Target ◎

Research

Strategies that respond to people's emerging needs and help Target navigate the first holiday shopping season since COVID hit.

User research | Strategy design

08/10/2020 - 11/3/2020

Project background
It is a 14-week strategy research project for Target. It was supported by the "Principles and Methods of User Research" course that I took at ID.

My role (Team of 4)
Co-hosted 6 in-depth interviews and 2 workshops. Independently completed the heuristic evaluations for Target mobile app and 3 rounds of usability tests. Contributed to deck research and primary user research.

What is JOY under COVID?

Emerging needs, behaviors and expectations under COVID-19

With the mission of helping all families discover the joy of everyday life, Target had a blockbuster Q2 in 2020, and has adapted to the new challenges for the pandemic.

This coming winter holiday brings a lot of stress and uncertainty.

"This year more than ever, a joyful holiday will be inseparable from a safe one, and we're continuing to adjust our plans to deliver ease, value and the joy of the season in a way that only Target can."
—Brian Cornell, CEO of Target
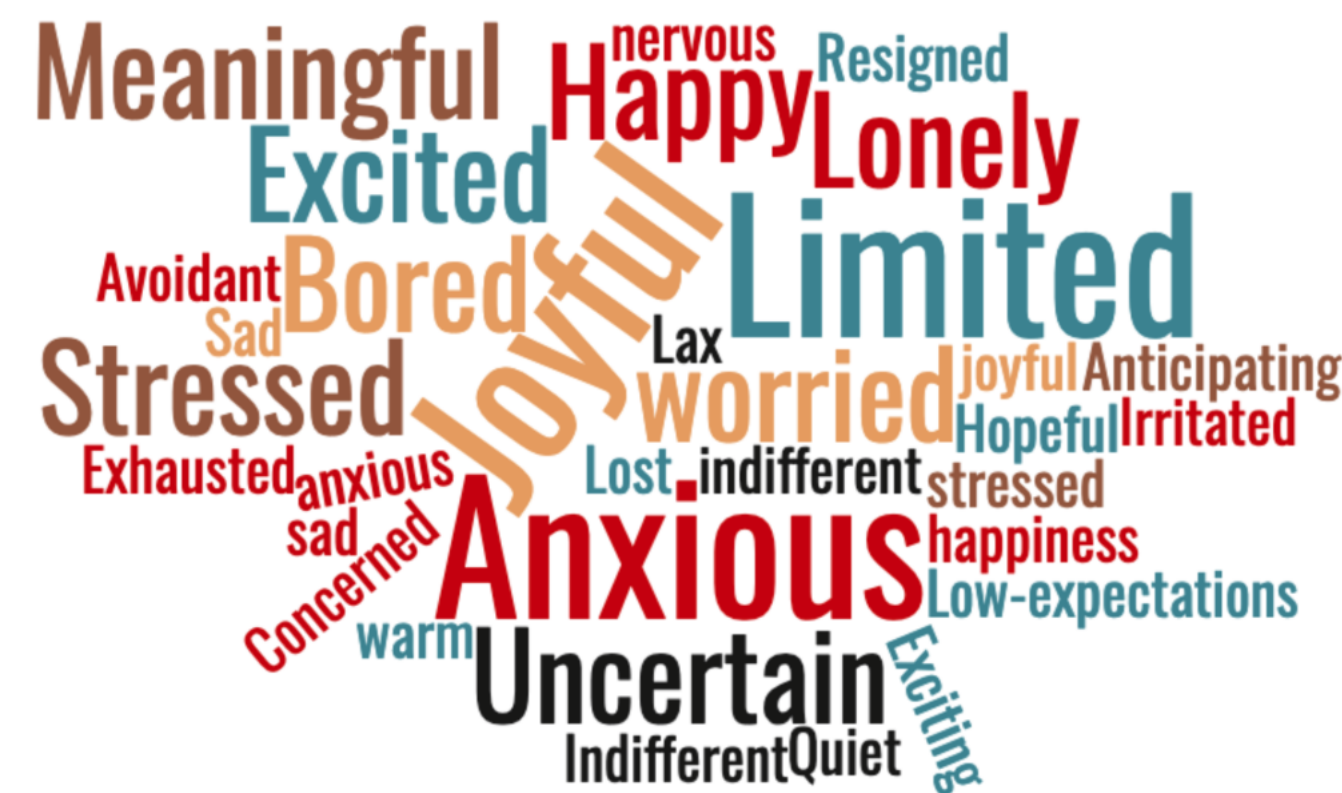
How can Target successfully accommodate the new normal, and bring more joy to guests during the 2020 winter holiday celebration?

