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ARAM MORTAZAVI
BFA 2023
SJ STATE UNIVERSITY

Thesis

BFA 2023

A

pro

ject

The BFA Graphic Design thesis project at San José State University is a flexible and open-ended opportunity for students to apply the visual design skills they have developed throughout their studies. The project can take various forms, such as print, web, animation, or installation, and can have a range of goals, from experimental to practical.

The purpose of the project is to challenge students to expand their understanding of what it means to be a designer, encouraging them to identify an area of interest and explore it using design techniques to present their findings. The class is mainly self-directed, giving students the freedom to pursue their own interests.

The thesis project is an exciting and valuable opportunity for students to develop their design skills, explore new ideas and approaches, and gain experience in a real-world setting.

0

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

THESIS

- 01 thesis statement
- 02 abstract
- 04 locating thesis range
- 06 people, places, things
- 08 repository of insight

02

RESEARCH

- 10 research question
- 12 research findings
- 14 survey findings
- 16 research outcome

03

DESIGN PROCESS

- 18 manifesto
- 20 application and VR
- 22 guest user journey
- 24 VR interface sketches

04

OUTCOME

- 26 VR space design
- 28 VR interface design
- 30 VR lobby log in
- 38 application design

05

CONCLUSION

- 44 conclusion
- 46 reflection
- 48 colophon/annotated bibliography

01

THESIS STATEMENT

Yearly, so many people migrate to different countries for various reasons in their life. Adjusting and adapting to the new culture can be challenging. Staying connected to family after migrating to another country is important for emotional support, cultural identity, and family bonding. It can help individuals feel more grounded and connected to their loved ones, even when they are far away.

Thesis

01

ABSTRACT

Maintaining social connections and having a support system can help individuals adjust to the changes and challenges that come along with moving to a new place and country.

Additionally, family members can act as a source of information and social networks, helping newcomers navigate the practical challenges of life in a new country. Studies have also shown that maintaining strong family connections can have positive effects on mental health and well-being, particularly for immigrants who may be experiencing stress and trauma related to their migration experience.

Social media has become a popular tool for immigrants to connect with their friends, family, and community members both in their home country and in their new country of residence. A recent survey shows that 90% of immigrants use social media and that social media has a key role in helping new immigrants to feel more connected to their communities.

There are several ways to stay connected with families after immigrating to a new country: For instance: Social media and messaging apps like Whats App or Facebook, phone calls and video calls like Skype or Zoom, or even by sending hand written mails to the loved ones, but who has time to jump from one application to another application or even write an email? Or do you feel other person's presence on the phone screen?

We are here to connect families to each other by using the VR technology.



First, we began to articulate our interests and concerns through writing and research in order to establish a stronger foundation for our work. We took note of three subjects or topics that were of deep and abiding interest to us. Here are the three topics that I was interested in.

CHARITY

I have always enjoyed helping people in need because by contributing time, resources, or skills to those people, one can experience a profound sense of satisfaction that arises from helping others. Also, charitable acts can improve the well-being and quality of life of those who are less fortunate.

ELDERLY ASSISTANT

As individuals age, they may experience chronic health conditions such as arthritis, osteoporosis, and heart disease, which can affect their ability to perform daily activities independently.

IMMIGRATION

The life of immigrants can be complex and challenging, as they navigate new cultural, social, and economic systems while also attempting to maintain their own identity and culture. They also face language barriers.

CATING

ESIS

NGE

REFLECTION

After writing all my ideas down, I have decided to choose immigration as my topic. Reflecting my own life as an immigrant, I understand how difficult migrating to a new country is. Although people leave their countries behind and go to a different country but they can never leave their family.

After researching more about immigrants, I have learned that so many of the immigrants who sought asylum can't even go back to their countries, and they can not see their loved ones. It was at that moment that I started thinking and looking for a solution to connect families together even if they are thousands miles away.

My thesis can be found anywhere that the user has access to Oculus and the Internet. The three huge objects that are related to my thesis is VR headset, a place where you feel safe to wear your headset (no hazard on the way), and also the last one is knowing the basic knowledge of working with VR and AR technology.

One of the three tiny objects that I will use in my thesis are the little elements that I will be using in my design. For instance, one of the features that people can use in this VR experience is to celebrate special occasions like birthdays. Users can use balloons, cakes, and candles in the VR format to celebrate each other.

The three abstract qualities that are related to my thinking are usability, enjoyability, and finally satisfaction.

Supermarket to promote my thesis can be a greeting card, any snacks that can be enjoyed when family gathers because we sometimes eat to socialize with people. Also, users can buy any ingredients and have a cooking session with their families and friends.

The three foundations that are possible to support my thesis are Meta, Microsoft, and Google, and Apple.

The three objects that can be found in a supermarket to promote my thesis can be a greeting card, any snacks that can be enjoyed when family gathers because we sometimes eat to socialize with people. Also, users can buy any ingredients and have a cooking session with their families and friends in the space.

The three designers that might be interested in presenting my work is professor Yoon and Jeong kim who works and are interested in VR/AR technology and also my other advisor Mrs. Leily Khatibi who works in in Meta.

My thesis live in present because in the last two days I can feel how much I missed my family and friends, I missed my cousin's birthday because she lives so far away from me,. Lastly my mom tried to teach me how to cook a Persian cuisine over the phone but it took so long because I had to go back and forth between my phone and my cooking.

