roomndorm

A Location-based (Responsive) Rental App

UX / UI Case Study

UX PHASE

Problem Statement

Finding a space to stay in is challenging enough then to add to that, finding a roommate/ apartment-mate or dorm-mate is even harder. Rental apps are readily available but what is lacking in most rental apps in the Philippines is the connectivity aspect.

Goal / Solution

Through the app, users can find a space, connect with other users in need of housing, build friendships while sharing a space and feel secure through the app's security features. The app provides easy access to better housing, convenience and accessibility to amenities within close proximity, and promotes adaptability through community building which is the added value to the rental apps that are currently available.

Role & Responsibilities

For this project I was responsible for:
(Click to jump to a section)

- User Research
- Ideation and Strategy
- User Personas
- Competitive Analysis
- User Flows
- Wireframing
- Branding and Visual Design
- Prototyping

UX PHASE

Stepping out of our comfort zone is never easy. Feeling lost is daunting.

For this project, I designed a location based rental app where users can find a home shared by like-minded people that can make their living experience budget friendly, comfortable, fun and secure.

In relation to the practicality of the app's features and through research done early into the project, I was also able to understand the problem, identify and define an intrinsic value shared by many Filipinos which helped in clarifying what to prioritize while building the app.

Home   **Roommate**   **Community**
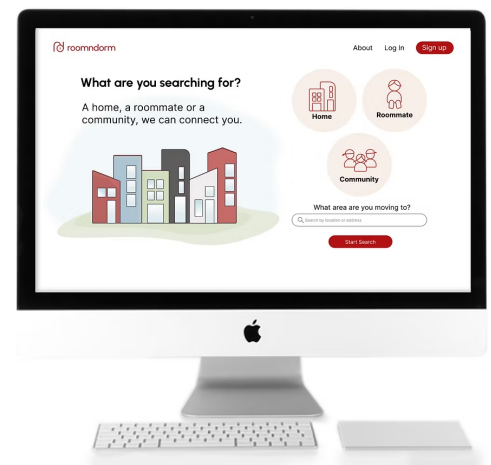
PROBLEM SPACE

With many rental apps out there, was there a problem to be solved?

By conducting user research as well as reviewing apps of competitors, sending out a survey and talking to the target market, I was able to understand the users' perspectives as well as their needs, intentions and wants to be able to deliver a product that solves not just their external problem which is the search for a space to live but also the internal which is community, connection, safety and security.

Research also shows that a large percentage of Filipinos value connection and community which isn't factored in in most existing rental apps in the Philippines was . Finding a home shared by like-minded people can make their living experience budget friendly, comfortable, fun and secure.

Want to get to the solution? Jump to UI Phase

USER RESEARCH

Who are the people in the target market?

Students, college graduates, workforce (ages 24-32) who are looking for a space to rent with these considerations budget, proximity, connection and community

SCROLL DOWN TO MEET THEM

USER PERSONAS

IRA MARQUEZ

"I am no bird and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will."

- Charlotte Bronte

Goals
- Find a place to move into that fits the budget
- Find a roommate with a similar lifestyle
- Use a trusted platform that would make the tasks easier
- A reliable source of information
- Transparency in transactions

Frustrations
- Budget and time
- To find a place feels like "a needle in a haystack", you will have to know people who can refer trusted landlords or be invited by other dormers
- Getting to know a roommate before moving in together

Age: 20 years old
Education: 2nd year College
Hometown: Metro Manila
Occupation: Student
Status: Single

Ira lived at the University dorms during her first year of college. She is now about to enter her 2nd year and she would like to live outside the campus because the campus dorms have a curfew and strict rules. Freedom to create her own schedule is important to her. Although she would like privacy and her own apartment, she has a budget and would therefore need to find a roommate to share a place with.

Ira is diligent, active in school related organizations, fun-loving and sociable. She likes late night chats or coffee breaks in between her responsibilities. She is currently on the hunt for a space with a reasonable budget and a roommate that would also fit her lifestyle.

