Design Intervention for Social Acceptance of Gaming in India

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Project Approval

The project titled “Design Intervention for Social Acceptance of Gaming in India ” by Aaditya Aji, is approved for partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of ‘Bachelor of Design’ at I ndustrial Design Centre, IIT Bombay.

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Declaration

I declare that this written document represents my ideas in my own words and where others' ideas or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified any idea/ data/ fact/ source in my submission.

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Abstract

This project is about implementing design intervention for social acceptance of gaming in India.

I interviewed over 30 people belonging to different demographics, ranging from students to teachers, from industry experts to social workers to try to understand the problem in depth, and implement a strategy to solve the problem. Using the insights from the primary research and the secondary research, I propose a holistic solution which uses multiple strategies to raise awareness about the campaign itself and the cause, as I redefined the problem statement to "*Design intervention to make college students better aware and equipped about career path in esports industry, as a first step towards social acceptance in India*"

Inspired by the IPL in India and the Model United Nations, I designed a strategy which starts with a platform that brings people together and trains the users with skills that they'd require in the actual industry, and eventually develops a self sustaining community which participates in increasing public conversations about gaming, hence contributing towards working towards social acceptance of the activity.

The community also acts as a support group and an inspiration for the users which will eventually equip them with the required skill sets to break into the industry.

The methodologies and design process used will also be helpful to raise awareness about similar problem statements where the target users are a niche group with common interests. motives and goals but are unorganised and distributed to act as a whole and serve as a contributing member to the cause of raising awareness.

Introduction

When a person is popped with the question, “What are you hobbies?”, a typical answer would include things like photography, bird-watching, reading, watching TV, playing a sport, gardening etc.

Interestingly, ever since the tech boom in the late 20th century, a lot of people increasingly started adopting internet-driven hobbies, such as maintaining a blog, coding applications, reading newsletters, listening to podcasts. One of the major reasons for this fundamental shift from outdoor activities to indoor activities which happen in front of a computer or a smartphone is due to the ease of access and the overabundance of the said content.

The newer generations when posed with the question will invite answers like watching Netflix, browsing Instagram or Pinterest, maintaining a Tumblr blog, playing video games or streaming games.

Much to my interest, I found that gaming is increasingly being adopted by the newer generations, as the preferred sit-at-home hobby as the major form of entertainment.

The reason for this boom is very similar to any other similar trend we have seen, production of video games over the recent years has become increasingly cheaper and simpler, thanks to free online tools that are now available, and a plethora of free online resources to learn to develop a game. Games now require less time, less manpower to complete compared to earlier due to more accessible and easy-to-work-with tools such Unity Engine, Unreal engine etc.

The video game industry is currently growing at 20% compound annual growth rate. Games are made to be single player or multiplayer, and the multiplayer games developed a competitive gaming, an offshoot of the gaming industry which is called the esports industry, which is expected to bring massive disruption to the

sports industry, and is currently growing globally at 18.61% compound annual growth rate.

Both these industries combined is set to affect the social, cultural and economic fronts of humanity in the 21st century.

Several multiplayer games have developed communities of the players. Multiplayers first person shooter (FPS) games such as Players unknown battlegrounds, has over 1 billion users in the community; role-playing games such as Dungeon Fighter online has over 700 million users; sandbox games like Minecraft has 600 million users; the numbers are comparable to the most populous countries in the world; some of these games have developed their communities into online social spaces where people get to know each other and interact. Some of the popular players in the communities have generated fan-following and cultural following so big that they are practically celebrities in the internet era.

The size of the global gaming industry is largely underestimated; it is bigger than the global movie and global music industries combined in terms of market valuation. The esports and video game industries combined offer a lot of jobs, in all verticals from design, engineering, marketing, journalism etc. The career opportunities in the industry is extremely rewarding, like any other entertainment industry, but with lesser competition due to its nascent stage. This is the global scenario.

Meanwhile, in India ‘gaming’ is not even considered an acceptable hobby, let alone as a career path. Gaming is usually associated with laziness, portraying traits such as indifference towards surroundings, social interaction, participation etc.

Specifically in Indian households and Indian culture, gaming is considered a waste of time, a distraction from important duties in life, and in some cases, even harmful for people. Children and adults are looked down upon

with the mention of gaming as a hobby or a career option.

There are several claims about videos games promoting violence, and inciting negative behaviour amongst parties involved.

Watching game streaming is also not considered near acceptable in the Indian culture. One of the anecdotes which were shared with me during the interviews, was a student was laughed at by his father when the former was watching a video of a person playing a video game on a platform called ‘twitch’, the father said “I don't get why anyone would watch these stupid games. You aren't even playing. Why would you want to watch it?”, the irony in this situation is that the father is an obsessive cricket fan and keenly follows every Indian Premier League match, and international cricket matches, in which he spectates trained players play a sport against each other.

This is the typical attitude. People would not mind watching a cricket match but a gaming match bugs them. A person sitting on a computer/console may be seen as someone sitting alone but in-fact the player is coordinating with his team to achieve a goal with the skills he/she has developed through constant practice by playing the game and also competing against another individuals at the same time.

People actively talk about the unsubstantiated harmful effects of video games but rarely people are aware of the positive effects of videos games.

An MIT publication titled, “The Ecology of games” has several researches that invalidate some negative behaviours which according to the experiments could be attributed external factors such as lack of healthy psychosocial interaction, or internal behaviour issues such as depression or conduct problems Several researches have substantiated the positive outcomes of video games as a hobby for children and adults alike,

such as improved problem solving, better social behaviour, improved concentration and focus, etc.

Game Type	Benefit	Impact on the players
Shooter/Action	Cognitive skills	Faster and more accurate attention allocation
		Higher spatial resolution in visual processing
		Enhanced mental rotation abilities
Strategic		Allocate resources more efficiently
		Filter out irrelevant information more effectively
Role-playing		Enhance memorization, analytical skills, past experience, and intuitions
		Improve problem-solving skills, collaboratively
Strategic	Motivational Benefits	Increase the intelligence and abilities,
		Resilience in the face of failure
		Develop an incremental theory of intelligence,
		Use failure as motivational tools to engaged and bolster one's efforts
		Effective for "training" new behaviours.
		Lead to lasting educational success.
Puzzle	Emotional Benefits	Mood management, enhance the positive feelings.
		Sources of inspiration and connectivity.
		Build social relationships.
playing		Increase commitment and achievement, and higher self-esteem.
		Promote relaxation, and ward off anxiety
		Dealing with frustration and anxiety in adaptive ways
Cooperative-based	Social Benefits	Immediate, short-term cooperative play
		Short and long term effects on "helping" behaviours
		Reduces feelings of hostility
Prosocial		Decrease players' access to aggressive cognitions
		Increases subsequent prosocial, cooperative behaviour
Role-playing		Increase group organization and leadership skills
		Rapidly learning social skills and prosocial behaviours

Source: The Impact of Video Games on the Players Behaviours, Jordan University of Science and Technology

The lack of awareness is clearly a huge problem in a developing country like India, which has so much to offer to the growth of the industries.

The current industry leaders are American, Chinese and some French companies. There are barely any Indian companies which have contributed well to the scenario, nor are there any on the track of doing so. (Dream11 and some other gambling apps are exceptions)

Due to its inevitable future potential, big-tech companies like Apple, google, Microsoft and amazon have all invested heavily in the sector, developing their own hardware and software for video games.

I believe it's essential for the society to be aware about the industry so that individuals and groups can reap the benefits, and hence my aim in this project is to create an impact in the society by changing the pre-existing image of the activity and conveying a healthier perspective of the same.

Background

Video games

Early video games used interactive electronic devices with various display formats. The earliest example is from 1947—a "Cathode ray tube amusement device" was filed for a patent on 25 January 1947, by Thomas T. Goldsmith Jr. and Estle Ray Mann, inspired by radar display technology, it consisted of an analog device that allowed a user to control a vector-drawn dot on the screen to simulate a missile being fired at targets, which were drawings fixed to the screen. Other early examples include Christopher Strachey's Draughts game, the Nimrod computer at the 1951 Festival of Britain; OXO a tic-tac-toe Computer game by Alexander S. Douglas for the EDSAC in 1952; Tennis for Two, an electronic interactive game engineered by William Higinbotham In October 1958. It was a very simple tennis game, similar to the classic 1970s video game Pong, and it was quite a hit at a Brookhaven National Laboratory open house. These preliminary inventions paved the way for the origins of video games today.

Now, we have multiple platforms in which games are supported, such as personal computers, VR headsets, smartphones, gaming consoles such as playstation or Nintendo, which are dedicated devices to play videos games on. Video games come in many genres and can be categorised under several kinds of segregations.

For the purpose of this project, we need to understand the difference between single-player games and multiplayer games.

Single-player games, as the name suggests can be played by one person without depending on another individuals involvement in the gameplay. These games typically tend to be story-driven games, or puzzle-driven games where naturally, the enjoyment comes from anything but social engagement of any kind.

Multiplayer games, requires at least 2 people for thee game to be played. It can be a simple tennis game where two people control one player each and play against each other, or it could be a cooperative game, where two people control one player each and cooperate and help each other to achieve a common goal, it could be a massive multiplayer, which is a mix of both the types where multiple people cooperate with each other in teams against other teams which are also controlled by people.

The multiplayer game due to its nature, either needs multiple input devices or needs to carry out in a network, which could be multiple smartphones connected over bluetooth, multiple laptops connected over a LAN (local area network), or a combination of the two connected over the internet.

Video game live streaming

Video game live streaming is an activity where people record themselves playing games to a live audience online. The practice became popular in the mid-2010s on US based sites such as Twitch and later, YouTube, Facebook and China based sites Huya Live, DouYu, Bilibili and other services. By 2014, Twitch streams had more traffic than HBO's online service, HBO Go. Professional streamers often combine high-level play and entertaining commentary, and earn income from sponsors, subscriptions, and donations.

Both AAA and indie developers have circumvented rising development costs by utilising the free advertising live streaming provides. Independent titles such as Fall Guys, Rocket League, and Among Us are some examples of games that have experienced a huge increase in player base as a result of this. Esports have also gained significant traction and attention from the accessibility of

live streaming, and streaming has even been used as a method to raise awareness to social issues and raise money for charity.