Outcome

Four design principles generated based on rounds of qualitative and quantitative researches

"We need Familiar | Enjoyable | Engaging | Emotionally rewarding holidays."

FAMILIAR

**Bring inclusivity.
Help guests see themselves in Target's offerings.**

Provide publicity, guidance, products and services for festivals and traditions of different races. Show how shopping at Target can contribute to their communities,

ENJOYABLE

Recreate the magical store shopping experience online.

Design immersive online shopping experiences. Add interactive and shareable features to bridge guests' needs on social connection and holiday atmosphere.

ENGAGING

Promote crafting and ways for spreading joy.

Following the trend of handmade gifts, Target can provide innovative and practical handmade gift bundles and guides. Encourage guests to use objects as media to keep connected with friends.

EMOTIONALLY REWARDING

Help create shining memories in monotony days.

Become a happy spreader. Show different scenarios of how Target products can guide a better life and help create daily happiness.

Online shopping UX report

Based on our usability tests on Target App, we found that the joy that Target provides does not align with the joy expected by customers.

Q: Can users find holiday products easily?

Users can find Halloween goods by category, search or banners. However, each way has usability problems that cause unnecessary burden on users.
#Misleading recognition   #Lack of consistency

Q: Can users check out the orders smoothly?

It is especially difficult for users to change the delivery methods as they want. Users also become impatient when they can't check out but couldn't figure out the reasons.
#Lack of control   #Error recovery

## Q: Does the Target app provide joy for users?

- Unique features ≠ joyful experience
- Interactive features such as AR mode enhance excitement. However, they need to be tightly integrated with the user journey, and provide guidance on how to play with them.
- Improving key usability issues is the first step in building immersive shopping experience.

Action Now
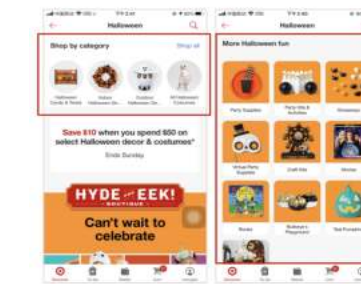
01 Provide error notes and solution

Add detailed explanations and easy-to-follow solutions to all the errors that may occur during holiday shopping. Give positive messages when approaching check out.
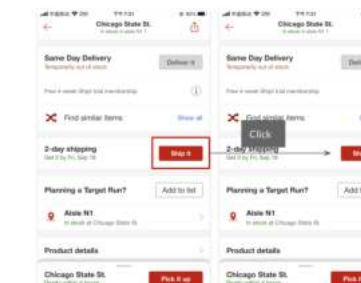
### 02 Clearly differentiate delivery methods

Automatically remember the user's previous choice and set it as default. Clearly explain the differences between ship/delivery/pickup.
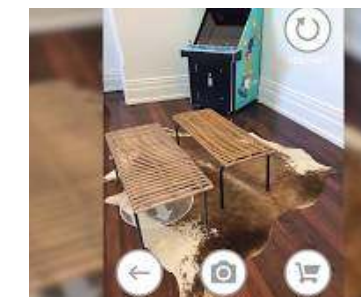
03 Use AR to trigger social interaction