JASON SANTOS

"Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom"

Goals
- Find a space that's within his salary's budget
- Find a roommate who will respect his privacy and who isn't noisy
- To be fully independent
- To live close to work to save time by being able to walk to and from work

Frustrations
- A trusted and reliable website that isn't too overwhelming (information overload)
- Having to find a roommate
- A new environment and he's clueless as to what to expect, needs more information about listings
- Budget
- Structure and being able to set expectations while finding a home

Age: 24 years old
Education: College Grad
Hometown: Visayas
Occupation: Bank Teller
Status: Single

Jason recently landed a job in the city. It's his first job after graduating from college. He's been living in his family's home since birth but because of his job, he has to relocate. Instead of taking public transportation, Jason would rather walk to work. He also likes having amenities close by. Living near the office is the best set up for him. The last thing he would want is to have to get a car because public transportation is inefficient and too time consuming.

He's introverted and a bit shy and is anxious about finding an apartment and meeting a roommate. Family and friends are highly valued and building relationships matter. He is overall excited about the next chapter of his life but doesn't also know what to expect.

JANELLE ESPIRITU

"A healthy relationship multiplies the good life and divides it's evils"

Goals
- Find a space that's within her salary's budget
- Find a new roommate who is trustworthy and easy to live with
- Quick and easy process of finding a space
- To meet the prospects before making a decision

Frustrations
- Can not trust current roommate
- Is not happy with her environment
- Can search for prospects during breaks
- Easy to schedule meet ups and apartment visits after work
- A reliable website with complete information to make the search easier and less time consuming

Age: 27 years old
Education: College Grad
Hometown: Metro Manila
Occupation: Marketing Associate
Status: Single

Janelle is frustrated. She is not happy with the environment of her living space. Her roommate is not respectful of her things and is also noisy and messy. She didn't have a choice when she first moved in and didn't know what to expect either because it seemed like the best option at that time. But now she wants to move out and look for another space. Peace of mind is what she needs after a full day of work.

Although she doesn't mind the commute because budget is also a factor, what she minds and hopes to find is a better roommate to make her life much more relaxing. On many days, she ends late and the best option would be to able to search online for apartments or schedule meet ups with possible roommates during work breaks. The apartment hunt is an urgent matter for her.

KEY INSIGHTS

Here are the findings synthesized from doing User Research

| PATTERNS

- Excitement over moving out and being independent
- Trust and security are important for bedspacers and room shares
- Proximity to school and work are a priority when looking for a place to stay
- Proximity to transportation is a factor
- Budget is also and important factor
- Apps are a useful tool because it saves

| FRUSTRATIONS

- Lack of information about the place or vicinity
- Safety and security and the feeling of ease when having a roommate
- Difference of pictures vs the real look of a place
- Easier to trust relatives and connections vs landlords who might be a fraud
- Time consuming to search

| SURPRISES

- The most surprising would be the budget range. I was surprised to learn that the expected rental rates for bed-spacers are very low
- Traffic and inefficient or non-existent public transportation results in a commute of 2-3 hours for some people

- Apps are a useful tool because it saves time in the search process

KEY QUOTES

The need for shelter, safety, security and human connection are universal.

SOME KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM APP USERS ACROSS THE BOARD

"Having a roommate means you have someone that you can talk to when you get lonely, you also have someone to do activities with. Having constant companionship can be really helpful to your mental health."

—

"[Apps] are a big help to the users because it is less time consuming, they don't need to travel far and the app gives all the information needed when looking for a place to stay."

—

"It is important to know the person I am living with, especially the behavior and character. We need to secure our safety."

UX PHASE

Competitive Analysis

Do other existing apps offer a solution to the problem at hand?

After doing research on the student housing and rental market in the Philippines, it's clear that there is a need for this to be more accessible to students. Compared to other countries who offer students housing or dorm-living within their campuses, Universities in the Philippines have limited space and offerings to their own students, thus they are left to figure out and find housing on their own.

I did a competitive analysis and zeroed in on on two existing apps, Rental Bee and DormyPh which are focused primarily or dorm-living and providing student housing as compared to other related apps. With thorough research, I learned that:

- All other apps provide basic functionalities of providing a range of property listings close to Universities
- The available apps have navigational features similar to popular apps such as Airbnb or Spare Room which makes using the app familiar to users but improvements can be made in terms of UX.
- DormyPh would be the closest in terms of fulfilling this problem's goal which is connectivity. However, the steps and user-flow could be simplified.

