

Main Document

Project 2

Redesigning the Ride-Hailing Rating System

By: Derron, Angelo, Abby, Mishti

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Project Overview

Our project is intended for regular uber users, specifically the Uber drivers and passengers. It's intended for Uber drivers who have more than 200+ rides and don't rate passengers, as well as for passengers who use Uber 3x a week, such as students who do not rate the Uber driver. We are focusing on redesigning the rating and review system used in ride-hailing platforms, specifically in the Uber driving experience. Our primary and secondary research supports that the system relies heavily on a five-star scale that often lacks clarity, encourages biased emotional responses, and shifts an imbalance of power into the hands of riders. Drivers' access to their work, visibility, and compensation is disturbed by this imbalance of power and unfairness to drivers. Our goal is to create a new interaction system that helps increase clarity and support fair and more transparent feedback. Our design system replaces the traditional five-star scale with more structured tags, expressive emojis, and optional photo/video feedback. We are enabling riders to communicate more accurately and drivers to understand feedback more meaningfully.

Problem Framing

- Riders do not give ratings to Uber drivers
- There is an imbalance of power within the platform
- They did not provide clarity and transparency
- Too much load for human customer service
- They did not use a voice transcript to make it efficient

Solution to our design

- Develop an incentive system to encourage riders and drivers to review
- Give similar punishment and the same impact on the power within the platform
- Integrate tags and emojis to give more clarity and express your emotion

- Machine learning to help with decision making and resolving issues, human-in-the-loop
- Using a voice transcript to make it easier for the user to give ratings

Exploring Rating Systems

To give you our design, we have to examine rating systems beyond ride-hailing platforms to get the bigger picture of what we can do to create the perfect design. We analyzed rating systems beyond ride-hailing platforms, including online marketplaces such as Amazon and Alibaba. We also analyzed Google Maps' review system, community moderation systems, reputation point systems, peer review models, and educational feedback systems such as RateMyProfessor. Furthermore, we also analyzed Airbnb to understand its rating system design in order to improve ours. For each system, we found similarities and things in common: their rating systems are very fast and efficient. With just a few simple clicks, users are able to receive clear feedback. For example, Amazon users can click on the notification button, and it jumps straight to the rating page. With Google Maps, users are able to give not just a rating with text, but also photos and videos as evidence. We also studied why hospitals use emoji rating systems instead of stars. First, emojis show feelings, and faces are much easier to understand for the user to understand. Stars can create bias and confusion among users. Emojis work for everyone, such as kids, older people, and people who don't speak English, just by being able to point to a face. So emojis are more universal than stars and don't create confusion for people around the globe (Strange, 2016). It's also faster for people to choose because you can just select the face that matches how you feel and tap it instantly. From RateMyProfessor, we can clearly see how students support each other by giving clarity about the professor in the form of tags such as #heavy-grader, #do-not-skip-class, etc. These tags help other students choose their professor wisely and understand the workload and things to avoid, such as not skipping class. Similarly, within our design, we provide clarity for passengers to inform us about the driver's performance. For example, they can use tags like #suspicious, #dirty, #rude, #kind, #fast, etc. to provide highlights for other passengers to see.

Analysis and Synthesis - Background Research

We conducted research and collected data on gig-economy labor, algorithmic decision-making, bias in rating systems, and platform governance. Our documentation includes links, summaries, and key insights from academic papers, news articles, and industry analysis. We highlighted power shifts towards the passengers and unfairness within the system. We understand that riders can simply give bad ratings to drivers, such as 1 star, and it impacts the overall rating of the driver similarly to student GPAs. If we get a C-, it will affect our overall GPA by a huge number. If the Uber driver's rating goes below a certain percentage or falls to 4.5, the Uber driver can get fewer passengers, which leads to the deactivation of their account, meaning drivers are banned from working with Uber. On the other hand, if Uber drivers rate a passenger, they simply do not get any punishment. This research challenged assumptions about

neutrality in the rating system and how design choices can reinforce or mitigate power imbalance.

Design Decisions:

[\(28\) The 5-Star Fallacy: How Uber ruined the single-point rating system | LinkedIn](#)

This is exactly why we target those flaws specifically in our redesign by incentivizing drivers and passengers, allowing them to use tags, add media, write detailed reviews, rather than forcing them to quantify their emotions into a number. Instead, we have them use an emoji that actually shows how they felt their ride actually went.

- LinkedIn article notes riders feel pressured to give 5-star ratings, even for average experiences.
- This pressure leads to snap decisions or people avoiding ratings altogether.
- Uber's system is sensitive because drivers can be deactivated below ~4.6 average rating.
- Even small drops (like 4 stars or lower) can significantly hurt drivers.
- Yackowski suggests shifting back to clearer categories (Poor → Exceptional) and improving transparency.
- She also recommends a more detailed performance system with categories, rewards, and clearer evaluation criteria.
- These critiques highlight major flaws in Uber's current rating model.
- The proposed redesign addresses this by using emojis, tags, media, and written feedback instead of just numbers.
- The goal is to better capture rider emotion and reduce unfair rating pressure.

