

# Wavelength

*Case Study Documentation*  
*Hannah Cattanach*

Ken Yiu

UXO720: User Experience Design  
MA User Experience Design  
Falmouth University

**19.04.2024**

# Links

*Link to Prototype*

*Link to Figma*

*Link to Case Study Video*





# Contents

Links	2	Iteration	34
Introduction	4	Approach to design	35
		Assumptions and Testing	36
Research	7	Early Testing	38
Brief	8	Gamification	40
Interviews	10	Design Studio	41
Personas	12	Grid	43
Journey Map	14	Responsive layout	44
Competitive Analysis	15	Decision Making	45
Feature Analysis	16		
Task Analysis	17	Conclusion	47
Project Re-alignment	18		
User Flow	19	References	50
Card Sort	21	List of Figures	53
Testing - Iteration 1	22		
Iteration 2	24		
Testing - Iteration 3	25		
Design	27		
Inspiration	28		
Major design decisions	29		
Accessibility	30		
Copy	31		
Design conventions / patterns	32		
Colour palette / font pairings	33		

# Introduction

Moving to a new country or city is an exhilarating experience. Everything is different and fresh; you can't wait to get out there and soak up all the new experiences. But moving can also be crushingly lonely. Suddenly, nobody laughs at your jokes and friend groups are already tightly established with seemingly no wiggle room.

People choose to move for many reasons; a gap year, a better job or a new experience to name just a few. However, the struggle to find your feet in established communities leads to feelings of loneliness and isolation. Within the queer and transgender community (Q/T), this is especially pertinent.

Found family is touted by many as "a signature of queer experience" (Jackson Levin et al. 2020: 1) and refers to a non-biologically related group of people that subverts the traditional ideas of a family unit. But the way a found family functions in reality means different things to different people. They can be huge with official gatherings or just a few friends coming



*'Wavelength' splash screen*

together over a favourite TV program on a Friday night (Blum 2022).

This project hopes to bridge that gap between loneliness and community building by helping individuals find their feet in new places. The resulting product is not queer-exclusive but is rather designed around queer-specific experiences to make a more accessible product for all people.

Initial research focussed on finding pain points associated with community building and learning how people have done it in the past to see where I can help the process. However, my ultimate goal was to reimagine the tools that empower queer and trans people of all ages to find their families wherever they are.



# Research

## Brief

The suggested brief centred around charitable giving with a focus on how specific underrepresented groups can be encouraged to spend more time or money. While I believe in the worth of charities, an app to facilitate volunteering will not change the social conditions that make food banks necessary.

For inspiration, I browsed the news and found an article from Candice Chung, who had emigrated from Australia to Glasgow (2024). In the article, she discusses building a community in her new home and the difficulties of finding good Cantonese food. Social isolation and loneliness are reported as significant experiences for migrants and return migrants (Barrett and Mosca 2013).

My initial thoughts regarding design and development were to steer away from photos and to let small introductions and private conversations lead the way. As I knew I wanted to keep users accountable for replies I wanted to start my designs by focussing on the style of all copy to ensure sensitivity and inclusivity.



*Early brainstorm session exploring project topics*

# Problem Statement

"I need a way to easily and safely connect with like-minded people in my new city because it can be stressful when the only options are big groups."

# Hypothesis

"I believe that by creating intentional meet-up solutions based around individuals and their values, newcomers can build strong communities."

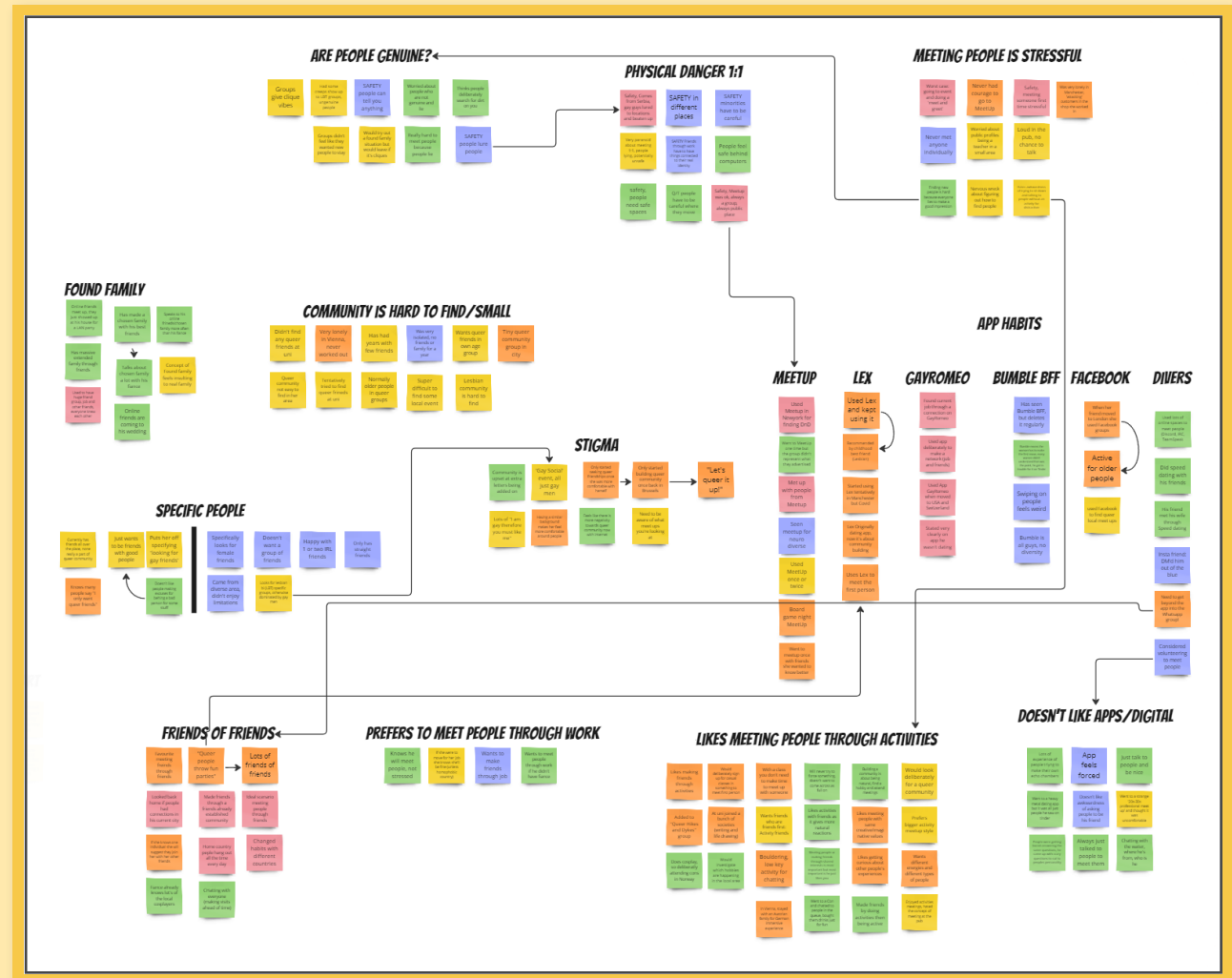


# Interviews

I began by conducting a series of user interviews with a small handful of people with different sexualities and emigration backgrounds.

The initial affinity map fell into the 'basic groupings' trap, exactly what the literature says not to do (Braun and Clarke 2006; Rosala and Pernice 2023). Taking a minute to reframe, I broke things down into the essence of the insights. For example, I split the 'Problems' group into six distinct categories, including: 'physical danger', 'community is hard to find' and 'meeting people is stressful'.

As the second map was much clearer, I saw my initial assumptions were wrong. I assumed the main problem of meeting new people was that events are often big groups, making them stressful. But the biggest problem my users identified was safety and knowing if people were genuine rather than trolls. So, based on that and my users' preferred ways to meet people, I developed the following two problem statements.



Affinity map generated from interviews



# Revised Problem Statements

"Queer people need a safe way to meet locals so they can make friends with similar life experiences."

"New arrivals need a secure, low-effort method to find in-person hobbies in their new area so they can start building communities."





# Personas

Conducting interviews also highlighted the flaws in my assumptions surrounding personas. My initial assumption was that recent immigrants would start searching for a new circle of friends once they had settled in.

However, my research showed that more organised individuals would reach out to people before moving. This indicated to me that setting location independently of the user location would be a key feature. As this would be the person most likely to use a meet-up service, I made them my primary persona, Montague.

She is an organised community builder and will set aside time to meet new people. Montague has moved continents once already and is moving again. She will adjust her habits to her new home as she did before. As Montague is quite a character, I needed a second persona to encapsulate the whole story. Sarah.

Someone who recently moved to a city two hours away from her hometown

<b>PRIMARY PERSONA</b> 	<b>SCENARIO</b> - WHEN MOVING FROM RIGA TO NEW YORK, SHE USED A GAY DATING APP TO MAKE CONNECTIONS AND FRIENDS BEFORE ARRIVING, BUT SWIPING ON PEOPLE FELT UNCOMFORTABLE AND SHE HAD TO STATE CLEARLY IN HER PROFILE SHE WAS LOOKING FOR FRIENDS ONLY. NOW SHE'S MOVING AGAIN, SHE WANTS TO DO THE SAME THING BUT WITH MORE CONFIDENCE	<b>NEEDS + GOALS</b> - WANTS TO HAVE A FEW PEOPLE LINED UP TO MEET BEFORE SHE MOVES - NEEDS TO ENSURE HER SAFETY WHEN MEETING PEOPLE
<b>NAME + CATEGORY</b> MONTAGUE WITHNAIL THE COMMUNITY BUILDER	<b>DEMOGRAPHICS</b> - LESBIAN/CIS - RECENTLY EMMIGRATED TO LYON FROM NEW YORK - LATVIAN? <b>BEHAVIOURS</b> - ORGANISED + WILL MAKE TIME TO MEET PEOPLE - WANTS FRIEND HABITS HAVE CHANGED WITH COUNTRIES	<b>FRUSTRATIONS</b> - ANNOYED AT PEOPLE LYING ON THEIR PROFILES - A LOT OF APPS ARE SPECIFIC FOR GAY MEN
<b>SECONDARY PERSONA</b> 	<b>SCENARIO</b> - SARAH HAS ALWAYS FOUND CONTEXTUAL FRIENDS NO PROBLEM, BUT IN HER NEW JOB THE OFFICE IS SMALL AND MOST PEOPLE ARE OVER WITH FAMILIES / RESPONSIBILITIES. SHE LIKES TRYING OUT NEW HOBBIES BUT HAS FOUND THE CLASSES SHE HAS ATTENDED IN LIVERPOOL PEOPLE HAVE BEEN ATTENDING FOR THE SKILL AND HAVEN'T BEEN OPEN TO NEW FRIENDS.	<b>NEEDS + GOALS</b> - WANTS TO MEET PEOPLE VIA ACTIVITIES - WANTS TO MEET PEOPLE THAT 'GET IT' BUT STILL A DIVERSE BUNCH
<b>NAME + CATEGORY</b> SARAH CHURCHILL THE BUSY HOBBYIST	<b>DEMOGRAPHICS</b> - CIS/PANSEXUAL - MOVED FROM BRISTOL TO LIVERPOOL 6 MONTHS AGO FOR WORK <b>BEHAVIOURS</b> - HATES GIVING UP FREE TIME WHEN - FINDS MEETING PEOPLE AWKWARD - WAS IN A BUNCH OF DIFF. SOCIETIES IN UNI	<b>FRUSTRATIONS</b> - HAS USED MEET UP A FEW TIMES BUT THE GROUPS ARE TOO BIG - NOT SURE HOW TO FIND LOCAL SPOTS WITHOUT INSIDER KNOWLEDGE

Sketched out primary and secondary personas

and is struggling to connect with her new colleagues. She has always had big circles of contextual friends, but her new workplace is small and everyone has family responsibilities.

While Montague doesn't need much help, it was found through research that users like Sarah feel lonely and insecure in their new home. Therefore, it was clear that a friendly tone for colour and copy would be essential.

By referring to Sarah's persona, I added the additional feature of 'Chat Practice', to allow users to try out starting conversations deliberately rather than waiting for help from contextual circumstances.

