Picks

Pick your inspiration

Addison Leong	Joanne Jang	Katherine Liu	SunMi Lee
Development	Team manager	Design	User testing

Introduction

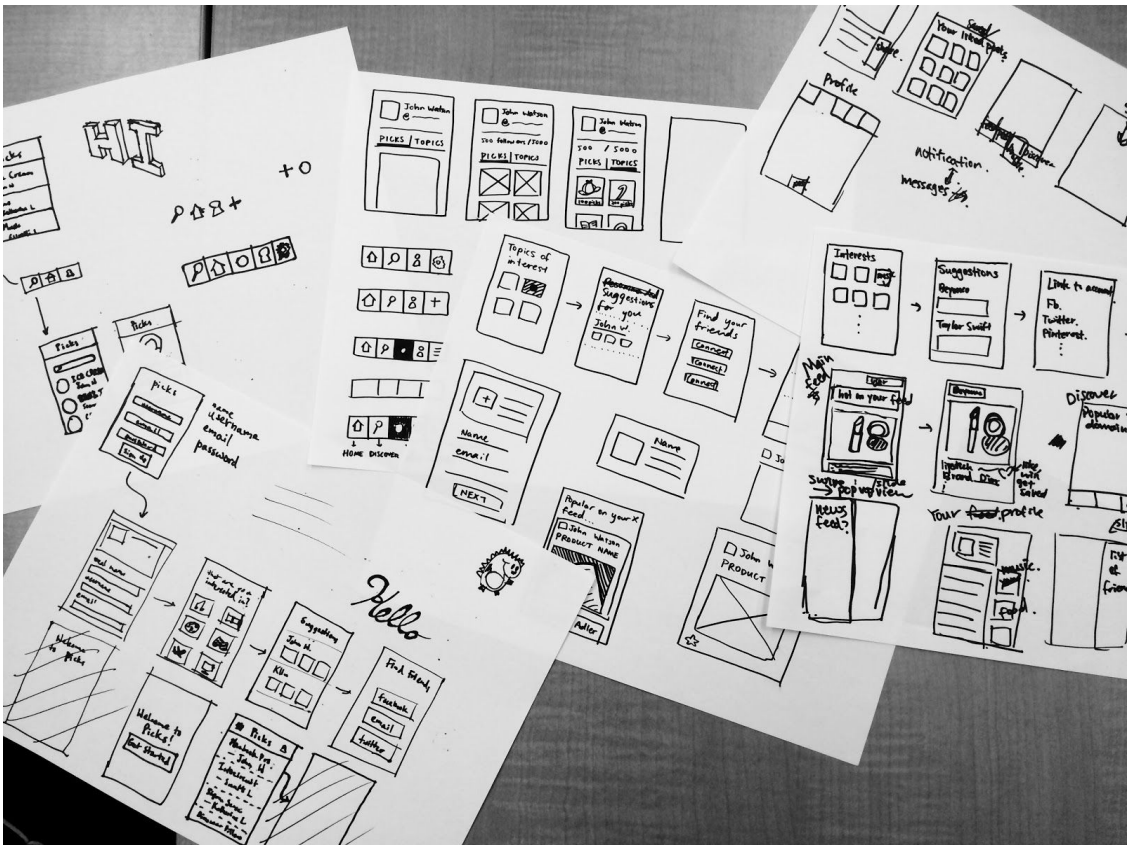
Mission Statement / Problem and Solution Overview

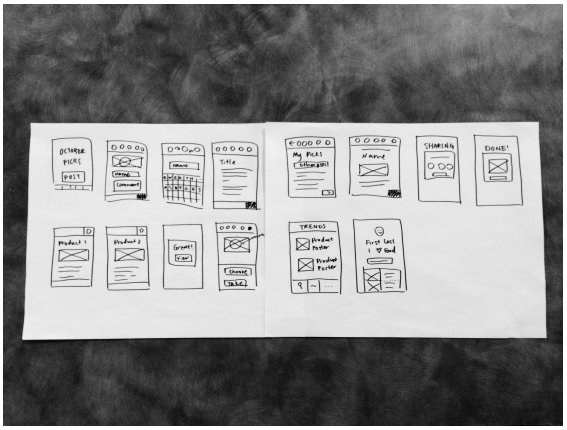
Picks is a mobile-based discovery network guided by person-to-person connections that tells a person's life story through nouns. It provides a simpler, more elegant, and more personal platform that allows people to discover new interests through people-centric product recommendations and be inspired by the lifestyles of influencers and the people they admire. Through Picks, we hope to promote products by emphasizing the people who use them rather than the companies behind them.

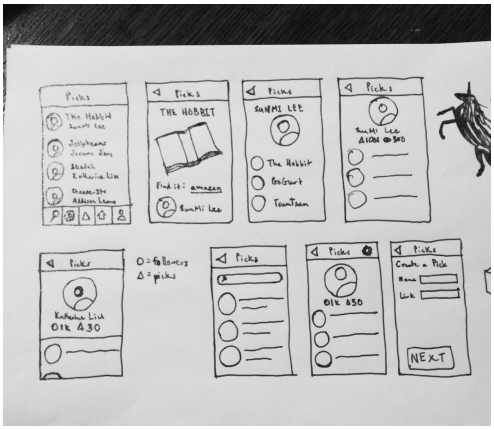
To work toward achieving this goal, we constructed a low-fidelity paper prototype of Picks in order to test with users, learn, and improve the efficacy of our user interface. We invited our four participants to use the app while a group member played the role of computer, helping us gain a better understanding of areas for improvement in the product flow as well as parts of the app that worked well. With the insights and observations we gathered throughout testing, we are now better prepared to make alterations to aspects of Picks that were not as effective and further build on parts that elicited positive feedback.