[At what rating will Uber deactivate you?](#)

There's no way to actually differentiate poor service from a rating that was just given due to emotions or unfair reasoning.

- Uber drivers risk deactivation if ratings drop too low (around 4.6, varies by location).
- Most drivers focus on staying above 4.6–4.7 since lower scores matter less.
- The system is flawed because ratings often lack context and can be biased or emotional.
- A redesign with emojis, tags, and written reviews aims to add context and improve fairness.

[Effects of Smiley Face Scales on Visual Processing of Satisfaction Questions in Web Surveys](#)

We allow the user to communicate their feelings and emotions through emojis, which allows the users to actually engage with the rating in a more genuine manner, instead of just typing or clicking whatever, just to finish the entire process.

- Eye-tracking studies compared emoji (smiley face) scales to text-based rating scales.
- Users spent less time with emoji scales but gave equally accurate responses.
- Emoji scales were easier to understand, especially for people with lower reading comprehension.
- Emojis reduce cognitive load by communicating emotion instantly without interpreting text or stars.
- This supports redesigning rating systems away from traditional 5-star formats.

[Incentives Can Reduce Bias in Online Reviews](#)

If we do include incentives, then we get more participation and a larger quantity of honest and detailed reviews that provide more documentation on the overall user experience.

- A study (NBER) shows reviews are often biased because extreme opinions are more likely to be shared.
- This creates a skewed, unbalanced distribution of feedback.
- Offering incentives brings in more moderate users, improving the representativeness of reviews.
- Incentives increase participation without reducing honesty or the quality of feedback.
- More users contribute detailed reviews when rewarded (e.g., discounts).
- Conclusion: incentivizing reviews leads to more accurate and useful data for understanding user experience.

[Reforming Uber Driver Ratings: The Need to Count Unrated Rides](#)

Uber's current rating system is considered inefficient because it does not accurately reflect driver performance and instead spreads bias and incomplete information.

- Uber's rating system is inefficient because it doesn't accurately reflect driver performance.
- Ratings can be influenced by unrelated factors like bias or personal opinion (Yale Insights).
- The system doesn't measure actual service quality consistently.
- People are more likely to leave ratings after bad experiences, skewing results.
- Positive or normal rides are underrepresented in the data.
- Overall, the system gives a biased and incomplete view of driver performance.

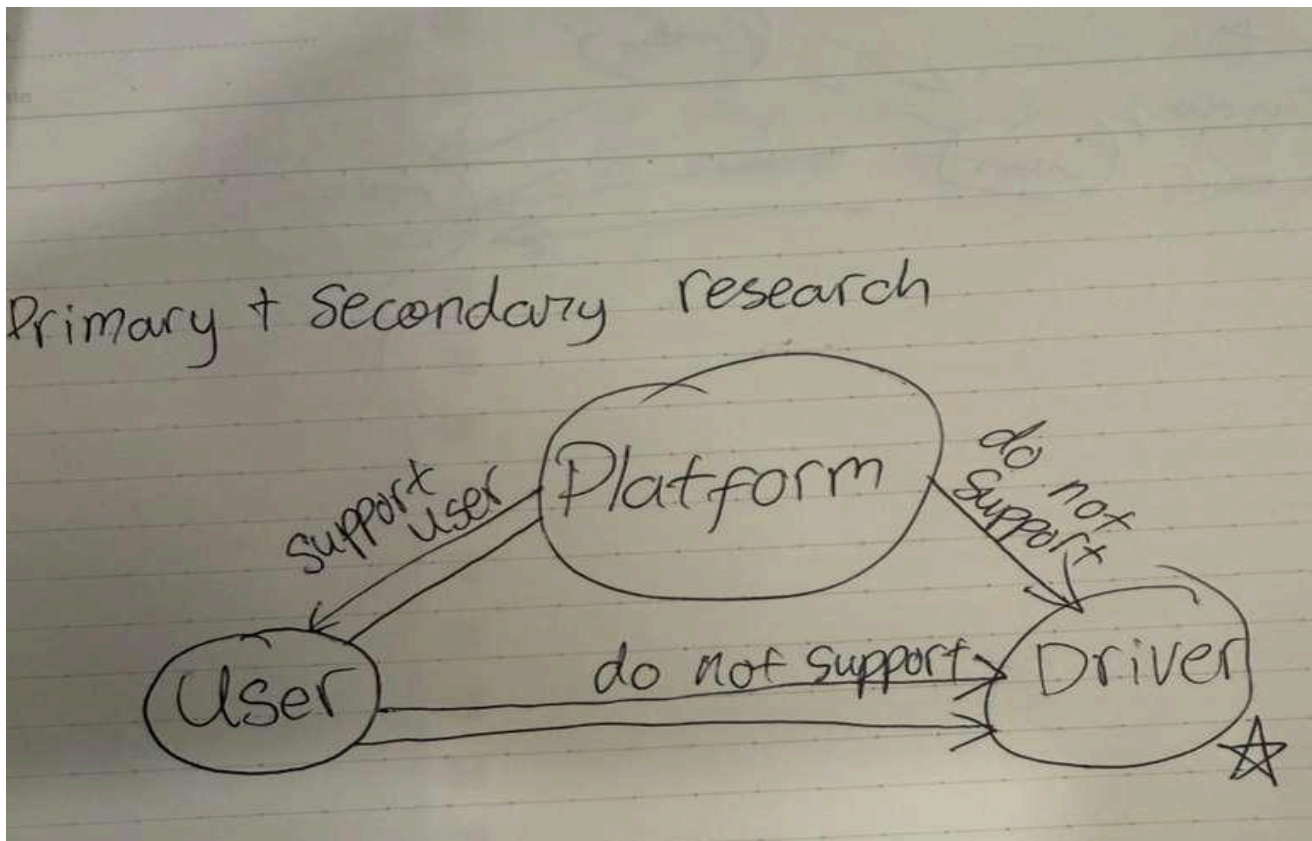
[A Guide to AI Customer Service Chatbots | IBM](#)