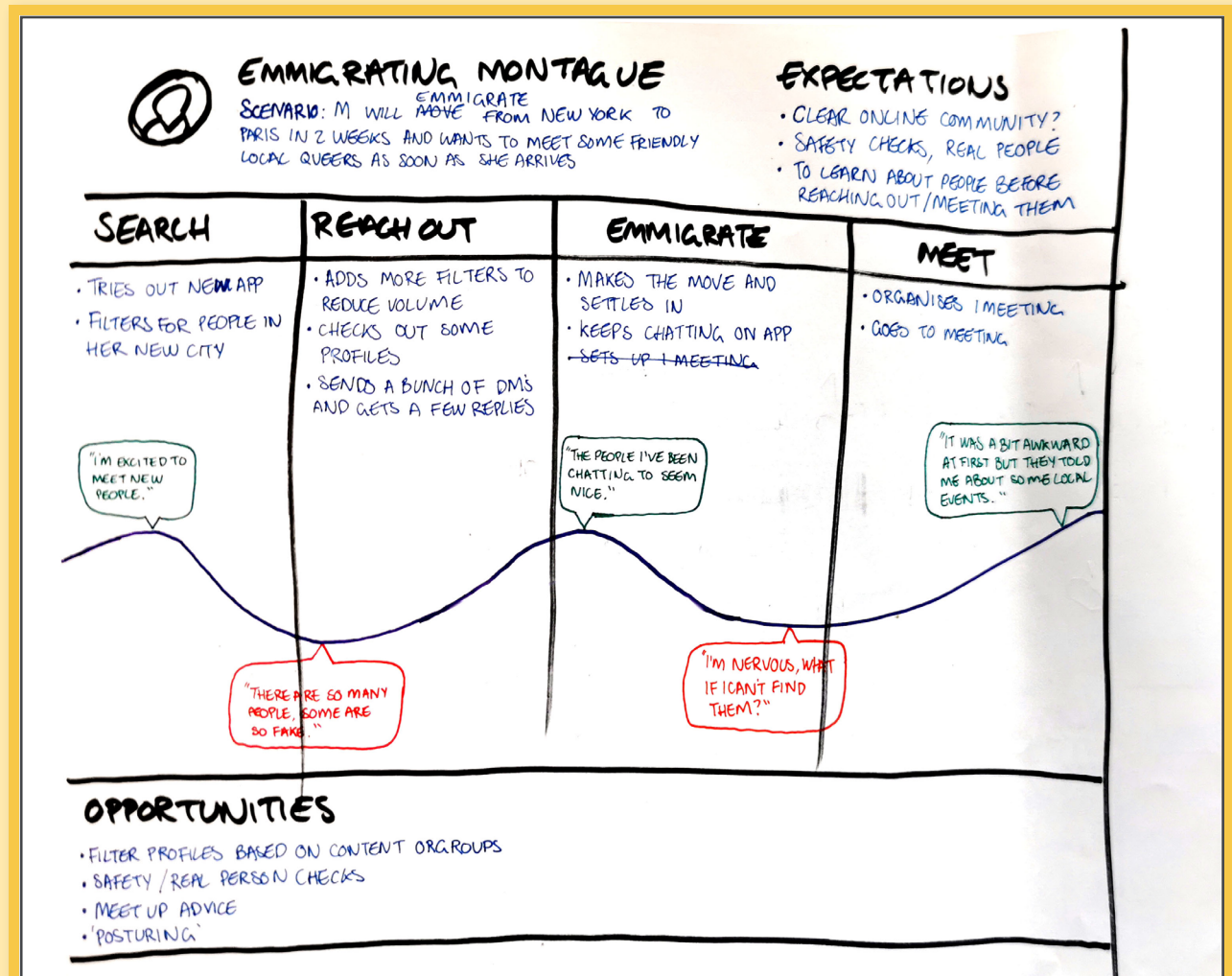


*Private chat practice with a bot*

# Journey Map

Moving further into the design phase, I developed a journey map for Montague, the primary persona. The map tracks her experience from two weeks before her move from New York to Paris, to her first month living in her new city. Early in the journey, Montague experiences frustration with fake accounts and ghosting and already feels distanced from a potential new community of friends. Trolls and the need to ensure safety during meet-ups were therefore highlighted as a key concern for this product.

As there is no ethical way of making people be nice, I decided to ensure that user accounts are at least real people by introducing account verification. Many sites utilise a basic form of verification, however I took it a step further by requesting users to input their ID number, and then match that number with a photo later. To combat ghosting, I implemented a blog focussed on accountability, safety and fostering nuanced conversation.



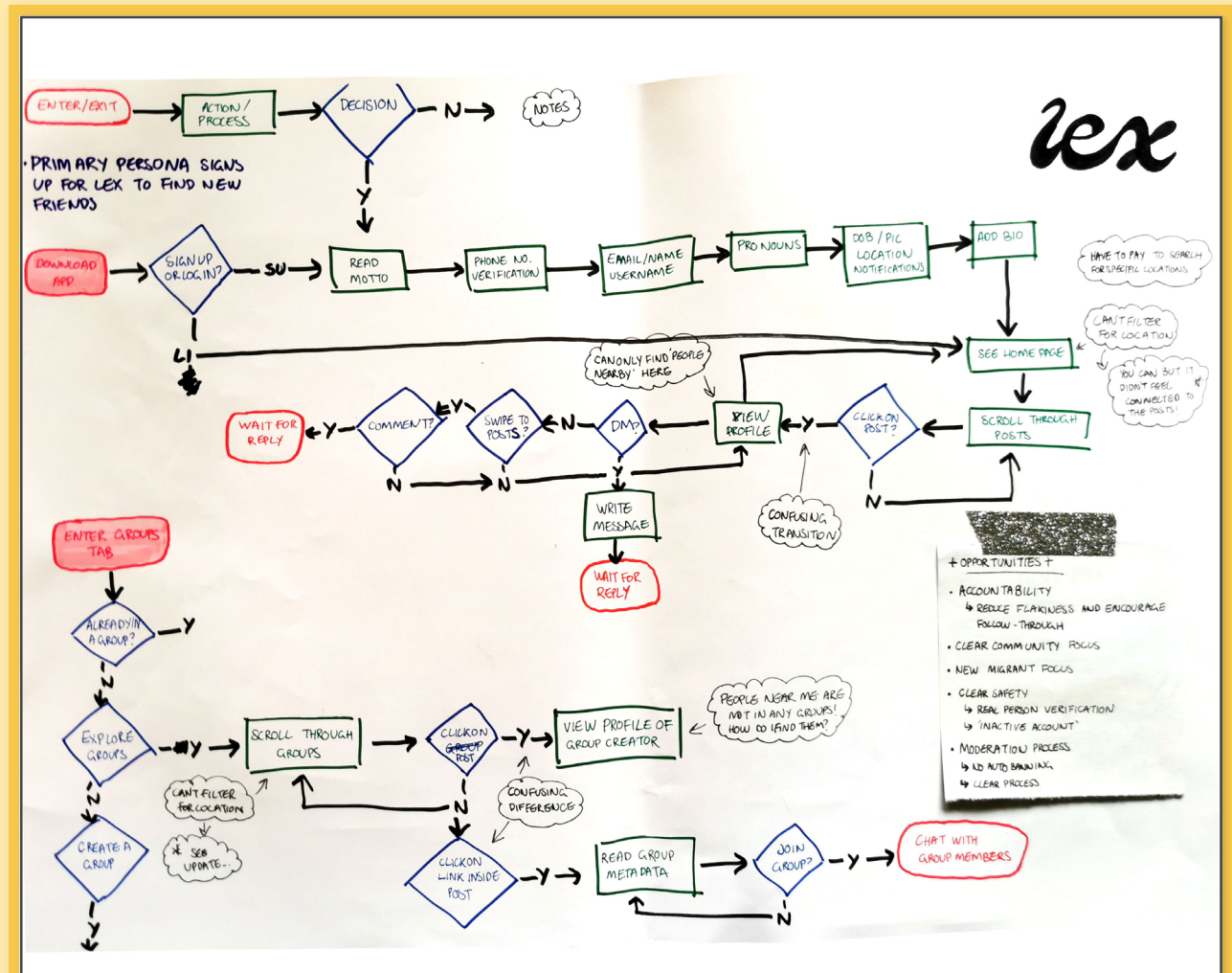


# Competitive Analysis

I identified Lex, MeetUp and Bumble BFF as my main competitors. MeetUp is a huge platform for people to form public groups and attend events of all kinds (MeetUp 2024). Bumble BFF is an offshoot of Bumble where a match makes you a friend rather than a date (Bumble 2024). Lex on the other hand started as a queer dating app but has developed into a community-building tool (Lex 2024).

Flow analysis of Lex onboarding, messaging and joining groups was very illuminating as it helped me identify a few problem areas that could make new users unsure of how to proceed. The combination of the journey map and the user flow also helped me identify key opportunities for my product, which I might not have seen without stepping into the user's shoes.

Despite being focused on the queer community, the only safety protocols in place in Lex were adding a phone number. The app does not provide any advice on in-person meetups.



The 'Sign-up' flow and 'Join Group' flow in Lex

## Feature Analysis

Each product very quickly gave different vibes regarding values, which led me to identify which features I would like to include in my artefact. Despite Lex having a community aspect and Bumble BFF specifically targeting platonic relationships, they both had a strong 'dating' feel.

In contrast, MeetUp felt quite distant and intimidating as the main focus of the app is to join pre-established groups. Interviews found that of all participants who had attended MeetUp groups, they all had the same memories of stress at having no contact with the group before the event.

	LEX	MEETUP	REALLY PUSHING PREMIUM	BUMBLE BFF	UX0720
PROFILE PICTURE	✓	✓		✓	✓
PROFILE PHOTOS	✗	✗		✓	✗
BIO / PERSONAL DE.	✓	✓		✓	✓
PUBLIC POSTS	✓	✗		✗	✓
PRIVATE MESSAGES	✓	✓ * EVENT CHAT + DIRECT MESSAGES		✓	✓
PRIVATE GROUPS	✓	✗		✗	✓
PUBLIC EVENTS	✓	✓		✗	✗
LOCATION FILTER	✗ * DISTANCE FROM ME FILTER * LOCATION FILTER PAID	✓		✓	✓
MODERATION	✓	✗ * EVENT ORGANISERS ARE INDIVIDUAL MODERATORS		✗	✓
SAFETY CHECKS	✗ * ONLY ASKS FOR PHONE NO.	✗		✗ * ONLY ASKS FOR PHONE NUMBER * PHOTO VERIFICATION (NOT REQUIRED) * HAS BRIEF ARTICLES ON WEBSITE	✓
ADVICE	✗	✗		✓	✓
1/1 CONNECTIONS	✓	✗		✓ * BFF HAS DATING VIBES	✗
DATING	✓	✗		✓	✓
APP	✓	✓		✓	✓
WEBSITE	✗	✓		✗	✓
QUEER FOCUS	✓	✗		✗	✓
FRIENDS	✗	✗ * 'CONNECTIONS' CONNECTED TO EVENT		✗	✗
AGE FILTER	✓	✗		✓	✓

# Task Analysis

As one of the key values for my project is making meaningful connections with people, I conducted a task analysis into how each product treats its direct messaging (DM) function. MeetUp showed its focus on the RSVP function as direct messaging with event participants was convoluted and tricky.

Bumble BFF maintains the complexity of Bumble messaging involving timers and only women are allowed to send the first message (Bumble 2022). Through the task analysis, I found Lex to have the most direct approach to DMing other users as it is primarily a text-based app.

As Wavelength is also a product based on personal connection, I took inspiration from Lex to make the DM button a prominent feature on user posts.

TASK: SEND SOMEONE A PRIVATE MESSAGE			
	LEX	MEETUP <sub>(WEBSITE)</sub>	BUMBLE BFF
1.	LOGIN/SIGNUP	LOGIN/SIGNUP	LOGIN/SIGNUP
2.	SET DISTANCE + AGE FILTERS	SET DATE / TYPE / DISTANCE FILTERS ↳ INPERSON / ONLINE	SWIPE LEFT AND RIGHT ON PROFILE PICS
3.	BROWSE POSTS / GROUPS / EVENTS OR CHOOSE OTHER ADDITIONAL FILTERS	BROWSE EVENTS (ORGANISED BY DATE)	BROWSE PEOPLE'S PROFILES
4.	→ POST? CLICK DM BUTTON WITH POST RESPONSE +	SELECT EVENT	WAIT FOR A MATCH NOTIFICATION 📬
5.	→ GROUP? CLICK ON GROUP POST	CLICK ON <u>EVENT HOSTS</u> BUTTON	♀ SEND A MESSAGE WITHIN 24 HOURS 📬
6.	CLICK ON DM BUTTON	CLICK ON (A) HOSTS NAME BUTTON	RECEIVE A RESPONSE WITHIN 24 HOURS 📬
7.	START CHATTING	(OPENS NEW WINDOW) CLICK ON CHAT WITH XXX BUTTON	START CHATTING
8.		(OPENS NEW WINDOW) START CHATTING	



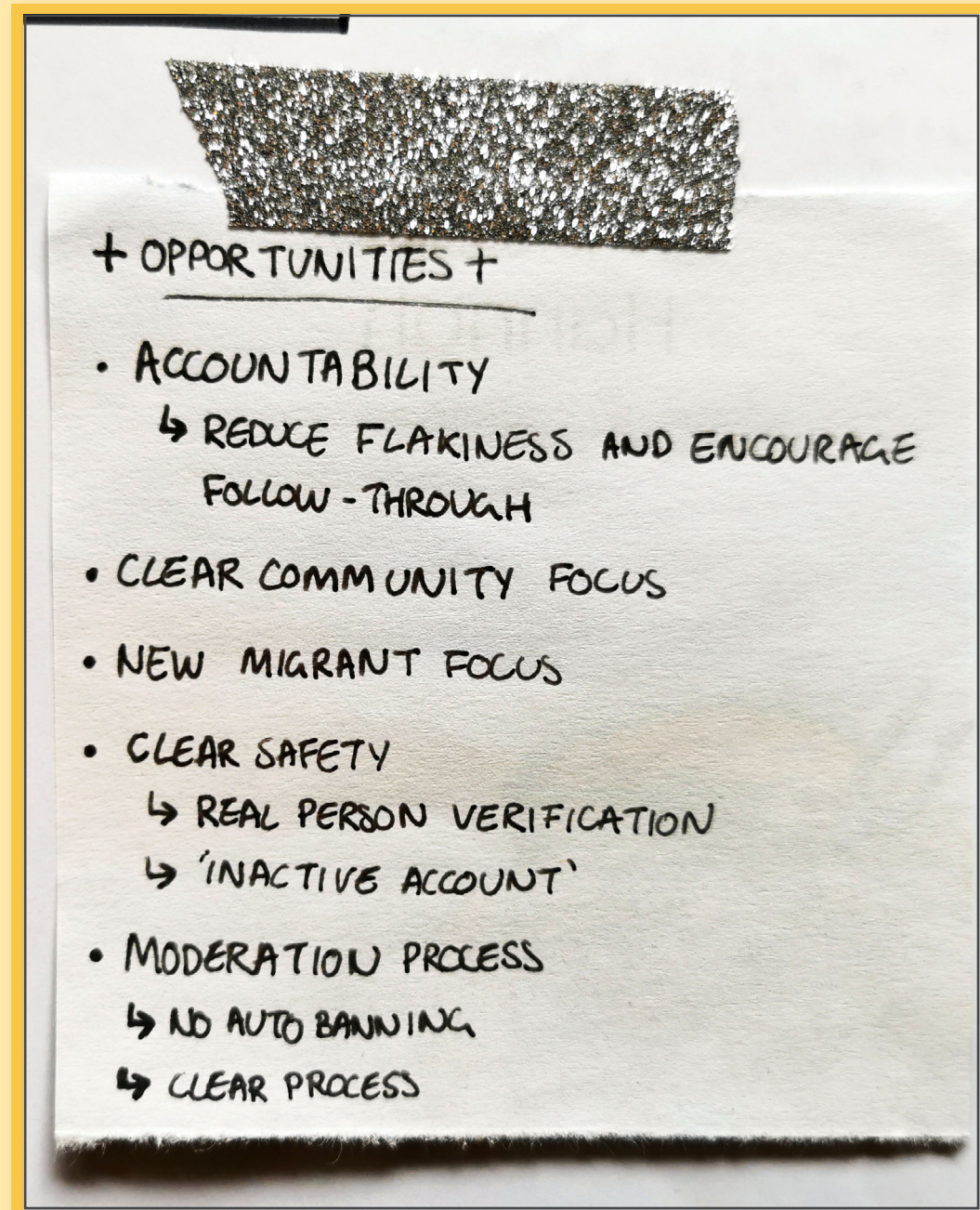
## Project Re-alignment

**Goal of UX prototype:** To facilitate IRL friendships amongst queer immigrants while prioritising safety and personal accountability.