Live streaming offers the allure of transforming a hobby of playing a video game into a full career of streaming, but brings with it the risks associated with this added renown, whether they be inside the video game, like stream sniping, or in real life, like stalking and swatting. Additionally, the low bar of entry in terms of technology and audience allows for a wide variety of streamers and games to be broadcast.

One thing streamers should be wary of are possible copyright violations or other legal issues when streaming the game of their choice. Legal issues can differ depending on the platform and video game streamed, so streamers must do their research before they start streaming as to adhere to the rules.

Professional streamers often combine gameplay with highly knowledgeable or dexterous play and entertaining commentary. They can generate sufficient revenue from viewer subscriptions and donations, as well as platform advertisements and sponsorships from eSports organisations. An October 2017, a report from SuperData Research estimated that more people subscribed to video game streams and Let's Play videos on YouTube and Twitch than for all of HBO, Netflix, ESPN, and Hulu, combined.

Esports

Esports is a form of competition using video games. Esports often takes the form of organised, multiplayer video game competitions, particularly between professional players, individually or as teams. Although organised competitions have long been a part of video game culture, these were largely between amateurs until the late 2000s, when participation by professional gamers and spectatorship in these events through live

streaming saw a large surge in popularity. By the 2010s, esports was a significant factor in the video game industry, with many game developers actively designing and providing funding for tournaments and other events.

The most common video game genres associated with esports are multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA), first-person shooter (FPS), fighting, card, battle royale and real-time strategy (RTS) games. Popular esport franchises include League of Legends, Dota, Counter-Strike, Valorant, Overwatch, Street Fighter, Super Smash Bros. and StarCraft, among many others. Tournaments such as the League of Legends World Championship, Dota 2's International, the fighting game-specific Evolution Championship Series (EVO) and Intel Extreme Masters are among the most popular in esports. Many other competitions use a series of league play with sponsored teams, such as the Overwatch League. Although the legitimacy of esports as a true sporting competition remains in question, they have been featured alongside traditional sports in some multinational events in Asia, with the International Olympic Committee also having discussed their inclusion into future Olympic events.

By the late 2010s, it was estimated that the total audience of esports would grow to 454 million viewers, with revenue increasing to more than US$1 billion. The increasing availability of online streaming media platforms, particularly YouTube and Twitch, have become central to the growth and promotion of esports competitions. Despite viewership being approximately 85% male and 15% female, with a majority of viewers between the ages of 18 and 34, female gamers have also played professionally. The popularity and recognition of esports first took place in Asia, seeing significant growth in China and South Korea, with the latter having licensed professional players since 2000.

Esports in India is still in its early stages. Tournaments and competitions happen from time to time and the interest is growing at a very high rate.

In the recent years, India has hosted some of the most significant tournaments in esports, such as PUBG Mobile Series 2019 and the Electronic Sports League, participated by Dota 2 players from different parts of the world.

Recent relevance

The number of people who own a personal computing device– a laptop, a smartphone is growing; more and more video games of a variety of genres are being developed, newer video games are specific to cultures and revolves around a specific niche of people, hence more people will be playing video games than ever in the coming years, as the sheer volume of content available increases.

Being part of a specific gaming community plays a significant part of some people's identity.

After the 2020 pandemic, a lot of activities shifted to the internet platform. Video games saw a major boom during the lockdown periods and as adults started working from home.

Since the pandemic cancelled a lot of music tours, concerts, sports events, some community-driven video games started hosting music festivals within the gameplay, like when famous DJ Marshmelo held a electronic-dance music concert or the popular hip-hop artist held a musical event, it was attended by 27.7 million unique people.

Video games are gaining relevance, with pop-culture movies, books, events increasingly involving gaming as an important part of our lives.

The adoption is only likely to increase further as the services and products are getting cheaper and more accessible.

Primary Research

The primary research involved talking to a wide spectrum of people as the exact people to target wasn't clear from the beginning for a "social impact campaign".

I interviewed school teachers, college professors, parents of children from age 4 to 24 years, to understand how their interaction and relationship with their kids might have affected their decisions in hobby adoption.

The major difference was children who are currently between 4-10 years old grew up with technology being a significant part of their lives, some owned smartphones since they were 8 years old. On the other hand, people who are currently between 20-24 years old didn't necessarily grow up with the said technology. Most of them owned their first smartphone around the age of 17.

I interviewed people who have worked in social impact spaces ranging from problem areas such as "women empowerment" and "sexual health awareness" which are topics of taboo in India.

The aim was to understand the kind of challenges they faced, and how they dealt with them. How did they decide which demographic to target for problems like "sexual health awareness", because the male and female populations will have different way to deal with the problem, different age groups will require different kinds design interventions to raise awareness, etc.

I interviewed people in the video game industry, from founders of startups to game developers, artists, streamers and professional players.

To my surprise, adults weren't the only people uninformed about the gaming industry. Although the young adults and the teenagers were more exposed to video games and culture revolving around video games, they weren't aware of the growth of the industry. The impact of it in how its shaping the culture, how development in technology is opening several

possibilities for video games which wasn't the cases earlier, the increase in demand of engineers, designers, artists in the industry and other aspects of newer career options that are opening up due to the growth of the industry, including in the entertainment industry.

Young adults weren't aware about the new demand, the entry barriers and the kind network that they'd have develop during their college years to break into the industry.

The number of engineering and design colleges in India is increasing every year, statistics say that there are more jobs than the number of people who are graduating but still students aren't able to land a job after graduation.

A brief talk with some of the students revealed that they wouldn't opt for gaming related careers, because it's not considered respectable, even thought technically they are software companies.

Students did not want to opt for entertainment related gaming careers like professional gamers or streamers because according to their parents, its not a 'real job'.

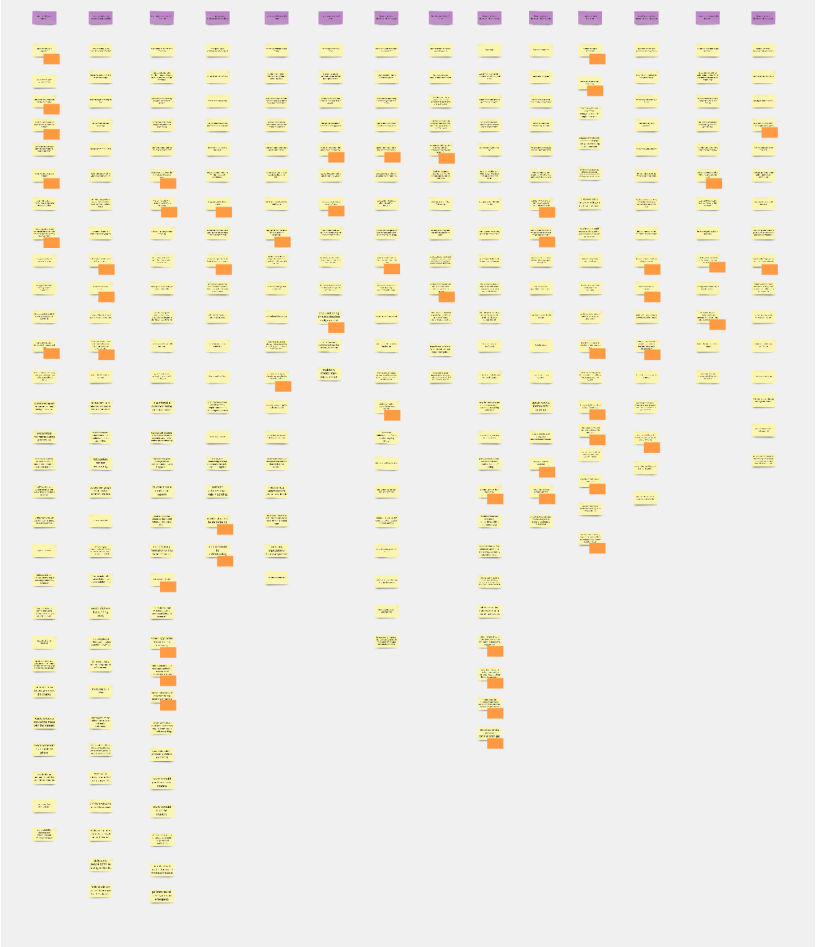
Hence, I interviewed some college alumni who opted from alternative careers from what they were trained in college for, like people who became musicians, sports personalities, film directors, dancers etc.

My aim was to try to understand at what point they decided they did not want to become engineers or designers, like their college curriculum was training them for, what were the reasons due to which they decided to change their career line, if their parents, relatives and friends were supportive about their decision, etc.

Working on social acceptance is a very complicated problem. There is not one solution, typically, continuous interventions are done at different stages to create a social impact. Dealing with only one demographic will

not solve the problem but starting somewhere is important. The changes can only be seen overtime.

Eventually I decided to work on creating awareness about the career options in the gaming industry for college students, since the current college students makes up the demographic which will be the future parent generation (in the next 5-10 years), they are decently exposed to the industry, partially informed and could be responsible for setting up institutions in the coming years , they have an active influence in social conversations compared to any other demographic and they are at a stage where they are in a position to choose career paths.



Affinity mapping

Interviews

Due to pandemic, the interviews I could conduct were over a zoom call or a phone call and were entirely unstructured to avoid fatigue for the user. The users were informed that the insights from the conversation will be

used for a design project. I keep the interviews conversation-like and as casual as possible so that the user is comfortable. A total of over 30 unstructured interviews were conducted during the primary research phase. The first set of interviews were with teachers, professors and parents to ask about what they know about esports, video games and its impact on young minds and understanding their stance on a career in gaming for entertainment. My motive was to try to know how much they understand the industry and how close are they to the ground reality, considering that their generation seemed like the one which did not grow up with video games at all during their childhood.

Asked them some specific questions to try to know if they understand sports very well and who according to them are sportsmen/ women or athletes– starting with definition of sports, and questions like “Do you think chess is a sport, why?” Which led to some very interesting discussions about the understanding of what they consider as athlete and if its restricted to only physical tuning of the body or should it also consider the mind? Interestingly most of them considered chess a sport and the people who play chess at the highest level to be sportsmen, since “they trained for years to achieve this skill and experience and they have to actively think and strategise against the opponent”, this was a very specific statement as it stood out, because it fit the professional competitive video game players too. Then I asked them about formula 1 racing and if they consider the racers as athletes, interestingly most of them initially disagreed, after which I told them about the intensive body workout routine that they have to follow to maintain fitness and to prepare their body to endure the G force they experience from racing at extreme speeds for hours.