Festive costumes and decorations triggered users' photo-taking and sharing behavior. The ar mode can be designed into a powerful and fun helper.
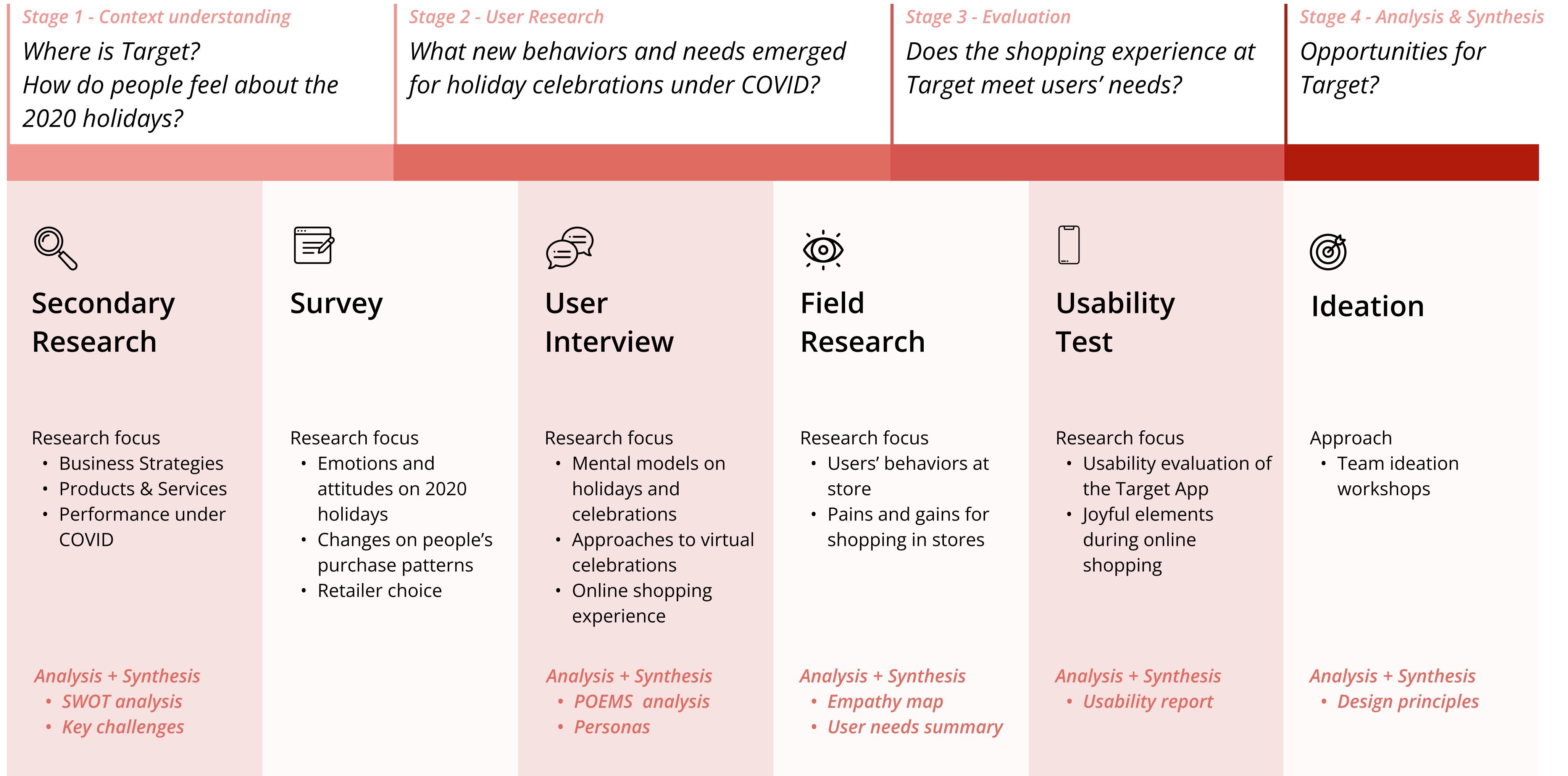
Need Attention
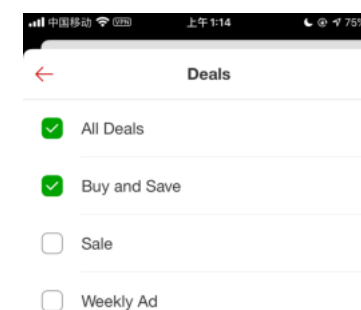
01 Design the filters that users need

Add shortcuts for the frequently used filters on the search results page. Clearly display the preview of each filtered result in the detailed settings to avoid repeated operations.

Process

Question driven.
Use frameworks
for analysis and
synthesis

*Where is Target?
How do people feel about the
2020 holidays?*

*What new behaviors and needs emerged
for holiday celebrations under COVID?*

*Does the shopping experience at
Target meet users' needs?*

*Opportunities for
Target?*

Secondary Research

Research focus
• Business Strategies
• Products & Services
• Performance under COVID

Analysis + Synthesis
• *SWOT analysis*
• *Key challenges*

Survey

Research focus
• Emotions and attitudes on 2020 holidays
• Changes on people's purchase patterns
• Retailer choice

User Interview

Research focus
• Mental models on holidays and celebrations
• Approaches to virtual celebrations
• Online shopping experience

Analysis + Synthesis
• *POEMS analysis*
• *Personas*

Field Research

Research focus
• Users' behaviors at store
• Pains and gains for shopping in stores

Analysis + Synthesis
• *Empathy map*
• *User needs summary*

Usability Test

Research focus
• Usability evaluation of the Target App
• Joyful elements during online shopping

Analysis + Synthesis
• *Usability report*

Ideation

Approach
• Team ideation workshops

Analysis + Synthesis
• *Design principles*

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01
Background research

Get a brief overview of Target's business scope and focuses

S
- Multichannel Commerce
- Financial Performance
- Product portfolio management
- Brand association
- Own brand performance
- Internal Engineering + Design capabilities