**Barriers to adoption and user success:** From user interviews, many people assume that people lie. Especially in online social profiles where people want to appear the best they can be. Lying erodes trust and could prevent users from signing up and from trusting other users if they do.

**Elevating the experience:** I am making safety a key feature from the start. Unlike other social apps, verification is easy to abuse. With this product, I have made it an essential part of the sign-up process where each new user will learn what the verified symbol means.

The product experience is further personalised by discovering local people and interest groups. The product helps users connect by offering conversation suggestions, reminders for unanswered messages, and inactive account banners.



Opportunities identified after conducting competitive analysis



## User Flow

The primary user goal supported in this prototype is allowing queer people to connect with locals safely. Secondly, the prototype provides a low-effort method to find new, in-person hobbies.

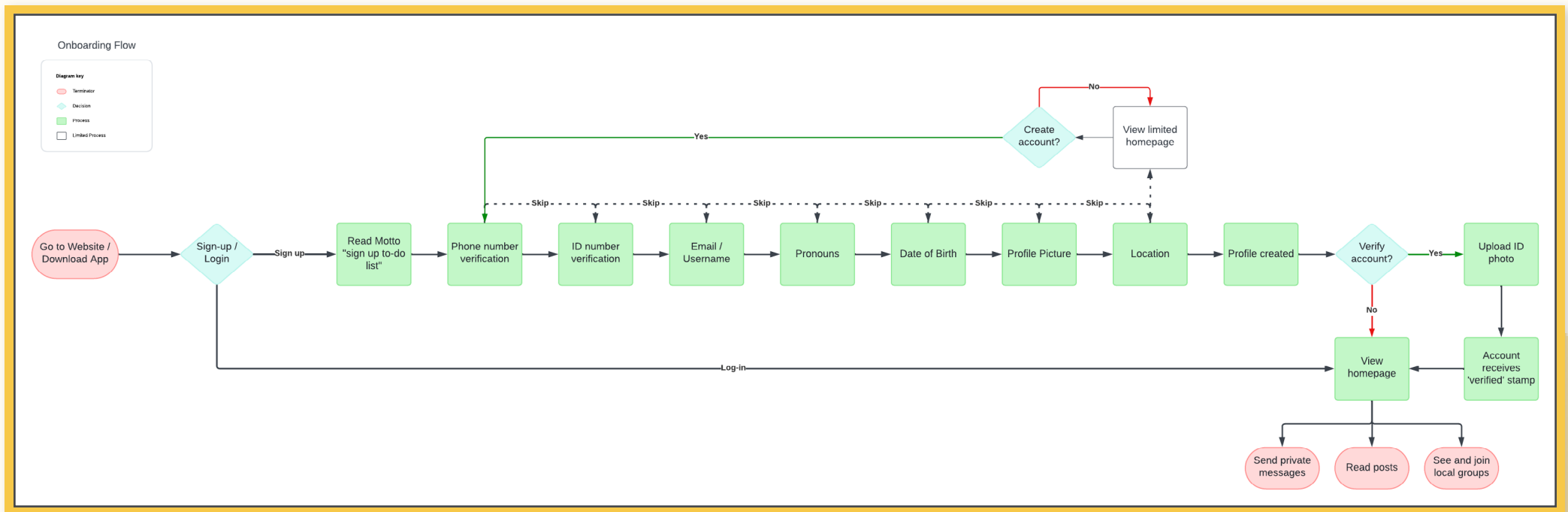
To facilitate safer connections, Wavelength utilises a doing-oriented onboarding process (Shad 2023). The onboarding flow simultaneously verifies users are real people and helps them establish the basics for their user profile. New users cannot engage with other users without a verified profile and will only see limited content.

Therefore, creating an account is a non-optional condition for using the product. Users will first read the product motto because the onboarding process will be slightly longer than average. The user learns about the product's values and upcoming steps on the motto screen.

Once the user has a profile, access to groups and direct messaging is prominently displayed on the home feed, reducing friction for users to start reaching out.

***“Wavelength onboarding teaches;  
1) the product's benefits  
2) filling out key profile details  
3) verifying users”***

# Onboarding User Flow



## Card Sort

The card sort returned ambiguous results. I did not provide participants with any additional context other than the navigation items on the cards which resulted in scattered sorting. For example, 'Create Post' was most often sorted under 'Blog' as participants were unclear about the type of post that was meant. Additionally, sections about accountability and meet-up safety were quite randomly sorted as it was unclear if they referred to blog post categories.

Due to time constraints, I did not conduct a second card sort. Instead, I observed norms in the information architecture of other social media sites and followed a similar structure. In further usability testing, users did not report confusion or frustration at the information architecture indicating that following industry norms did not increase any cognitive load.

### Popular placements matrix ?

	Feed	Profile	Direct Messaging	Groups	Blog	unsorted
Settings		100%				
My Friends	20%	60%		20%		
Online Safety		60%			40%	
Saved Posts	20%	60%			20%	
Accountability	20%	40%			40%	
My Posts	20%	40%			40%	
Conversation Practice			100%			
Individual Conversations			80%	20%		
My Groups		20%		80%		
Group Categories		20%		60%	20%	
Meet Up Safety		20%		60%	20%	
Local Businesses	20%		20%	40%	20%	
Create a post	20%	20%			60%	

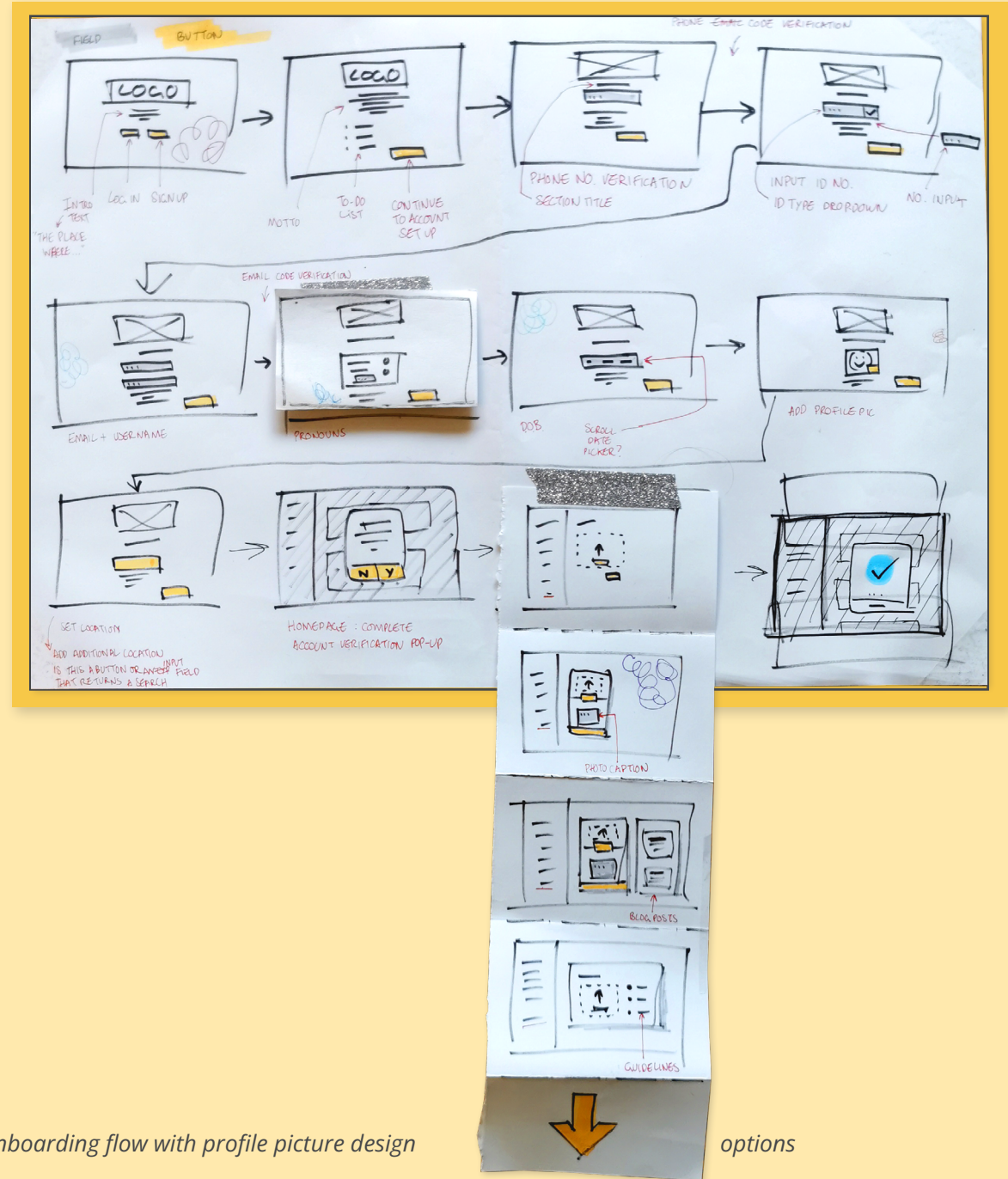
## Testing - Iteration 1

As the onboarding flow is where Wavelength will experience the highest dropout rates, it was the first port of call for hotspot usability testing. Using a combination of Figma and Maze, I created a low-fidelity prototype of the onboarding process.

In total, 19 people completed the initial testing giving the flow a usability score of 61. However, upon investigation of the data, the misclick rates were very low.

Participants clearly understood each screen and found the correct buttons to progress to the next stage. What gave the low score, was that participants were objecting to the account verification requirements such as phone number and ID number.

These valid concerns indicated the importance of system feedback to let the user know the data would not be kept beyond the initial verification process.



Onboarding flow with profile picture design

options

# User Feedback

*"The information was too much, with the increase in DDoS attacks and accounts being leaked, having the specifics such as phone number and other important details that if leaked could lead to identity fraud is a high concern, and without any reassurances that the data is secure, entering them into a system is a red flag in itself."*

*"I've tried to skip some steps because I wanted to take a look at the product first. Personally, I don't like to fill out registration at the very beginning before viewing the product."*



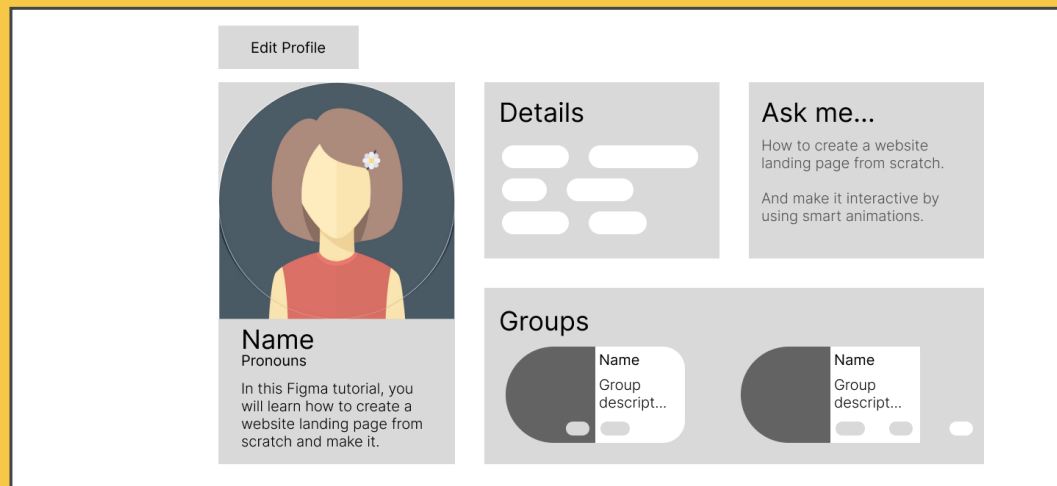
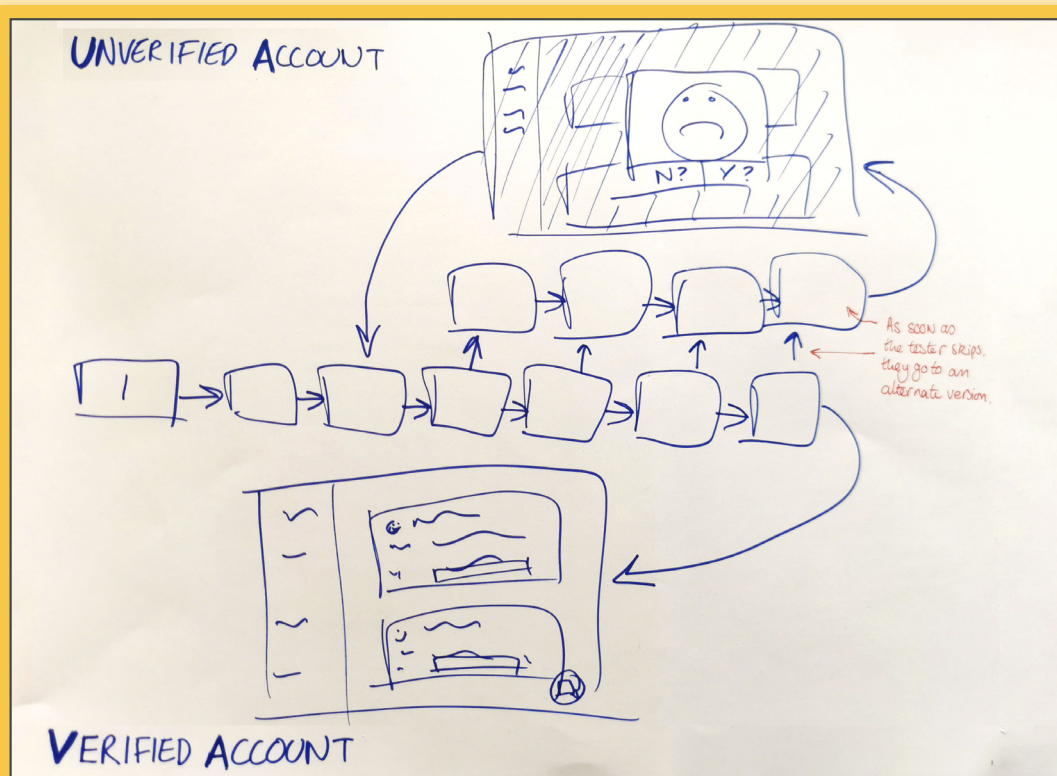
## Iteration 2

Using the testing data, I built a second iteration of the onboarding flow and the rough layout of the rest of the prototype.