- Based on this research, they “ increased customer engagement by 40% across all platforms and decreased wait times to only 33%. “

- Combined with conversational AI chatbots, it would autonomously resolve 80% of common customer service issues without human intervention.
- AI-powered chatbots communicate fluently in multiple languages, allowing businesses to serve a diverse, global customer base and expand into new markets.

Stakeholders and Power

Ride-hailing rating systems affect riders and drivers. Riders hold power over drivers by having the power to give them a bad review, which can impact their next ride. Based on primary and secondary research, we can see that users are being helped and supported by the platform, but the platform does not support drivers by balancing the power.



Primary Research Plan

Our team conducted primary research through interviews and contextual inquiry with both drivers and frequent riders. We documented who we planned to speak with, what we hoped to learn, and the interview questions we prepared. As research progressed, we added notes, quotes, observations, and emerging insights to help guide us to make a better decision. We

focused on understanding the driver stress around ratings, rider confusion about what ratings mean, and moments where the system breaks down or encourages unintentional bias.

Research Findings

We synthesized our data using affinity mapping to identify patterns across interviews and observations. We found that:

- Drivers feel powerless and confused about how ratings affect their accounts
- Riders rate quickly without context, often emotionally or arbitrarily
- Lack of clarity about what 4 or 5 actually means
- Drivers wanting actionable feedback rather than vague star scores will

Riders wanting simpler, faster ways to express their experience

Research and Exploration Workspace

Our research board served as a flexible space for us to gather evidence, externalize thinking, and explore the rating ecosystem from multiple perspectives. We documented questions, insights, sketches, and early ideas. The board accumulated maps, mood boards, interview notes, and conceptual diagrams that helped us understand the complexity of the rating environment and guided our design exploration.

Understanding the Current System

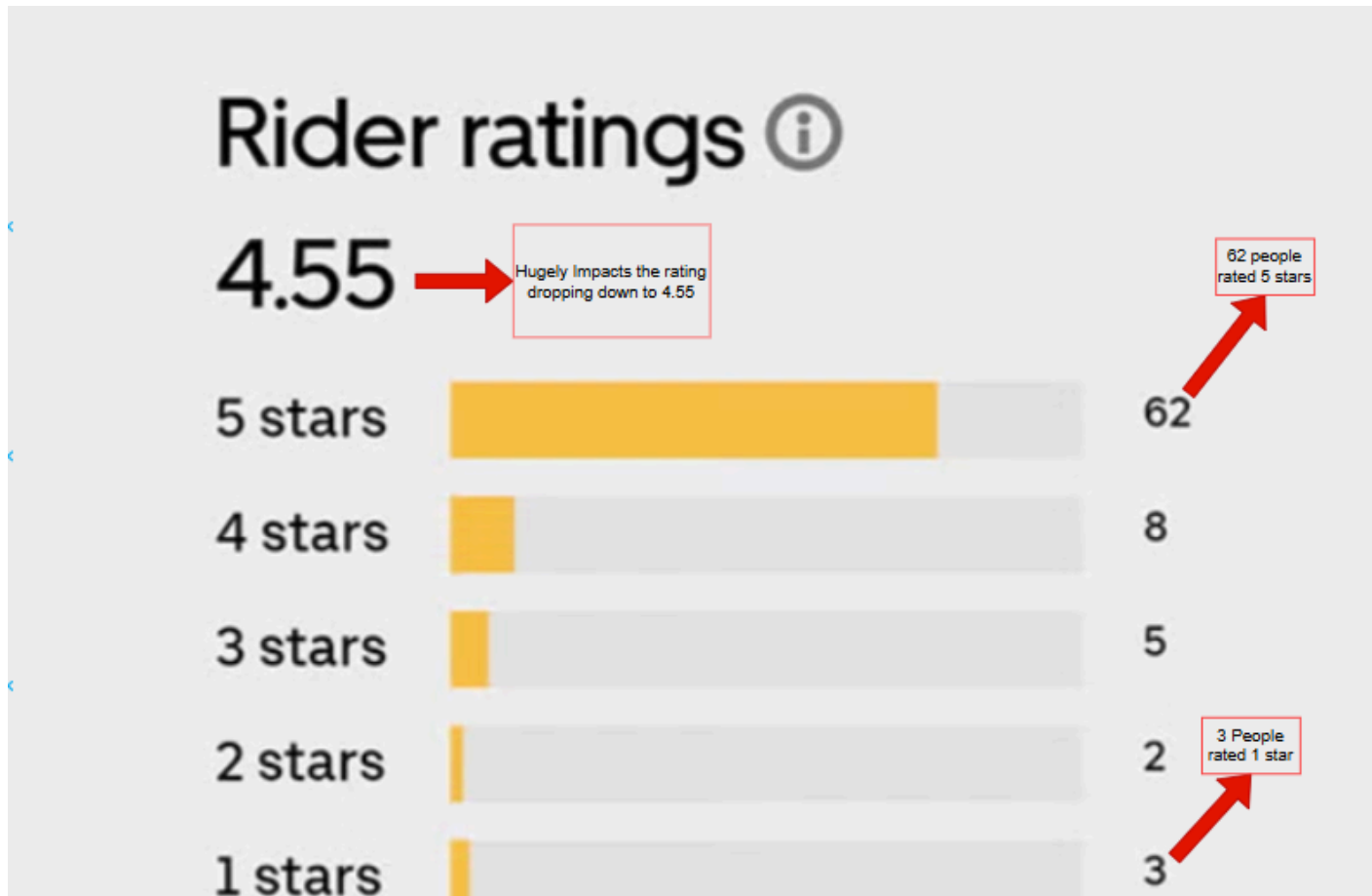
We mapped the existing ride-hailing rating ecosystem, including relationships between drivers, riders, platform algorithms, payment systems, customer support, and rating mechanisms. We explored questions such as:

- Who can rate whom
- What data is collected
- How ratings influence driver visibility and access to work
- Which decisions are automated or algorithmically mediated

We created system diagrams and interaction timelines to visualize breakdowns and identify opportunities for redesign.

Mood Board Exploration

Our mood board helps us understand the situation the driver and passenger are undergoing right now. However, it also includes some fictional but possible real-world scenarios.



Contextual Inquiry 1:

Even with 62 five-star ratings, just three one-star ratings can drag the overall score down to 4.55. This shows how heavily the system punishes drivers for even a small number of negative reviews.

Because every low rating has a disproportionate impact, drivers feel constant pressure, and a single frustrated passenger can significantly damage their overall standing, even when most riders had a great experience.



Contextual Inquiry 2:

After receiving a negative review without any explanation, a driver can immediately fall into a bad mood. That emotional hit doesn't stay isolated; it carries into their next ride, making them more frustrated, less patient, and more stressed.

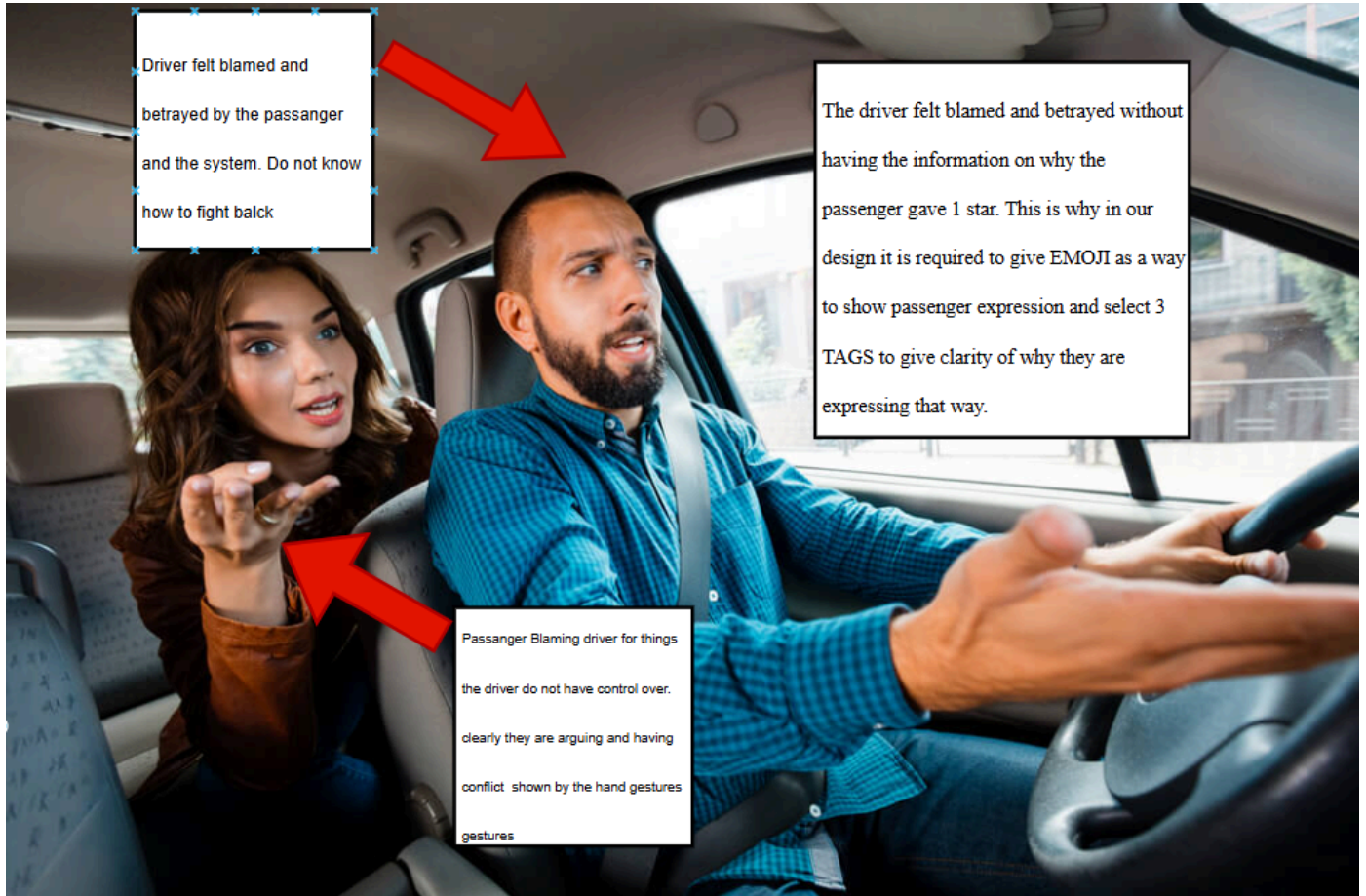
When feedback lacks clarity, it doesn't just hurt the driver's feelings; it creates a negative effect that impacts the overall experience for future passengers as well.