Initial Sketches

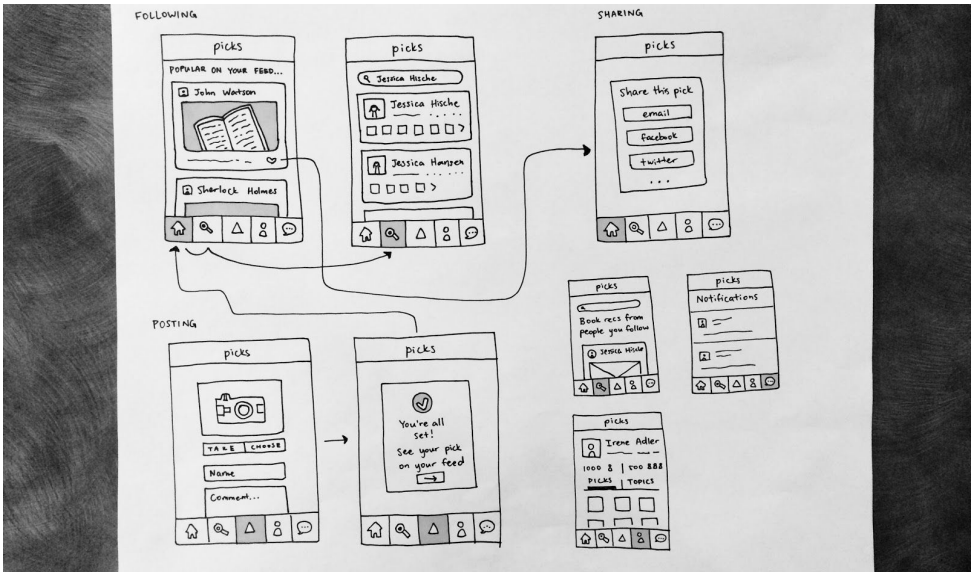
Overview images of our initial sketches and 3 separate ideas:



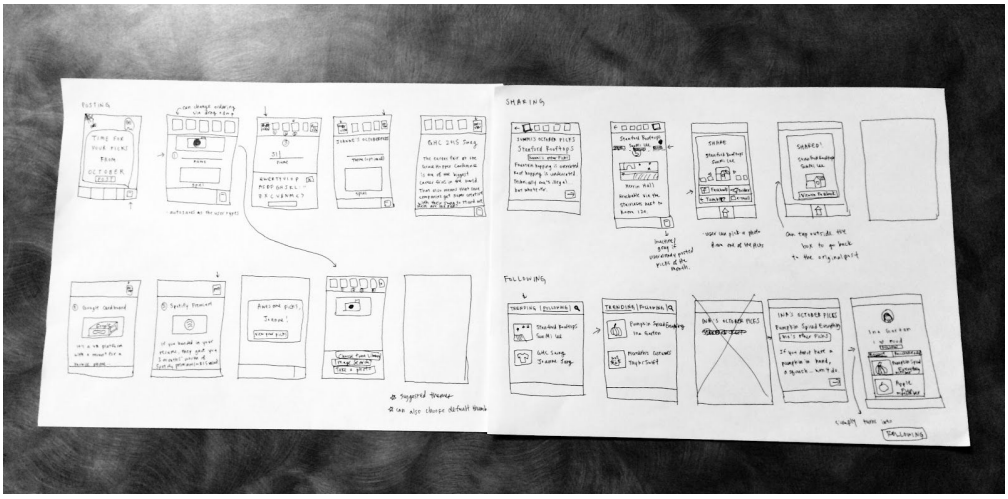




Our top two sketches as UI storyboards:



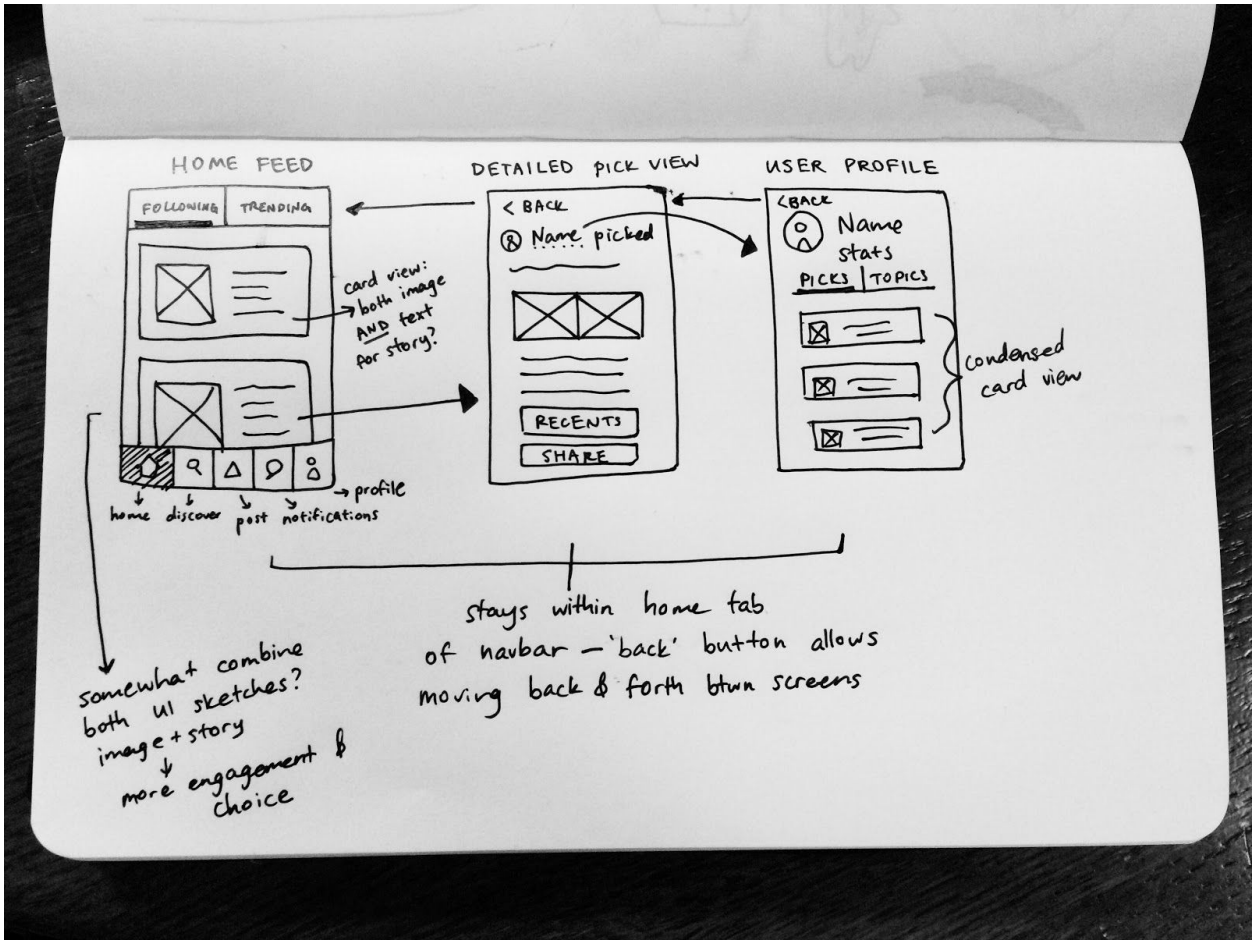
1: This idea was more centered around the actual “picks,” or products – it featured large image views of the picks right under the posters’ names. We were aiming to create an extremely easy way for browsing users to easily see and share the products they used through images.