Restructuring the onboarding, I moved the verification to the start to make use of higher energy levels. I added clear, explanatory copy at each stage detailing what information is kept, what for and what can be changed later.

Several users commented that displaying a progress bar upfront with all the steps was a great addition to allow them to plan their time better.

This rough stage also helped to clarify the overall information architecture and the hierarchy of content.



*Using sketching and grey boxes to develop the design*



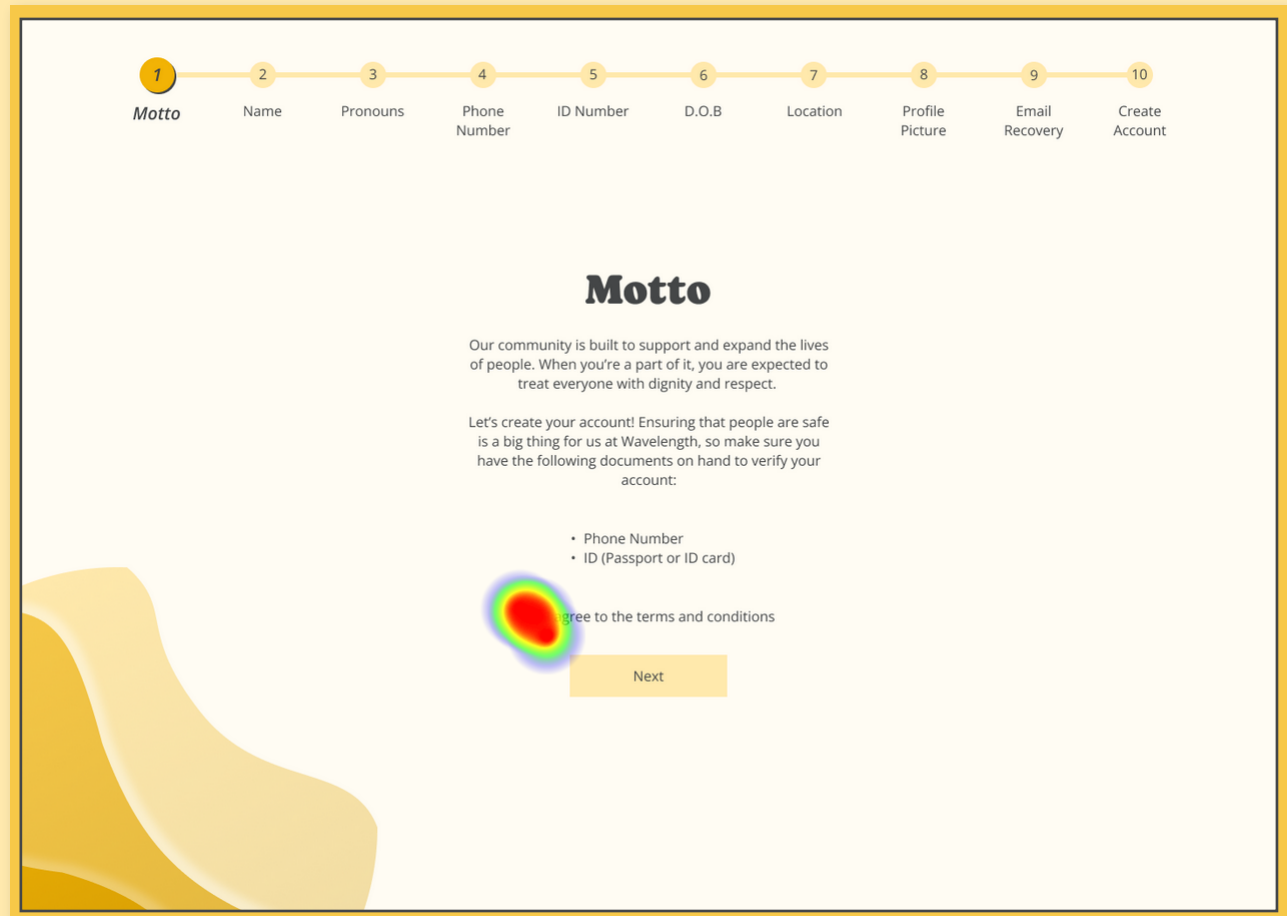
## Testing - Iteration 3

With a more fleshed-out prototype, I conducted a second usability test with the same goal as the first: create a verified account. Again, the results of this test were ambiguous as I did not build the prototype specifically for the Maze platform which requires different end screens for each desired path.

Due to time constraints, I set only one desired path and settled for 'indirect successes'. Twelve users in all completed the test, with two dropping out early.

Every participant successfully created a verified account with minimal difficulty. One participant pointed out that the radio buttons were too small and had insufficient change between selected and unselected.

While most participants were happy with the onboarding process stating that it was clear and straightforward, several found it too long. I was surprised at this feedback arriving only in the last round of testing as I had expected to receive it straight away.

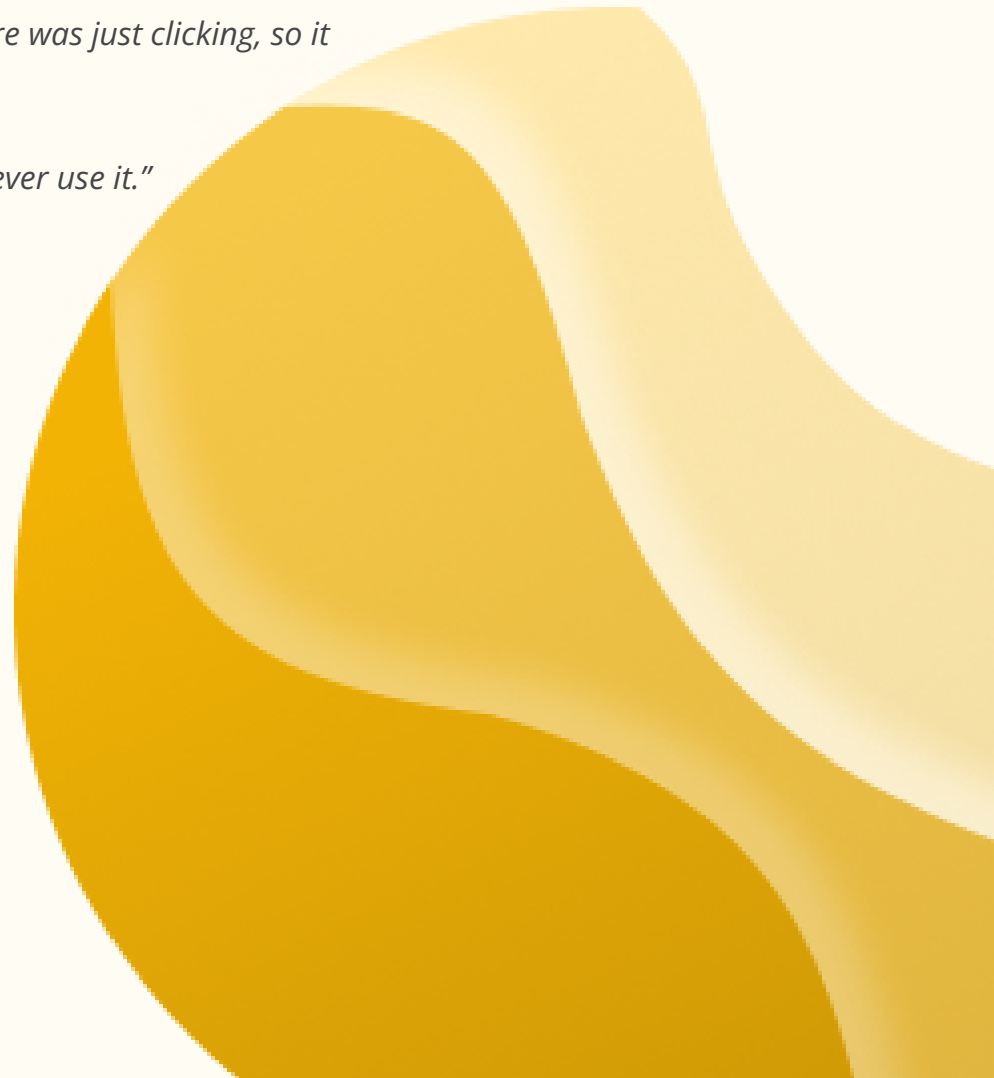


*Radio buttons and tick boxes were too small for some users*

# User Feedback

*"Would be more tiresome if I had to do all of that in a real app. Here was just clicking, so it gave me the impression that is easy and fast."*

*"Long and tedious. If this were a real-world meet-up app I would never use it."*





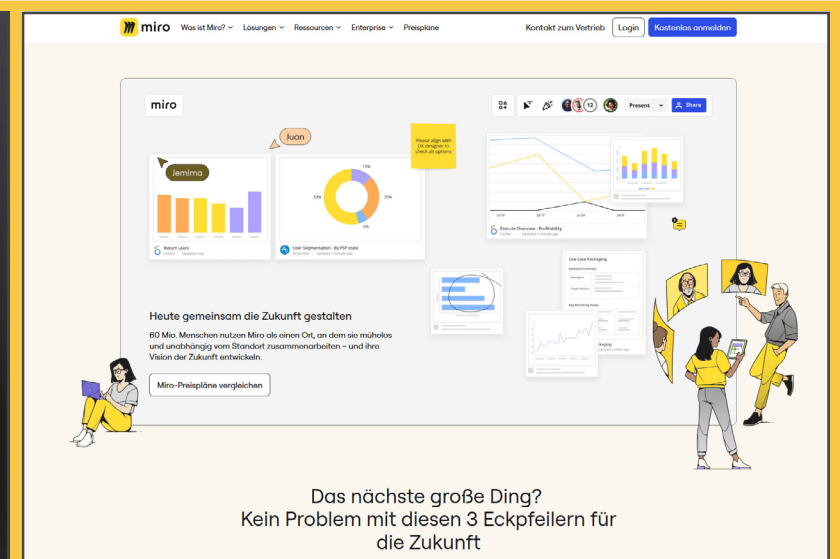
# Design

## Inspiration

Wavelength was inspired by a combination of sources. Lex and Bumble caught my attention immediately as they both have a very youthful feel which I wanted to bring to this project.

Lex is so simple in its content and design while Bumble BFF feels so friendly (despite its reputation). I loved Miro for its softness and Yellowbird for its brashness and bold typography style.

These sources each provided their own flavour to the development of Wavelength and guided my choices in colour, layout, navigation and content.



Das nächste große Ding?  
Kein Problem mit diesen 3 Eckpfeilern für  
die Zukunft

Our hot sauce isn't just hot—it's delicious. We source killer ingredients for the most flavor in every squeeze. So whether you're a seasoned spice connoisseur, or you fear the Reaper, we've got the sauce for you.

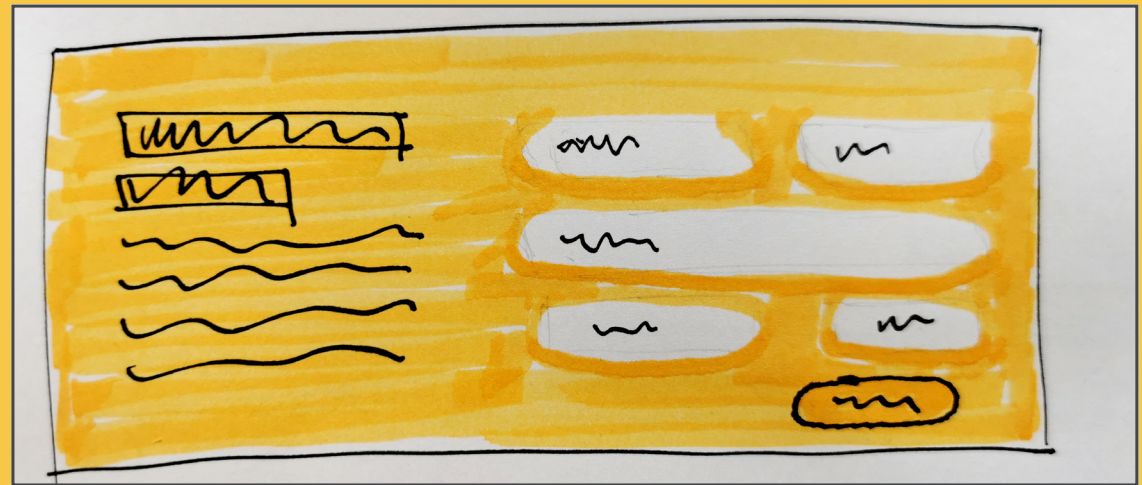


## Major Design Decisions

The key design decision for Wavelength was usability through contrast. Almost every field element is held within a container to clearly state to the user the hierarchy of elements.