The first historical event was in 1935 American science fiction writer Stanley Weinbaum presented a fictional model for VR in his short story Pygmalion's Spectacles. In the story, the main character meets a professor who invented a pair of goggles which enabled "a movie that gives one sight and sound taste, smell, and touch". The second most historical event was in "1968 Ivan Sutherland and his student Bob Sproull created the first VR/AR head mounted display (Sword of Damocles) that was connected to a computer and not a camera." And the third most historical event to my project is when the ShapesXR was made. ShapesXR is a VR creation and collaboration platform that allows users to create VR experiences.



I am always inspired by other people's words and some of them came to my mind as I was developing my thesis project. Also, I have started learning more about immigrants and their lives and I found some inspiring stories and quotes.

“The time you spend with family keeps your inner clock running.”

“ 59% of the women in Girl Gone International communities found that the biggest challenge to living abroad is that they have lost touch with friends from back home—and it’s not due to lack of effort!

“ People have always moved in search of better livelihood opportunities for themselves, a safer and more prosperous life for their children, or protection from conflicts, persecution, or the effects of natural disasters.

“ People who have fulfilling relationships with family, friends and community members are happier, have fewer health problems, and live longer.

“ Global migration has experienced strong growth over the past several decades.

“ Lacking social connection carries a risk that is comparable, and in many cases, exceeds that of other well-accepted risk factors, including smoking up to 15 cigarettes per day, obesity, physical inactivity, and air pollution.”

“ Being connected to others socially is widely considered a fundamental human need—crucial to both well-being and survival. Extreme examples show infants in custodial care who lack human contact fail to thrive and often die, and indeed, social isolation or solitary confinement has been used as a form of punishment,” said Julianne Holt-Lunstad, PhD, professor of psychology at Brigham Young University.

“ One of the greatest challenges for immigrants is the disruption of longstanding social networks in their native countries and the need to find a place to belong in a new society. This sense of belongingness consists of not only having friends and social support but also of feeling one can make a meaningful contribution to others.

“ Those who say that keeping up with family members is a major consideration in their use of social networking sites are a demographically diverse group—there are no dominant trends on this question regarding age, income, education, race/ethnicity, parental status or place of residence.

“ The scariest thing about distance is that you don’t know whether they miss you or forget you.

“ Getting together as a family is like putting all the chapters in a book, you need each member for the family to make sense.

02 RESEARCH

RESEARCH



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Can technology help us to feel connected to our families if we are thousands miles away?

Why do people lose touch with their family and friends after they move to a new country?

Can staying connected to family and friends reduce the feeling of separation and isolation after migrating to a new country?

What is the most challenging aspect of being an immigrant?

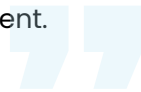
RESEARCH

02

RESEARCH FINDINGS

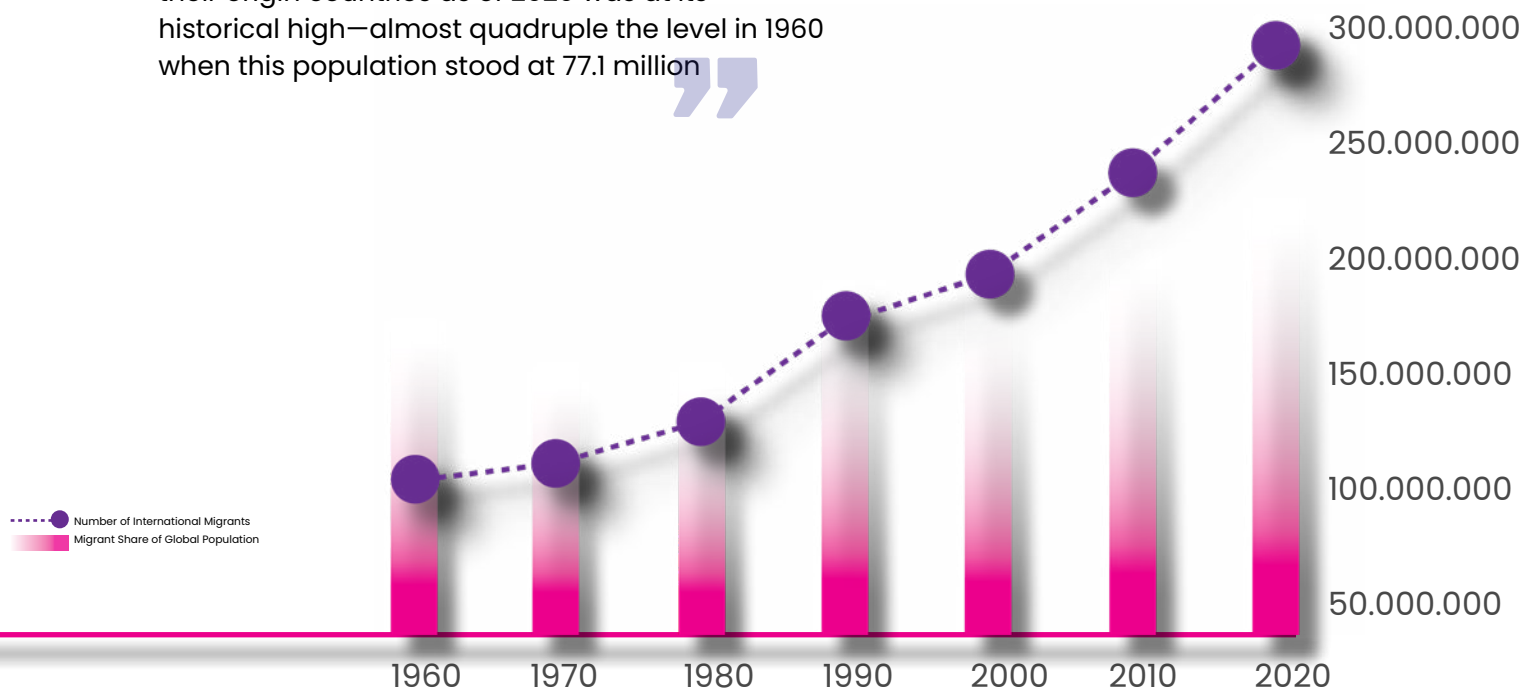


The long-term effects of toxic stress are wide ranging and can include anxiety, PTSD, and depression. For younger children, the trauma of the separations is likely to affect their attachment.