For some reason more often than not, sports required active movement of the entire body according to their definitions. I asked the about how they will feel if their close relative pursued a career in gaming, especially

if its their son or daughter, some of them reluctantly nodded yes to it while clarifying that its their son/ daughter's decision and they will support it no matter what.

My next set of interviews were with some industry professionals and some students and people who have worked in the social impact space. My motive was to try to understand the challenges faced during the process, the factors on the basis of which they prioritise different demographics and what set of actions do they take to resolve issues for a particular demographic. While the industry professional helped me with some first hand information about the job requirements, the demand of certain kind of career paths in the growing phase that is happening in our country, and the role that we as college students can play during the phase to help build a stronger contribution to the state of global industry.

Most of this led me to the understanding that people are very unaware about thee state of affairs of the gaming industry and there's a lot of misinformation around, including amongst the college students who are very closely interacting with the elements on a daily basis.

Which eventually led me to interviewing college students and school students and get first hand information about their awareness and their idea of gaming and its affects on individuals.

Then I worked with some students in the college student councils and societies to know how they work with clubs which are hobby or interest derived and how they develop it over time. I worked with them to understand their needs and pain points in handling a club or a society which becomes very useful by the end of the design process as I make the platform which is also primarily for managers of the club.

Analysis

The key points from the interviews were recorded in writing and later analysed together for each user and across users to get a macro understanding.

Since the interviews were conducted in phases with different motives, the phases were analysed and compared with each other as well to get a broader picture of the different kinds of users.

Later the information was grouped together using affinity mapping to find individual solutions and eventually redefine the brief for a focused work.

User behaviour and insights

- I found that the definition of sports and sportsperson, athletes is different for people from different generations.
- Younger generations consider competitive video games equivalent to sports, while the older generations don't
- Older generation from my interview sample believed that sportspersons need to train some specific skills for years, and gain experience while maintaining their diet and sleep to perform optimally during matches.
- Some did not restrict to physical activity as the requirement for a person to be qualified as a sportsperson, but could also include mental work and constant strategising according to circumstances like already in lots of physical activity based sports but also sports such as chess.
- Most people didn't consider F1 racers as athletes; in their words, "sitting in a closed cabin and driving a machine is not sporty". When they were told that they have intensive training to prepare their body to adjust to the high G force from extreme speeds, and

maintaining high stamina to race for hours, most we're convinced that they could be categorised as athletes.

- Which led to another important insight that a lot of sports which aren't commonly talked about in our everyday life or the demands (physical or mental) of which aren't obvious to people will be misunderstood as not sports. Which is why chess was more widely accepted as a sport than F1 racers.
- This meant that a lot of people assume information or are basing their ideology and opinions on misinformation.
- With students who have ben following a specific hobby for a while, such as piano, music, dance, football etc, it was found that the parents were actively involved with the ward from a young age.
- Safe to assume that the hobby was a part of their daily routine win form of activity or conversation.
- Their hobbies were encouraged through formal professional training or coaching.
- Fame was an indicator of success for several people, eg. Virat Kohli or Dhoni for cricket.
- People were generally aware about the positives of the hobby, and their interests aligned with the positives only even though each sport has its own disadvantages too.
- Lot of accepted hobbies have a higher rate of domestic conversations, such as mainstream sports like cricket or football or skills such as music or learning some instrument.
- In the context of gaming, the parents we're never involved with their children in the activity; there were never any mentions of videos games in mainstream media until very recently; the parents aren't aware of any popular professional video game players.
- Interviews with the student community revealed that students were afraid to take a leap of faith with a gaming career because they have no mentors, nor do

they know what can be done to achieve success win the field.

- The steps to become a professional gamer is not well documented, hence students don't want to take a risk by exploring.
- Students weren't aware of the different career options in the gaming industry itself.
- Students didn't have any inspiration in their closed circles who can give the hope about a successful career in esports
- When interviewing the student council members, most of the problems thy mentioned revolved around better event scheduling and team management, which right now happens across multiple applications.
- Team members did not show up on time, and some members missed important messages since communication was happening in multiple channels

Revised Brief

For clarity in direction of progress and focused effort, I had to redefined the brief and goals, by narrowing down context and dealing with very specific problems.

Design intervention to make college students better aware and equipped about career path in esports industry, as a first step towards social acceptance in India by creating a platform to connect gaming communities of colleges in India and simulate the esports industry dynamics, and use the developed community for an awareness drive.

Alternatives

An esports specific mentor app :

An app that targets the mentorship/inspiration problem for students to get quick access to.

Existing esports professionals could be onboarded onto the platform so that students from colleges can network with the professional individuals and get guidance from them directly in exchange for some fees.

The app can be structured such that there could b different tiers of mentorships–short term or long term mentors depending on the requirement.

This concept had several challenges, such as getting enough professionals to sign up would be very difficult considering the industry itself is in a very nascent stage.

After researching a little about existing video game coach hiring platforms, there could be a way to onboard virtually anyone as a coach, considering they upload enough social proof in form of YouTube or twitch profile links or other similar platforms, but this will form a lot of friction for the coaches to onboard.

Secondly, students are very selective about spending money, especially in India. Hence a paid platform will not be ideal for students who might want to hire professionals from the countries as mentors.

Another option was to set up a platform for game specific coaches who set up educational and training videos and content. But a brief research revealed that there are already platforms which ar doing this.

A career counsel guide app for parents:

An app to spread awareness about unconventional career paths and deal with misinformation for parents and students.

An app with general information about alternative career paths which also includes careers in the gaming an industry. The app would be targeted for both parents and students to browse through and discover unconventional career paths.

This strategy also had several challenges, firstly, it deviates from the Gaming industry which was the original brief, it lacks focus.

Secondly, this requires a lot of research intensive content creation and curation which wouldn't be sustainable as it'd require constant updates.

It'd require a significant extra effort from parents and students to use it. Using an app like this doesn't fit in any of their schedule.

Awareness drive with placement cells:

Most of the colleges of the students that I interviewed had placements cells which is a student council subset which acts as the mediator between companies and college students for job placements and internships.

Typically the placement cells conducts placement talks, workshops and events with students to inform them about preparation for job placements and upcoming offers etc.

I could partner with the placements cells across different colleges for an awareness drive about the careers in the gaming industry, the design challenge here would be to content creation and communication methods.

But this strategy had several flaws, placement cells typically did not want to spend time to talk about career options that the college can't provide by brining in companies and gaming companies wouldn't be coming to engineering colleges in India to hire.

Secondly, it's not a scalable concept since only the tier 1 and some of the tier 2 colleges of India have placement cells.

Chosen Concept

A platform application for desktops and personal computers that university students can get on-board

along with other students from their college to participate in esports competitions in their own college and against other colleges in tournament and championship formats.

The platform houses communities of gamers in a college and with help of the student council of the respective colleges, selects a contingent of gamers to participate in inter-college championship.

The structure is as follows, every college has a student council/ parliament which takes care of student affairs in the university such as sports competitions, cultural competitions, entrepreneurship events, cultural festivals etc. The student council is segregated into several groups called clubs/ societies which takes care of specific verticals of affairs of college students. Cultural council and sports council are few of the common groups within these college student bodies.

The sports council itself has secretaries who are elected to manage affairs of specific sports in the college, eg. there will be a football secretary, who manages the football related affairs in the college, typically also responsible for holding football related events, competitions, etc.

There will be an esports secretary who is also elected like any other secretaries in the university, who will be the manager of the official esports team of the respective university. The person will be responsible in selecting the team, scheduling and managing practice sessions for the official team, and holding intra-college esports events.

The esports secretary acts as the ‘Manager’ of the team, who is given access to the platform admin rights.

Students of the college can sign-up onto thee platform and play games like they normally do, only in this scenario, their activity is monitored through this application, keeping track of their progress and stats.

Official intra-college tournaments will be held in this platform, through which winners will become eligible to

be selected into the official esports team of the respective college.

This exact same structure is followed in other universities as well which is now connected by a single platform, where the inter-college competitions are going to be held.

The community on this platform majorly consists of 3 types of users:

Managers: the elected college representative who manages esports events in the college and acts as the functioning manager of the official college team.

Pro Players and other gamers : Pro players ar the gamers who get selected into the team and participate in the official intercollegiate esports events; The other gamers are gamers who still play games amongst other users of the community and participate in intra-college events.

Lurkers: The people who don't play many games often but prefer to watch other gamers play and stream their games, their mode of entertainment revolves around consumption of video games streaming.

Every game that is played is automatically recorded and the players can wish to stream their gaming hours to the college community allowing other people to watch it like in platforms such as twitch or mixer.

The main motive of this community is to simulate the esports industry at a college level just like how 'Model United Nations conferences ' are an approximate simulation of ''United Nations conferences". It helps students assume roles and gain experience as how they'd need to function if they were actually Pro-gamers and team managers.

This allows the students to learn about the industry dynamics by being a part of it without the risks and repercussions involved in the actual scenario. Students get informed about the strategies that they have to follow assuming a role and how their actions and the said strategies might reflect in their career.

The official teams of the college will bring togetherness amongst the college community just like how IPL teams bring people of a specific state together.

Unlike in other sports and cultural events, where official teams of colleges travel to a different college to participate in competitions, in this version of event, students can compete against each other while sitting in their dorm rooms or houses, while other students of the can watch their official team compete against another college and support them and cheer them virtually, because the tournament matches are streamed in the platform itself. This is similar to how we watch our favourite IPL clubs or football clubs play in their respective championships.

The official college team will have their official twitch and YouTube accounts where the videos ar posted in public for people outside the platform to see.

The players will have their profiles pages with all their statistics, videos, and progress that other students can follow.

The entire structure of the platform essentially brings together a community of gamers and video game enthusiasts who can actively share knowledge with each other. Now this single medium can be used to communicate more information about the industry. It opens up possibilities to hold virtual workshops, talks by professionals to educate and develop the existing community.

The student councils can share the information outside of this community as well, inviting other people to join the community.

Once this community is developed enough, it will have all the information about performances of gamers in

the participating colleges, along with their streamed videos, and the performances of the managers.

