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Year 3 Digital Media
Interaction Design

How Interaction Design can help tackle Overstimulation

Introduction and Project Goals

My project involves developing a high-fidelity prototype to tackle a social-technological problem, in this case, overstimulation. I will be using Figma to create a mobile app prototype.

The main goal of this project is to develop a user-friendly mobile app prototype using Figma that tackles the issue of being overstimulated. The app will include a 25-minute timer that alternates between work/study periods and short breaks. During the 5-minute break, users will be encouraged to snap a photo of their activity or surroundings using their phone's camera. Following the break, the app will dim the screen for another 25-minute session, reducing the risk of feeling overwhelmed due to screen time. The app aims to provide an easy-to-use experience that motivates users to stick to the timer's schedule and pause regularly. Furthermore, potential enhancements or customisation options will be explored to boost the app's effectiveness in promoting mindfulness and reducing feelings of being overwhelmed. The design of the app prototype will prioritise appeal and coherence while following mobile app design standards.

Overstimulation, or excessive exposure to stimuli, can have detrimental effects. The brain struggles to process overwhelming information or sensory input, leading to stress response, increased cortisol levels, anxiety, irritability, and feeling overwhelmed. Sensory overload can cause discomfort, headaches, and difficulties in processing sensory information, especially for those with sensory disorders like autism spectrum disorder. Constant exposure to notifications and distractions contributes to attention deficits and shorter attention spans. Overstimulation also impairs emotional regulation, disrupts sleep patterns, and can lead to decision fatigue. Ultimately, it negatively impacts well-being, productivity, and overall health, emphasising the importance of implementing techniques to regulate and minimise stimulation.

Designing a Solution

The prototype I have created is inspired by the Pomodoro Technique, a time management strategy created by Francesco Cirillo back in the 1980s. The method centres on the concept of working in sessions known as "pomodoros," typically lasting 25 minutes, followed by brief breaks. These quick breaks, around 5 minutes each, give individuals a chance to relax and recharge, preventing exhaustion and excessive stimulation. After completing a series of four pomodoros, there's a break of 15-30 minutes to offer a substantial period for rest and maintaining a sustainable work rhythm.

The Pomodoro Technique promotes grouping tasks together and tackling them during the sessions. This method helps reduce task switching and cognitive strain associated with shifting between activities, thus minimising overstimulation. Users are advised to keep track of their pomodoros, breaks, and distractions to spot trends, optimise their work-break routine, and make adjustments to enhance concentration and productivity over time. By integrating the Pomodoro Technique into the app design, I intend to offer users an approach for managing their time allocation, task organisation, and digital engagement. Including features such as a timer will assist users in applying this technique. This method has the potential to boost efficiency, alleviate tension, and foster an equilibrium between work and leisure, ultimately lessening the adverse effects of overstimulation.

The central idea drew inspiration from the social media platform BeReal, which encourages users to capture moments from their lives. In contrast to sharing these photos, this model prompts users to take breaks from digital tasks by snapping pictures of their current surroundings during designated breaks. The app follows a work-break routine where users work for a period like 25 minutes, followed by a 5-minute break. During the break, users are encouraged to use their phone's camera to capture an image that reflects their moment and activity. After the break ends, the screen dims for the work session to reduce distractions and enhance concentration. The design of the prototype utilised the Uber UI Toolkit in Figma to provide a user-friendly experience that aligns with established design patterns.

Evaluation

The initial version of the mobile application prototype effectively transforms the BeReal concept of capturing moments into a tool for promoting mindfulness to combat overstimulation. By integrating a design inspired by the Uber UI toolkit along with work-break intervals, photo prompts, and screen dimming features, it creates an environment conducive to managing digital usage. The inclusion of analytics aims to enhance self-awareness and encourage changes in habits. This prototype showcases how technology can tackle challenges such as overstimulation by advocating for breaks, capturing experiences, and minimising visual distractions to support digital wellness. The potential addition of a lecturer monitoring function expands its appeal. With enhancements and user feedback through testing, this application has the potential to evolve into a resource for cultivating healthier interactions with technology.

References

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Cirillo, F. (2006) The Pomodoro Technique.
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Figma kits used:

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https://www.figma.com/community/file/1283187028138772366
https://www.figma.com/community/file/1218349191407367536