In the last decade nearly **60 million** people became international migrants

“The number of people worldwide living outside their origin countries as of 2020 was at its historical high—almost quadruple the level in 1960 when this population stood at 77.1 million”



02

SURVEY FINDINGS

After doing some research and learning that millions of people migrate to a new country yearly I dived into the issue and started learning more about migrants experiences. I conducted a survey that asked some questions from immigrants regarding to their personal experiences. 16 people participated in this survey.

Q

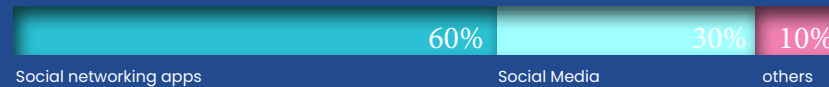
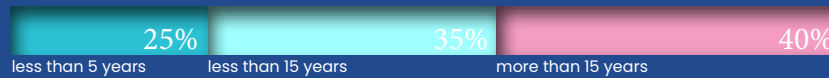
When was the last time you contacted your families? _____

When did you move to the new country? _____

Do you have families back home? _____

Did you face any emotional challenges after you migrate? _____

How do you connect with your family and friends after you migrate? _____



Top 3 KEY FINDINGS:

Families wanted to have more realistic experience

Families prefer to have more personalized platforms

Families wanted to be able to do more activities with their loved ones

02

RESEARCH
OUTCOME





After researching and interviewing people I have decided to create a mixed reality experience as a way to connect the families together because:

- It allows users to have more immersive and interactive experience
- It allows users to be more engaged and do different activities rather than just video calling or having a phone call
- It allows users to teleport themselves to other places like another country without spending any money on traveling.

03

DESIGN PROCESS

Mair

After two years of studying my process in design decisions, my manifesto is that the people who use our designs are our top priority, which means I thrive to create a user centered design. My top priority in creating individual design is to empathize with the user needs and create experiences that are intuitive, accessible, and enjoyable.

I have also learned to be innovative. I explore new ideas and push boundaries to create designs that are not only beautiful and inspiring, but functional. My manifesto in design has led me to recognize the potential of VR/AR technology to inspire creativity and innovation which will push boundaries and explore new possibilities in everyone's life.

The most important lesson about UX/UI Design that I have learned and I would never forget from one of our professor's, Kim Jeong, in San State José University is:

“Design with empathy”

manifesto

03

APPLICATION AND VR

The host is required to own MetaFam's app but the guest is not required. The host has to set up the meeting in his/her mobile application and then share it with his/her participants and they can join the party by inputting the special code that they receive.

1 The host creates the event and shares it with the guests

2 The guests and the host input the code in VR space and they join the party

3 Host can add activities to the party to make the event more engaging

03

GUEST USER JOURNEY

Aida is a little sad today because today is her brother's birthday and he lives on a different continent! So she won't be able to attend his birthday party.

Aida sees a package in front of her house when she gets home! The sender is his brother, she gets excited and rushes inside to open the package.

First thing she sees is a card that says I am so glad to have you as part of my birthday celebration. Please download the MetaFam app and Follow me in VR.

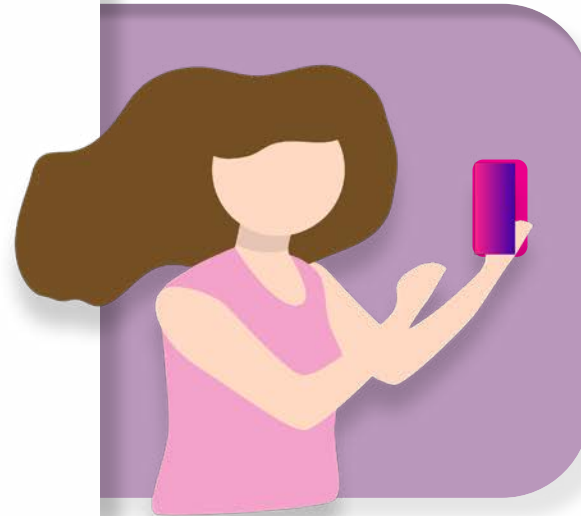
Aida keeps opening the box that is warped beautifully, she opens the box and she starts working with her new VR headset. She is super excited to be able to join her brother's birthday party.

The time has arrived, time to party. Aida can not believe what she sees! All her family from all around the world are here! She can not stop saying that this experience is so REAL.

2

Wears VR glasses and enter the code

3 4 5 - 6 0 5



1

Receives the code by text message or by downloading the MetaFam app



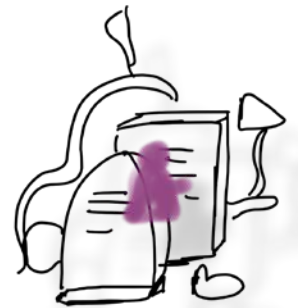
3

Joins the party, meets her loved one and have a great time with her family!