This community can be opened up to the actual esports companies who can contact colleges to hire students or sponsor the gamers, opening the students to the industry and several other professionals who would be essential for their career in esports and gaming.

Over time, the development of the community, the communications and information in form of posters, snippets, articles and any other resources shared on thee platform will lead to a better informed sheet of students who are going to be better equipped and trained to start a career in the gaming or esports industry.

The existence of such a community in the college will not go unseen by other students and the potential popularity and hype may help spread awareness to other students who aren't directly part of the community.

A nation-wide championship across colleges which is constantly streamed on all popular streaming websites will attract other non-participating colleges to the platform, and hence eventually build a wider network of colleges.

I believe this will not only help normalise gaming as a hobby and an actual career path, but also eventually motivate the college students to contribute in related aspects of the industry such as game development, and other software development involved, as they start their careers and maybe eventually set-up their own companies or institutions.

Needs and Inspirations

Managers:

1. Should have complete control over setting up practices and other schedules for the team
2. Managers across colleges should be able to meet
3. Managers should be allowed to set up tournaments within the college

4. A dashboard view to manage the team, including new applications by games and setting up rosters for tournaments
5. Filtration process to handle the number of applications for teams
6. Should be able to invite gamers into the team
7. Team management and scheduling should not feel too different from how it already works using multiple apps like zoom, WhatsApp and Facebook messenger.

Gamers:

1. The players should feel similar to how current sports and cultural teams feel.
2. Players want to track their progress and stats, now that it's simpler to do it in a virtual medium where all information is recorded.
3. Teams should bring people together like in IPL
4. Mechanics should closely resemble how esports industry works
5. Transparency in how the team is selected.
6. Fan-following feature, which allows people to be closely followed
7. College should have an official team page

Lurkers:

1. Want to easily contact people who they follow
2. Watching should not be restricted to their own colleges
3. Should be able to contribute to college community
4. Lack of participation in games or tournaments shouldn't lock any important features
5. Even newer players should be able to join the team if they are talented enough

Experience goals

1. Gamers:

1.1. Match structures and formalities shouldn't overload the gamers or the players

1.2. Experience should be close to get on a PC and playing a game like people usually do.
Just like when college football or cricket teams decide to play a match, it isn't different from any other kind of matches they play

1.3. Social gaming should b easier and simpler than any current platform.
There isn't a current dedicated platform for social gaming, as its consider a sub-feature of general gaming. But with the current increase in community driven games, more attention is given to allowing users to play socially, including cross-play, better intuitive user experience to play with parties, etc.

1.4. Recording and streaming should not add mental load on players or gamers who wish to do it.

2. Managers:

2.1.Scheduling should be simpler or similar to current planning flows which include a workflow across apps such as Whatsapp, Google meet, calendar, Zoom etc.

2.2.Overall dashboard view should be simple and similar to existing dashboard UIs in games and roster managing apps.

2.3. Easy to manage messages and queries

3. Lurkers:

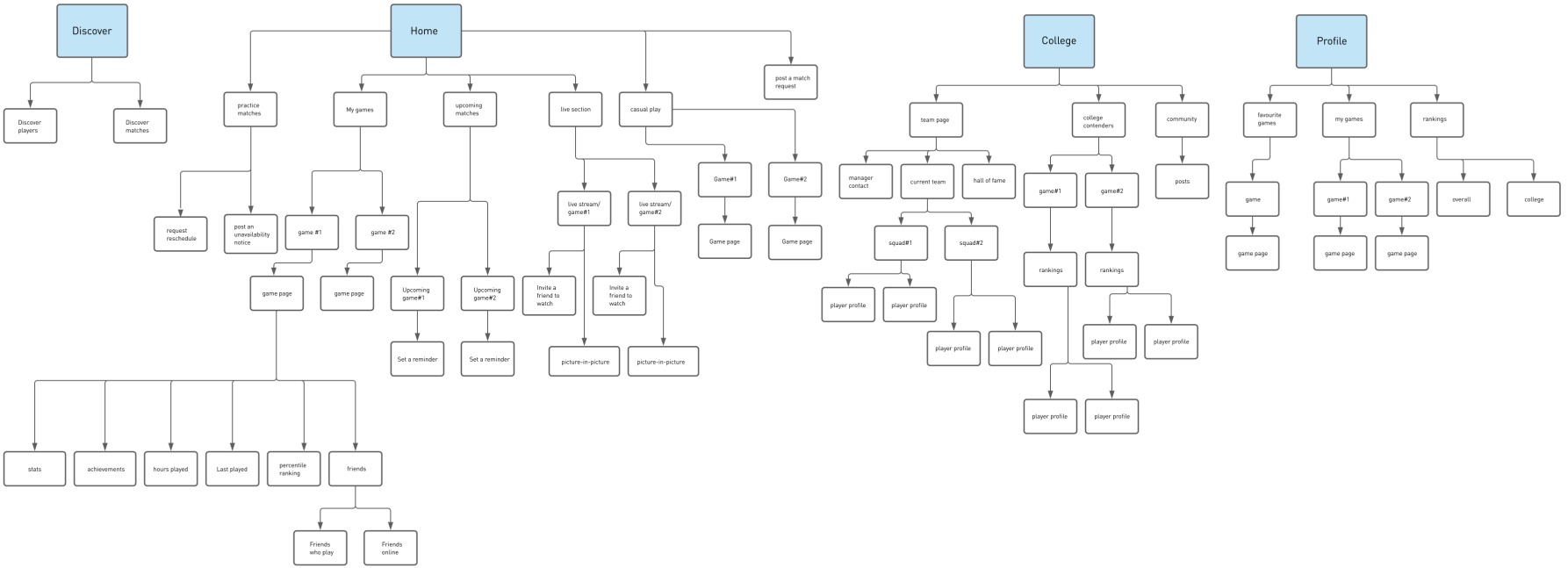
3.1. Simple discovery

3.2. Simple player following and stream watching mechanics

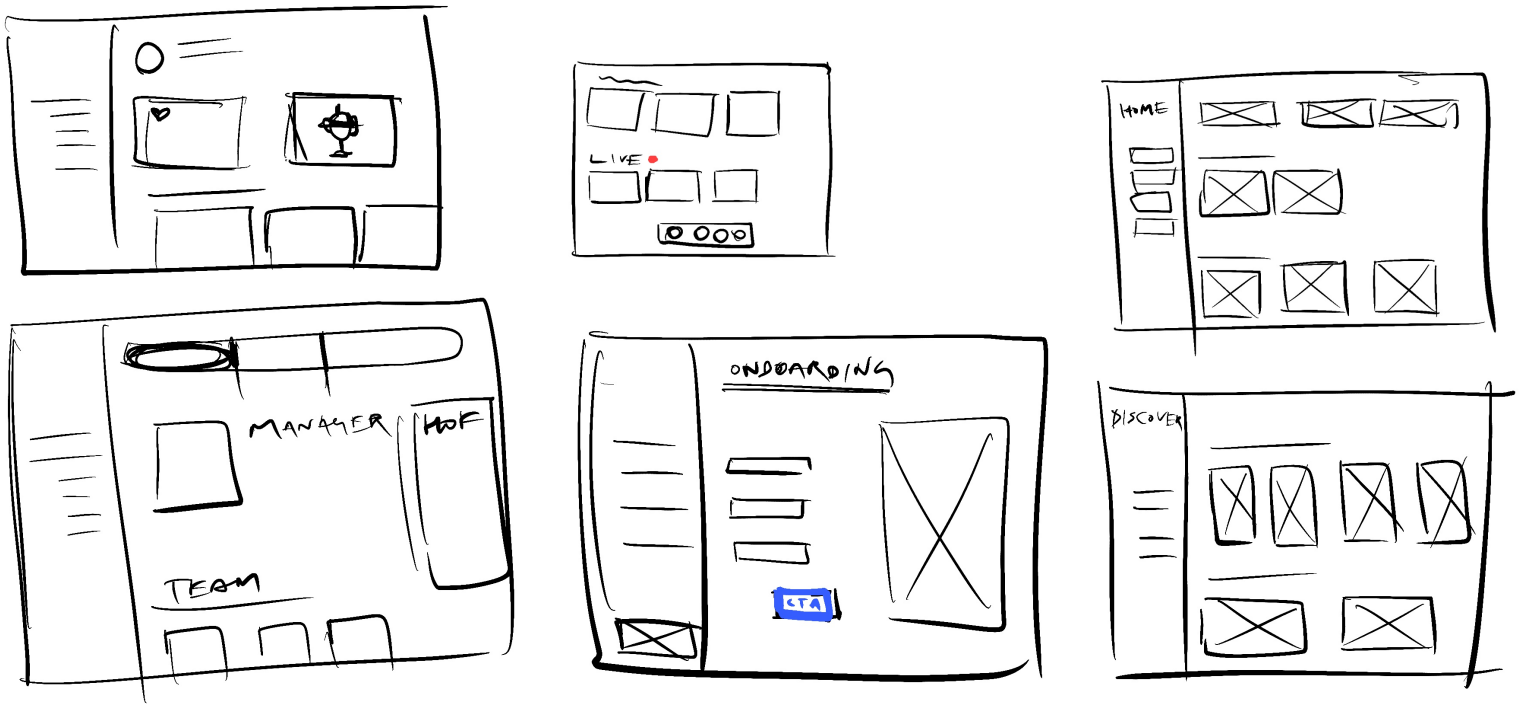
3.3.Easy to covert to ranked gaming, hence implement a casual model

3.4.Comparable experience to existing gaming platforms and streaming platforms.