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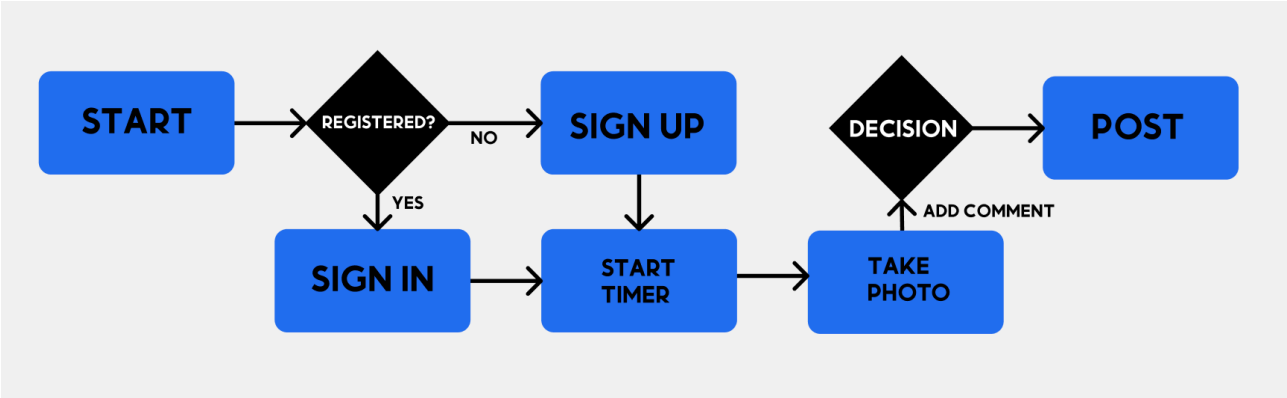
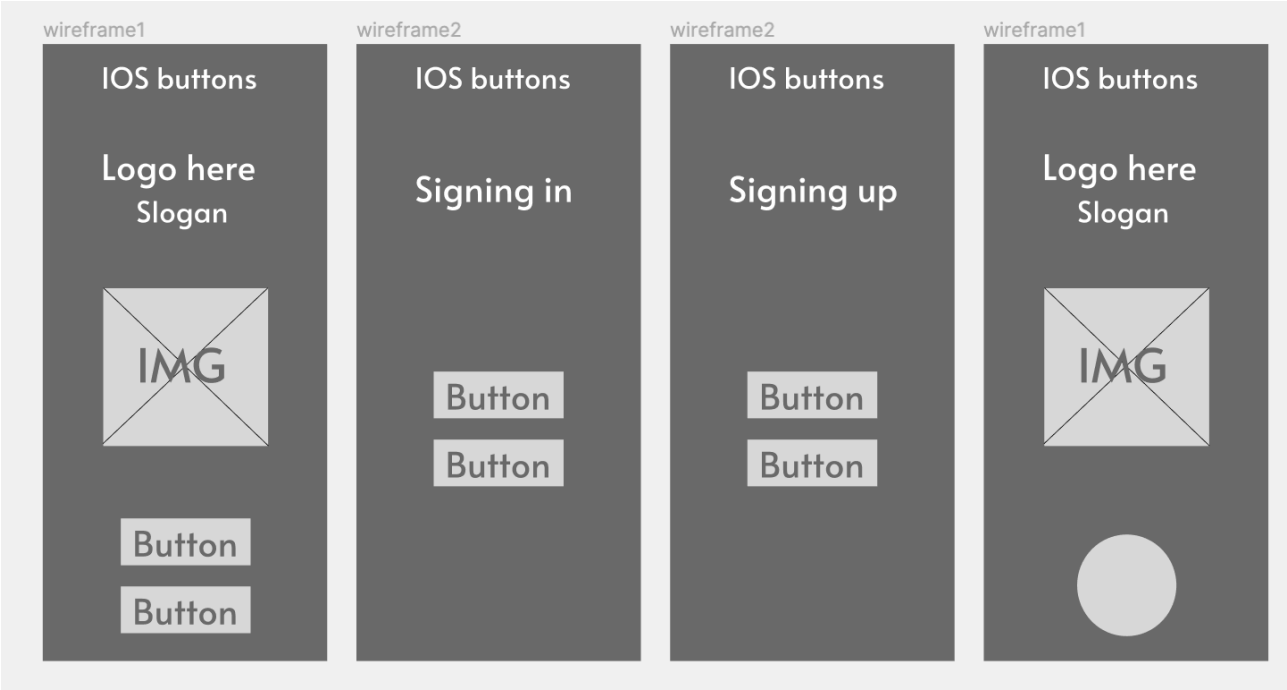
Task flow and wireframes