03

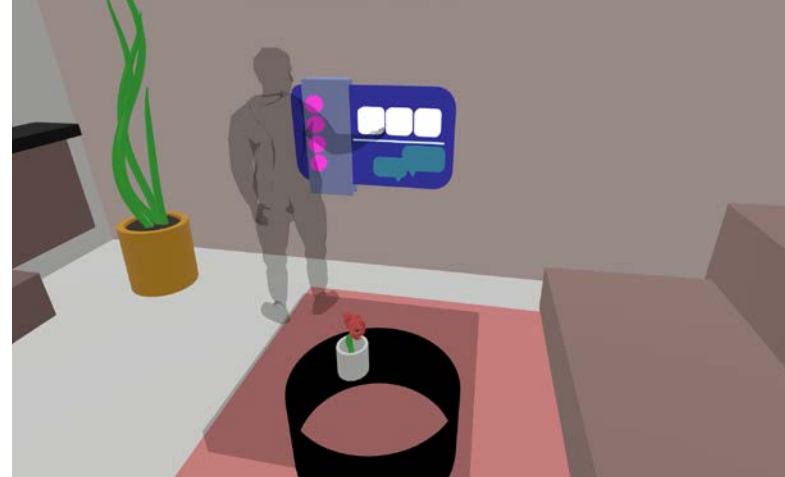
VR INTERFACE DESIGN



04

DESIGN OUTCOME





This is the Interface and space design for the host. Host has different UI than the guests.



Users can interact with the space and they can walk around the space.

The user can scan more than one room if they want to make the experience more fun and give the opportunity to users to walk around more and explore more.

Space LOW-FIDELITY Design

Participants



Emillypoli

📍 San Fransisco



Avabet

📍 Cancun, MX



AidaDan

📍 Sydney, ASTL



SatinaDe

📍 San Fransisco, CA

Arig

Te

Balloons

Cake

Gifts

Rings

Numbers

Candles

DEGG

04 Interface Design

This screen will be placed in the VR space and the hosts can choose an activity for the guests to make the party more fun!

The interface was designed in the 3D program in order to make the experience more realistic and immersive. The user can either point at the objects to activate the buttons or they can touch the icons in order to get activated.