Contextual Inquiry 3:

Even when the traffic light is green, drivers often can't move because the road ahead is completely blocked. This is a common situation across the United States, where heavy traffic regularly makes passengers late to work or appointments.

Because passengers can only rate the driver after the ride ends, their frustration often gets misdirected at the driver. Even when the delay was caused by traffic, not the driver's actions. Without clear context, drivers end up receiving low ratings for circumstances they cannot control.

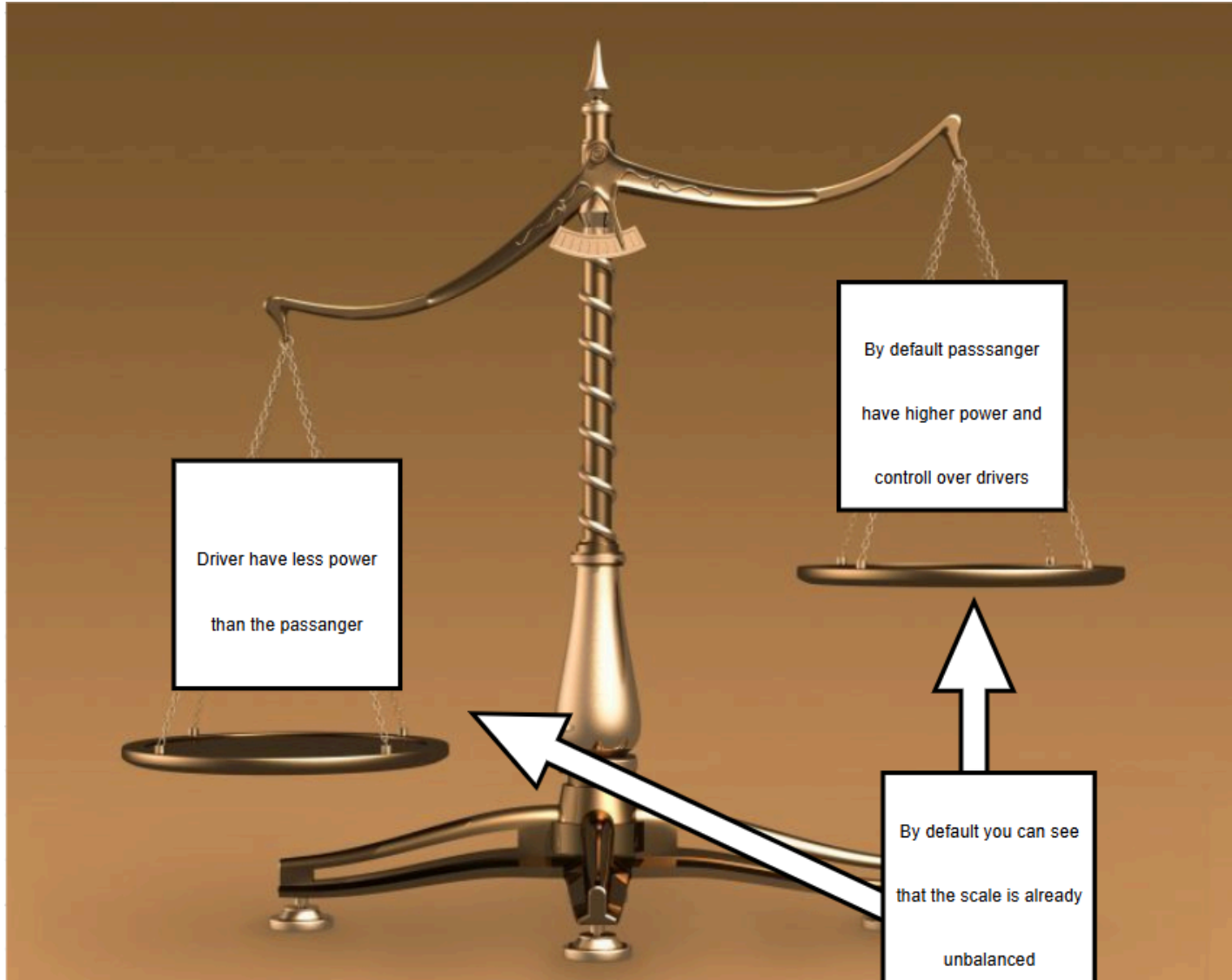


Contextual Inquiry 4:

The reason we don't use stars is that stars communicate evaluation, not emotion. A 1-star rating feels like a judgment, and without context, it leaves the driver feeling blamed, betrayed, and confused.