The outermost part of the container is always a box with 90° corners, while everything within the containers is soft and rounded. Interactable elements are therefore also rounded, including the 'Write a post' button. This button does not sit within a container but still follows the same visual language.

The logo forms the beginning of the hierarchy with rounded forms. Then comes the containers with sharp edges, and finally interactable field elements which are again round. A wavelength of visual hierarchy.



Contrast through form in sketch and high-fidelity format

## Accessibility

All colour combinations within Wavelength achieve AA standard at a minimum, with the majority achieving AAA standard. Users with visual impairments are further aided by the extensive use of containers and their distinctive visual design. Even when zoomed in to 400%, users will know when they encounter a line and a colour change that important content is not far away.

For neurodivergent users subject to overwhelm, I have kept the design flat and minimal to reduce visual noise. By adding a big heading to each section, the user can see at a glance where they are, even if they forget the meaning of the highlighted icon in the navigation bar. I further reduced cognitive overload by sticking to an analogous colour scheme.



Robyn • @RainbowM

Vienna, W • Today

*I was inspired*

Roses are red //



## Copy

The focus behind the copy in Wavelength was to serve as conversational inspiration. When users are reaching out to new people, it's nerve-wracking. It's easy to write a message that is too formal, or too casual and the relationship gets off to a bad start.

So at each stage, the copy is intended to serve the user and set the tone for initiating casual conversation. Everything is written with sensitivity and inclusivity in mind remembering users can have any variety of sexualities, gender expressions and requirements.

In areas that remind the user to engage with the community, the copy aims to encourage and inspire by empowering the user to be themselves rather than a perfect representation.

***This chat uses an AI chatbot to let you practice saying hi.  
Moving home is tough, we know, this is our way of making it  
a little easier for you.***

What's your favourite thing about living in Vienna?	Tell me your best gay panic story :D
Tell me about your home town	Stay safe and read our blog on meet-up safety

What's your favourite thing about going to the mountains?	Tell me your best snowboarding horror story
Tell me about how you learned to snowboard	Stay safe and read our blog on meet-up safety

What's your favourite thing about city tours?	Tell me your best plant mama success story
Tell me about your hat collection	Stay safe and read our blog on meet-up safety

*The beginning of the chat history with each new person is customised to fit their profile*

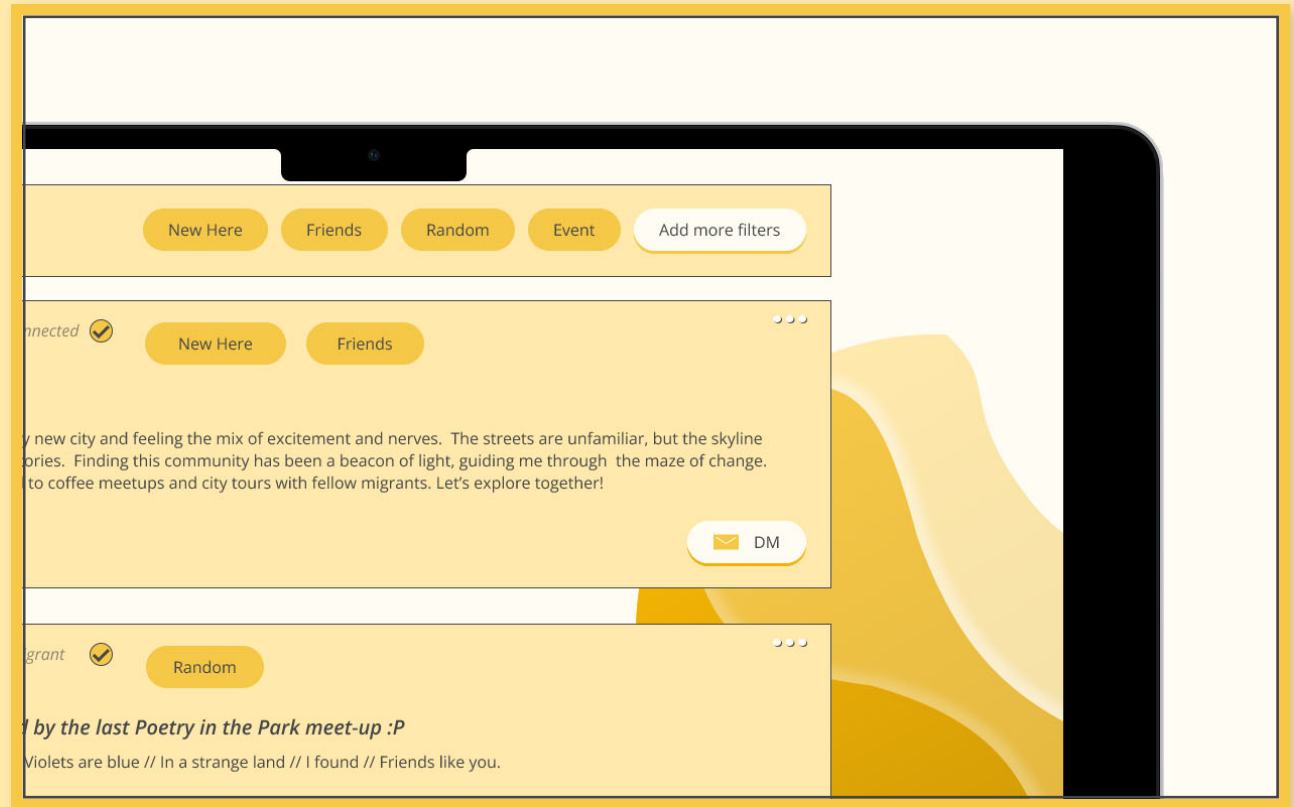
## Design Conventions

By following the six principles of design, the interface for Wavelength is clear and coherent.

Similarity and contrast are used extensively to indicate the location of content and whether the user can interact with field elements. I paired this with a clear hierarchy of form to indicate importance.

Container proportions are deliberately light and airy to prevent any feelings of the content feeling squashed. Buttons within containers are emphasised by contrasting the darker yellow background with a lighter-coloured button.

I maintained standard UI patterns to maintain simplicity such as progress indicators, settings menus and page headers.



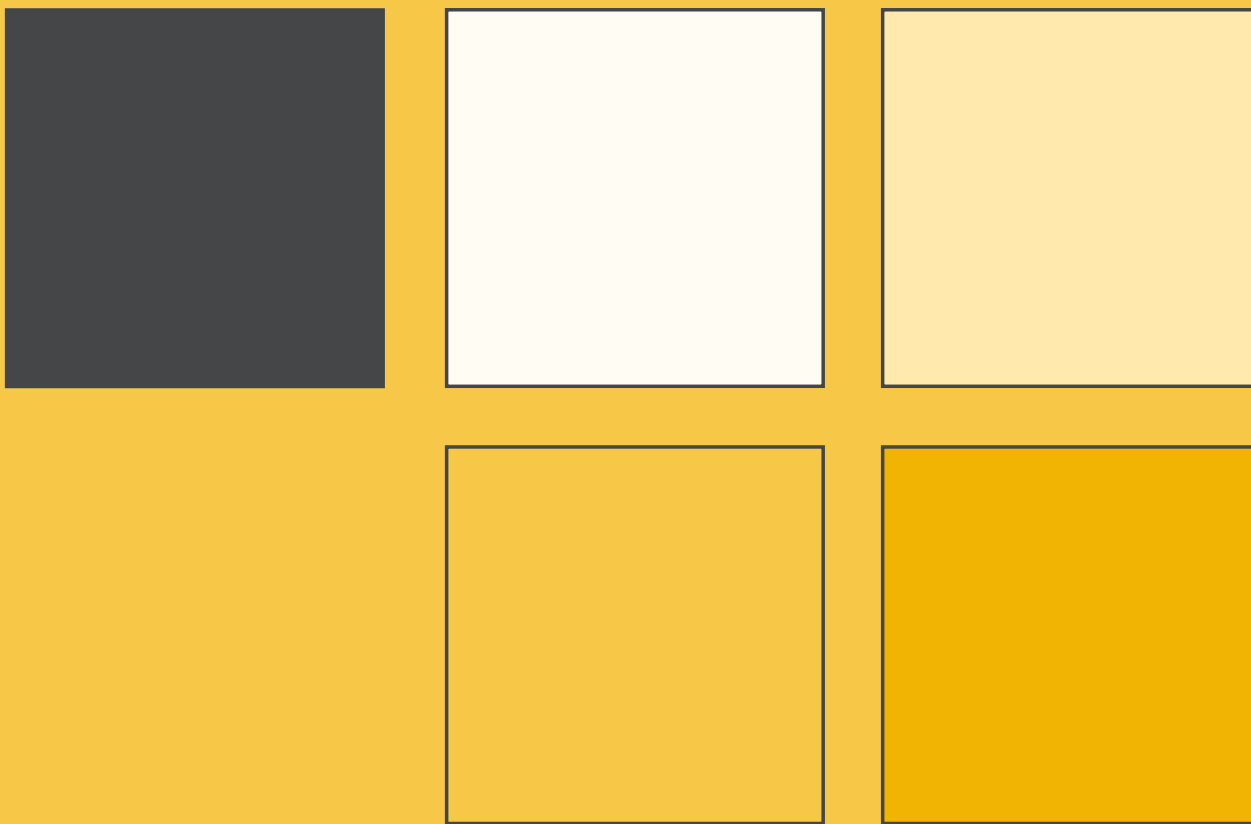
*Hierarchy from round to square back to rounded*

## Colour / Font

Paper sketching inadvertently led to Wavelength's colour scheme. I picked up the nearest highlighter to hand, a warm yellow, which I used to colour the buttons and backgrounds. Concurrently, many of the precedents I was studying also used some variation on yellow. Enjoying the friendly vibes, I took the hint, developed a yellow colour palette, and combined it with Caprasimo and Open Sans.

Caprasimo jumped out at me instantly with its soft, rounded feel. Combined with warm yellows, Caprasimo has a laid-back, retro feel which aligns nicely with queer poetry picnics in the park. Open Sans grounds the body text and subheaders by creating a clear contrast to Caprasimo's fussiness. It is straightforward, unobtrusive and great for readability (Creative Market 2024).

**Caprasimo, 48pt**  
*Open Sans, semi-bold italic, 20pt*  
Open Sans, regular, 16pt



# Iteration

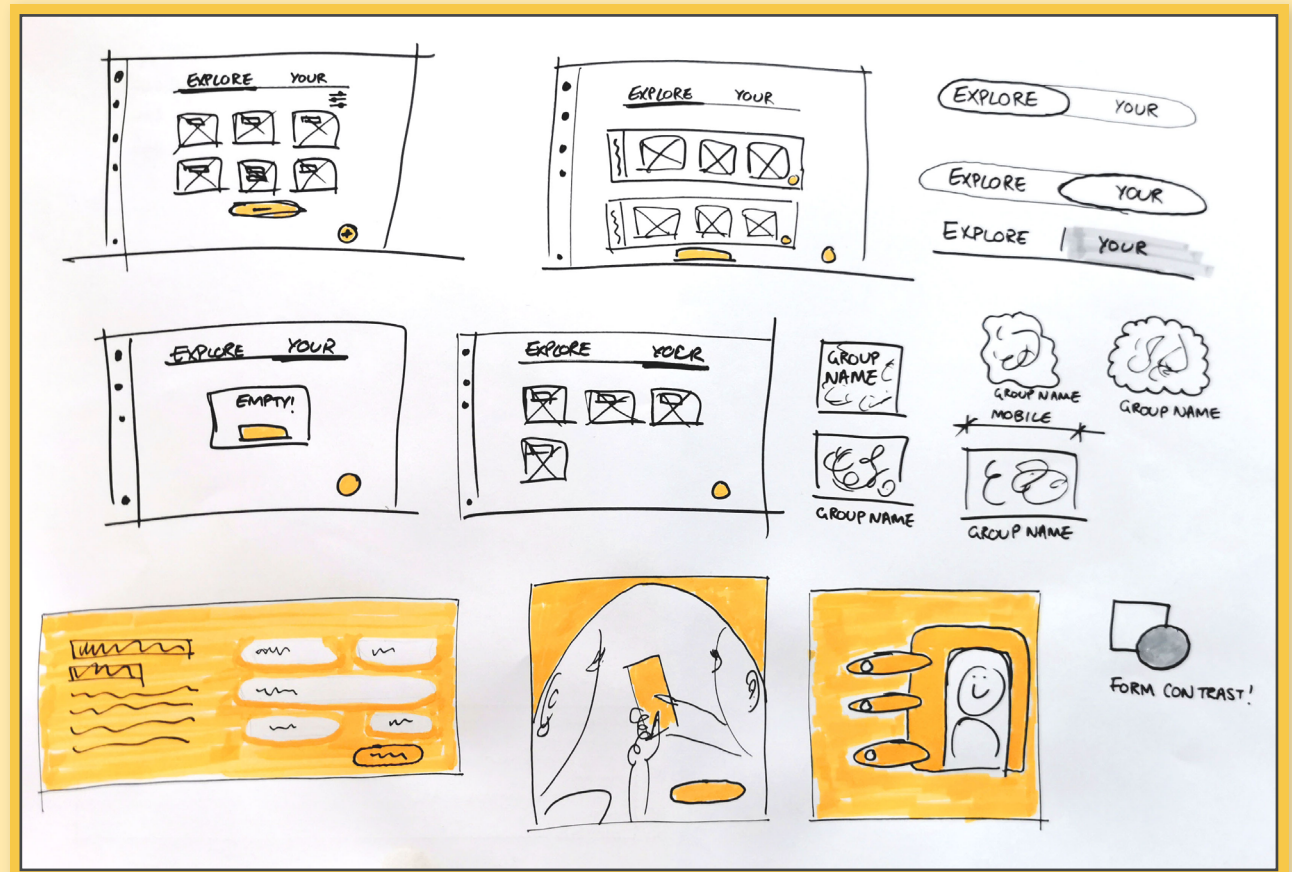


## Approach to design

My approach to the design development of Wavelength was fluid. I stayed sketching on paper as long as possible to avoid locking the design onto one track too early. Even once I started building the high-fidelity prototype, I returned to paper regularly to validate the ideas in my head in a sketch first before finalising it on the computer.