Information architecture

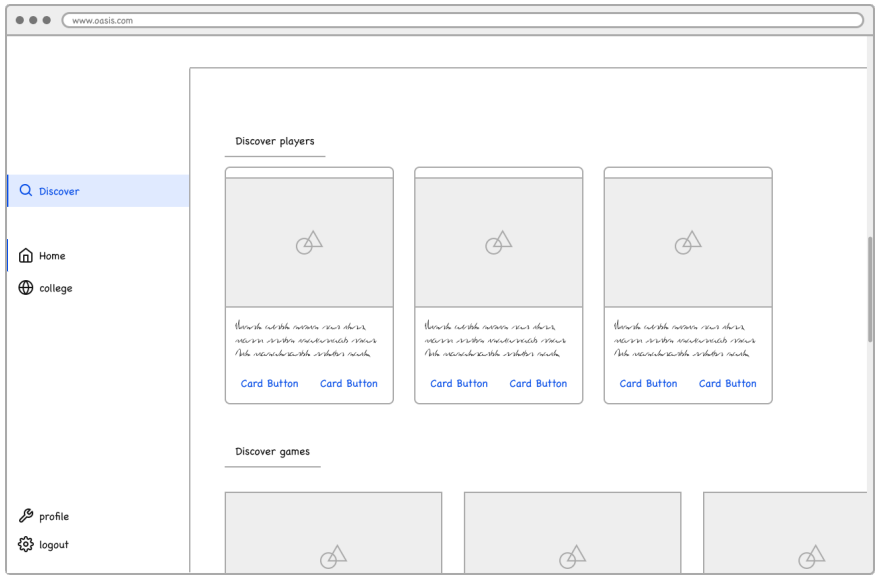


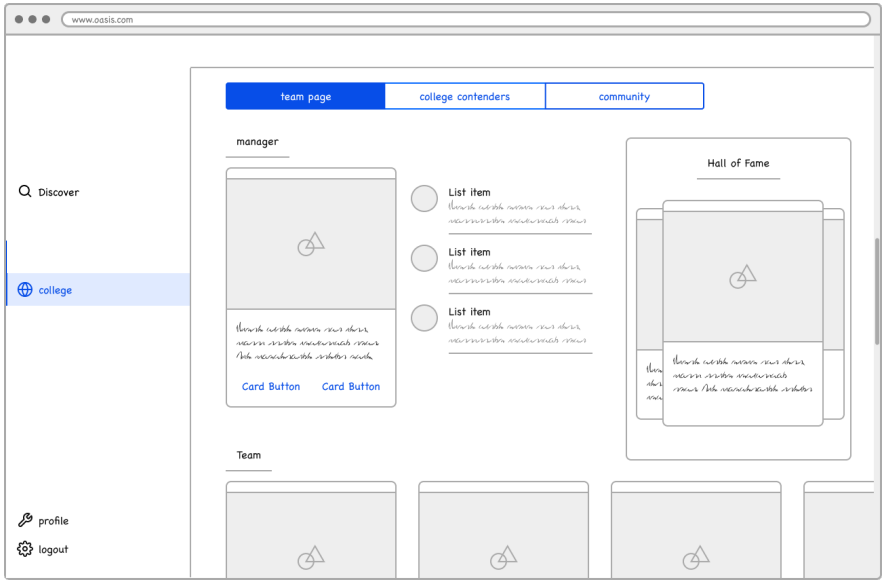
Wireframes



Low-fidelity screens

Based on the needs of the users, scenarios of use cases and priority of features, an information architecture was planned, on the basis of which wireframes were created and eventually low fidelity screens and prototypes to understand how the UI may look.





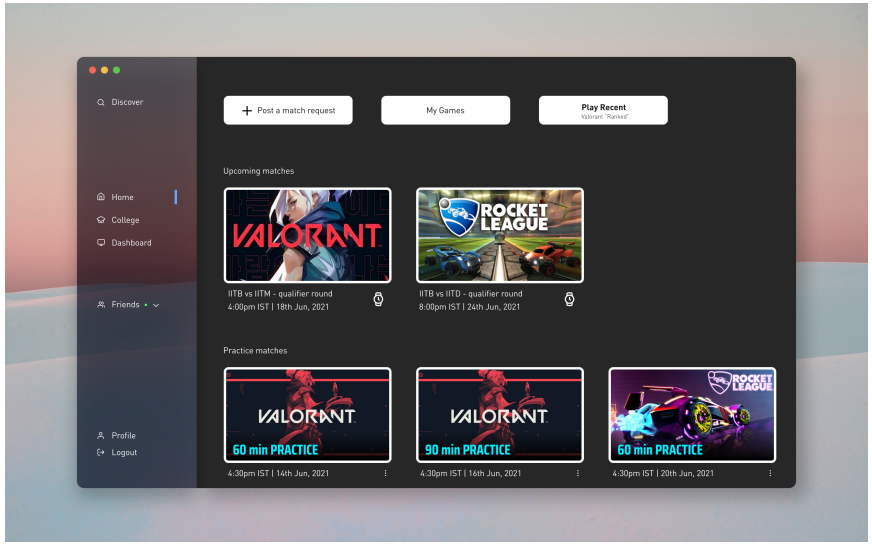
Some key features of the platform

Home:

The home section is the landing screen for all the users, this section is adaptive depending on the user type.

For managers and pro players, the ‘upcoming matches’ are the most important kind of matches,

because they are the scheduled games which affect their championship scores, hence its the first carousel in the screen. The users can also add a reminder to any upcoming matches which will send push notifications to remind the player to prepare for the scheduled event.



Home section also contains a quick link to all the games a person plays and upcoming practice matches which are scheduled by the manager of the team.

A user can post “an unavailability notice” for practices sessions or “request reschedule”, if enough people request for a reschedule, then the manager may do so as required.

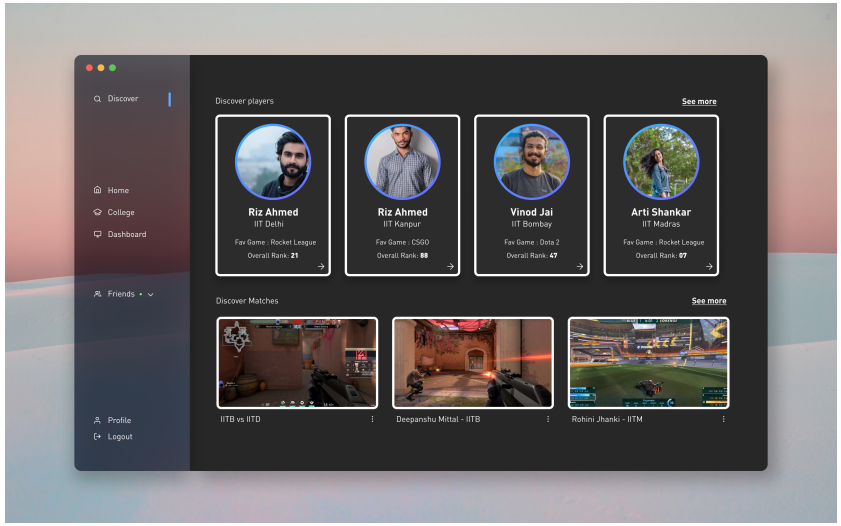
The next carousel is for the live matches which are being streamed by other players, in case the users aren’t willing to play any matches at the moment and just want to spectate. The live section ranks videos by popularity and videos from their own college get priority over popularity till a certain limit. The users can also invite their friends to watch a live stream together.

The home page also has a quick link to the last game and game type that you played, and another quick button to post a match request which people can find under matches in the community page.

Discover:

The discover section allows gamers and managers to discover new players in their college and in other colleges to scout, or to network with.

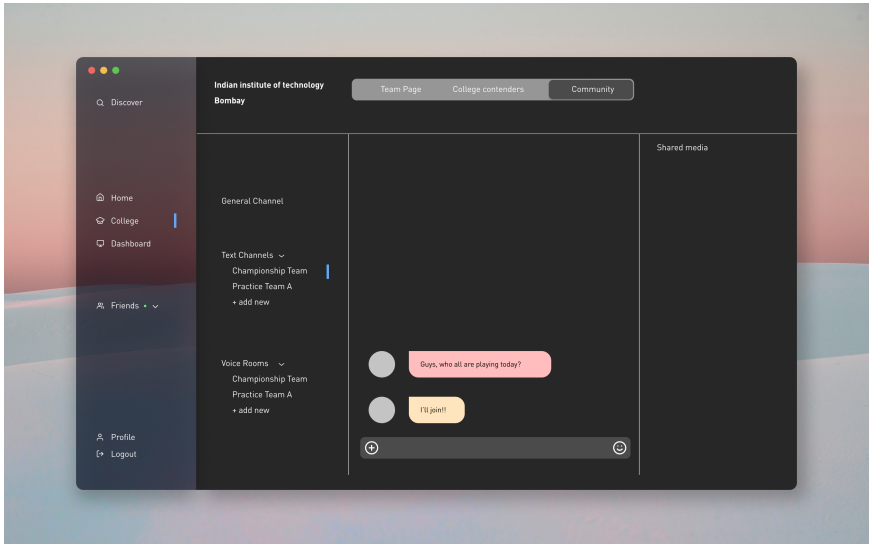
The discover section also allows users to watch exciting games that they might have missed but was watched extensively by other users on the platform.



Users can use go to the match section and discover more people, the ones who played that specific game.

College:

The college section has 3 pages - the team page, which has all the information about the active team of the college, the contact information of the members and the manager. It also has the hall of fame section which contains all the important records and achievements by students of one's college.



The second page is called 'college contenders', which is a dedicated page to live track all the gamers in a college and their performance and their relative ranking with each other, which gives every user an idea about their chances of getting accepted into the official team

and, how well should the individuals be performing to increase their chances. These statistics are available for all competitive games.

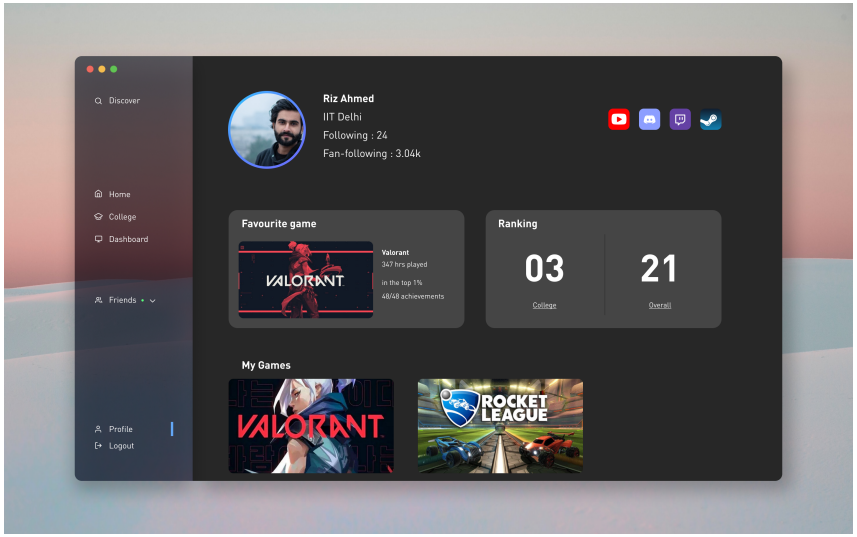
The third page is the community page, which acts like a wall of the entire community, people can share messages, links, videos, pictures, etc with the entire community through this channel.