W
- Liquidity
- International Growth
- Shipt workers pay structure
- Overall Satisfaction esp. ease of return
- Customer Loyalty

O
- Current restructuring
- Digital focus
- Product portfolio
- Leadership in inclusive design
- New formats and continual delivery improvements

T
- High competition
- COVID uncertainty
- 3rd Party dependence
- Privacy breaches

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Q2 2020

Greatly influenced by the pandemic

↑↑ **Digital Growth**
- +195% in digital sales
- Digital sale powered by store
- Different ways of delivering
- 350% growth in Shipt (grocery delivery service)

↑↑↑ **One-Stop Shopping**
- Electronic >70%
- Home >30%
- Beauty >20%

Guests' shopping needs as families continued to transition to working, learning, and playing from home.

Customer Safety
- Uncertainty in back to school
- Change in celebrating holidays
- Employee's welfare
- Protect guests and teams in store

Advancing Racial Equity

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A+S
Insights

Guide our
research and
design directions

Key challenge 01

Navigating the holiday season

This Q4 shopping season will be like any other. Guests will be worn from the strain of COVID, an election season and economic downturn. Joy will be more critical than ever but the need for social isolation plus increasing delays in mail deliveries need to be addressed.

How has the concept of joy been transformed> What new rituals have been created? What are the effects of a longer sales season?

Key challenge 02

Store designs for COVID and beyond

Consumer shopping habits have significantly changed. The increase of out of store commerce presents new opportunities for Target to rethink their physical footprint. They have already focused on opening smaller stores locations.

How should the store footprint evolve? How to convey safety and joy in the experience? What additional services would be welcomed? What is the new normal?

Key challenge 03

Social justice in the user experience

The REACH committee needs to go beyond just representation to being actively anti-racist and finding ways to rebalance power dynamics and equity.

What does this look like at a user experience level? This requires a significant rethinking of everything from the mental models used all the way to the behaviors of the team.

02
Survey

Have a basic understanding of people's attitudes and behaviors around holidays under COVID

Background

42

people reponded to our online survey.

24-35

is the main age group of the people surveyed (60.5%).

A variety of holidays

are celebrated apart from "American holidays" (Lunar New Year, Hanukkah, Lantern Festival, Kwanza, etc.)

Emotions & Attitudes

60%

of the people surveyed expressed anxious about this coming holiday season.

Limited

is the word most often used by people surveyed to describe how they feel about the 2020 holiday season.

Social distance

was the main driver for the nagetive emotions. "How to find joy when I am separated from loved ones?"

Purchase Patterns

Less than last year

is how people surveyed planed their shopping for holidays this year.

Food

remains the most important preparation for holidays (61.9%). Cloths and decorations are also popular(51.2%).

Retailer Choice

Price
Quality
Product type

is the top 3 factors that affect people's online retailer choice. (65.1%, 60.5%, 55.8%)

Amazon

is people's most frequently used online retailer for holiday celebration preparation. (86%)
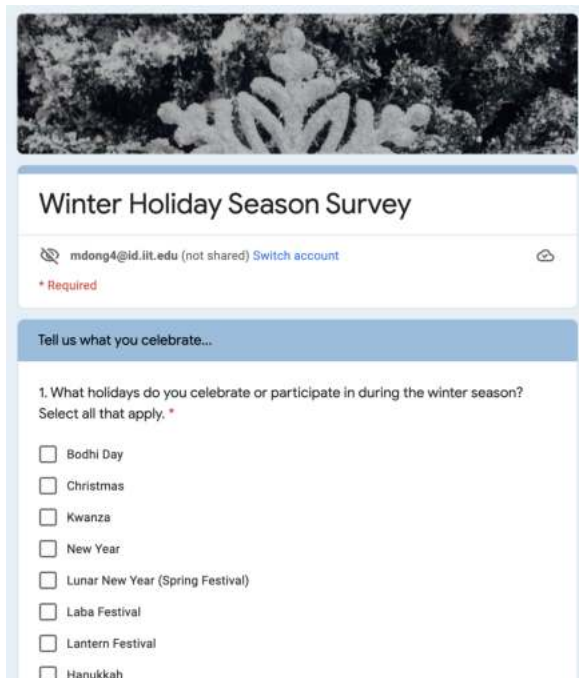
Remote Interview

Understand how can Target be a platform to help navigate having to celebrate the holidays separated from loved ones.