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

Rental Bee

KEY FEATURES & OBSERVATIONS

- Rental Bee offers a wide variety of quality properties in various locations around Metro Manila
- Finding a place is convenient and easy through their website
- Shows images and a lot of information about the space, less personal inquiry is needed

Dormy Ph

KEY FEATURES & OBSERVATIONS

- Dormy offers rentable spaces and is connected to several universities around the Philippines
- Finding a place is convenient and easy through their website
- Apart from finding a space, Dormy also connects people and assists them to make finding a room-mate a better and easier experience

| STRENGTHS | WEAKNESSES | | STRENGTHS | WEAKNESSES |

- Quality property listings that are presented with good quality photos
- Informative about accommodations and presents it in an organized way
- Well designed website, clean, easy to use, consistent with branding

- Limited to University belts
- Only limited to Metro Manila, not other provinces
- No reviews or testimonials

- A social network and rental app in one
- Website is easy to navigate and gives information and guidance for students
- Shares blog posts related to student life and real estate on their website which can help educate the viewers
- Consistent branding
- Has a lot of listings and is partnered with many Universities within Metro Manila
- Connects their users to amenities and offers services such as laundry assist and food deliveries

- Limited to University belts in Metro Manila
- Only limited to Metro Manila, not other parts of the Philippines
- No reviews about listings on their website and Instagram

USABILITY

- Rental Bee's website is easy to navigate
- The information presented is comprehensive, displayed in an organized way visually.
- It follows similar structure of other established websites such as Airbnb or Spare Room therefore users are familiar already with the set up.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Rental Bee's target market is higher than competitors
  Their website looks and feels more upscale
  More research may be needed about the target market

USABILITY

- Dormy's navigational tools are straightforward and well designed. Colors are also consistent with overall look and feel of the website

DIFFERENTIATION

- Dormy offers more than just properties for rent as compared to other rental apps.
- They also offer a social aspect which as they put "is like Bumble" and is integrated into their rental app.
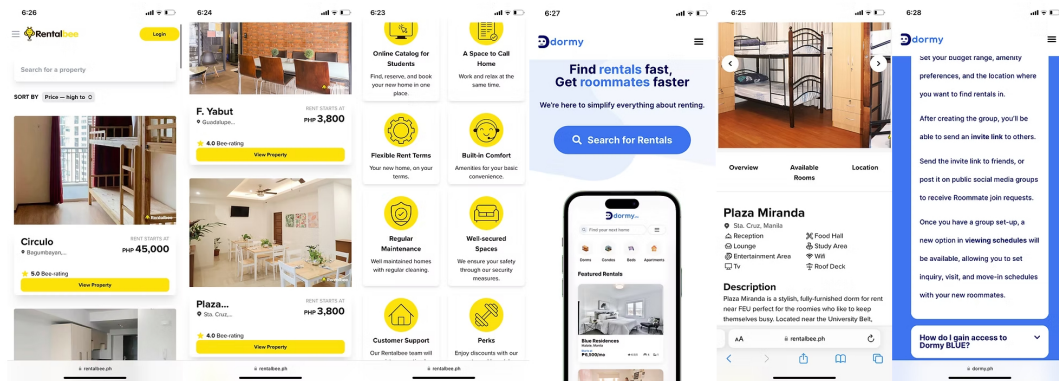
HYPOTHESIS

So what am I designing?

Providing users with a platform that offers a broad selection of rental listings with considerations such as budget and proximity and one that also centers on relationship and community building through connecting people, will result in giving the users a more harmonious and fun living environment while also making the search process easy, accessible and convenient.

What can the MVP deliver?

The objective of the app is to gain users and familiarize them with the branding of the app. It will also allow the users to get a feel of how the app works and it's benefits in both the search for a space and a roommate.

"The app will empower users to network, connect and create meaningful relationships in a convenient, easy and trusted way to build a life in their home away from home."

INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE - USER FLOW

JTBD 1: When I visit a rental app, I want to be able to view a range of rental spaces close in proximity to school or work.

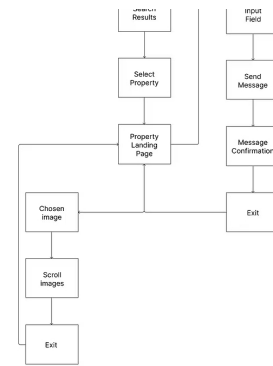**Success Criteria:** Display a variety of listings

JTBD 2: To be able to view roommate's account and/or contact roommate
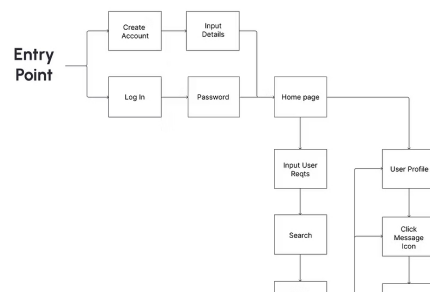
Success Criteria: View info of roommate or contact roommate

JTBD 3: When I click on a preferred property, I want to be able to view a carousel of quality photos.

Success Criteria: View many images
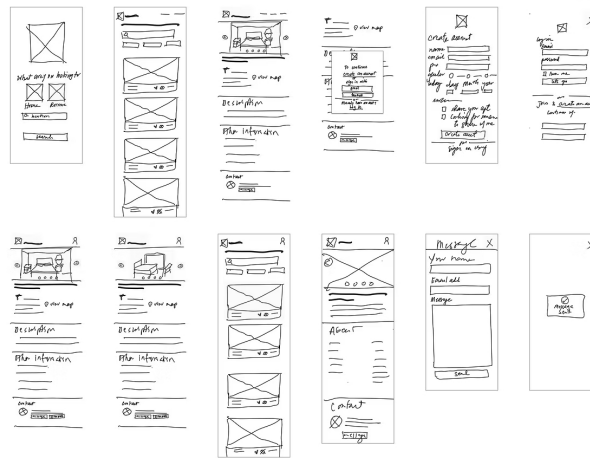
Low-Fidelity Wireframing
IDEATION

After organizing JTBD and user-flows, I got the iPad and drafted some initial ideas I had for the app. This allowed me to think quickly and conceptualize better my ideas and what I had visualized in my mind.

Mid-Fidelity Wireframing
IDEATION & MORE ITERATIONS

From the initial iterations to solidifying the concept further, I was able to assess how the onboarding flow should be, how the app would be navigated by the user answering the question, "Should a user log in or create an account at entry point or at what point is signing up required?" "Easy accessibility vs security (added steps during onboarding)?"
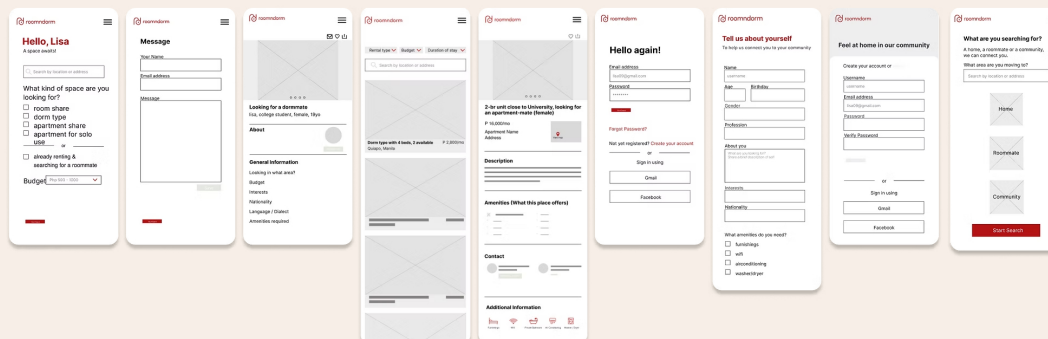
UI PHASE

Design Solutions

"Home is anywhere you make it out to be."