Emojis solve this because they express emotional tone, and not a numerical score. They show how the passenger felt, while the required three tags explain why they felt that way.

Stars and tags still frame the interaction as a performance score, which is exactly what caused the driver's negative reaction in the first place. Emojis shift the system from judgment to empathy and clarity, which is the core goal of the redesign.



Contextual Inquiry 5:

The power dynamic between Uber drivers and passengers is unbalanced by default at the start. Drivers hold less power, while passengers, by default, have more control and influence over the experience.

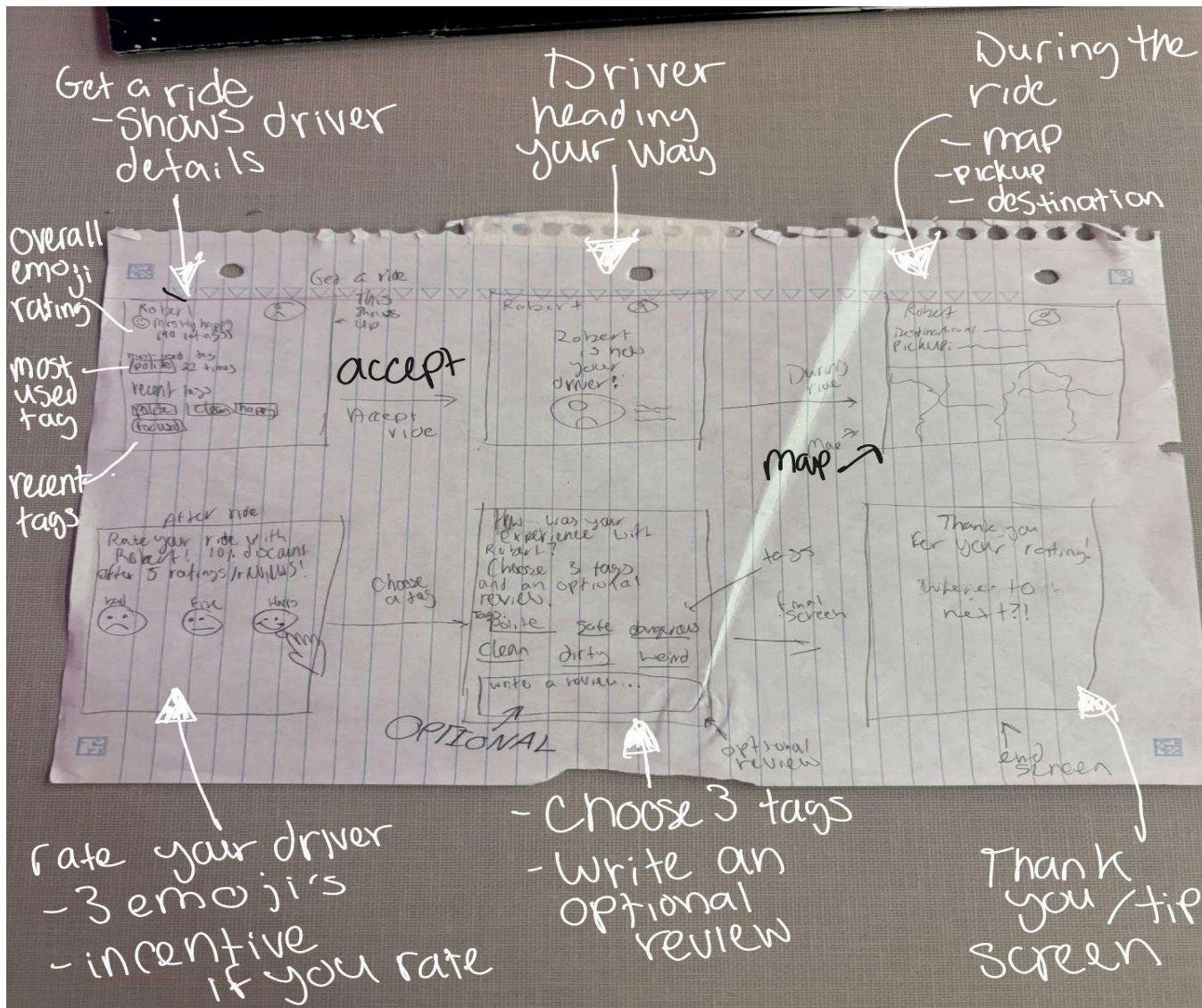
This imbalance is built directly into the rating system; passengers are not affected by ratings in any meaningful way, but drivers' livelihoods depend on them. As a result, the "scale" is already very tilted before any interaction even begins.

