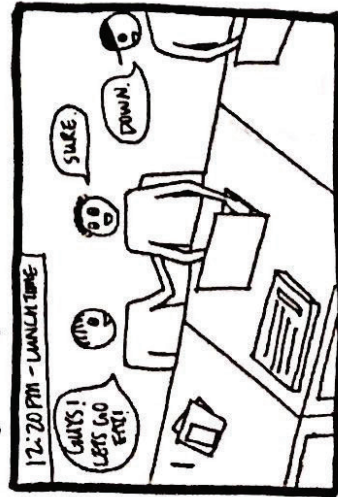
When they arrive at the stand, Jake Dwight, the owner of the hotdog stand, greets them with a big smile with friendly greeting such as "Hey, boys! Welcome back." Matthew and his peers did not know that Jake knew who they were, but they are satisfied with a happy greeting from Jake. Jake does a great job in memorizing their orders and keeping light conversations with the boys. Matthew and his peers happily make it to their class at 1:00 PM on time.

PERSONAS: MATTHEW MOORE
JAKE DWIGHT

Julie Choi

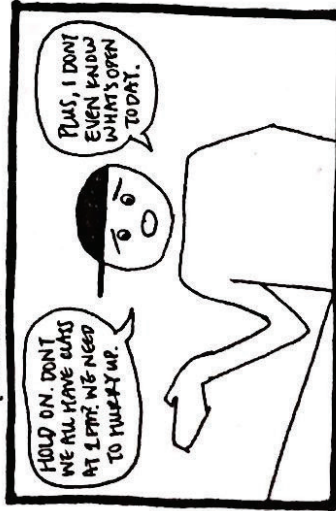
HOW MIGHT OCCASIONAL STUDENT CUSTOMERS CHECK AVAILABILITY OF THE FOOD TRUCKS?

CONTEXT



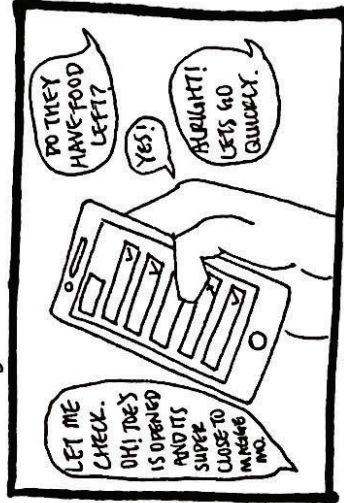
MATTHEW MOORE'S STUDIO ENDS AT 12:20 PM. HE WANTS TO GRAB LUNCH WITH HIS PEERS.

PROBLEM



THEY ALL HAVE CLASS IN 40 MINUTES, AND THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT IS OPEN AND WHAT IS THE CLOSEST FOOD TRUCK FROM MARGARET MORRISON.

SOLUTION



MATTHEW CHECKS THE WEBSITE FOR INFORMATION ON FOOD TRUCK AVAILABILITY AND CONCLUDES TO GO TO JOE'S HOTTDOG STAND WITH HIS PEERS.

RESOLUTION



JAKE DWIGHT, THE OWNER GREETING THEM AND SEEMS TO BE REMEMBERING THEIR FACES. HE KEEPS A SMILE ON HIS FACE THAT MATTHEW HIS CUSTOMERS ALSO SMILE. MATTHEW AND HIS PEERS MAKE IT TO CLASS ON TIME.

