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Research Summary
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introduction+thesis

Health has become a major focus in the past few years. The controversy of modern medicine and the uncovering of alternative processes has given people an opportunity to seek help in various methods. A specific practice that usually goes overlooked is traditional chinese medicine. There are numerous myths about traditional chinese medicine (TCM); for example, the mysterious dried geckos and what looks like dried sexual organs. In the eyes of the uneducated, traditional chinese medicine is either a placebo or disgusting but in to those who understand the effectiveness and purpose of those ingredients, it could be the most beneficial to their health.

"Most information is complied in textbooks and the regular consumer does not have the time to digest a book of 500 pages. How can we change it so that people will take interest and apply these in their daily life. There are very few compilations of Western vs Asian medicine texts around and this project will focus on changing that. How can whole foods and Traditional Chinese Medicine theories be applied through daily life; Is it simple? How can one grab attention of their audience? Why Traditional Chinese Medicine? Taking inspiration from books and apps, how can you make them better and easier to understand? How can communication design simplify the presentation of cultural information to appeal to the next generation of youth and young adults? As a new type of popular medicine, acupuncture will be the gate to chinese herbal soups and remedies: a new trend?"

By creating an integrated system that is composed of an iOS application that focuses on the aspects of traditional Chinese medicine and Chinese history of food in combination with Western style cooking and healing properties of whole foods, the objective is to educate young Western adults aged 18-35 who are interested in a natural healthy lifestyle without consumption of unnecessary drugs.

The approach will be contemporary but take inspiration from Asian influences and to ensure the accuracy there will be questionnaires to randoms in the focused age range. In terms of acceptance rate, research will be conducted by interviewing certified practitioners in Vancouver and what they have observed in their careers.

brainstorming

Like many projects, it began with copious amounts of research and questioning. There was always a desire to create something related to my family and a piece that would serve as a reference for future family usage. The dominant question was "how can communication design simplify the presentation of cultural information to appeal to the next generation of tech savvy youth?". With the question in mind, the exploration began with searching for keywords and creating mind maps where it ultimately narrowed in on a few keywords: cultural preservation, informative, and daily. When speaking about cultural preservation, it can be described as a method to educate others about Chinese food histories as well as keeping those traditions alive. Informative, like any medical related piece is the key to understanding. Translating the technical terms and concepts into simplified and understandable methods is going to be a challenge and so being informative will be crucial for a desire to use the application. The

concept of “daily” is a focus because the more often people use the theories and methods of traditional Chinese medicine, the more likely they will remember and pass on the knowledge. Community is also a large factor in this project in that it allows others to connect and spread the knowledge of the new information they acquired from the app.

text-based research

The next phase was familiarizing myself with the subject at hand. Especially with a subject like medicine, it is difficult to find reliable sources from the internet; therefore, all of my resources were from textbooks. An important reference was Healing with Whole Foods: Asian Traditions and Modern Nutrition by Paul Pitchford. It possessed a majority of information that was required and gives more insight to the science of traditional chinese medicine. When it comes to the aspect of stories and legends of food, I discovered a book written by the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China that directly relates and is called Food in Chinese Culture. Discovering theories like the difference of yin and yang as well as the techniques to balance those aspects of one's body was something. Information acquired from the Pitchford text will be compared to other resource texts of similar nature. Gathering all of the information needed, research for western nutritional aspects such as vitamin content and flavour combinations will also be referred to.

quantitative research

Much of what was being done during the previous stages was out of personal experience or assumption. Following the research, a questionnaire was distributed to a random number of people. So far, 43 people have anonymously taken the questionnaire which is shown below.

How do you go about curing common illnesses, such as colds?
take medication (eg. tylenol, buckleys etc)
sleep it off
drink tea with lemon
other

How often do you take non-prescribed medication?

1-3 times a week
1-3 times a day
1-3 times a month
1-3 times a year
Never

Do you watch what you eat?

is there anything stopping you?

Have you ever considered eating whole foods to cure ailments?
if not, why?

Do you feel that you have knowledge about the properties of food?
no

only the basics

yes I am very aware

Do you feel that you know how to choose the right produce? (e.g ripeness etc)

What comes to mind when you think of Chinese culture?

What is your definition of Traditional Chinese Medicine?

Have you ever considered using traditional chinese medicine

If not, why?

Comments:

Here are few highlights from the questionnaire:

*74% of people who took the questionnaire only know the basic properties of food
A number of people mentioned that Chinese culture is represented in rice, food and ancient traditions
There was a split opinion about Traditional Chinese Medicine where it is either bitter medicines or natural medicines. A very generic answer
Many people have not necessarily considered using TCM or assume it would taste awful but it TCM is not only composed of dark coloured soups.*

qualitative research

The next step after fully analyzing the anonymous questionnaire will be pushing interviews with professional TCM practitioners and seek information from them about the industry and acceptance rate. What has been learned so far is that a majority of people do not seem receptive; therefore there needs to be a smooth bridge connection from one to another.

market comparison

Information is important but creating a comparison between existing applications and the proposed one was crucial to the research. Uncovering that certain apps had things like categorization and images worked but I found that they never defined the terms. Applications like WebMD was a great example in that it gave reasoning, glossary, definitions and symptom trackers.

While answering all the questions and solving the issues that has risen, as a design project there are requirements for a visual representation. At this stage, there are rough UX wireframes and aspects of the app. Colours have not been finalized but have been considered. Tertiary colours seem like they would be an interesting match but more experimentation is needed.