Profile:

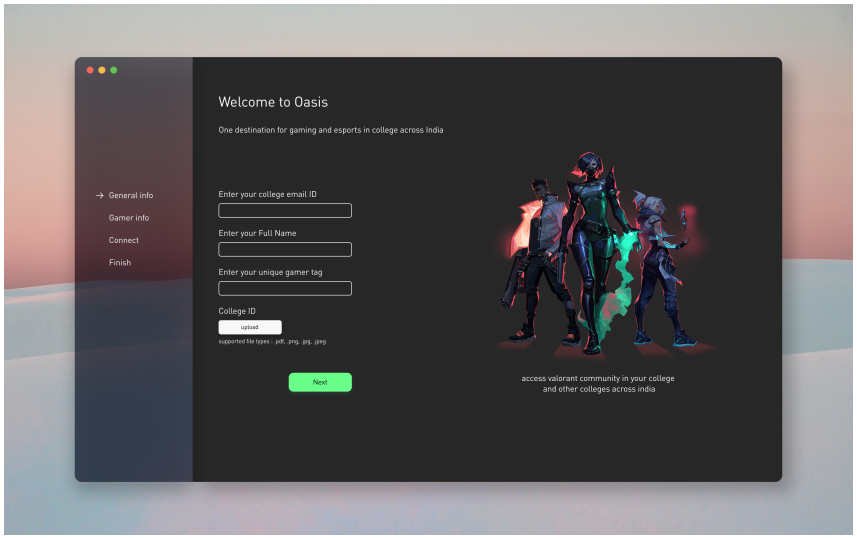
The profile page has all the performance tracker for each game played by the user. Most gamers usually have one main game that they stick with which has more ‘played hours’ than the others. This is shown as favourite game in the profile page so when others visit your profile they have that information about you.

Another section tells the ranking at that moment in your college and overall in the entire community.

By going to individual game page, from any section, the users can find the friends who play that game and

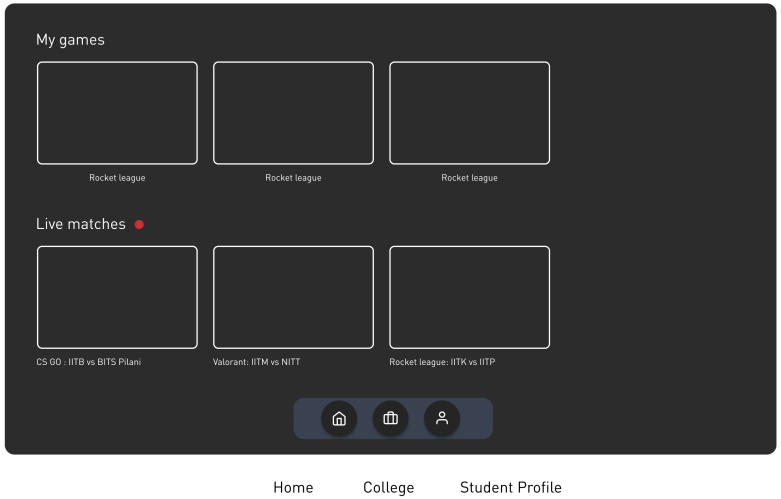


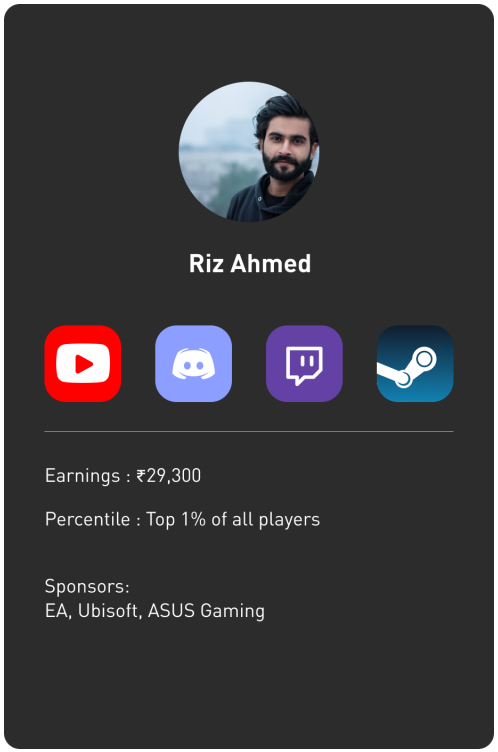
also the friends who are playing the game at the given instance.



Very simple and short onboarding flow using the college ID and general information.

Here are some screen UI iterations





Branding

The organisation which manages the community and holds the competitions and events is called ‘Oasis gaming’, its an ode to the pop-culture fiction called “ready player one”, written by Ernest Cline, a story which

revolves around a 21st century protagonist in a virtual reality world who wins a game tournament to inherit the creator's fortune. The VR world in the fiction is called 'The Oasis'. The platform which will be used by the colleges to conduct the championships is called 'Oasis'.

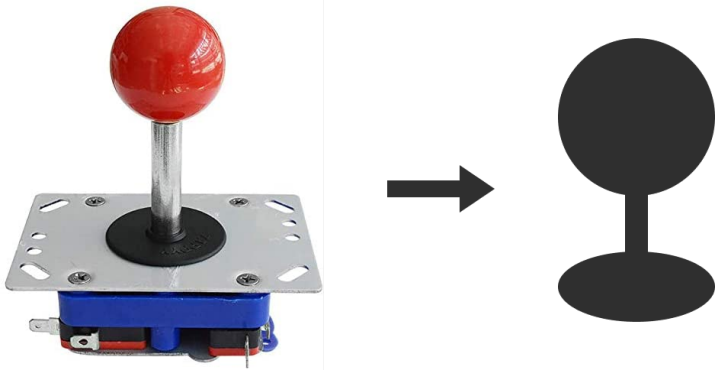




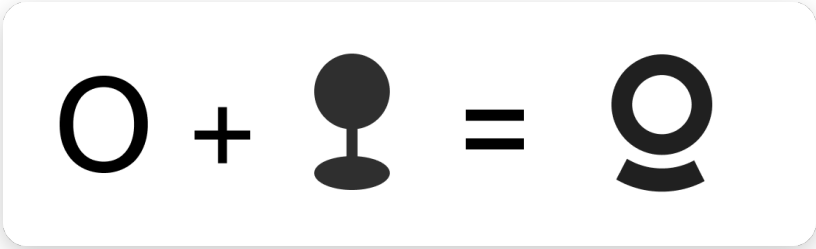
Oasis gaming

The logo is a combination of the letters 'O' as in 'Oasis' and the abstraction of the joystick in an arcade which is one of the first iterations of the modern day gaming controllers used in consoles.

The logo needed to be simple and minimal, but unique and recognisable. A guideline that I used for myself was, the logo should be simple enough to be used as a laptop sticker (for the context of computer gaming ofcourse)



Developing a cohesive and professional brand identity is an important part of any effective campaign strategy. Creating a brand identity requires research and



attention to detail in order to develop a style that successfully meets the goals of a campaign and gives off the appropriate message.

In the current scenario, where newer gaming companies are coming up frequently, and many have already set deep roots into the society, its not easy to distinguish yourself from the sea of existing and new organisations.

I researched on the major existing video game related companies which are becoming popular with the young adults to strategise to create a unique identity for the organisation.

The popular household names of gaming included xbox by Microsoft, Nintendo, Steam and playstation by



Explorations for logo

Sony. Users tend to relate the the corresponding colours to these brands when it comes to gaming.

The newer entrants to the space was Apple, Google, Facebook, Amazon which were identified by the colours as in the pictures.

It was important to stay unique, at the same time convey a certain set of emotions to the target users.





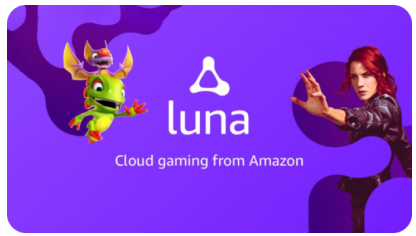












Luckily, the college students being a niche and unique set of target users, it was fairly simple to decide what emotions should be conveyed to the users and how to make it relatable for them.

The keywords I decided to work with were-

- **New** : Since it was a novel idea to connect colleges over a platform to conduct inter college events, I want the users to feel the that it is a fresh idea and it would be worth exploring
- **Energetic** : Since the users are college students, I wanted them to be excited about the idea of a new community that they can use to express themselves, connect with people with similar interests.
- **Trustworthy** : since gaming was believed to have more harmful affects than beneficial ones, and the awareness campaign revolves around the positive side of the industry, I wanted users to perceive a this fresh venture is trustworthy.

Considering these factors, while staying unique in the sea of companies I decided to go with a gradient of pop blue and purple.

Oasis gaming

#39B8FF #6974FF

For the typeface, I experimented with several fonts which convey similar emotions, and finally decided to go with DIN Pro.



DIN Pro Regular	**DIN Pro Bold**
Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz 0123456789	**Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii** **Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr** **Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz** **0123456789**



Branding in context



Goodies for brand awareness

Social media Campaign

Since a significant part of the target audience spend most of the Tim in front of screens- laptops and smartphones, the awareness campaign will be best carried out through social media.

Phase 1 : Considering there is a pandemic going on, thee first phase of the awareness campaign is going to b completely through the platform and social media.

The organisation will design and share infographics in the community section of the platform, so the that first-contact users will be informed about topics such as opportunities in the industry, job skill requirements and other useful resources that the community might benefit from.

There are still students who fall under the target demographic who aren't onboarded on the platform, but will be interested. For this specific set of users, we'll be conducting the awareness campaign via social media like channels like Instagram, and Facebook which occupies majority of the screen time of the target users and secondly, channels such as the twitter and LinkedIn which has lesser screen time but a huge portion of the target demographic still spend time on.