STORY BOARD BY JULIE CHOI

FOOD TRUCK OWNER SCENARIO

Selena Zhen

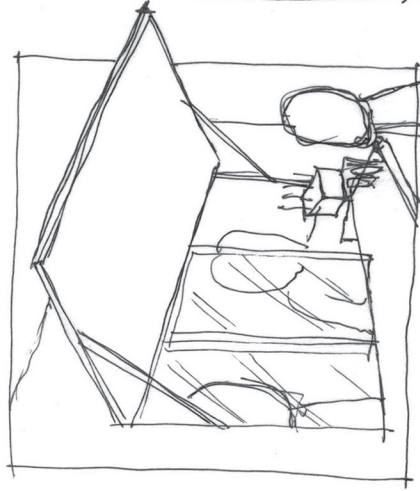
It is 6am. Rohan is the owner of India on Wheels, and works as the cook and server on the truck every day, along with his wife, Anika. India on Wheels serves mainly CMU students and is located on Margaret Morrison Street. Though they are generally happy with the truck, Rohan and Anika notice after winter break that business is dwindling, particularly around the winter months.

Rohan has overheard about *cmufoodtrucks.com* from a regular customer who he recognizes. He asked more about it and now decides to create a profile for India on Wheels. On the website, he enters the description of the service, business hours, standard menu, special menu items, and popular items. He found the process extremely easy.

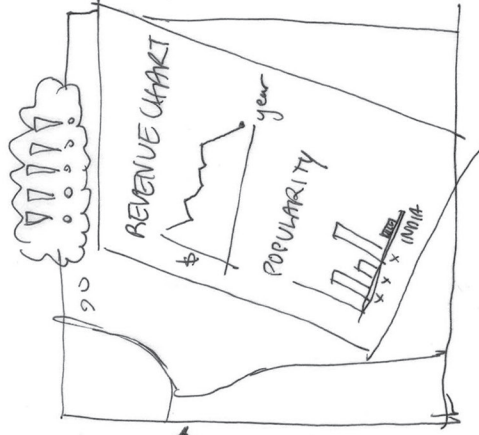
Every day going forward, Rohan spends a few minutes before the truck opens in the morning, to update the menu with the day's specials. With *cmufoodtrucks.com*, if the weather is especially bad, he can easily change the status of the truck to 'closed' or even adjust special meal prices to entice customers to come purchase food.

Hearing about *cmufoodtrucks.com* and starting India on Wheel's profile was the best new step for his business in years. Word continues to spread about India on Wheels and, aided by its high rating on the website, reinvigorates Rohan and Anika's business and passion in cooking.

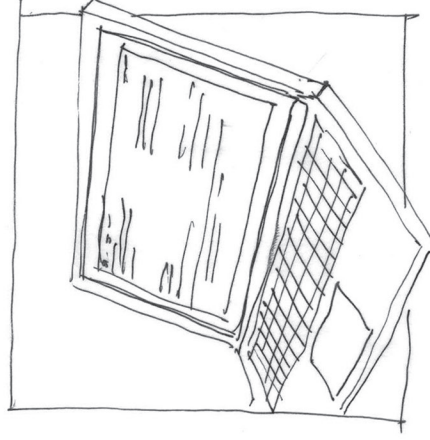
HOW MIGHT FOOD TRUCK OWNERS IMPROVE BUSINESS & EXPOSURE ON CAMPUS?



ROHAN IS THE OWNER OF INDIA ON WHEELS, & WORKS AS THE COOK & SERVER ON THE TRUCK EVERY DAY, ALONG WITH HIS WIFE ANIKA. MANY STUDENTS VISIT INDIA ON WHEELS FOR LUNCH.



HE WANTS TO INCREASE THE ~~INDIA~~ EXPOSURE TO INDIA ON WHEELS TO IMPROVE BUSINESS, WHICH HAS DECREASED OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS.



ROHAN UPDATES INDIA ON WHEELS PROFILE ON UMUFOODTRUCKS.COM, ADDING BUSINESS HOURS, REGULAR MENU, SPECIALS, & POPULAR ITEMS



ROHAN'S BUSINESS HAS IMPROVED BECAUSE OF ~~ITS~~ ITS PUBLIC EXPOSURE ON UMUFOODTRUCKS.COM. MORE STUDENTS ARE NOW VISITING THE TRUCK & ORDERING FOOD FROM INDIA ON WHEELS