JTBD 1: How might users view a range of rental spaces that are conveniently located?

- Clearly defining the **search by location bar**. Based on research, the format is similar and standard in most location-based rental apps. Being consistent in design and layout provides familiarity and ease when using the product.
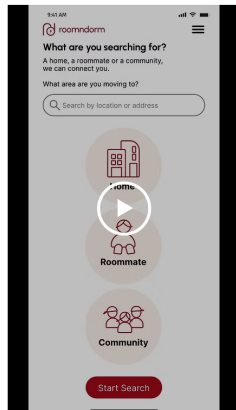
"Connect in ways that feel rewarding"

JTBD 2: How might users connect with other users?

- Clear **CTA button at the entry page** indicates the app is not just for rental but can also connect users
- Have an **option to view** a roommates profile when viewing a listing.
- For security reasons, the users are required to create an account and sign in vs. easily accessing the listed properties without the need to create an account.
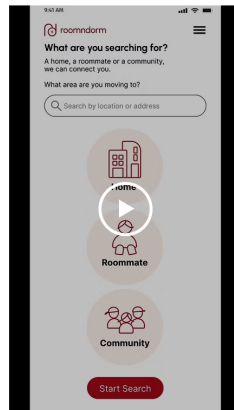
"The more the merrier"

JTBD 3: Whetting the users appetite by showing a carousel of quality photos

- Quality of photos presented in tile view for bigger screens and carousel layout for smaller screens
- Ensure quality photos of space are uploaded to meet the expectations of the user, resulting in consistency.
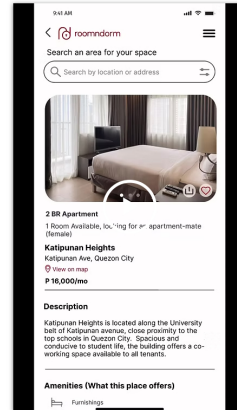
USABILITY TESTING

How did the feedback shape the design?

The GOAL of this test is to determine whether the steps from entry point to sending a message to a landlord or roommate (current lessee) is understandable and straightforward when a user accesses the app for the first time through mobile. I would like like to observe if the app's functions such as logging in, viewing listings and connecting to other users will enhance the experience and make the rental app appealing and valuable to users searching for rental spaces and roommates.