Phase 2 : To grow from this stage, we need to expand to people who are not interested in the video game industry, but could be at some point, for this specific purpose, we will need to conduct workshops, festivals, conferences with the help of the existing communities.

Of course, this will only be possible after the pandemic, but eventually it can be done.

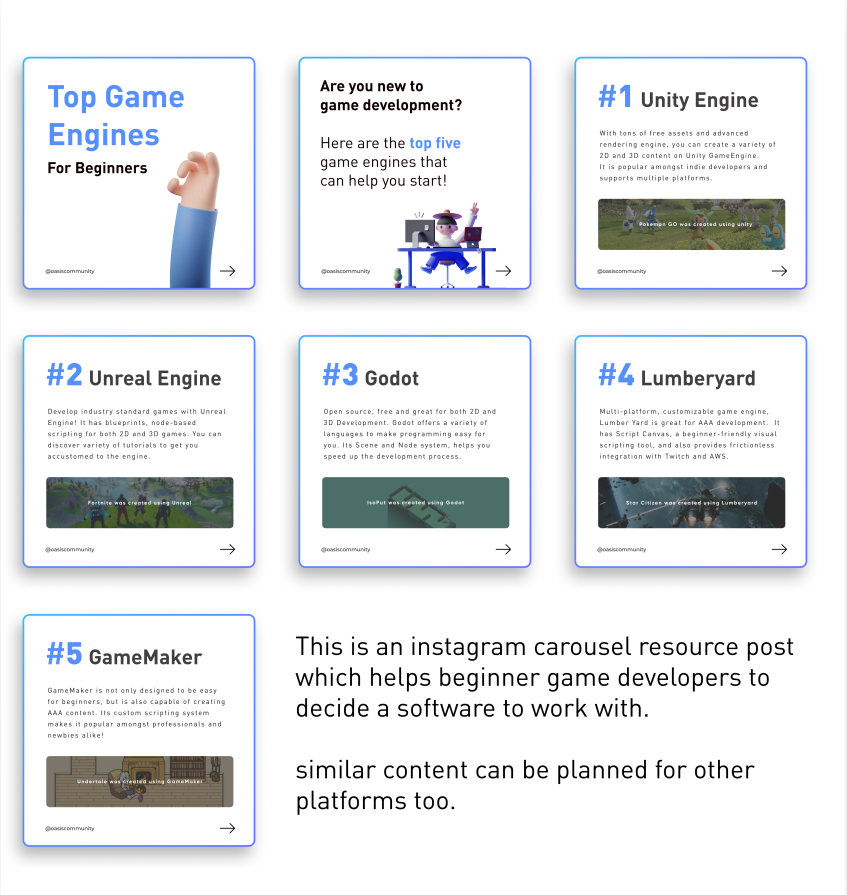
Together, using this hybrid strategy, wee can reach out to maximum people over years as we develop an awareness drive to help people get over the misinformation revolving around the gaming industry and realise the benefits, importance and most importantly the role every individual starting with the college students in India, can play in building of the industry.

Social media posts

Social media posts can have general facts along the interest of raising awareness.



Or it could be a resourceful post like an Instagram carousel post which can be about software development in gaming.



Different social media platforms and guidelines for the feed posts:

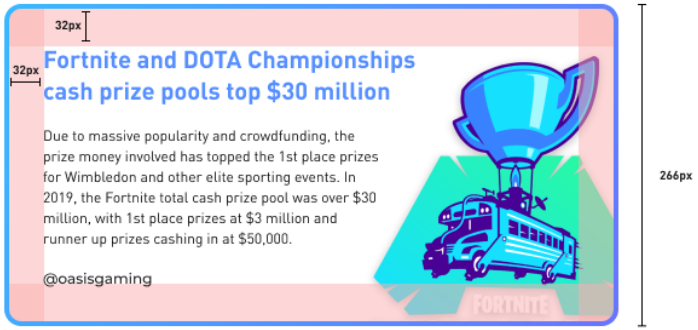
- The heading should not exceed 3 lines, hence the copy needs to be written accordingly.



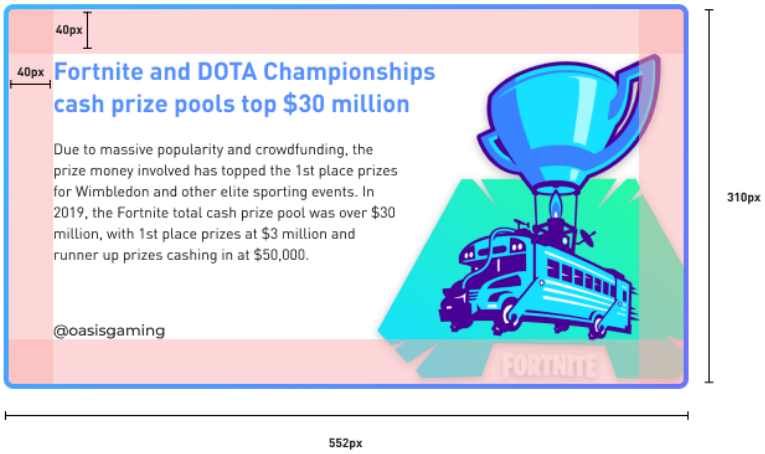
Design iterations

- Resource posts should have text covering more area than the supporting graphic
- The colours and typefaces are as mentioned earlier.

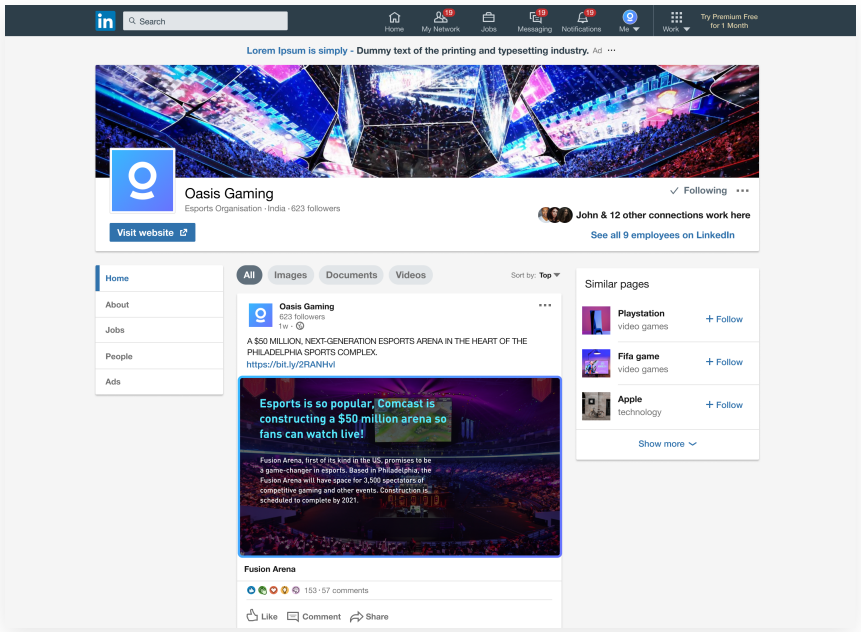
Twitter banner : social media post to raise awareness



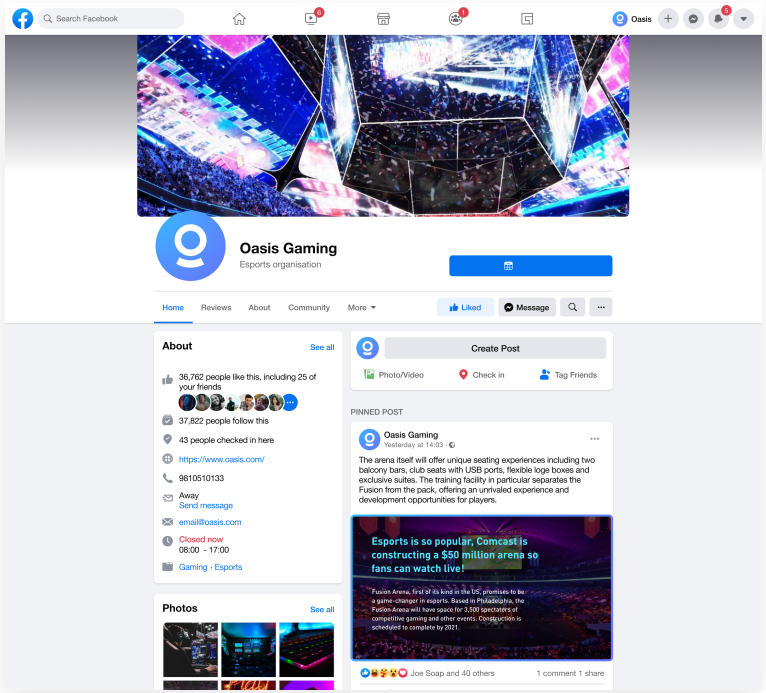
Linkedin banner : social media post to raise awareness



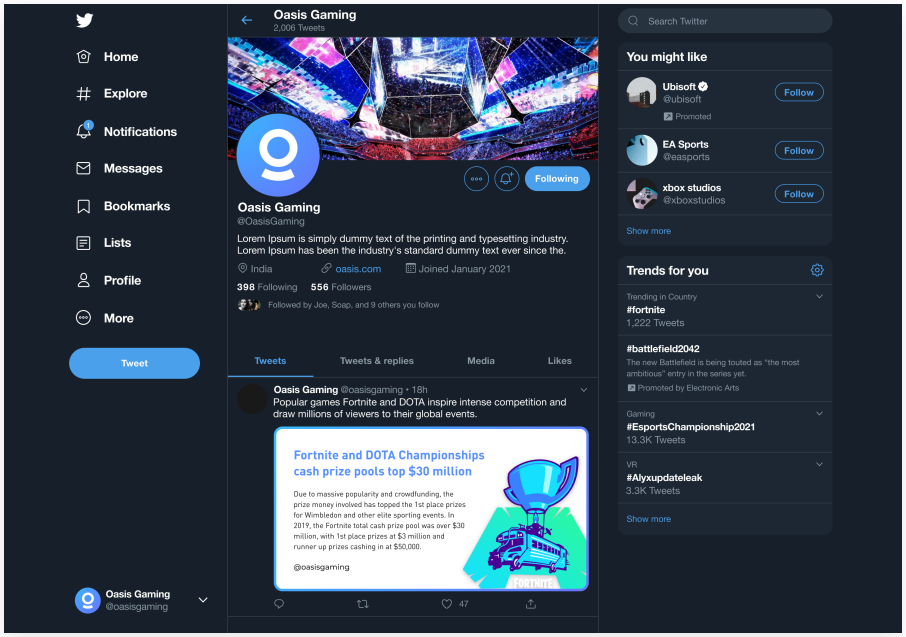
- The supporting graphic colours should not visually overpower the default color theme.