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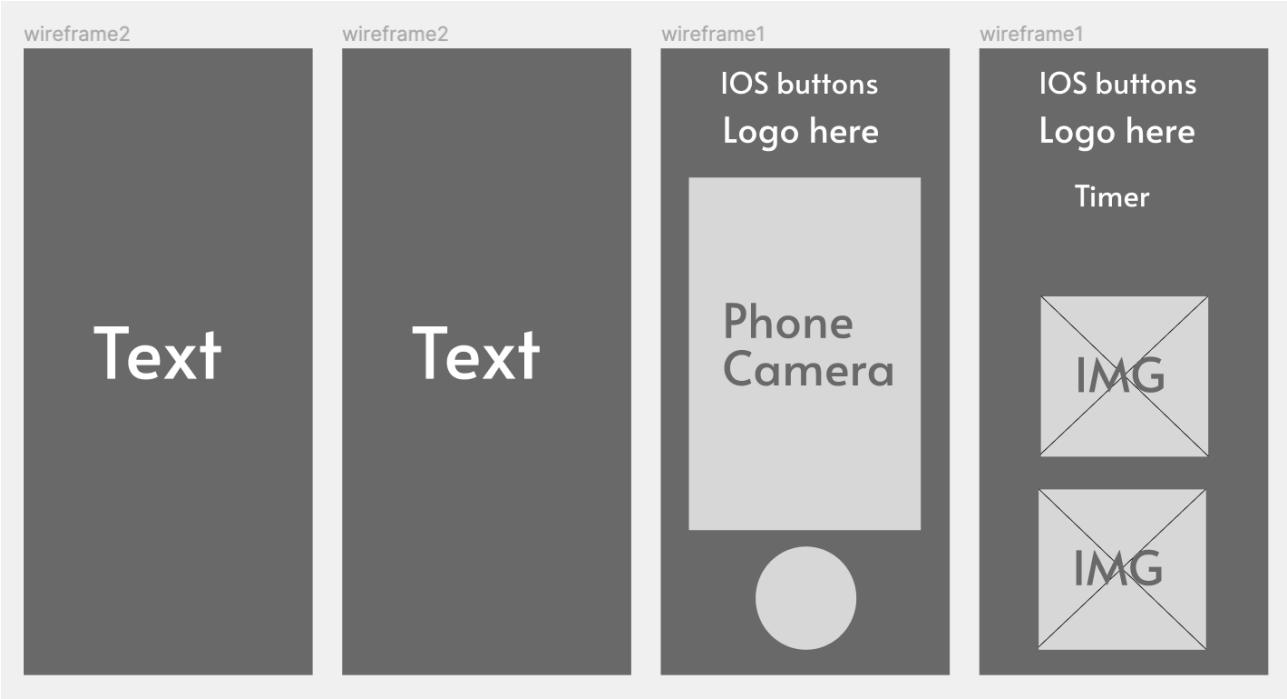
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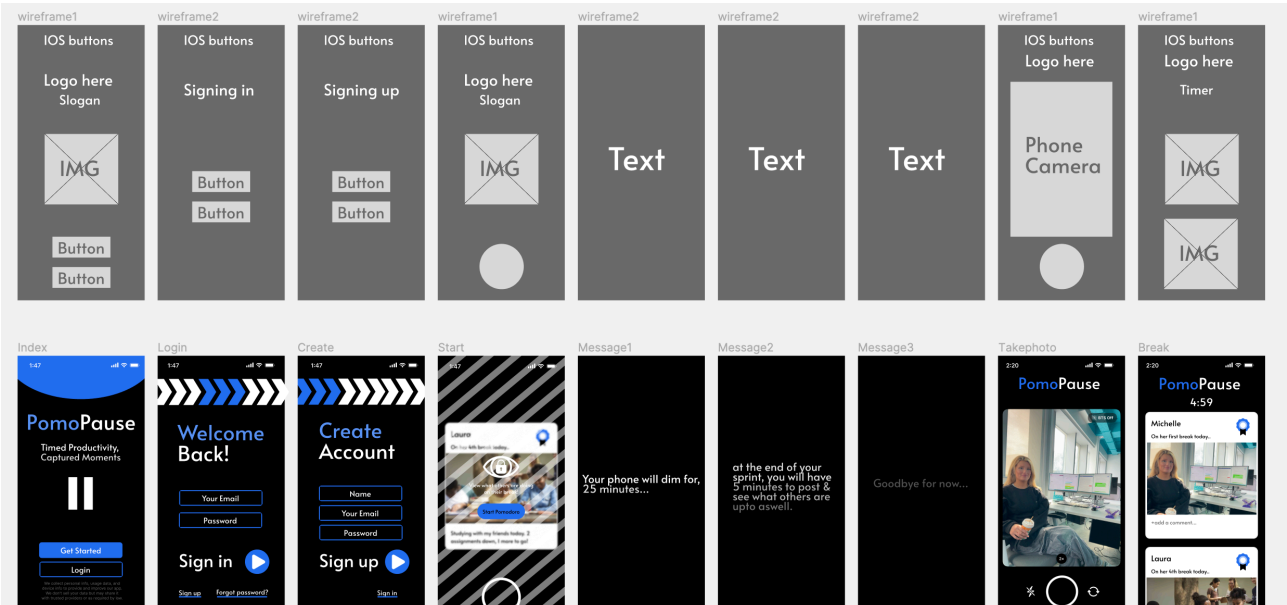
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Michelle
Laura