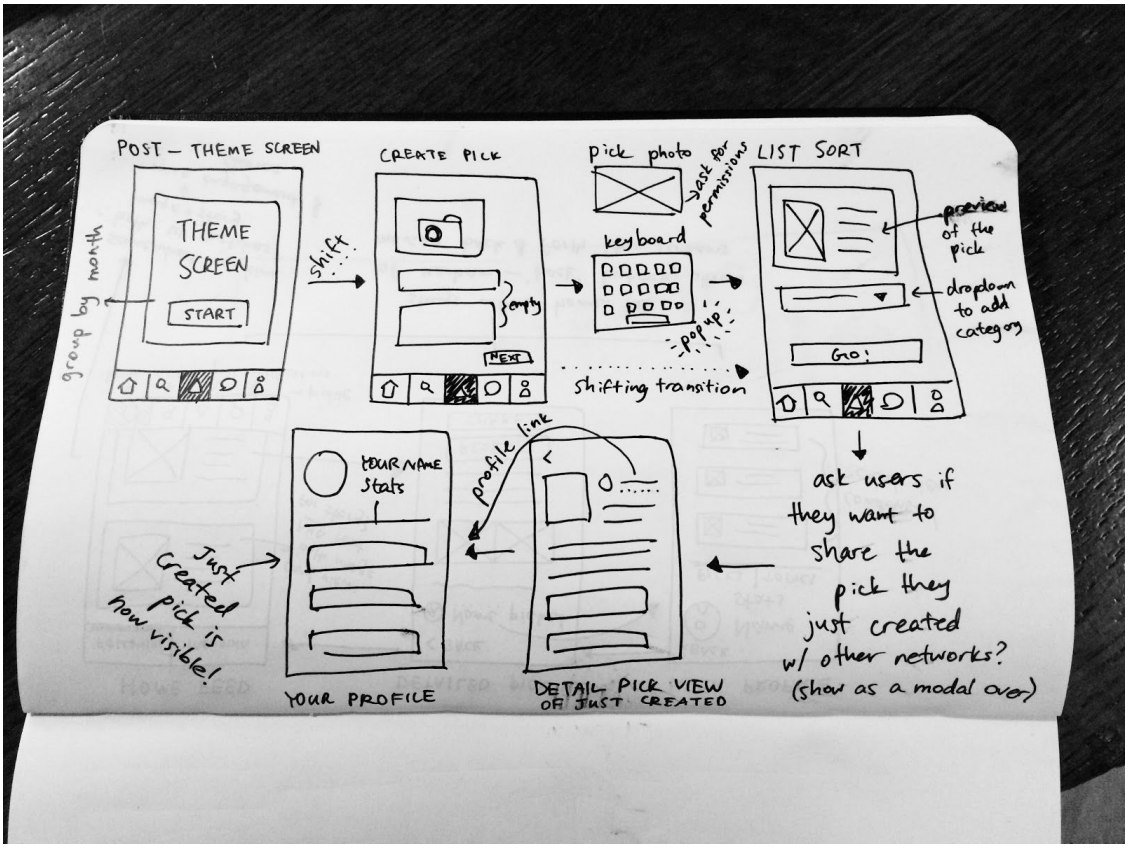


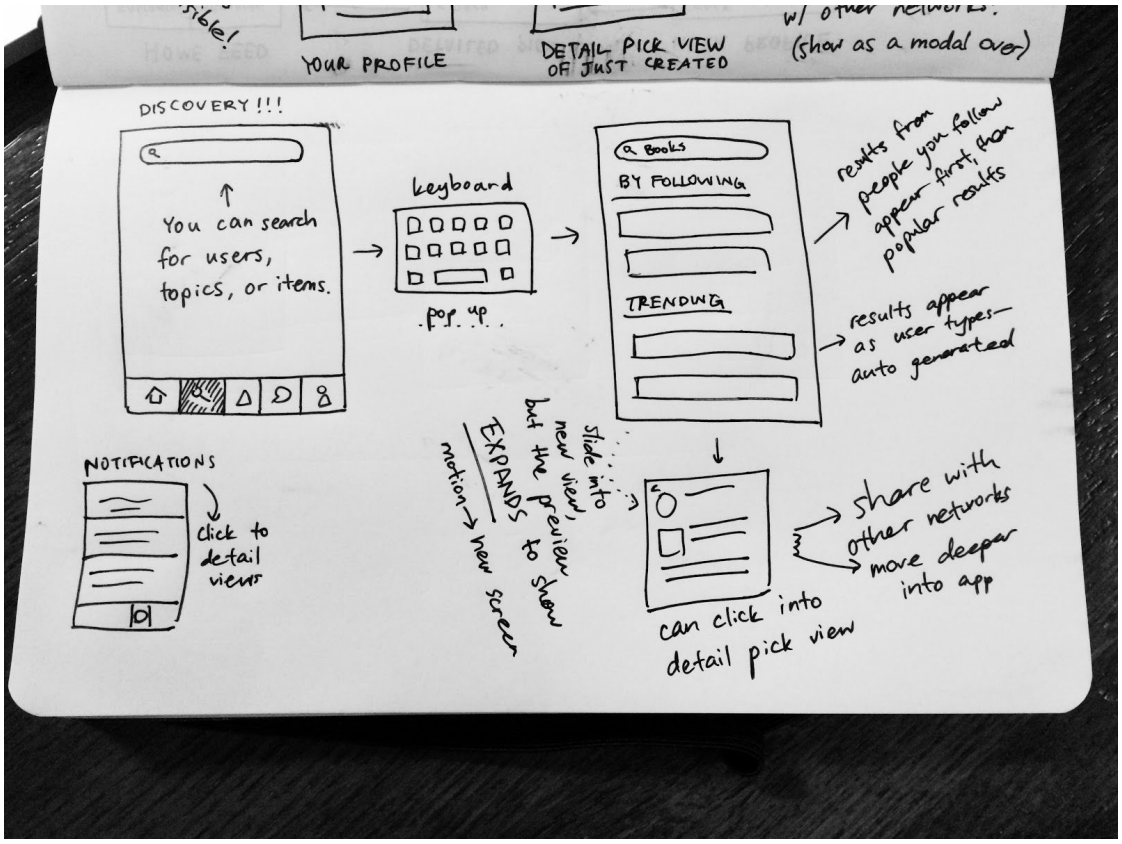
2: The second idea we chose was story-based, so that users could create stories and share experiences around their picks. Rather than focusing on large images, we allowed for an approach involving more text, hopefully encouraging more trust around products while helping users express their own lifestyles in a different way. Also, this groups each post into a month (shown as the five squares on the top menu bar), allowing for posting multiple elements at once

Selected Interface Design

We settled upon the first design because it presented the most unique approach to the problem. Not only did it have a navigable interface, but it also appeared to emphasize the goal of connecting people rather than products more than the other designs did. Furthermore, the design was just clean enough to encourage intuitive use, but complex enough to demonstrate multiple tiers of functionality (ie. notifications, comments, and sharing). Although we focused on the flow from our first UI sketch idea, we ended up incorporating elements from our second idea as well to