Plan →

Main topics
- What do holidays mean to people
- How people have address and think they will address celebrations being virtually distanced?
- How are people's holiday traditions represented in retailers
- Opportunities (features/products/ experiences/services) for retailers to help with social distancing

Interview structure (90min)
- Intro
- Rapport building
- General holiday questions
- Objects Share
- Card sorting 1
- Shopping experience questions
- Card sorting 2
- In-depth Holiday & Target
- Final thoughts & advice

Preparation
- Instruction for participants
- Online card sorting frames (Miro)
- Note taking template

Recruit →
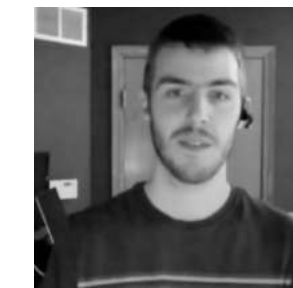
Nash
Located in Chicago
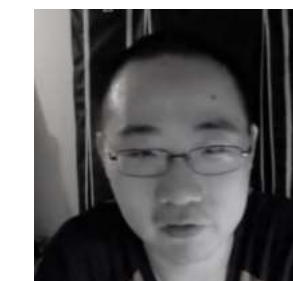Living with family
USA nationality, Polish

Aamena
Located in Chicago
Living alone
USA nationality,
Indian

Samar
Located in Peoria
Living with family
USA nationality,
Muslim

Yifei
Located in Chicago
Living with roommates
Chinese nationality

Echo
Located in New York
Living with boyfriend
Chinese nationality

Aoya
Located in Indiana
Living with roommates
Chinese nationality

⅔ had experience of virtual celebration
Mix of those who celebrate Christmas vs. other holidays

Interview

2 moderators + 1 note taker

Echo is telling the stories behind her "holiday symbols"

Quick team reflections after interviews

Moderated
Card sorting

Understand what are essential to users when preparing for holiday celebrations and why.
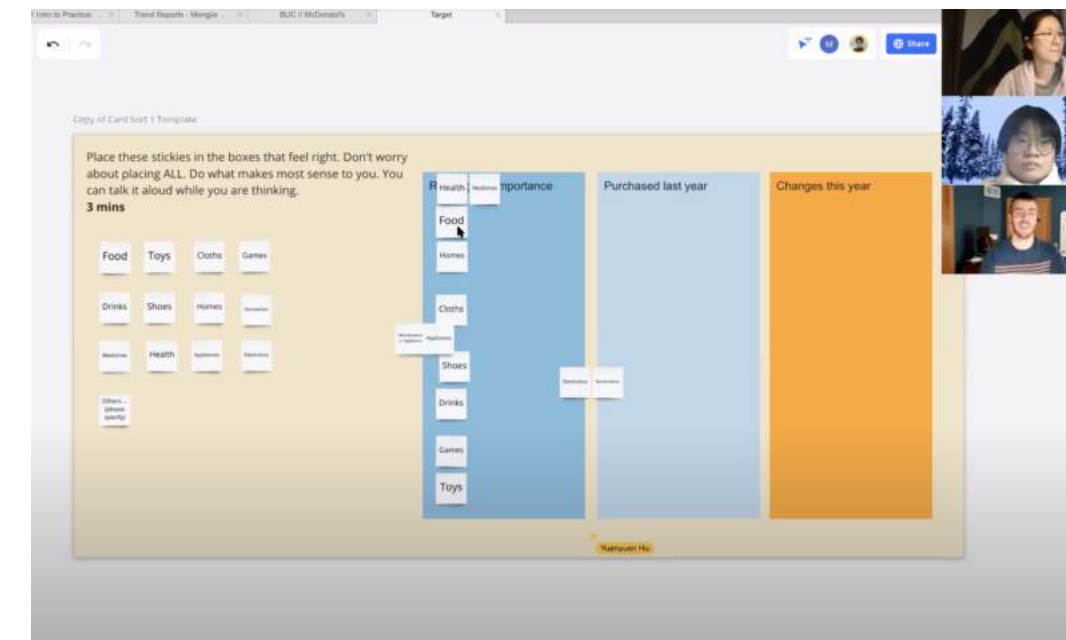
Closed card sorting

Task:
1. Thinking about holiday preparation, sort these product category cards in order of importance.
2. Place the cards in the boxes that feel right. (Purchased last year / Changes this year)