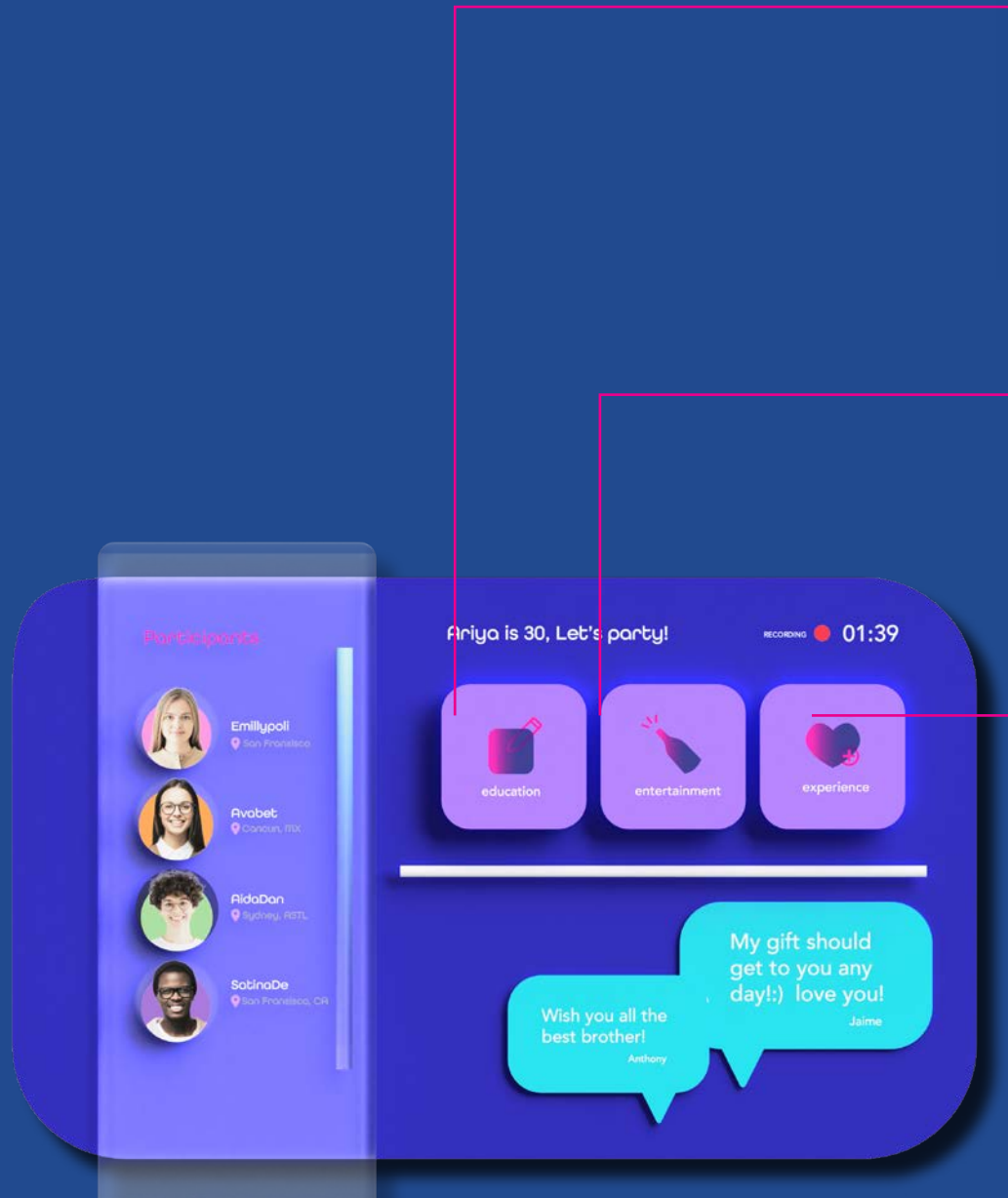


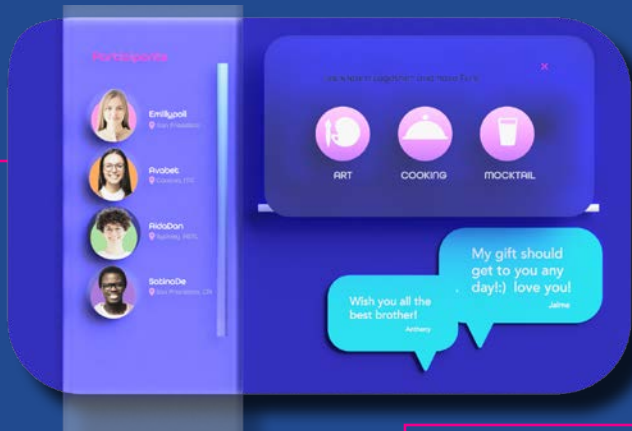
Interface Design

HIGH-FIDELITY

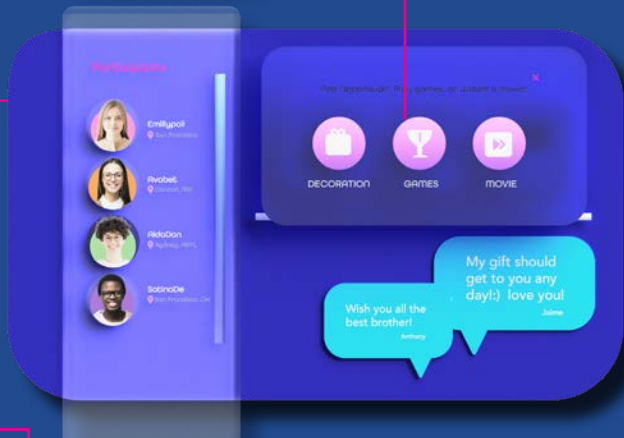
The left side of the screen is designated to the participants. This will remind the host who is joining the party and also the participants will know who is joining as well. The names has locations which will allow others to get to know where each person is joining from even if they do not communicate to each other.

Host can record the event and share it with the participants after the event is over. MetaFam has some cameras in the space, it feels like the host is hiring a videographer without needing to pay!

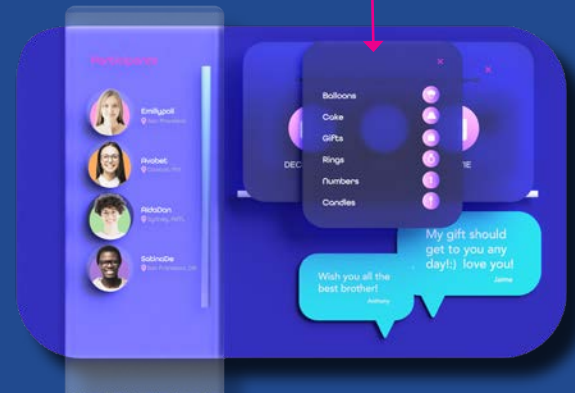




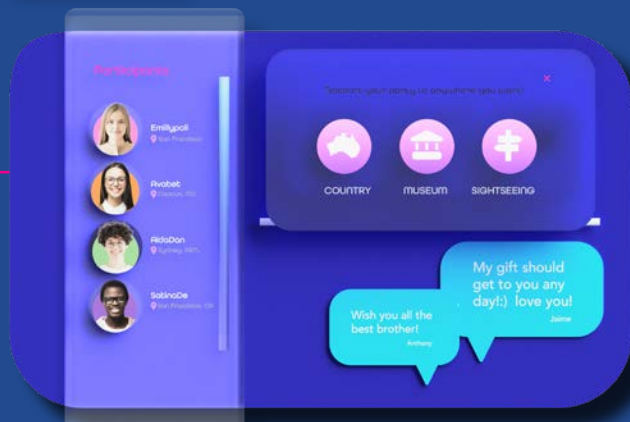
The host can hire experts like art teacher or take a cooking class or hire a barista or bartender to teach the participants to how to make mock-tails or even coffee.



The host can add decoration to the parties for different occasions or they can play games or even watch a video all together.



The host can decorate her/his space in VR. He/she can also adjust the sizes of the decoration pieces.



One of the most important things that some people especially immigrants misses a lot is doing activities with their family and friends. MetaFam allows users to travel the world by teleporting the whole participants to the desired destination which has been chosen by the host.