help accomplish our goal of letting users express themselves through their picks – for our selected interface, we created a storyboard for a version of Picks that would include both images and text for stories.



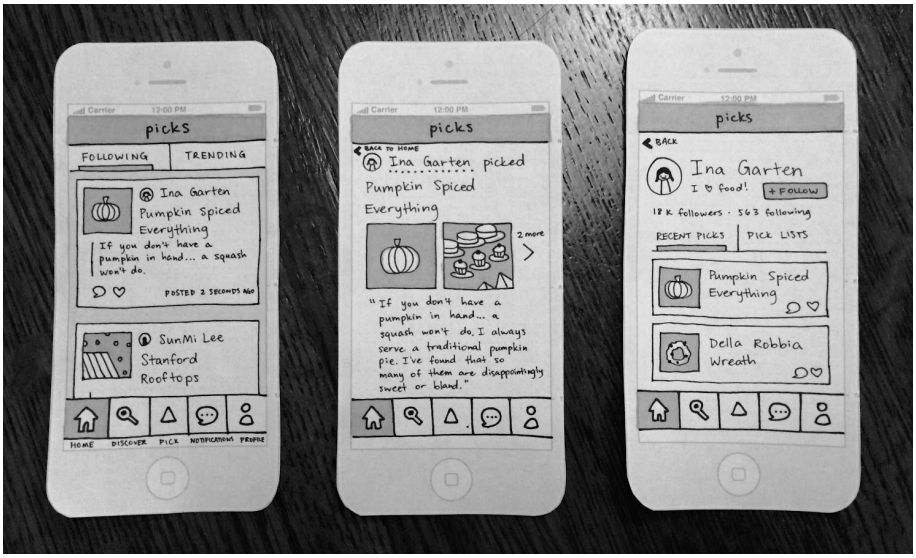

POST – THEME SCREEN
THEME SCREEN
START
group by month
shift
CREATE PICK
empty
NEXT
Pick photo
ask for permissions
keyboard
pop up
shifting transition
LIST SORT
preview of the pick
dropdown to add category
Go!
ask users if they want to share the pick they just created w/ other networks? (show as a modal over)
profile link
YOUR NAME
stats
Just created pick is now visible!
YOUR PROFILE
DETAIL PICK VIEW OF JUST CREATED


YOUR PROFILE
DETAIL PICK VIEW OF JUST CREATED
(show as a modal over)
DISCOVERY!!!
You can search for users, topics, or items.
keyboard
pop up
Books
BY FOLLOWING
TRENDING
results from people you follow appear first, then popular results
results appear as user types— auto generated
NOTIFICATIONS
click to detail view
slide into new view, but the preview EXPANDS to show motion → new screen
can click into detail pick view
share with other networks
move deeper into app