In terms of the theoretical approach to the design, I took an ethics-first approach. It is practically a common practice for social media to engage in emotional manipulation of users either directly or indirectly by sprinkling deceptive patterns everywhere (Flick 2016; Gray et al. 2018; Brignull 2024).

Knowing this is the norm for social media, I aimed to be as upfront as possible with users about the platform. By adding the blog, instead of it being a place for some lack-lustre content, I hoped to bring users into the discussion about important topics such as the limits of verified accounts and general accountability throughout the digital community.



Sketches for the 'Groups' section

## Assumptions and Testing

During user interviews, it emerged that a big complaint about social media and meet-up sites was people lying about themselves.

Based on that information, I centred the experience of Wavelength around safety and security. An important assumption is that people wouldn't mind trading off a little extra time during sign-up for a more secure experience.

I tested that assumption repeatedly with each hotspot test and each time the results were overwhelmingly in favour of account verification. However as discussed above, during the last round of testing the final comment every participant left behind was that onboarding was too long.

This contradiction between what users report and what users do is often discussed in the literature surrounding data privacy (Carrascal et al. 2013; Kokolakis 2017; Choi et al. 2018).

In the next steps of the project, I would like to test the boundaries of this paradox with



### How important is a verified account to you in meet up apps?

Multiple Choice

Kind of important 42%

Very important 33%

Neutral 8%

Not very important 8%

Not at all important 0%

Really important 41%

Kinda important 29%

Not at all 12%

Neutral 12%

Not really 6%

*The results from both surveys were clear*

a more complex prototype that allows for a stepped approach to making an account.

- A) Skipping the entire onboarding process;
- B) Verification only;
- C) Filling out some/all of the profile only;
- D) The full onboarding process.

This form of testing would also explore different versions of the product, allowing users to see different amounts of information depending on which onboarding route they took.



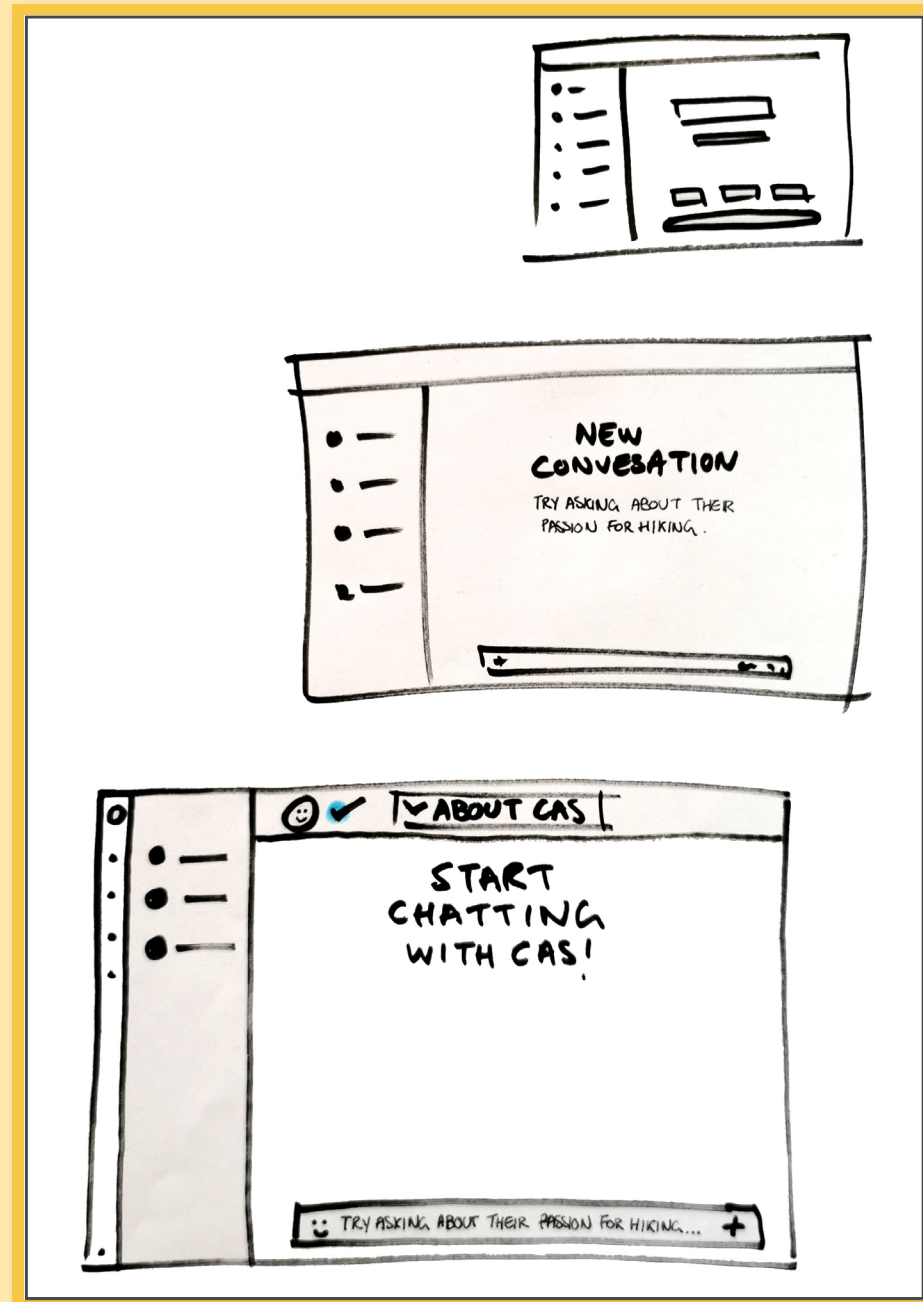
## Early Testing

Peer feedback is directly related to improved performance and user research should ideally be conducted at every stage (Gielen et al. 2010; Pernice 2022).

Following the advice of my betters, I developed a few sketches and sent them out to fellow students with some questions.

**Usability:** Despite the rough sketches, users accurately identified the 'Account Verified' symbol on both the profile picture and within the chat function. They quickly spotted the drop-down window on the chat screen and correctly assumed this was where users could find a summary of the person. This feature, however, developed into an AI system that analyses the user profiles to provide conversation prompts instead.

**Functionality:** There seems to be no confusion about the primary function of each screen, and users consistently identified the 'Profile' and the 'Messaging' screens. In each iteration, I aimed to maintain the clarity and distinct

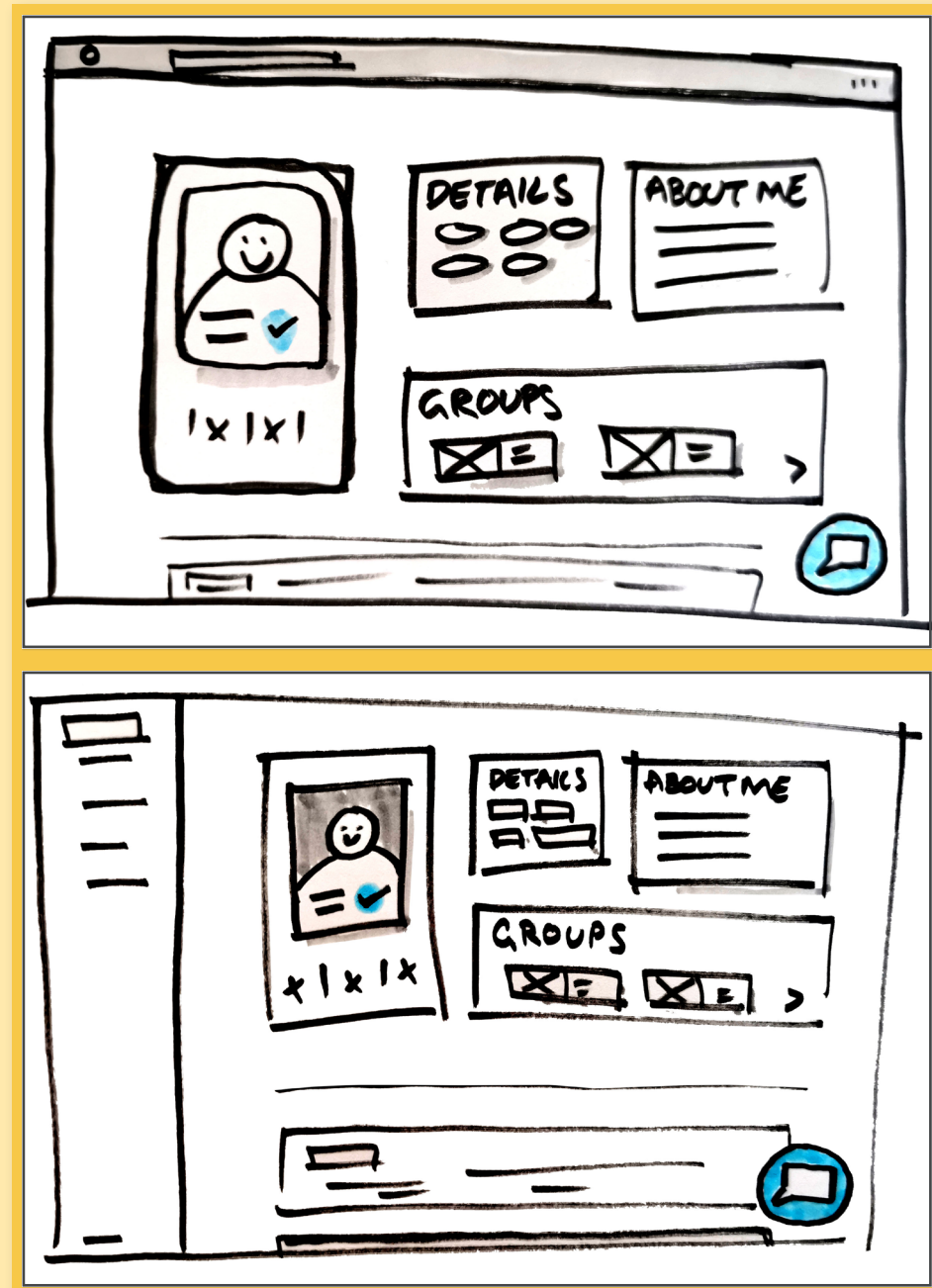


Early iterations of the chat window

organisation of each section so users don't get lost.

**Content:** Participants cited the verified symbol and chat button as being the first things they noticed. A good sign, as these are my product's two most important functions. Since this research, I reduced the size and impact of the verified symbol as it doesn't provide any interactivity for the user.

**Navigation:** Interestingly, in the 'top' navigation participants thought they would edit profile information directly within each block in the style of LinkedIn. Whereas in the 'side' navigation, the assumption was profile editing would be within the main navigation sidebar.



Vertical versus horizontal navigation in the profile page

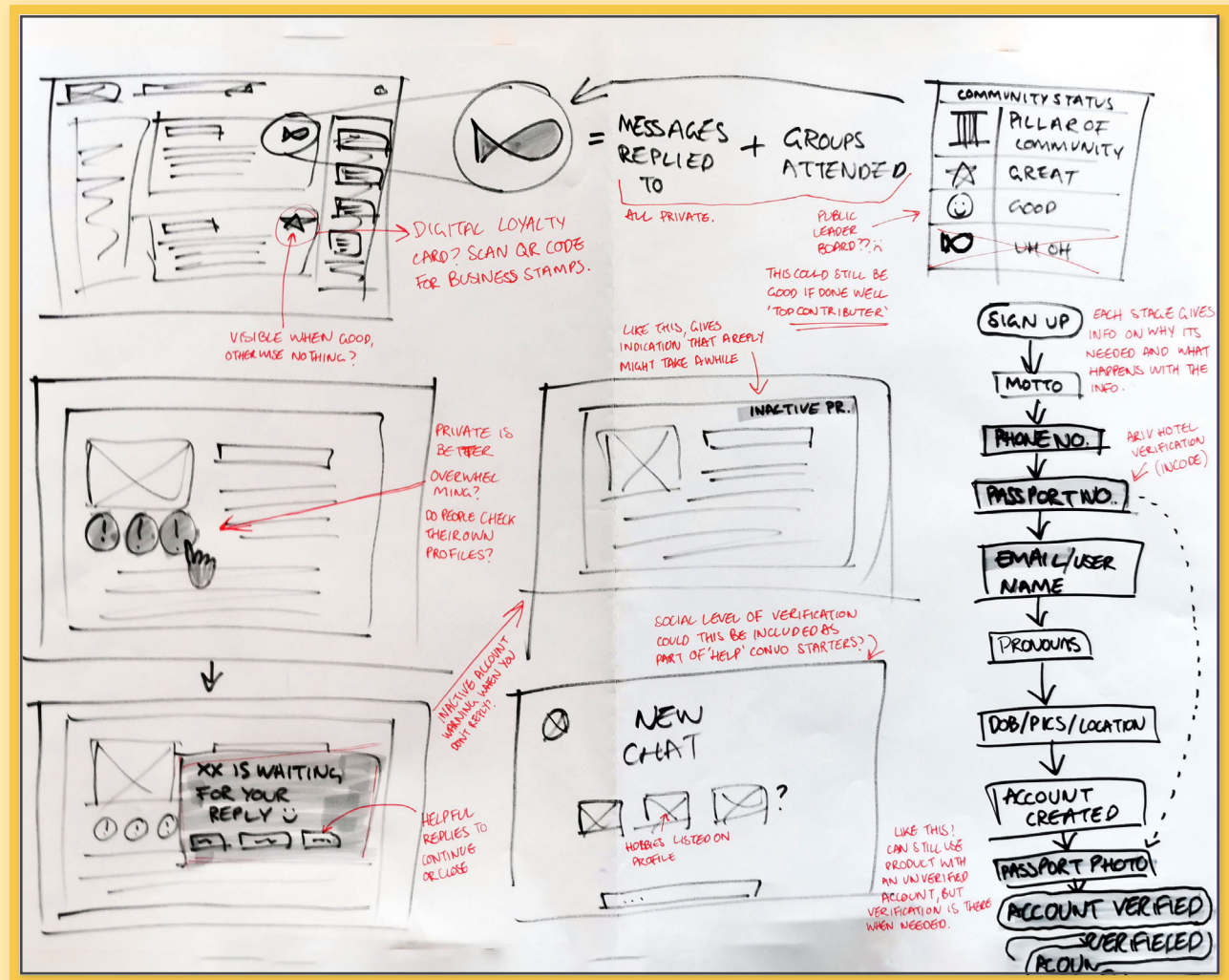


# Gamification

Gamification is a technique that is increasingly added as a component of UX to make a product more enjoyable (tubik 2017).