Space

HIGH-FIDELITY

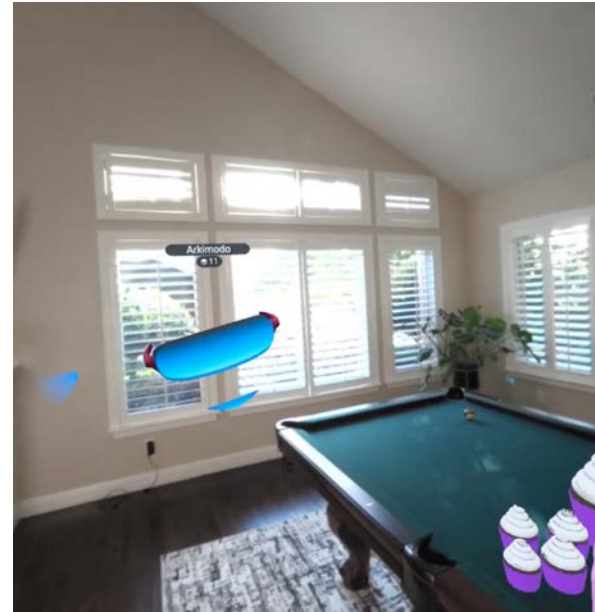
These pictures have been taken by VR Heaset (QuestPro). The program that was used to prototype my design is called ShapesXR. ShapesXR allowed me to import all my assets to their dashboard and I was able to access them in the VR space.

The program recognizes the wall that has the most space and places the interface on top of that. The host is able to move it around and make some changes to the placement if it is needed.





After the host scanned his space, the space automatically transfers to the VR. This unique feature allows the user to feel they are really in the host's house or room without having to travel thousands miles.



The user can choose to use just a VR glasses and show up to the party or he/she can use her/his avator. The user have chosen only glasses in this event but it is recommended to use avators for more realistic experience.

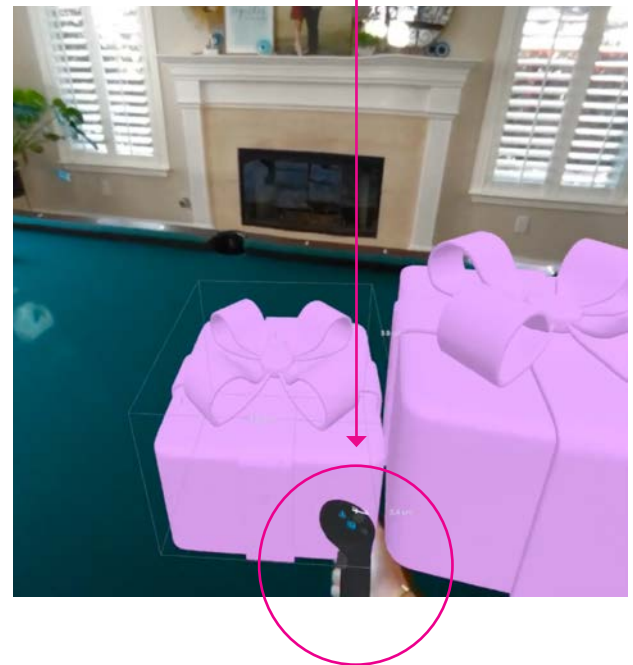
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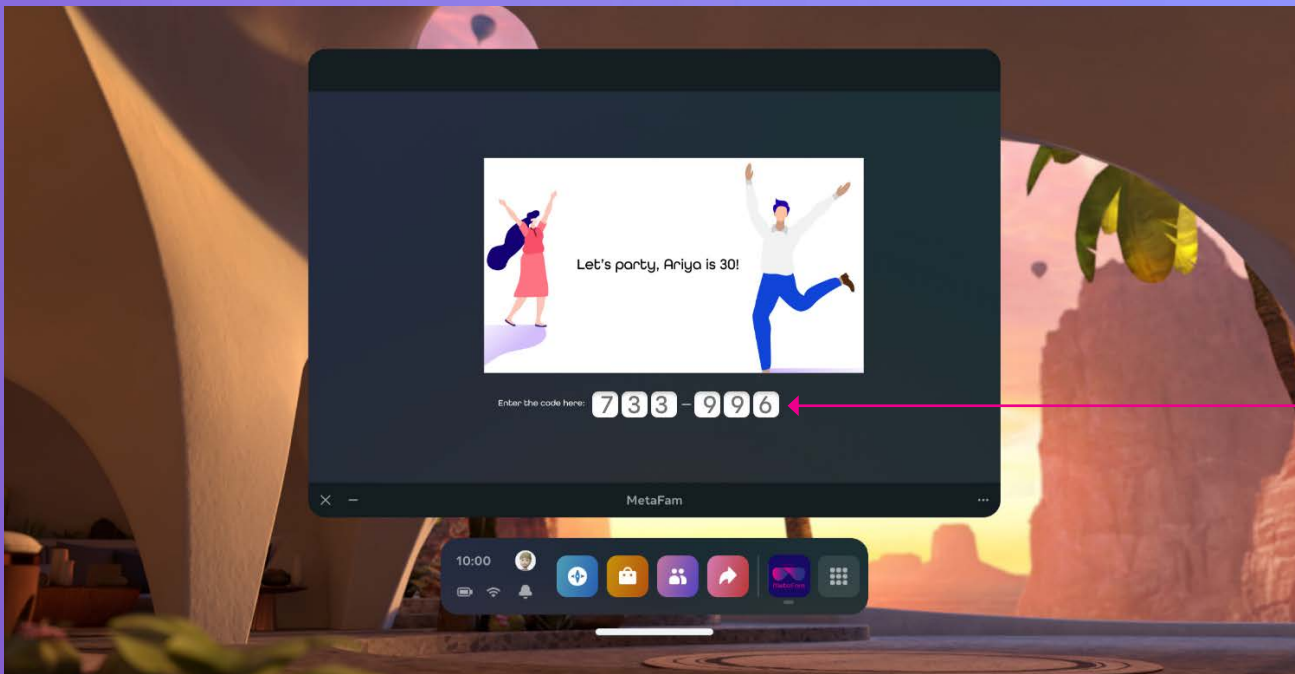


Space HIGH-FIDELITY Design



The host can add activities or add decoration to the event and he/she can adjust the sizes of the item or even make a few items in his/her space.