Prototype Description

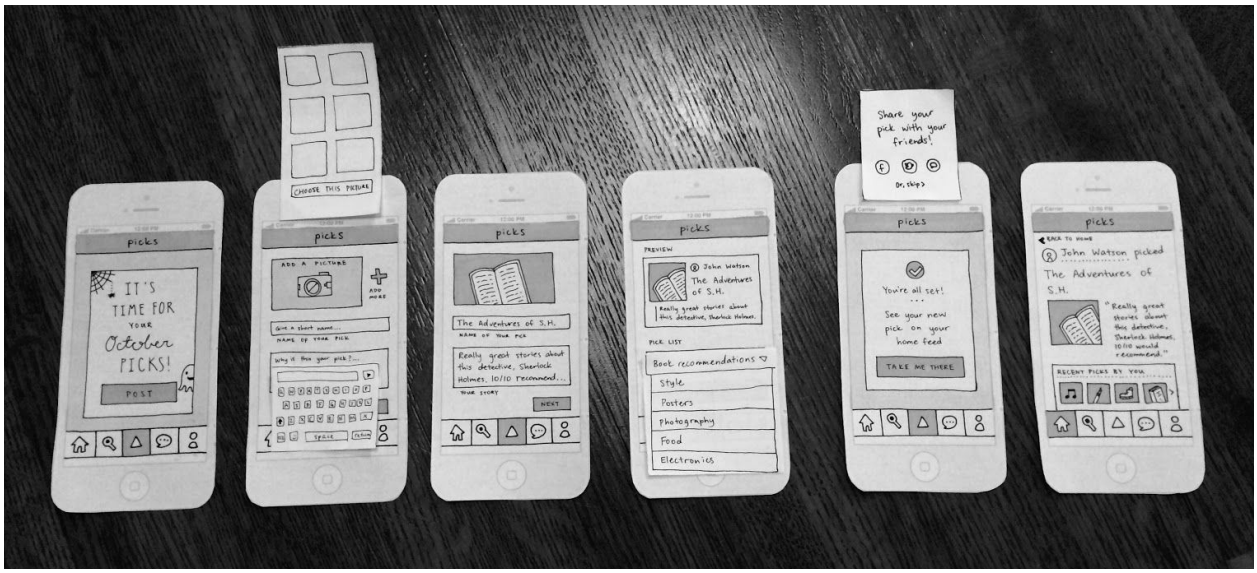
Our low-fi prototype was a hand-drawn paper prototype version. We initially tried to use POP in order to simulate a real app-like interaction, but when we did a quick test using POP, the tester kept expecting the prototype to be able to scroll down, double tap / pinch to zoom, etc. Hence, we decided that using POP would actually distract the users from looking at the workflow rather than focusing on phone-specific functionalities, and went with the paper version of our prototype. Here are the different parts of the prototype laid out:

The paper prototype shows the workflow of three distinct tasks: 1) posting your own “pick”, 2) looking at other people’s “picks”, and 3) sharing your or someone else’s “pick” with your friends via other social networks. The touch input was the main way for the user to move through the visual screens.



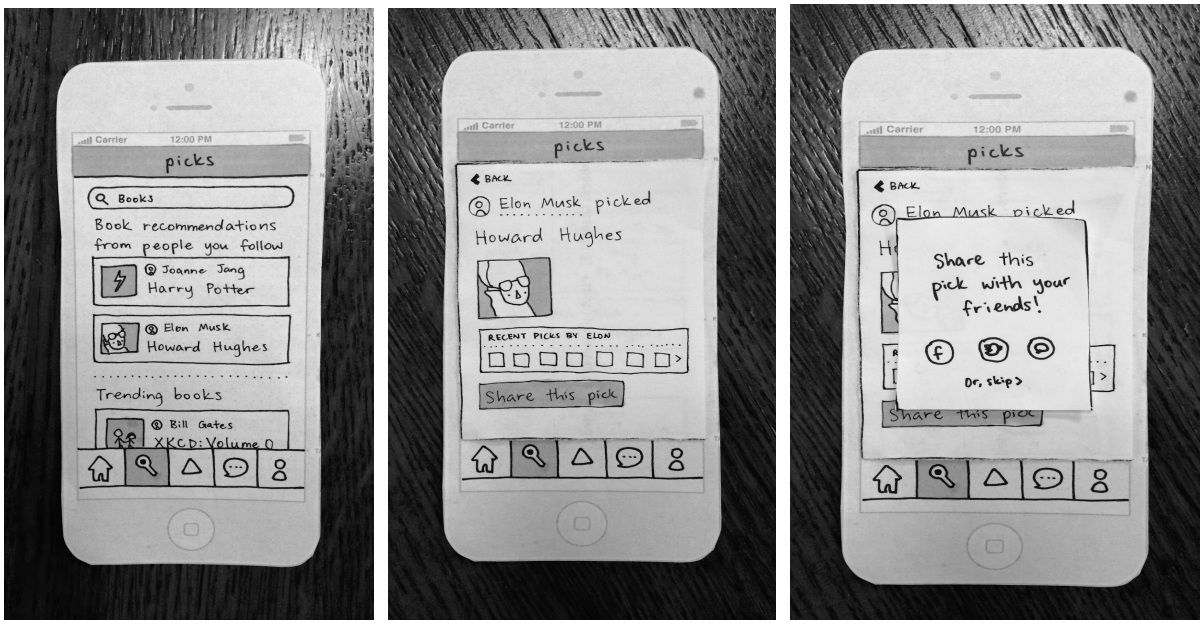
The first task is to discover products and follow users on the app. The goal for this task was to see what the ones you are following post on the app and demonstrate the utility of the app to find people with like-interests. To do this, the user:

1. Press the “home” icon in the lower menu bar. This action leads to the feed. The user chooses an item in the feed they find most interesting.
2. After selecting the item, the user is brought to the detail page, which displays information about the item
3. Then they can click on the poster’s name to see the person’s profile and follow them if they choose



The second task is to post your own pick. The goal behind this task is to share with your followers something you find valuable, meaningful or useful to have. The user does this through these steps:

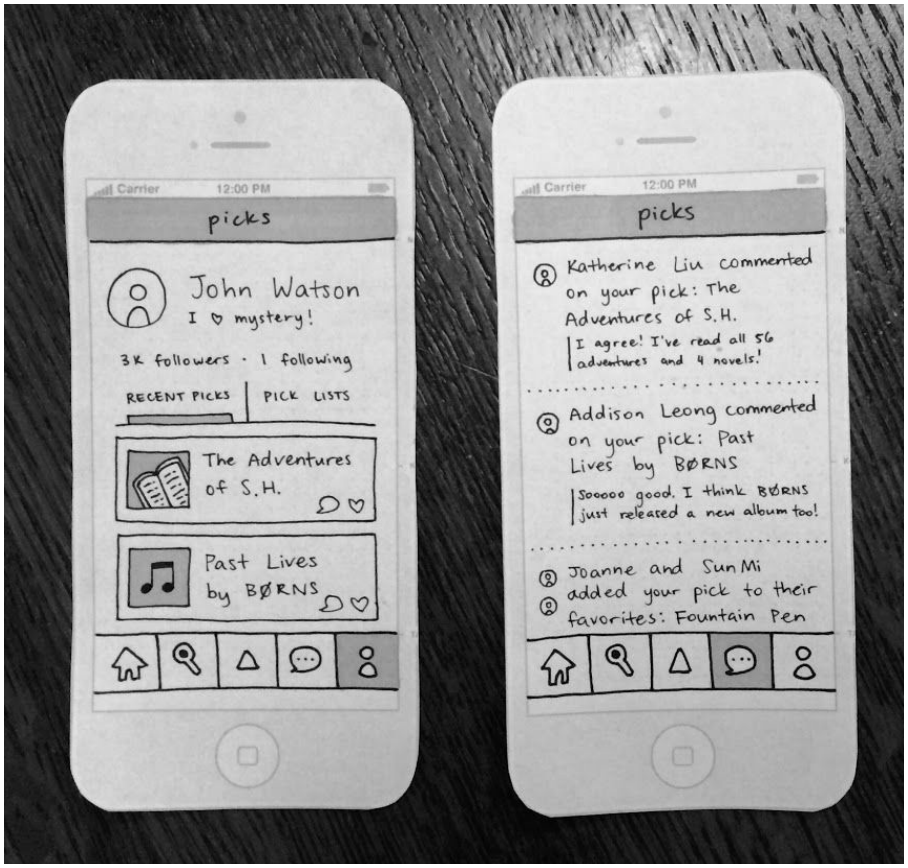
1. Press the middle icon on the lower menu bar.
2. That leads to a new screen where you can pick a photo (with the photo library paper slip)
3. On the third screen, you can add description (query keyboard)
4. You can choose which category this belongs in (drop down menu), then you press post
5. Confirmation page: press finish to post
6. The last screen shows the result of the post



After posting, you can also share your post or someone else's post, which is the third task.

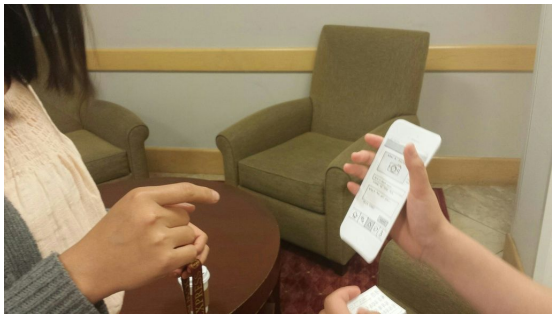
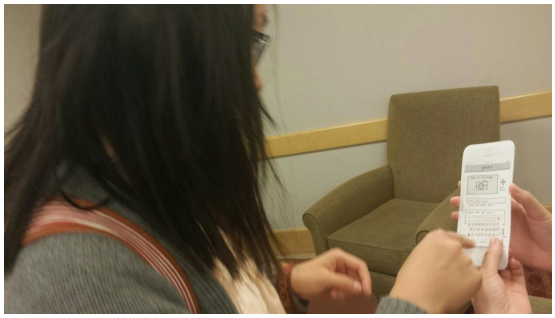
1. Find a post you find interesting on your discover screen
2. In a post, the user taps the "Share this post" button.
3. After tapping the button, a popup modal appears, prompting the user to share the pick on his/her choice of social media: Facebook, Twitter, or Text.

There are some additional functionalities the usercan do (that are not part of the three tasks), such as navigating the app through notifications.


Carrier
12:00 PM
picks
John Watson
I ♡ mystery!
3K followers · 1 following
RECENT PICKS
PICK LISTS
The Adventures of S.H.
Past Lives by BØRNS
Carrier
12:00 PM
picks
Katherine Liu commented on your pick: The Adventures of S.H.
I agree! I've read all 56 adventures and 4 novels!
Addison Leong commented on your pick: Past Lives by BØRNS
Soooo good. I think BØRNS just released a new album too!
Joanne and Sun Mi added your pick to their favorites: Fountain Pen