Our Design Direction

Based on our research, we propose a redesigned rating system that replaces the traditional five-star scale with a tag-based, emoji-supported, multimedia-optional feedback model. Riders select from structured tags (e.g., “smooth ride,” “clean car,” “great conversation,” “felt unsafe,” “late arrival”), supported by expressive emojis that communicate tone quickly. Optional photo or video uploads allow riders to document specific issues or highlight positive experiences. Increases clarity, minimizes ambiguity, and provides drivers with actionable insights while reducing the emotional and biased nature of star ratings.

Usability testing & concept mapping

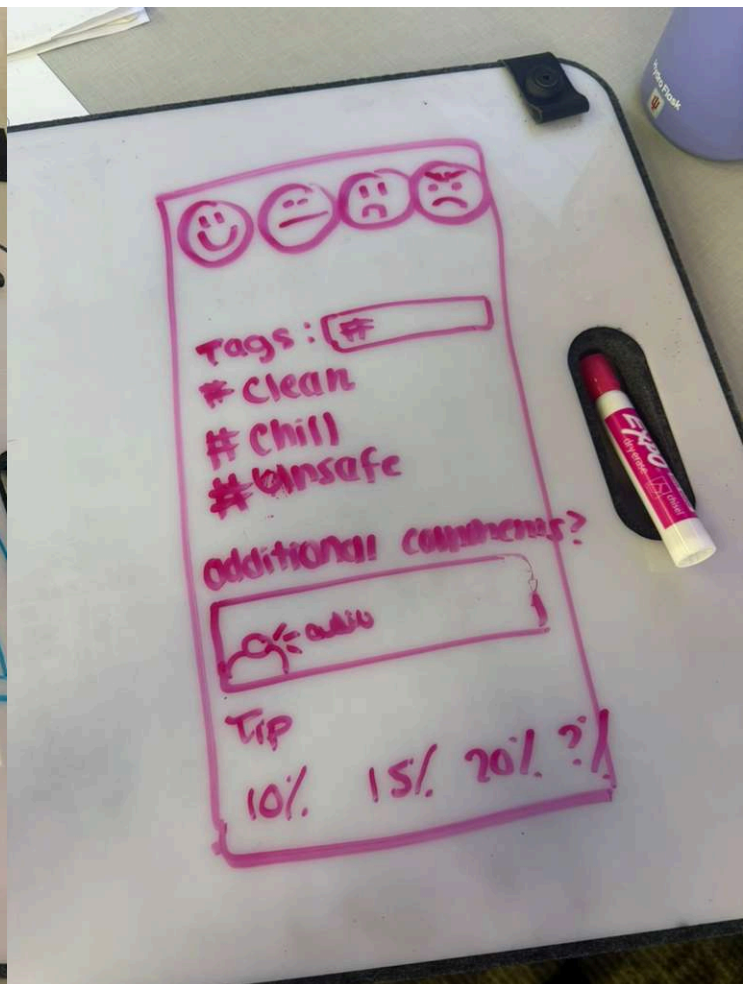
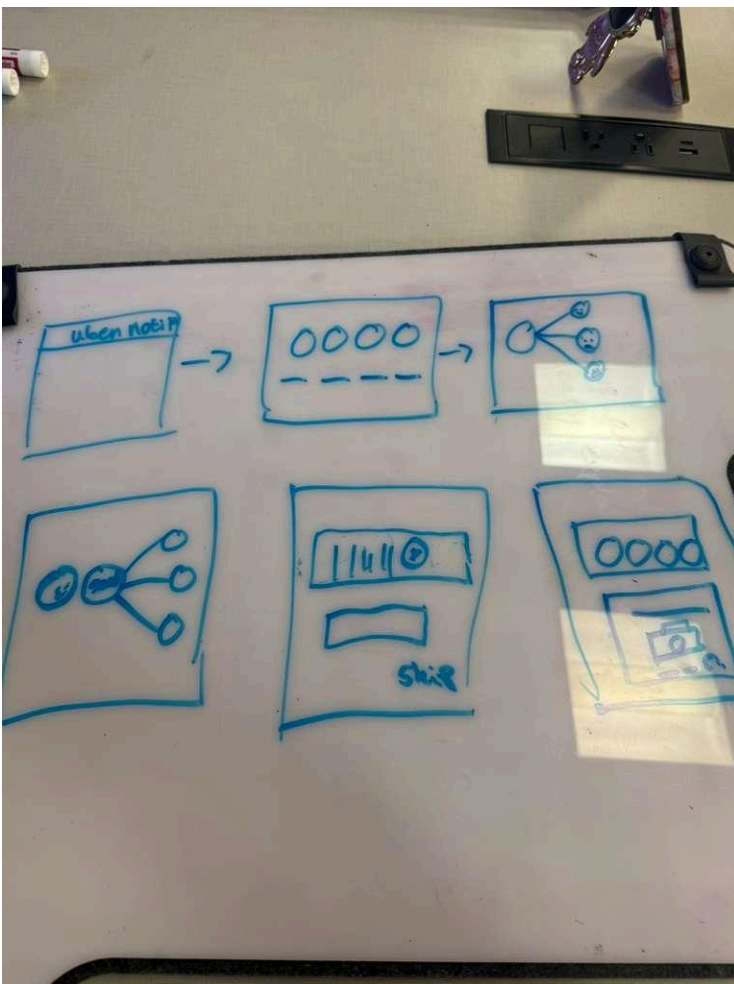
1. Concept Mapping. We created individual and group concept maps centered on “ride-hailing rating systems,” branching into themes such as Simple, clear, data driven.