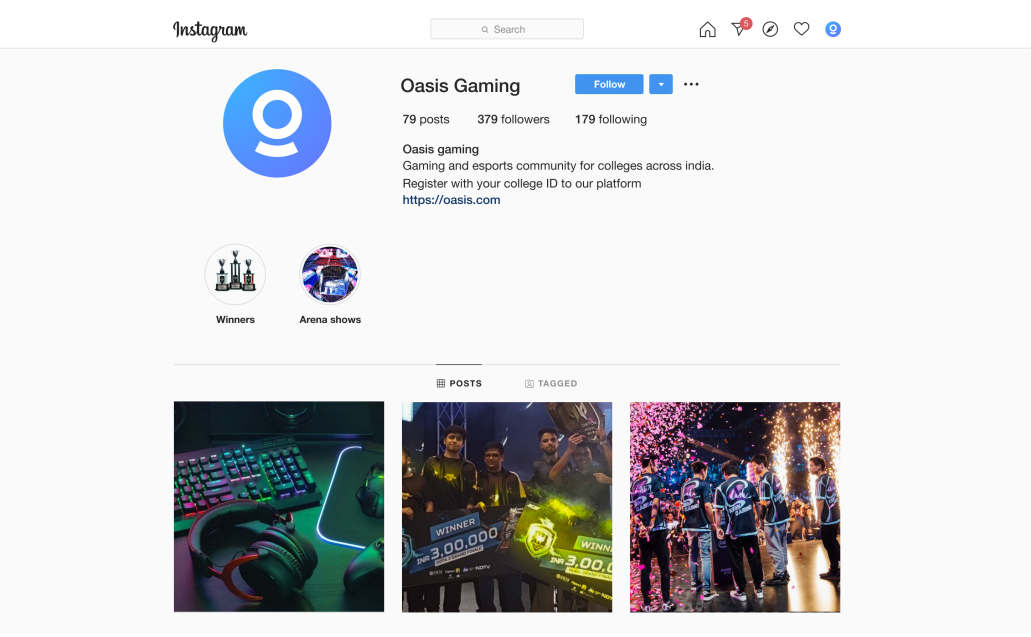
Linkedin post in the UI context



Facebook wall in the UI context



Twitter post in the UI context



Instagram feed in the UI context

Discussion

In the current scenario, it was difficult to isolate the interested individuals or the channels to use to reach out to people to conduct a mass social impact awareness campaign.

Most awareness campaigns require a constant stream of efforts and interventions, which over time changes the society. Things which aren't talked about in public, aren't discussed in public naturally ends up like a taboo, it invites spread of misinformation, as the perpetrators of the information aren't well informed and

the lack of constructive debate or discussion which as a consequence doesn't invite challenge affecting the social dynamics in a way such that extreme opinions and narratives gain tendency to be perpetrated faster.

One of the underlying pillars of the strategy proposed in this project is to make people talk about it with others more often than before, and the way it was done was by bringing an unorganised, distributed college community to a single platform where the member have a sense of belonging and togetherness.

The activities conducted within the community is not private to the community, hence, it finds its ways in form of celebration, disappointment, or competition to people outside the community, gradually inviting them to participate in the activities.

Imagine a scenario in which a typical common room of a hostel has an table tennis match going on between two hostellers, the cheering and the commune participation from students around will incite curiosity in students who may not have been interested in a game of table tennis.

The same scenario for a gaming which was once done in hostel rooms alone by individual students which led them nowhere, now will be streamed publicly on the internet, which could be screened in a hostel common room TV. Gradually bringing people together into celebrating the wins of their fellow classmates who might be part of the official esports team of the respective college.

The energy and atmosphere formed by this scenario is incomparable to students sitting in their own rooms playing by themselves and when more and more people find out that every student irrespective of the person being a gaming enthusiast or not, is equally invited to participate in the tournaments, it will attract attention and eventually participation, hence growing the community.

This was the first step towards awareness, grabbing the attention, bringing everyone together with a cause to relate amongst themselves, in front of the stage so that now, the announcements can be made, metaphorically speaking.

Once we have a central channel with which we can reach out to a huge group of people with similar interests, goals and motives, we can start the secondary awareness campaign– by sharing resources, networks, facts about the reality of the industry, by making the content crisp and shareable so that over time, the activities, the discussions, the micro-communities, the stakeholders of the entire community will act together in raising awareness.

Since, in this specific scenario, the target users are tech-savvy students who spend majority of their screen time of social media platforms, like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, the awareness campaigns can be conducted on the said social media platforms. At a micro level, this strategy is not effective, but at scale where this system is connected across dozens to eventually hundreds of Indian colleges with several thousands of students in each college, the community strategy will be extremely effective, compared to any other advertisement strategy.

Over time the community will develop by itself by where the members take it, the 'Oasis gaming' organisation will take care of the vision and the fundamental pillars of ideology upon which the campaign and the movement is based and will ensure that the community will not derail from this.

The centralised platform will also empower the creators and other stakeholders of the community by making them accessible to external forces such as companies or professionals who might want to help, sponsor or contribute to the community as a whole or individuals who are talented enough to stand out.

Physical events can't be held right now during pandemic conditions, hence it'll be easy to hold virtual

events as the target group and the stakeholders will be used to primarily using virtual and digital means to connect and as the pandemic settles, more exciting physical conferences, festivals or other such events can be held.

A lot of students initially were scared to try for careers in gaming since they didn't have any role models they can look upto and interact with directly. Their role models were all from different countries, getting inspired by them felt superficial for the students. Students had no clue how it feels to be in the gaming industry and hence they'd go for a safer bet, which in most cases of my primary research was engineering, because they had relatives or friends or seniors in the industry to mentor them or guide them, and hence it didn't seem unfamiliar or scary anymore.

The esports simulation format will significantly train the users in a safe environment for a potential career path in the gaming industry.

Connecting with different people who they can personally be acquainted by, and helping each other, inspiring and learning from each other will further empower the users.

Due to the pandemic and the restricted timeline during which the development of the platform could not be done, hence the exact drawbacks are upto speculation. But, I did manage to contact and connect 16 different colleges across India, and connect them over a system of existing platforms such as discord and slack to conduct an inter-college esports championship across 3 different games. For which, we've already laid foundation for setting up up esports clubs in the respective colleges along with an esports manager or convener.

The interest shown by the students was very overwhelming and surely is more motivating than anything else. We're planning to conduct the tournament during November vacations of the colleges as a pilot for this awareness campaign.

I'm sure there ar going to be some setbacks during implementation, I'm positive about dealing with them as they come.

I believe that this project can also be an inspiration to other similar ideas which requires bringing a certain niche of people together to a single platform, which once was unorganised and distributed, making them more accessible and hence making it simpler for other people to join the community and act as a contributing member, such as reading clubs, or painting club or any other such hobby which people don't want to try or are afraid to try for whatever reasons.

One of the unique advantages of this solution is that it fits into the target users general schedule. The students were already playing games but it was entirely unmonitored and didn't lead them anywhere. With the platform, there is purpose to the time they spend gaming and now that it is monitored via the app, with research and work, features can be implemented so that users take timely breaks and don't get addicted to playing for several hours continuously, which was also a recurring fear with playing video games.

Conclusion

The perfect social impact intervention for awareness is about continuous and persistent efforts and accessing the right channels to communicate something. Using the college community, we can use social media to share the awareness campaign in the respective college clubs/ societies/ student communities. Using both the platform and the developed student community across colleges, a good awareness drive can be initiated.

This platform only acts as a medium, but using it rightly is a whole different challenge. Encouraging these communities to develop over time and work together, acting as a driving force to raise awareness in the community and beyond the niche to other students who

might be interested will naturally increase the rate of awareness.

Stories of successful students will go around in the student communities inviting more people to it and hence developing as a whole over time.

The successful students will be inspired to want to contribute back to the community where their roots lie and could probably help by contributing in ways like connecting professional networks with the community.

This is a very common trend in student alumni networks who contribute back by giving endowments, connecting professional networks, or bringing up hiring opportunities. With more work towards awareness other than the proposed strategy, the way society perceives the activity that is ‘gaming' will change over years to come and India will be able to contribute well to the global industry before it's too late.

Since the project is in the social impact space, the effects of the campaign and intervention would be seen after some period of time, and there are no direct metrics or indicators that I could have used right now with a small sample to access the effectiveness of the design intervention.

Moreover, due to timeline restrictions and covid pandemic, the strategy proposed could not be developed into an actual platform or evaluated by professionals. The focus of the holistic approach was to figure out how it pans out in real life with actual communities of students and hence, I reached out to 16 colleges in India to join a pilot program in which I’ll be using a system of existing platforms such as slack and discord as an alternate to the platform proposed. The competitions are going to be held during November-December, when autumn semester ends for colleges and students have vacations.

Till then we are closely working together with student councils and college administration to setup esports and gaming clubs and societies in the colleges

with whom we'll run the pilot and evaluate the proposed strategy over time.

My learnings

My personal goal in this project was to learn about brand strategies and implementing a thoughtful process and strategy to create a brand identity for an interaction design project or a social impact project.

I learned how to conduct brand strategy research and how to convert findings and insights into design deliverables. I learned how to formulate insights by empathising with the user and creating solutions which fit into the user's life.

Taking a holistic approach towards problem solving than the direct approach that I've used till date in my projects was a new learning for me which I'll be able to use and experiment with, in my upcoming projects too.

The primary research and interviews gave me very deep understanding of how individuals in society perceive things very differently according to their upbringing and cultural background.

The secondary research introduced me to rich information about the various requirements and factors involved in a social media campaigns, and how they are planned and implemented.

Studied several case studies of works of popular design firms and professionals and learnt a lot from it.

Overall it was a very rich, informative and enlightening experience for me throughout the project.

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