Testing Method

1. We chose our participants using a random-sampling technique, but we also approached potential participants based on their activities (whether they were using their phones, etc). In order to get the best, most unbiased feedback, we approached strangers who appeared like they would be willing to participate.
    a. Our participants were selected based on fitting within our target age group of 19 to 30 years old. We aimed to have an equal gender distribution.
    b. Our participants were all already users of social media on mobile devices, so they were familiar with common mobile interactions.
2. Our testing environment spanned the campus, especially areas with a wide distribution of students at any given time. We also offered to buy food from various cafes on campus as compensation for the participants. One person accepted a latte, the others said they were interested in testing for free because the paper prototype was pretty. The setup was simple: one person presented the prototype pages, and the participant tapped on the pages to simulate actions. We gave each participant the option to stand or sit.
3. We chose three tasks of different difficulties:
    a. Posting (Complex): The participants are asked to, given the app, navigate to the appropriate page to make their own post. We carefully observed users to see how they interacted with the post form. This task had the most steps.
    b. Discovering + Following (Medium): In this task, participants needed to find an interesting post and open it to learn more about it. From here, we asked users to follow the poster given that they liked the post.
    c. Sharing (Simple): We asked participants to share a post they were interested in. This was the simplest task because, if done as expected, it only took one to two taps.
4. We assigned each member of our group a separate task:
    a. SunMi, Coordinator + Interviewer: approach potential participants and handle compensation. Walked participant through the interview, asking him/her to complete each task.
    b. Katherine, Screen Manager: carefully watched participant actions and switched paper screens based on participant action.
    c. Joanne, Note Taker: observed interaction and made notes.
    d. Addison, Photographer: took pictures of interaction and assisted note taker.
5. Our procedure followed a basic script (Appendix B).

6. Our test measures were meant to measure user excitement and app utility:
    a. Any strong emotional reactions? These include confusion and excitement.
    b. Were there any points where the user became disinterested?
    c. What errors were made? Was there any point where the user navigated strongly away from the goal?
    d. How long did it take the user to complete each task?

Results

Tester 1:

From the outset, Tester 1 was unenthusiastic about the app. We suspect this may because she only tested for us in exchange for a latte. Beyond this, she did provide extremely valuable insights. Throughout her testing, she declared that the app felt “Pinteresty” yet diverged from Pinterest’s typical flow. She was especially confused by how to post – as she explained of the post button, “What is this triangle? I’m very confused.” Apart from posting, which was the most complex task, Tester 1 went through the other tasks quickly. However, on the third task when she was supposed to go to the search screen and look for a specific user, she exclaimed “isn’t this the same page as before?!”, pointing out the similar layout of the home screen and the search screen.

Tester 2:

Tester 2 went through the app very quickly and found it very easy to complete all of the tasks we asked for. She simply said “ok” every time she pressed a button, not finding it difficult to find exactly what button to press. She did mention that she wanted to see her “September picks”, and other previous picks as well (since all of our screens showed October picks). When we asked her to go look at her notifications, she struggled to look for the notification button on the lower menu bar. She said “I don’t know where the notifications is. Like this? Is there even a notifications bar? Ok let me click this again. Wait no, what.” Then she went back to her profile and started to randomly press on all the button on the profile. Since we didn’t have a notifications button on the user profile, she couldn’t find the notifications button until she realized that there is a button that she hasn’t pressed on the lower menu bar. While she was able to find the notification button in the end, this took her almost two full minutes and she found it to be very frustrating.

Tester 3:

Tester 3 also finished all of our tasks very easily. However, she did ask about some small, specific buttons while she was going through each task. While posting, she looked very closely into what functions were available on the user’s profile. Specifically she showed interest in the pick list and wanted to press on it (which wasn’t part of the task and hence we didn’t have a screen for it). Another interesting action was when she tried to add multiple photos on a single post. She pressed on the add photos button multiple times, saying “I would add a picture. I would add more.” We never thought about this function, so we just kept showing the photo library, and she just moved on. Also, when we asked her to go look at Elon Musk’s pick, she just went to the home feed and expected to see his post there. The thought of searching for his name took a while to come, only after she looked through the home feed and her profile. Also, she thought the notifications option looked like messages and she seemed to be clearly confused by it.

Tester 4:
Tester 4 was extremely helpful in that he narrated what was going through his mind as he was presented with a new screen and a new task; for instance, when he was asked to post his own pick, he said, “There’s a triangle I’m tempted to pick on. But I’m going to pick the back button. [When presented with the home screen] Just kidding I’m going to go back and pick the triangle.” Through this type of feedback we were able to learn not only which interactions weren’t as intuitive as we thought, but what the user would do instead. When asked for general feedback, he said that it would be good to highlight, for each item on the home feed, who shared the pick, who was commenting on the pick, etc.

Discussion

We began our testing with Prototype on Paper (POP); however, navigating the POP showed itself to be difficult for our participants because of our limitations in making screens – we couldn’t make a screen for every possible action (for example, we couldn’t create a screen for every mock-post displayed in the UI). Users unfamiliar with POP didn’t understand why lists that seemed they would scroll couldn’t – the promise of expected interaction paired with the limits of how many screens we could draw became a major roadblock. We decided to go back to the paper prototype model to conduct all tests.

More specifically on the different functions of the prototype, all of our testers were confused by our “Pick” button, a small triangle in the lower menu bar. They had no idea what the triangle meant and universally expressed the sentiment with confusion and occasional disdain. It didn’t take long for users to figure out how to perform our simple and medium tasks (discovery+following and sharing), but the complex task (posting) proved a challenge for some because, as discussed above, users couldn’t understand what the triangle icon for posting meant. Also tester 3 wanted to add multiple photos to a single post, so we may consider that functionality as we prototype further.

Another interesting finding is that tester 2 asked how you can look at your previous postings. All of our screens had October picks and she wanted to see September picks as well. We definitely want to fully flush out this feature, which will introduce many changes to our future prototype. Perhaps we could make it so that you could swipe right and left on your profile to go to your previous/next month.