As Wavelength is about building community, I toyed with gamification to increase engagement. Top contributors in the Wavelength community would receive contributor points that they could convert into real-world vouchers, similar to Bristol Pounds (Hickey 2015). Vouchers for independent local companies would encourage people to keep the community alive and help them integrate better.

However, I decided against including contributor points in this iteration of the project. By integrating it with real-world businesses, implementation would need to be handled carefully to ensure points conversion and remuneration for businesses were fair. I would also ideally run extensive A/B testing to discover whether this concept resulted in an increase in product contributions and had a positive effect on local business.



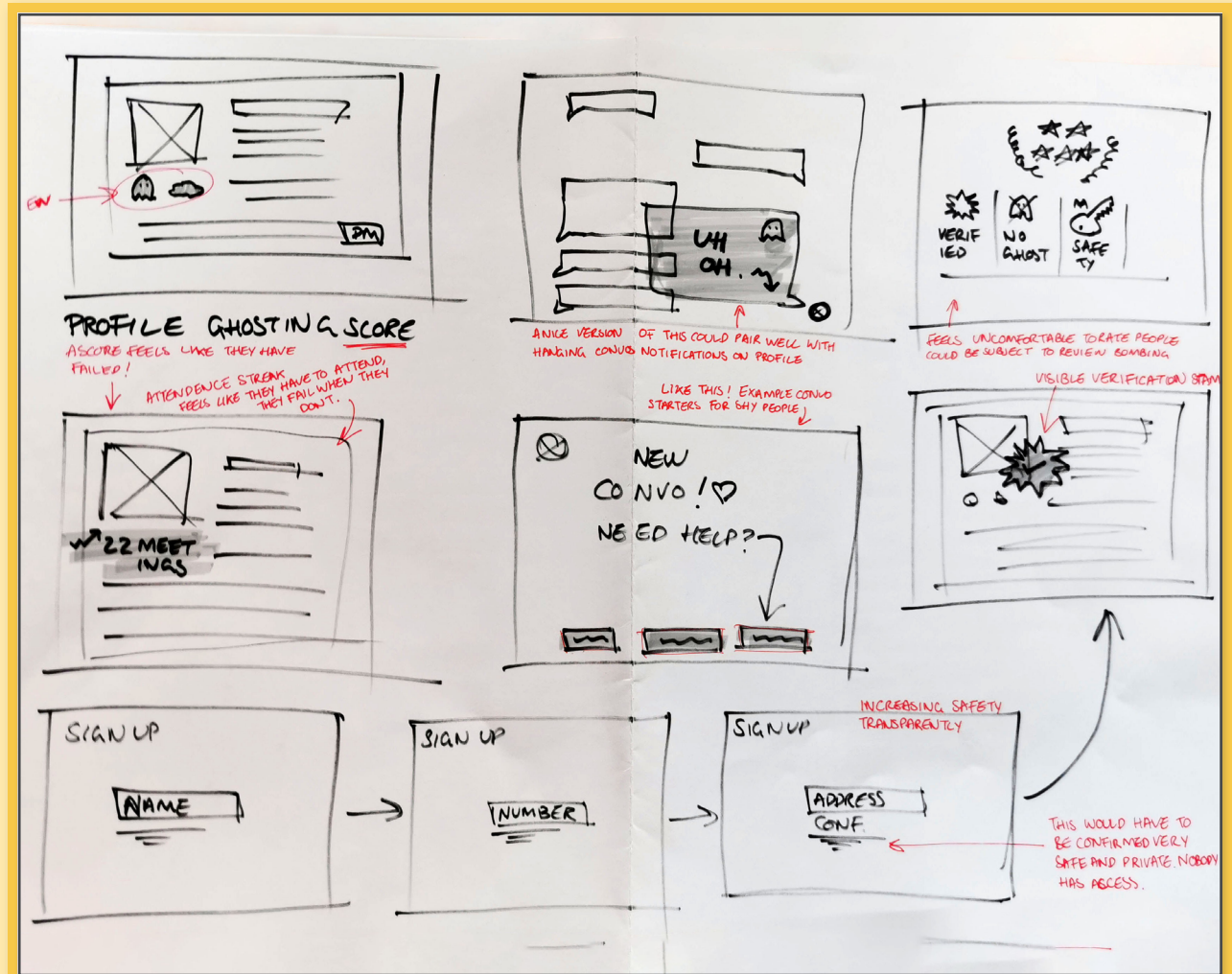
Early gamification ideas top right

## Design Studio

I conducted an initial design studio to generate some ideas quickly. I stuck to doing as much as possible with pen and paper to let the ideas flow faster and not get stuck trying to make too many decisions too quickly.

I turned the verification flow into a single wireframe screen, drawing inspiration from the Lex app (2024). As there will be a lot of steps in the sign-up process, I need to make sure the user understands why the information is required and that they don't suffer from cognitive overload (Davis 2011). Each piece of info appears individually with a small explanation of why and what it's for, plus information on how the data will be protected and how users can change it later.

The sign-up process leads to creating the user's profile, which, most importantly, shows a verification stamp (or not). Users can still interact with each other and the app in general without one but in a limited fashion. This area is also one of the locations where the 'connection

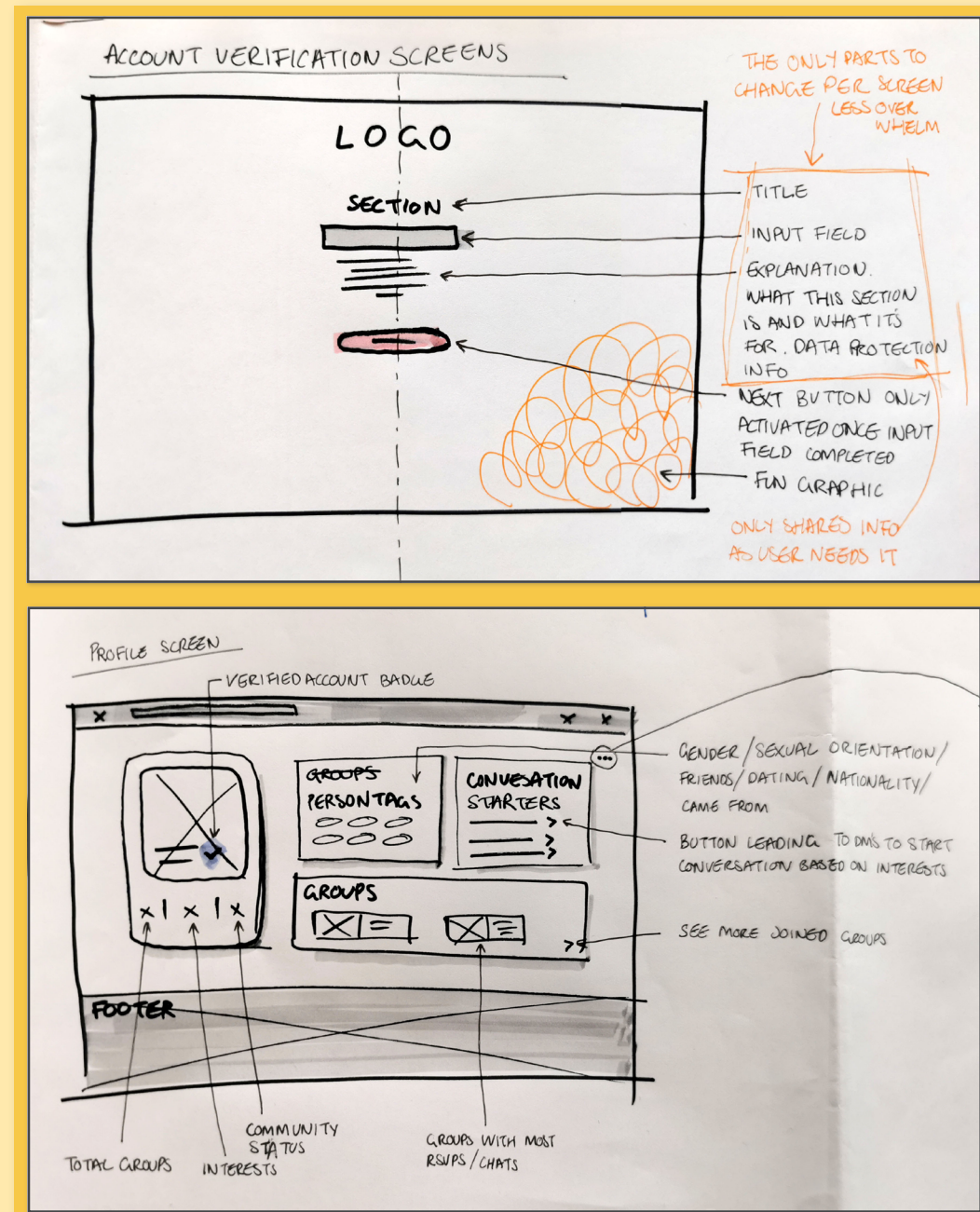


*In early sketches I leaned into testing out gamification*



encouragement/anti-ghosting' can be found. As part of the user profile, it states the person's interests and potential conversation starters, such as 'I'd love to learn crochet'. A DM button is always prominent and will take the user to private messaging with suggested sentences based on the user profile they were viewing. As always, the user needs to be able to go back and edit things, so if they skip account verification in sign-up, then they can always go into their settings and update their information.

Reflecting on the sketches, I quickly realised that gamifying 'ghosting' was missing the mark. Each version felt punitive or bullying in some way. When I flipped the same idea, encouraging people to connect rather than punishing them for ghosting very quickly felt more friendly.



Sketches planning out field elementss in onboarding and the user profile



# Grid

Wavelength is based on a classic, 12-column, 80-pixel grid layout while vertical spacings are usually based on a 15, 30 or 60-pixel framework. However, when required I have broken those internal rules such as when a centred alignment was more important such as on the sign-up pages and in the messaging service. When writing a message, the navigation pane for different chats remains open making a narrower space for the main content. The chat is therefore centered on the remaining space. Field elements that make up centred pages, however, still follow the dimensions of the original grid layout.

The circular logo 'breaks' the grid by providing a relaxed shape that spills off the sides and is covered behind the main content. However, the apparently relaxed logo also adheres to the grid in both horizontal and vertical alignment.



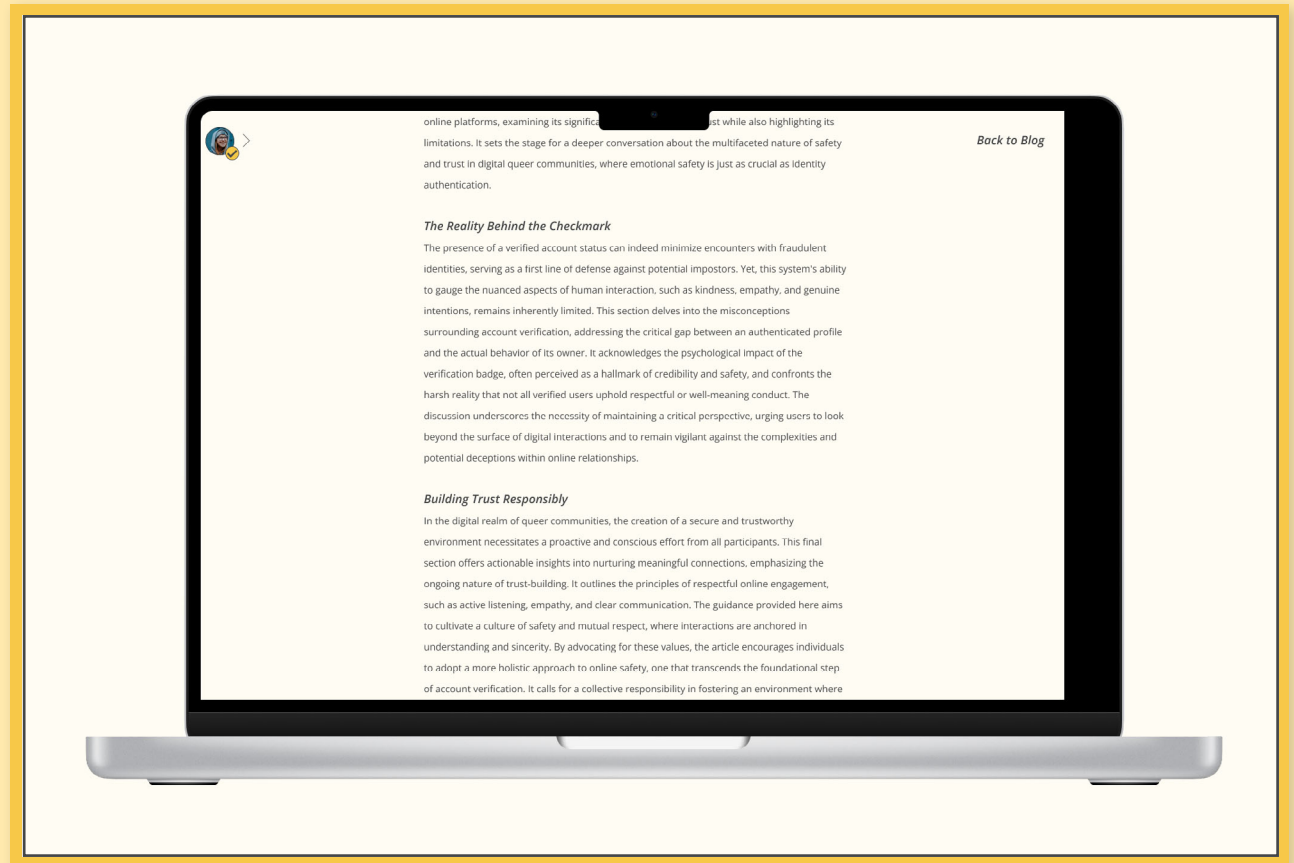
Field elements always adhere to the grid, even when centralised

## Responsive Design

I have designed Wavelength for the web first as the primary persona, Montague, is more likely to take an organised approach and deliberately seek out options on the computer or laptop. However, I have designed it with mobile and narrower browser windows in mind.