Research Focus:
1. Users' choices on the product level
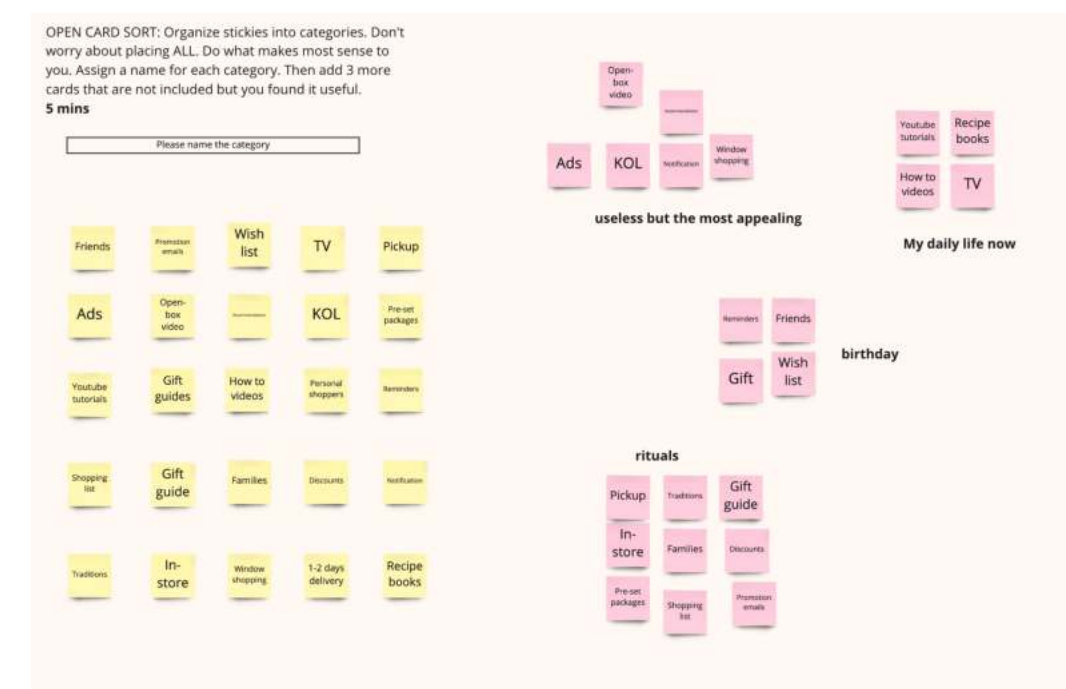2. Reasons behind the change of purchase

Open card sorting

Task:
1. Organize the cards into different groups.
2. Name each group in a way that makes most sense to you.

Research Focus:
1. Users' mental models (cognition and attitudes towards different services)

Key takeaways

Bring joy to all the customers = Equal respect and choices for all

Four essential parts for holiday preparation:
Tradition | Safe Environment Food to Eat | Working Appliances

Tradition is en element that has not been taken seriously enough.

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POEMS Analysis

Summarize COVID's impacts on people's celebration behaviors.

How people celebrate holidays

	People	Objects	Environment	Message	Services
PRECOVID	Determined by shared time and physical space. Larger social group than normal.	Used to mark a special moment: Food, Clothes, gifts and decorations.	Home or restaurant (large space to eat)	Enjoy sensation of being together. Indulgence/ Abundance / Risk taking	Window shopping Trip planning Hosting calculations
COVID	Smaller physical groups. Much larger digital group. Limited by coordination.	Food remains important but other elements depend on budget and need to raise spirits.	Home and cozy corners. Less important space to eat food and more important where can take calls.	Reevaluate priorities Reflection Gain strength Risk averse	Online shopping Quarantine preparation Virtual coordination Video calls

A+S
Persona Matrix

Categorize users based on their social involvement levels and purchase habits.

Proactive
High social involvement

PERSONA
Food Enthusiast

Mike

ABOUT

Age: 31
Profession: Consultant
Personality: #courteous

HOLIDAYS

Celebrate: New Year's Eve
                     Spring Festival

Participate: Halloween

GOALS

• To get some ingredients for hot pot
• To buy some souvenirs to send to his overseas family
• To find a custom for his company's Halloween party

MOTIVATIONS

Mike is the 1st immigrant in USA. His family are still in China. When there is a holiday, he can't spend with his family in the most situations. To reduce the anxiety of loneliness, he invites friends to his place having hot pot during and watching the Lunar Evening Show.

"Winter is cold in Chicago so spicy food can make me and my friends warm and feel delicious as we eat from the hotpot."

Jose

ABOUT

Age: 21
Profession: Student
Personality: #rational

HOLIDAYS

Celebrate: Christmas / Thanksgiving

Participate: Friends' holidays

GOALS

• To find cost-efficient products
• To get the most suitable gift for his friend's holiday party
• To learn different cultures

MOTIVATIONS

Jose is currently an art student in a university. He has been invited to several holiday parties from his friends from different culture background. He is interested to learn things outside his comfort zone, but he is also very cautious about every penny he spends as he doesn't have many right now.