VR

METAFAM'S SECURITY CODE

This is the lobby space in VR.

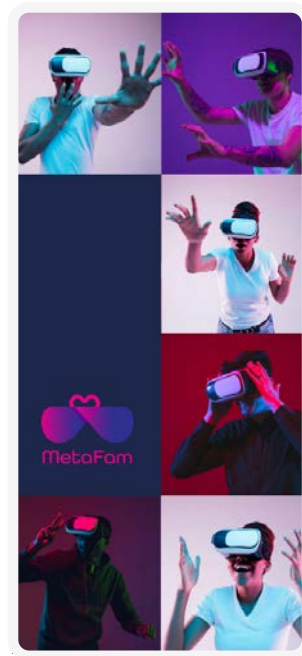
Guests are required to input the code which is unique for each party. The main purpose behind requiring this feature is the privacy and most importantly security.

Applic- cation

APPLICATION DESIGN

MetaFam APP helps to create the event

The Host is required to download the app in order to create the event, but guests are not required to have the app because the host can send the event's code by text message to the people who does not own the app.

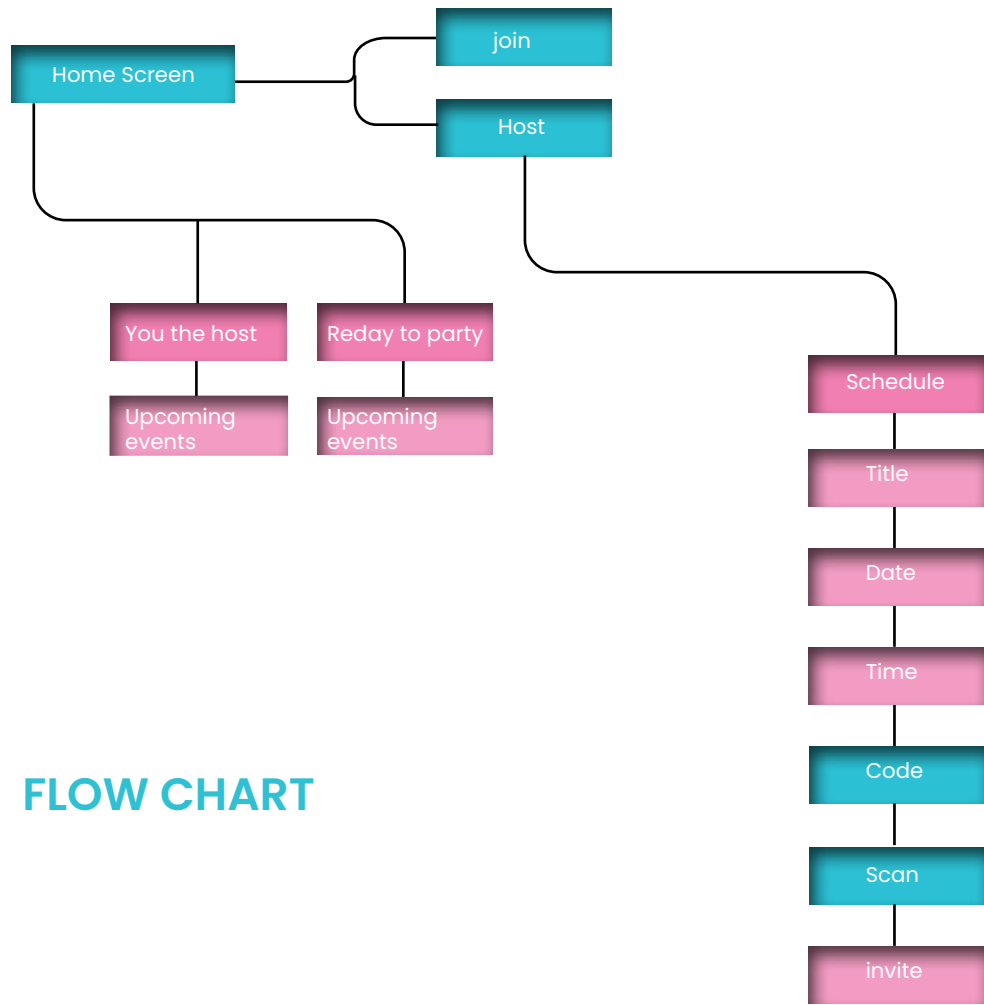


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4

DESIGN PROCESS

The initial idea behind designing MetaFam was to only focus on the VR design and do not use phone at all. After some user testing and talking to my advisor, Leily Khatibi who is an expert in VR/AR design, we decided to add the mobile application which helps to provide an easier user flow for the users.

