

User research: The process of finding new yoga classes

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

For this project, I wanted to find out how people currently find information about, and select, new yoga classes. My goal was to identify points within that process that could be improved.

PROCESS

Via social media posts, I found five people who currently practice, or have practiced, yoga, and who have an interest in finding new studio classes. I asked to meet with them for a 30-minute interview, either in person or via Skype.

INTERVIEW OUTLINE

1. Ask what their current practice is like: how often they practice, what styles, and their motivation for practicing
2. Contextual inquiry: have them walk me through their process of finding new classes on their phone or laptop
3. Ask how they feel about the process of finding new options
4. Ask how they feel about available information
5. Ask what, if anything, they wish was different about the process of finding new classes

Interview notes

Interview 1: Erin [29, female, journalist]

- Does in-studio and online classes, would like to go to studio classes more regularly. She has some background with yoga, but still feels like a beginner, in need of more instruction and assistance. She's looking for beginner classes because she doesn't want to feel out of place. **"I just want (a class description) that explicitly says like, 'It's cool if you're a noob.'"**
- Has felt frustrated by the lack of specifics in yoga class descriptions, that the choices were difficult to narrow down.
- She would like to know where she can find inexpensive classes without having to purchase a membership.
- She would also like to have an idea of the instructor's style - whether they are more hands-on or hands-off.
- **She would also like descriptions to include some idea of poses, to indicate how strenuous the class is.**

Interview 2: Yumiko [35, female, business analyst]

- Does online classes primarily, but does special event classes. Would like to get into a more regular studio practice, but hasn't found the right studio yet. Has some yoga background, but doesn't want a practice that's too physically strenuous. **"I think the thing that's difficult about a studio is that you just don't know who you're getting, or if you're going to, for lack of a better term, fit in with the group."** (In terms of the classes and instructors)
- Uses Facebook to find yoga classes and events. Likes that she can see who's going to be there, and that time, date, and location information are all in one place.

- When looking at descriptions, she usually looks to get a sense of how difficult the class is, but finds that a lot of descriptions aren't helpful or consistent. For example, "beginner" can mean a lot of different things. **Said the process of finding classes is hit or miss. "You kind of just don't know until you get there."**
- Mentioned that video is really helpful with giving an idea of what the practice is going to be like. Example: video of a stand up paddleboard yoga class that she saw on Facebook. **She also mentioned that video would give her an idea of poses, and the pace of the class.**

Interview 3: Corrinne [32, female, stay-at-home mom]

- Practices online and DVD classes primarily, goes to studio classes every once in a while. Would like to do a more regular studio practice, but can't due to financial limitations. Practices yoga most days of the week, has been practicing for 5+ years, enjoys physically strenuous classes.
- Finds classes via Facebook, and likes that classes are suggested for her based on interest. She also said she likes that Facebook events tells you how far away (distance-wise) the classes are. Said she mostly sorts by date, because at this point, studio classes are something she plans as part of a special outing with friends.
- Said she finds it easy to discover and pick out classes online. Mostly looks at descriptions to make sure the class is going to be enough of a challenge, and that she can afford it.
- Talking about online classes, **she looks for style when reading descriptions, looks for the term power yoga, looks for a ranking of difficulty, mentions phrases like, "this will get you sweating," or "don't attempt this unless you've tried it before."** Mentioned that some classes say what the most challenging pose is.

Interview 4: Rob [32, male, chemical engineer]

- Practices studio classes a few times a week, prefers power/vinyasa yoga — something that’s more active. Has a membership to Core Power yoga, but does classes at other studios when he travels
- Wishes class options where easier to narrow down: **“(The process of finding classes) does seem pretty cumbersome, right? ... It would be really nice if there was a place I could go, almost like buying a car, you can go to the dealership website, you can filter on make and model, filter on the features that you want...for yoga it could be something similar?”**
- **Would like more information about classes before going, specifically: teaching style (whether the teacher practices along with the class, or gives only vocal instruction, if they tend to tell stories while teaching) , style of music played, how active the class will be (said that sometimes the term vinyasa is misleading)**

Interview 5: Hillary [40, female, psychology graduate student]

- Practices at home several times a week, in studio twice a week, and teaches two classes a week, practices more restorative styles (yoga nidra, hatha) mainly for mental health benefits
- **Finding classes is easy for her, but she would like more information. Mentioned a situation where she went to a class and the instructor was very hands-on, which she didn’t feel comfortable with, and said she wished she’d known that beforehand.**
- When looking at descriptions, she says she looks for terms like “trauma-sensitive” and inclusive language like “everybody is welcome,” so she knows the class will welcome all levels of yogis
- **She finds looking at Facebook helpful because she can gauge whether an event will have a large crowd or not, and she can see who’s**

commenting/reviewing. She mentioned that she prefers classes and events with people from different backgrounds and abilities

Research synthesis

What are people trying to do? What are their goals?

They're trying to find teachers whose styles will click with their preference (hands-on vs. hands-off, pacing, talking vs. doing). They want to know that they'll enjoy a class because they're spending time and money on it.

What is the actual problem people are facing?

Using the information available via studio websites, Facebook, Google maps, and other searching resources, they're having trouble getting a good sense of teacher style and gauging the level of difficulty of classes.

Problem statement:

Finding yoga classes that are enjoyable can be hit-or-miss, and the people I interviewed said they don't really know what they're going to get in until they walk in. Finding the right classes can be expensive and time consuming

People who are looking for yoga classes need a way to get a better sense of yoga teacher and class styles because the information available can be incomplete or confusing.

Feature recommendations

A VIABLE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

Search by location

This is important because all the people I talked to during user research said they look first for classes that are near them. They could either use their current location or choose another location, since a few said they look for classes before they travel. This will solve the problem of finding classes that are convenient for users

Search by class type

This is important because users also mentioned that they search for styles they like, or keywords, such as “beginner,” “vinyasa,” or “gentle.” This will help users further narrow down their search, filtering out class types they’re not interested in at the moment.

Teacher profiles

Most users I talked with said they want to know more about an instructor’s style. For instance, does the teacher do hands-on assists or not, do they do the class with the students or not, etc. This would solve the problem of users needing more information to decide whether they want to take a certain teacher’s class.

Preview videos

Most users I talked with said that getting an idea of what a class will be like based on a description can be frustrating. For instance, one user mentioned a class that was listed as a vinyasa flow class, but was more of a slow, meditative experience, which was not what he wanted. Another mentioned that since she’s a beginner, descriptions can seem jargon-y and vague. Videos would be a way to show, rather than tell users what a class will be like.