"I want to maximize the quality and minimize the cost. That optimistic point is where I want to achieve."

PERSONA
Rational Shopper

Life **Lifestyler**

Rational **Shopper**

Impulsive
Try new things

Rational
Follow the conventions

Gift **Curator**

Conventional **Celebrator**

PERSONA
Gift Curator

Leela

ABOUT

Age: 27
Profession: Content writer
Personality: #creative

HOLIDAYS

Celebrate: Ramadan / Eid

Participate: Thanksgiving

GOALS

• To get some food for Ramadan
• To find a pretty present for her friend
• To explore the decorations for the holiday

MOTIVATIONS

Leela enjoys window shopping and exploring things that are pleasant in aesthetics. She is well-known for her good taste and creative thoughts about crafting. Holidays for her is a great excuse to have some fun making stuffs.

"I want to create a unique experience when my friends receive my gifts."

Kelly

ABOUT

Age: 21
Profession: Accountant
Personality: #introvert

HOLIDAYS

Celebrate: Christmas / Thanksgiving

Participate: New Year's Eve

GOALS

• To prepare the suitable and useful gifts for family
• To find a little retreat for herself

MOTIVATIONS

Kelly has a strong tie with her family. She spent most of her holidays with her parents during Thanksgiving and Christmas. Kelly also enjoys her self-reflections time and would treat herself once a while with a book, a dress or anything that makes her smile.

"I don't see holidays as big events, just want to chill at home with my dearest family."

PERSONA
Conventional Celebrator

Reflective
Low social involvement

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Field Research

Observe how people shop for holiday in Target stores.

Who are we empathizing with?

People that come to Target to shop for Halloween products

What do they need to DO?

Find useful products and suitable decorations to celebrate the holiday

What do they SEE?

- Holiday settings
- Promotion items are placed in obvious places with attractive price tags.
- All inventory is clearly displayed on the shelves.
- Other guests are shopping and talking happily.
- Assistants walking around.

Pains

- For hesitating items, there is no way to organize them in one place digitally.
- Hard to find similar products quickly.

Gains

- Seeing and feeling real products helped a lot.
- The holiday decorations in store made shopping joyful.
- Shopping with friends adds happiness.

What do they DO?

- Take photos of products and share them on social media
- Try on costumes and feel the product with skin
- Explore with friends on how the trick works
- Let the children explore around and pick for themselves
- Ask the assistant directly when they meet questions.

What do they HEAR?

- Holiday songs
- Holiday-related notification.

What do they SAY?

- How they can decorate the products in their houses
- Which costumes fit them most

A+S
User Needs

Key insights from user research.

01

Coordination Drain

People are the center but who is involved varies. In person celebration will have fewer people but virtual opens new opportunities and may involve more people. Coordination will be even more important for both in physical and virtual celebration.

02

Resilience in sparks of joy

In the face of many cancellations and increasing restrictions it has become increasingly important to finding ways to cut through the monotony, find a bit of joy in the dark to make it through the next couple of months

03

In search of the familiar

With some many changes and uncertainty- it is even more important for the guest to find things that are familiar and that remind them that they too are part of the community even when having different traditions.

04

Meaning = Making

As people reevaluate what really matters in these moments as well as reduce costs making has become more important. It is seen as a therapy, a form of activism, a way to honor special moment when you can't physically be there, and a way to fight boredom in social pods.

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06
Usability Test

Explore the potential usability flaws in the Target App.

Research questions

Can people find Halloween related products easily?

Can people use different filiters to narrow down the search result?

Can people decide the right size for the product without confusion?

Can people understand the different shipping methods and choose the ones they need?

Can people understand and find solutions when they meet errors?

Features to test

Feature A
Browse promotional items

Feature B
Use filters to search

Feature C
Add items to cart

Feature D
Select shipping method

Feature E
Comfirm and pay

Think Aloud usability test

"There is no wrong move here. When doing the tasks, please think aloud. That's to say, speak out what you are thinking. "