By grouping everything in containers, the switch to a smaller size is simple, as narrower versions of each container will just stack on top of each other once the window reaches the breakpoint. Between the breakpoints, the design will be responsive and will move fluidly with the browser size to reduce maintenance.

The blog section however will be adaptive and will remain fixed between breakpoints to maintain readability.



*The blog width stays narrow to aid readability*

# Decision Making

I made each design decision by imagining myself in the shoes of someone alone and recently emigrated. By making nervous users feel comfortable and welcome, my intention was to soften their first steps into rebuilding their local community.

Users consistently responded positively to the overall design. During hotspot testing, some users specifically mentioned that Wavelength feels 'nice and friendly', exactly the vibe I was aiming for.

However, one participant commented that, due to the colour scheme, it felt very similar to Bumble. Not an association I was aiming for. Ideally, I would like to do further 5-second testing to test whether the association with a dating app were too strong.



My inspiration mood board

# User Feedback

*"I thought the design was very friendly, welcoming and sunshine like. It feels like a happy place that doesn't take itself too seriously."*

*It seems to break away from current trends of minimalist design and embraces box-frames, rounded corners and other little things that are a little bit reminiscent of times gone by, so kinda bringing up pleasant, nostalgic memories."*



# Conclusion

In all honesty, I feel very conflicted about this product. I believe it fills a crucial gap in focusing on the safety concerns of queer migrants and growing concerns around loneliness (Johnson 2023). However, it is only as good as its users, and with the current culture in online spaces tending towards extraordinary aggression, there needs to be a cultural shift in mindset towards digital communities (Wolchover 2012).

I do believe, however, that if Wavelength communities were to develop an 'app to real life' pipeline then it could have great success. By facilitating an initial connection between people, Wavelength could help connect people beyond situational friendships and help users build wider circles of friendship and community.

Throughout the project, there was one, consistent barrier to progression, my confidence in my own abilities. At each stage, I was convinced I wouldn't achieve good results which prevented me from moving forwards. Returning to pen and



Logo sketches

paper time and time again helped remind me that as my fourth module in this course, I had already done it all before.

All in all, I am happy with where the project got to in terms of the amount of testing and the breadth of the final prototype. Although, I did have to cut down my original plans extensively to finish in time.

The next steps for the project would be to continue to build out all the features including the groups section. Ideally, I would also test if users engaged with the blog, and how I could incorporate the same discussion in potentially another format.



# References



# References

BARRETT, Alan and Irene MOSCA. 2013. 'Social Isolation, Loneliness and Return Migration: Evidence from Older Irish Adults'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39(10), 1659–77.

BRAUN, Virginia and Victoria CLARKE. 2006. 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2), 77–101.

BRIGNULL, Harry. 2024. *Deceptive Patterns*. 1st edn. Testimonium Ltd. Available at: <https://www.deceptive.design/book/contents/about-the-author> [accessed 6 Apr 2024].

BUMBLE. 2024. 'Find New Friends With Bumble For Friends App'. *Find New Friends With Bumble For Friends App | Bumble* [online]. Available at: <https://bumble.com/bff> [accessed 5 Apr 2024].

BUMBLE, Lindsey. 2022. 'Bumble's Inclusive Gender Identity Options'. *Bumble* [online]. Available at: <https://bumble.com/en/help/gender-identity-options> [accessed 5 Apr

2024].

CARRASCAL, Juan Pablo et al. 2013. 'Your Browsing Behavior for a Big Mac: Economics of Personal Information Online'. In *Proceedings of the 22nd International Conference on World Wide Web*. 189–200. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1145/2488388.2488406> [accessed 18 Nov 2023].

CHOI, Hanbyul, Jonghwa PARK and Yoonhyuk JUNG. 2018. 'The Role of Privacy Fatigue in Online Privacy Behavior'. *Computers in Human Behavior* 81, 42–51.

CHUNG, Candice. 2024. 'My Big Move: Leaving Sydney for Glasgow, Suddenly I Was an Old-School Migrant Again'. *The Guardian*, 25 Jan [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2024/jan/26/my-big-move-leaving-sydney-for-glasgow-suddenly-i-was-an-old-school-migrant-again> [accessed 28 Jan 2024].

CREATIVE MARKET. 2024. 'The 10 Best Fonts to Boost Readability in Web and

Print'. *Creative Market Blog* [online]. Available at: <https://creativemarket.com/blog/fonts-for-readability> [accessed 5 Apr 2024].

DARLINGTON, Yvonne and Jennifer OS-MOND. 2010. 'Reflective Analysis: Techniques for Facilitating Reflection'. *Australian Social Work* 58(1), 3–14.

FLICK, Catherine. 2016. 'Informed Consent and the Facebook Emotional Manipulation Study'. *Research Ethics* 12(1), 14–28.

GIELEN, Sarah et al. 2010. 'Improving the Effectiveness of Peer Feedback for Learning'. *Learning and Instruction* 20(4), 304–15.

GRAY, Colin M. et al. 2018. 'The Dark (Patterns) Side of UX Design'. In *Proceedings of the 2018 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. 1–14. Available at: <https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/3173574.3174108> [accessed 11 Apr 2023].

HICKEY, Shane. 2015. 'The Innovators: The Bristol Pound Is Giving Sterling a Run for

Its Money'. The Guardian, 7 Jun [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/jun/07/the-innovators-the-bristol-pound-is-giving-sterling-a-run-for-its-money> [accessed 27 Feb 2024].

JACKSON LEVIN, Nina, Shanna K. KATTARI, Emily K. PIELLUSCH and Erica WATSON. 2020. "We Just Take Care of Each Other": Navigating "Chosen Family" in the Context of Health, Illness, and the Mutual Provision of Care amongst Queer and Transgender Young Adults'. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 17(19), 7346.

JOHNSON, Sarah. 2023. 'WHO Declares Loneliness a "Global Public Health Concern"'. The Guardian, 16 Nov [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/nov/16/who-declares-loneliness-a-global-public-health-concern> [accessed 6 Apr 2024].

KOKOLAKIS, Spyros. 2017. 'Privacy Attitudes and Privacy Behaviour: A Review of Current Research on the Privacy Paradox Phenome-

non'. Computers & Security 64, 122–34. LEX. 2024. 'Lex'. [online]. Available at: <https://www.lex.lgbt/> [accessed 9 Feb 2024].

MEETUP. 2024. 'About - Meetup'. [online]. Available at: <https://www.meetup.com/about/> [accessed 31 Jan 2024].

PERNICE, Kara. 2022. 'Democratize User Research in 5 Steps'. Nielsen Norman Group [online]. Available at: <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/democratize-user-research/> [accessed 28 Feb 2024].

ROSALA, Maria and Kara PERNICE. 2023. 'User Interviews 101'. Nielsen Norman Group [online]. Available at: <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/user-interviews/> [accessed 31 Jan 2024].

SHAD, Aazar Ali. 2023. 'The Only Onboarding UX Resource You'll Need In 2023 [Guide]'. User Pilot [online]. Available at: <https://userpilot.com/blog/onboarding-ux/> [accessed 29 Feb 2024].

TUBIK. 2017. 'Gamification in UX. Increasing User Engagement.' [Medium]. UX Planet [online]. Available at: <https://uxplanet.org/gamification-in-ux-increasing-user-engagement-6437cbf702aa> [accessed 5 Apr 2024].

WOLCHOVER, Natalie. 2012. 'Why Is Everyone on the Internet So Angry?' Scientific American [online]. Available at: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-is-everyone-on-the-internet-so-angry/> [accessed 6 Apr 2024].

# List of Figures

## List of Figures

BANKS, Clay. 2021. Mann und Frau sitzen tagsüber auf dem Boden mit Essen auf dem Boden [Photograph]. Available at: <https://unsplash.com/de/fotos/mann-und-frau-sitzen-tagsuber-auf-dem-boden-mit-essen-auf-dem-boden-VsC9m6Tgx6o> [accessed 30 Mar 2024].

CHUNG, Candice. 2024. Candice Chung's First Meal in Her Glasgow Home [Photograph]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2024/jan/26/my-big-move-leaving-sydney-for-glasgow-suddenly-i-was-an-old-school-migrant-again> [accessed 12 Apr 2024].

FERRERO, Matheus. 2017. Frau steht in der Nähe von Bäumen und trägt schwarzen Hut [Photograph]. Available at: [https://unsplash.com/de/fotos/frau-steht-in-der-nahe-von-baumen-und-tragt-schwarzen-hut-pg\\_WCHWSdT8](https://unsplash.com/de/fotos/frau-steht-in-der-nahe-von-baumen-und-tragt-schwarzen-hut-pg_WCHWSdT8) [accessed 24 Mar 2024].

FLATICON. 2024a. Share Free Interface Icon [Icon]. Available at: [https://www.flaticon.com/free-icon-font/share\\_3917574](https://www.flaticon.com/free-icon-font/share_3917574) [accessed 23 Mar 2024].

FLATICON. 2024b. Heart Free Interface Icon [Icon]. Available at: [https://www.flaticon.com/free-icon-font/heart\\_3916579](https://www.flaticon.com/free-icon-font/heart_3916579) [accessed 23 Mar 2024].

FLATICON. 2024c. Comment Free Interface Icon [Icon]. Available at: [https://www.flaticon.com/free-icon-font/comment\\_3916638](https://www.flaticon.com/free-icon-font/comment_3916638) [accessed 23 Mar 2024].

HEFTIBA, Toa. 2018. Frau in blauer Jacke steht an Wänden [Photograph]. Available at: <https://unsplash.com/de/fotos/frau-in-blauer-jacke-steht-an-wanden-ANNsvl-6AG0> [accessed 23 Mar 2024].

HEFTIBA, Toa. 2019. Frauen sitzen auf Stühlen im Freien [Photograph]. Available at: <https://unsplash.com/de/fotos/frauen-sitzen-auf-stuehlen-im-freien-KzwpQnBs5Hs> [accessed 30 Mar 2024].

LATYSHEVA, Oksana. 2017. Ghost Icon [Icon]. Available at: <https://thenounproject.com/icon/ghost-1333256/> [accessed 29 Mar 2024].

LIVERANI, Stephanie. 2019. Frau trägt schwarzes langärmeliges Hemd mit Rundhalsausschnitt [Photograph]. Available at: <https://unsplash.com/de/fotos/frau-tragt-schwarzes-langarmeliges-hemd-mit-rundhalsausschnitt-Zz5LQe-VSMY> [accessed 24 Mar 2024].

MATTEL, Trixie. 2024. Ninth Inning Face + Body Shimmer Spray [Photograph]. Available at: <https://trixiecosmetics.com/products/ninth-inning-shimmer-face-body-spray> [accessed 7 Apr 2024].

MIRO. 2024. 'Miro'. [online]. Available at: <https://miro.com/de/> [accessed 17 Mar 2024].

NIX, Tyler. 2018. Mann mit blauem Hemd und schwarzer Sonnenbrille [Photograph]. Available at: <https://unsplash.com/de/fotos/mann-mit-blauem-hemd-und-schwarzer-sonnenbrille-PQeoQdkU9jQ> [accessed 24 Mar 2024].

NUMBER 10 CROWN COPYRIGHT. 2020. The

UK's New Passports [Photograph]. Available at: <https://www.cityam.com/brexit-blue-passports-to-return-from-march-2020/> [accessed 31 Mar 2024].

ROZUMNA, Anastasiia. 2020. Mann und Frau sitzen auf weißem Bett und lesen Buch [Photograph]. Available at: <https://unsplash.com/de/fotos/mann-und-frau-sitzen-auf-weissem-bett-und-lesen-buch-byJs-ykv2qs> [accessed 30 Mar 2024].

YELLOWBIRD. 2024. 'Yellowbird®'. Yellowbird® [online]. Available at: <https://www.yellowbirdfoods.com/> [accessed 17 Mar 2024].

ZHAO, Jiawei. 2021. Smoking Katze im braunen Karton [Photograph]. Available at: <https://unsplash.com/de/fotos/smoking-katze-im-braunen-karton-BsXeYX3efOI> [accessed 30 Mar 2024].