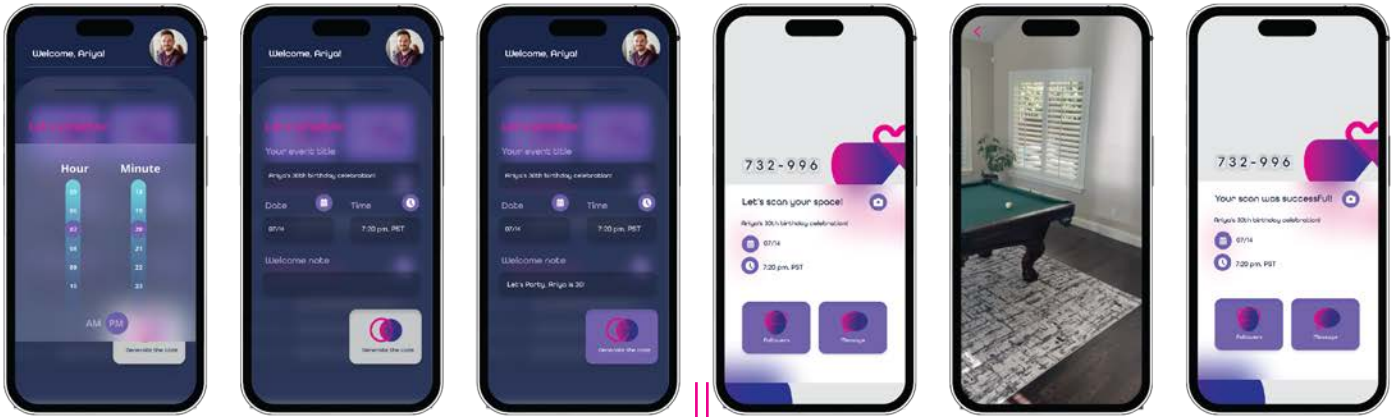


FLOW CHART



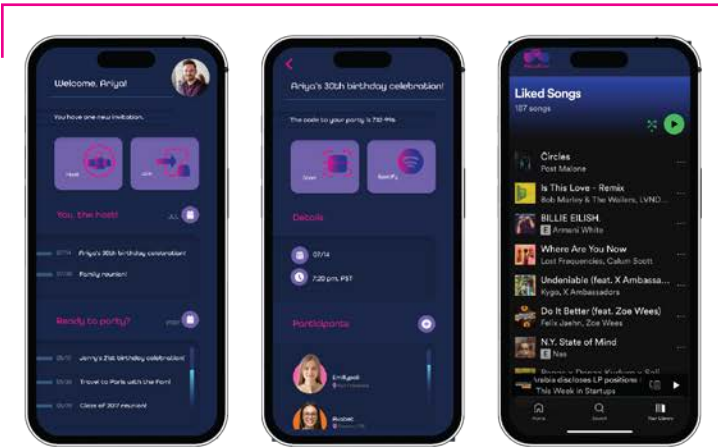
The host is required to fill out all the information regarding to the event in order to be able to generate the code for the event.

MetaFam App



The host is able to make changes to the event after he/she created them. The host can sync his/her spottily and play music during the event.

The host can share the event by sending his/her followers and invitation or text message the code to them.



The host can add followers by only one click and the invite would show up on their MetaFam's application.

05

CONCLUSION

People can be emotionally affected when they move to a new country. Moving to a new country involves leaving behind familiar people, places, and routines, which can lead to feelings of loneliness, homesickness, and culture shock. Culture shock is a common experience for people who move to a new country, and it refers to the disorientation and discomfort that can occur when adjusting to a new culture.

Culture shock can manifest in various ways, such as difficulty communicating, frustration with social norms, and feeling like an outsider. Additionally, language barriers can also make it challenging to connect with others and navigate daily life, which can add to feelings of isolation and anxiety. Homesickness is a natural emotional response to being away from one's home, family. It can manifest in feelings of sadness, nostalgia, and longing.

Fortunately, technology and the Internet can be incredibly helpful for individuals who are experiencing emotional distress due to migration. Keeping in touch with loved ones can be extremely helpful for immigrants. Technology makes it easier than ever to stay in touch with friends and family back home. Video calls, messaging apps, and social media platforms can help individuals feel more connected and supported.

I have taken advantage of the new technology, VR, and I tried to create a space that people can connect to each other in a shared immersive experience. For example, friends from different parts of the world can put on VR headsets and participate in a virtual reality birthday party or explore a virtual world together. This shared experience can help people feel closer to one another and strengthen their relationships. This VR experience can provide a space for people to connect and socialize in a way that feels more personal than traditional Online interactions. Overall, VR has the potential to help people connect with one another in new and innovative ways, bringing people closer together despite physical distances or limitations.



REFLECTION

I am very pleased with the amount of work that I have get done in the short amount of time!

I am glad that I moved out of my comfort zone and I managed to learn how to work and design in VR space. I did face so many challenges, but I never gave up! I am looking forward to expand my knowledge in VR because I saw so many potential in VR and I can see the future moving toward mixed reality designs!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have to say a huge thank you to all my advisors. Professor Connie who guided me through the whole process and kept everything positive although sometimes things were challenging. And Leily Khatibi who was very patient with me and taught me the basics of VR design in the short amount of time. And last but not least Mehdi RoohianFard who pushed me to start learning about VR technology and advised me for designing better user experience for MetaFam interfaces.

Annoto

05

COLOPHON

Publisher

BFA Graphic Design Program
San Jose José University
One Washington Square
San Jose, CA

Printer Company

blurb.com

Paper

Premium Matte (100)
Standard Portrait 8x10

biblioo

lead

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