1. Using the device that we provide, open Target App and enter the homepage.
2. Find the page that you can view all the Halloween products on sale.
3. Use the filters to find costumes for kids and rank them by sales.
4. Pick one and select a suitable size for a six-year-old girl.
5. Choose a shipping method that suits you.
6. Checkout and go to payment selection.
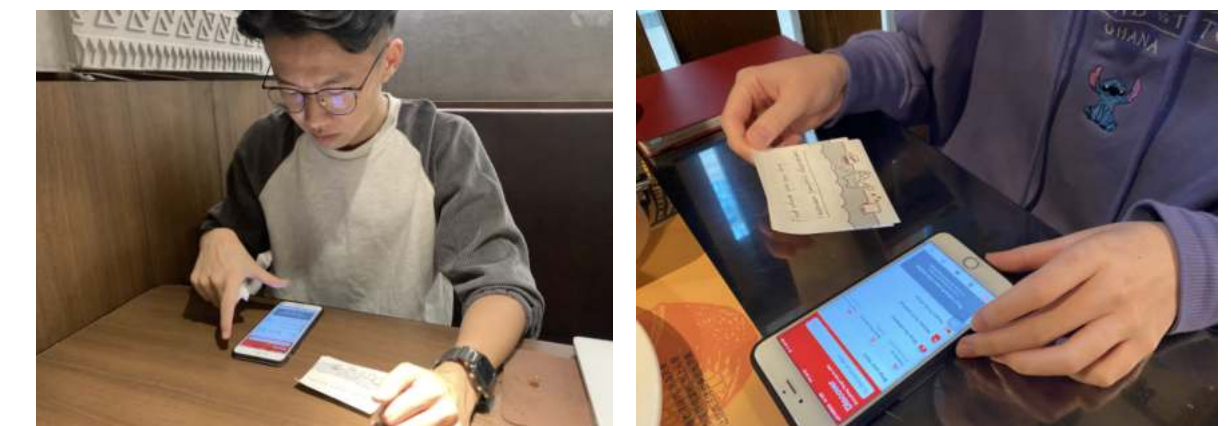
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Evaluation Report

Organize usability issues based on category and severity.

Usability Report Summary

Device	Participants	Date
iPhone X	6	2020/09/13

Severity Criteria
0 - I don't agree that this is a usability problem at all.
1 - Cosmetic problem only: need not be fixed unless extra time is available on project.
2 - Minor usability problem: fixing this should be given low priority.
3 - Major usability problem: important to fix, so should be given a high priority.
4 - Usability catastrophe: imperative to fix this before product can be released.

Heuristic	Severity	Usability Issues	Optimization
Error Prevention	4	Missing hints of the reasons for not being able to checkout	Provide hints on how to solve the errors.
	4	Key information is not displayed in the product title.	Make sure to include the most important information/users care most in the title or the pictures.
	4	Common spelling errors are not automatically corrected.	The system could have a fault tolerance range.
	4	The filters include irrelevant products in the results.	Optimize the sorting methods of the filters.
	4	No explanation for the difference between promotion types	Instructions or details for platform-specific vocabulary could be included in a small info icon beside the words.
	3	The hierarchy between filters is not clear.	If 'All Deals' does include the three sub-filters, the rest three sub-filters should be automatically checked
Flexibility and efficiency of use	4	Can't intelligently help users choose delivery methods	If the user selects a specific shopping option, then the system uses it as the default option.
Consistency	3	The displays of sizes are not consistent.	Unified size display standards.

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07
Desired state

Summarize and
describe users'
needs in context

01

Familiar   *Identity*
                    Tradition
                    Community

People want…   Target can…

Shopping in the holiday vibe and share their   Add interactive and shareable features to
thoughts with friends in real-time   recreate the immersive experience

Sense of control when shopping and come   Solve usability issues and iterate online
across delightful surprises   exploring experience

Try on costumes, take photos, share with friends
Fun, atmosphere, immersion

Unique joy when shopping offline

People want…   Target can…

Some special experiences, foods, activities,   Show different scenarios of Target products
environments to color their daily life   and guide a better life.

Be reminded and invited to celebrate little   Be a happiness spreader and offer
things in life   actionable happy tips.

"But this year, I have no intention to join the celebration activities
for the social distancing and safety concern. I think I will just
chat with local friends. "

Aoya

02

Emotional   *Uniqueness*
Rewarding   *Triggers*

People want…   Target can…

Unique and handmade gift to enlighten friends   Provide innovative and practical
                                                      handmade gift bundles

Engaging more people to celebrate in safe   Use objects as an media for people to
way   connect during social distancing

Send different gifts to friends with different   Educate people and provide gift guides
background

"Everyone prepares it in his/her own unique way. Some of us
focus on food, some of us focus on decorations and atmosphere
things, some of us focus on activities."

Nash

03

Enjoyable   *Safety*

People want…   Target can…

See holidays that reflect their cultural   Bring holidays that people care about,
background   beyond mainstream

Celebrate the holiday with the story behind   Frame up the story to raise interests

See the contributors and support their   Show how shopping in target can contribute
community   to the community

"For Muslim holidays, I would always make multiple trips to the
Indian stores to buy certain things for Indian dishes and sweets.
"

Aamena

04

Engaging   *People*

17