One of the biggest findings from the tests was that, generalized across our testers, users were somewhat familiar with the idea through their interactions with already existing social network

applications – one even said our app felt very “Pinteresty”. This served to make some users confused – the app didn’t behave exactly like Pinterest, so they found their typical workflows disrupted. We learned that we need to redefine the experience in a way that emphasizes our unique goal of connecting people to people rather than people to products.

To do so, we decided to experiment with a few features of our app; for instance, we are interested in adding monthly posting limits for each user to ensure that the picks are carefully curated by the user, therefore making his/her recommendations more meaningful. We are also interested in new ways of presenting a user’s picks; since the low-fi prototype simply lists recent picks, the recommendations might seem more item-based rather than user-based. Would displaying multiple picks in the context of “Ina’s October Picks” place more emphasis on Ina? Finally, we will be further exploring the value of the “story” component that accompanies each pick-- do users like reading the personal stories that led the picker to recommend the product? Do pickers like sharing stories related to the products they are recommending? Would stressing the importance of stories/the writing component make posting picks seem more of a hassle, and therefore discourage people from picking liberally? These are some of the questions we hope to answer as we do more testing in the future with the medium-fi prototypes.

Appendices (as many pages as necessary - link from text into the appendices)

A. Consent Form

Consent Form

The Picks application is being produced as part of the coursework for Computer Science CS 147 at Stanford University. Participants in experimental evaluation of the application provide data that is used to evaluate and modify the interface of Picks. Data will be collected by interview, observation, and questionnaire. Participation in this experiment is voluntary.

Participants may withdraw themselves and their data at any time without fear of consequences.
Concerns about the experiment may be discussed with the researchers (Joanne Jang, SunMi Lee, Addison Leong, Katherine Liu) or with Professor James Landay, the instructor of CS 147:

James A. Landay
CS Department
Stanford University
650-498-8215
landay at cs.stanford.edu

Participant anonymity will be provided by the separate storage of names from data. Data will only be identified by participant number. No identifying information about the participants will be
available to anyone except the student/researchers and their supervisors/teaching staff.

I hereby acknowledge that I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the nature of the experiment and my participation in it. I give my consent to have data collected on my behavior and opinions in relation to the Picks experiment. I also give permission for images/video of me using the application to be used in presentations or publications as long as I am not personally identifiable in the images/video. I understand I may withdraw my permission at any time.

Name _____

Participant Number _____

Date _____

Signature_____

Witness name _____

Witness signature_____

B. Test Script

Confidentiality
We have a simple consent form for you to sign.

Introduction of Picks
What you will see in a moment is an early-stage prototype, and it's not a finished version by any means. No matter how polished it might look because Katherine is such a great designer, think of it as a sketch, and we would love to hear any and all the thoughts that go through your mind as you interact with the app-- we're trying to evaluate how intuitive and easy Picks is. We would really appreciate it if you could share all your thoughts.

So this is an app called Picks and it helps people tell stories with products they buy with to their followers. This is your home screen.

Tasks
1. Can you show us how you would look at another person's pick?

2. Try to view that person's profile.

3. Can you try posting your own pick?

4. Can you share the post by adding it to your Facebook profile?

5. Look at your profile.

6. Can you check your notifications?

7. Can you find recommendations by the people you follow?

Debrief
Great, this concludes the experiment— thank you so much for your time. Do you have some feedback for the tasks, or the app in general?

C. Raw Data

Participant 1

1. First task
    a. This is kinda Pinteresty
    b. Wait that's so weird, that's not how Pinterest works
    c. Do I press on this?
    d. Whatever let me press on this.
    e. Oh ok cool
2. Second task
    a. Wait that's so weird, that's not how Pinterest works
    b. I'm so confused
    c. What is this triangle? I'm very confused
    d. This doesn't look like a post button at all
    e. Do I need to write something?
    f. Then choose category? Ok select
3. Third task
    a. Isn't this the same page as before?!
    b. Well they look so similar

Participant 2

1. First task
    a. So what's a pick?
    b. How come I can't see the previous picks? It only says October
    c. How about September picks?
2. Second task
    a. Ok
    b. I picked a photo
    c. I guess I'll write stuff now
    d. Ok I'll post
3. Third task
    a. I guess I'd search
    b. I don't know where the notification is. Like this? Is there even a notifications bar? I might click this again
    c. Where is this notifications button? Ok I'm just going to click on random things on my profile
    d. Oh is that the notification button? What, that doesn't look like it

Participant 3

1. First task
    a. I would click here… i'm so good at this.
    b. I'm assuming i can comment on the person's pick and like their pick. and follow them.
    c. I don't know what pick lists are. I'm assuming you can like group your picks into certain category or something like that?
    d. How come I can't press on that? I want to see the pick list
2. Second task
    a. I think I would go here (triangle) or (person). Triangle.
        i. I would add a picture.
        ii. I would add more.
        iii. I would type a name.
        iv. I would type stuff, I would press next.
    b. shared it w/ profile
3. Third task
    a. Should I go back here to my profile? Then I'd go to my followers. …. wouldn't home have the picks of people?
    b. Wait no I need to find a specific person? Ok search Elon Musk?
    c. I guess I'll go to search then
    d. ok (!) although I thought that notifications look like messages because that looks like messengers.

Participant 4

1. First task
    a. Ok that was easy
    b. I think there should be items on the feed: good to make it more stand out who shared it, who was reading it, and who was following it.
2. Second task
    a. There's a triangle I'm tempted to pick on.
    b. No I'm going to pick the back button. Wait no what that's my profile again
    c. So many buttons…
    d. I'm going to pick the triangle.
3. Third task
    a. I'll click on a notification from my home feed.
    b. Wait ut Elon Musk is not there.
    c. At this point I don't know where I should go but I would click on this guy (he clicks on search)
        i. Oh look Elon Musk!