UI PHASE

Branding & Visual Design
STYLE GUIDE

ICONS

Bedrooms   Wifi   Bathrooms   Airconditioning   Washer/Dryer   Kitchen

Sports   Religious Groups   Charity & Foundations   Health & Wellness   Barangay

**COPY OR LANGUAGE GUIDELINES**

• Descriptions should use simple, understandable and everyday conversational language
• Language used is English (not tagalog or taglish)
• Use words or phrases and descriptions that adhere to the mission and vision of the company
  which is casual, trustworthy and easy-going.
• Express as naturally and honestly
• Keep copy short and sweet, no lengthy highfaluting and complicated words and over-describing
• No cursing or foul language and reference to anything related to such
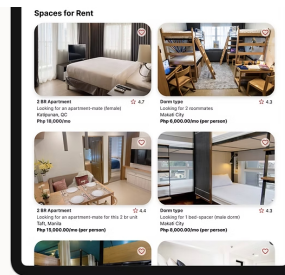
RESPONSIVE DESIGNS
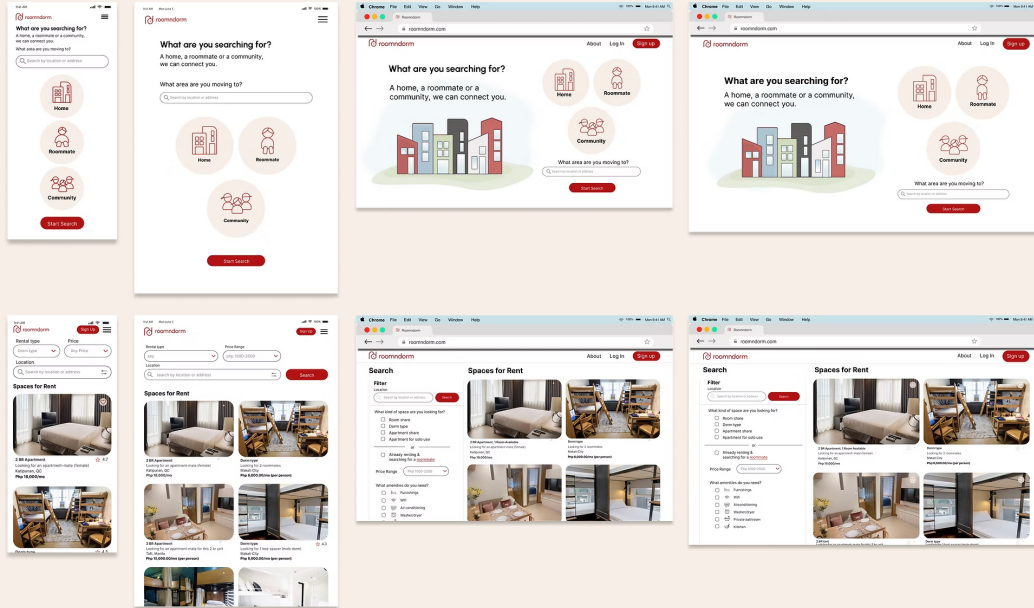
Choose from a variety of properties that fit your budget and lifestyle
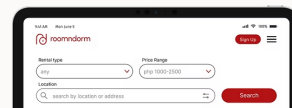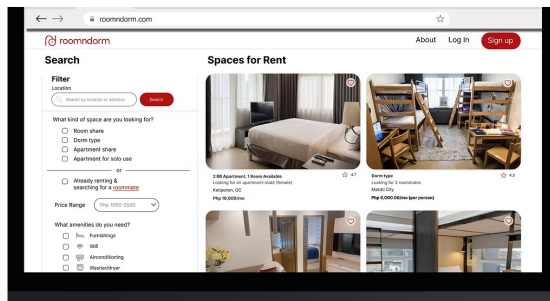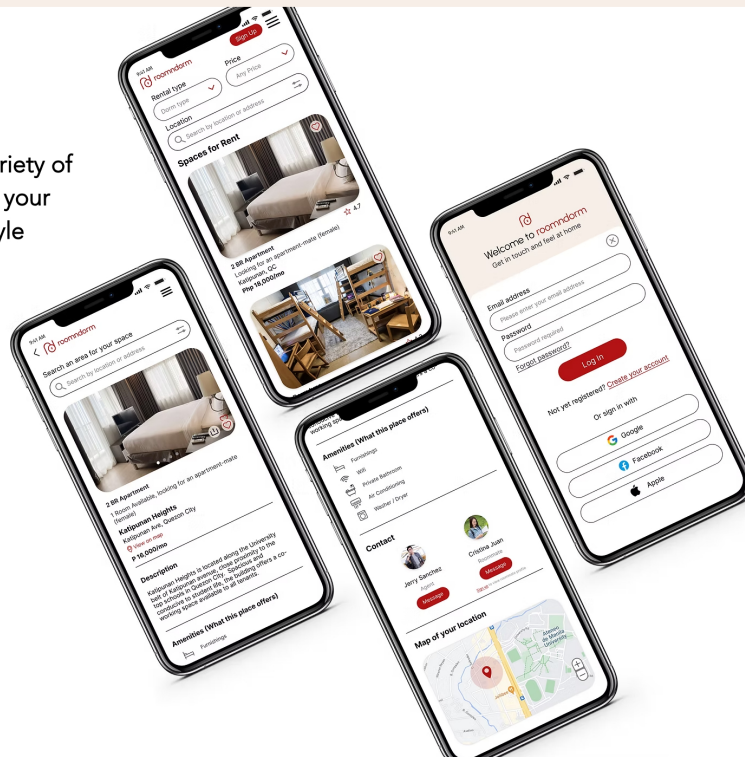
Easy to navigate from any device

Find your place and space away from home

Thanks for checking out my portfolio. If you have any thoughts or questions,
feel free to send me a message. Email adresworkspace@gmail.com.

Balibago Waterworks, A
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TicTaskGo! A Mobile
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