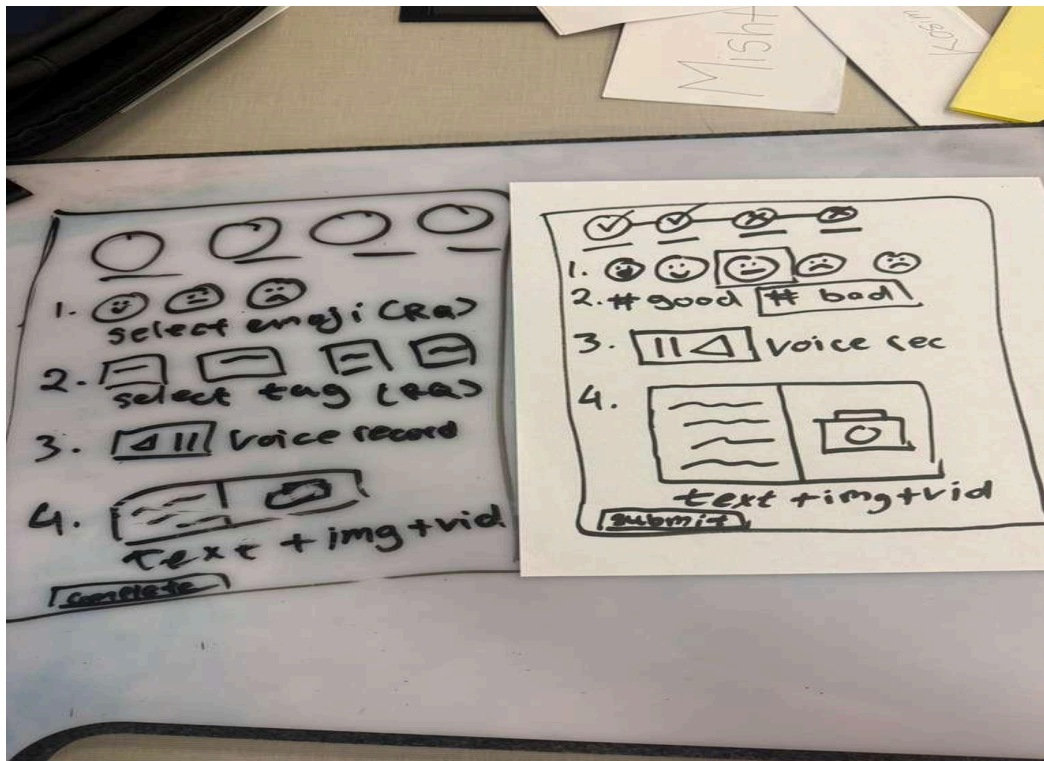
Read from left to right, top to bottom. This is our original system design of the entire user flow.

1. Get a ride, which shows driver details.
2. Shows the overall emoji rating of the driver with the most used and recent tags
3. Driver heading your way screen
4. Map with destination screen
5. Rate your driver with emojis
6. Choose 3 tags and write an optional review
7. Thank you screen at the end

This is our first-ever concept mapping idea; it shows our user flow but lacks clarity and detail. It's a quick and fast sketch of the Uber tags emojis, but they each pop up on a different page. We can also see that he drew the Uber driver profile, which is unnecessary to be shown there. But again, this is just the first ever rough sketch, and along the way, we have improved clarity of the design to make it a solution-based design, and fix clarity.

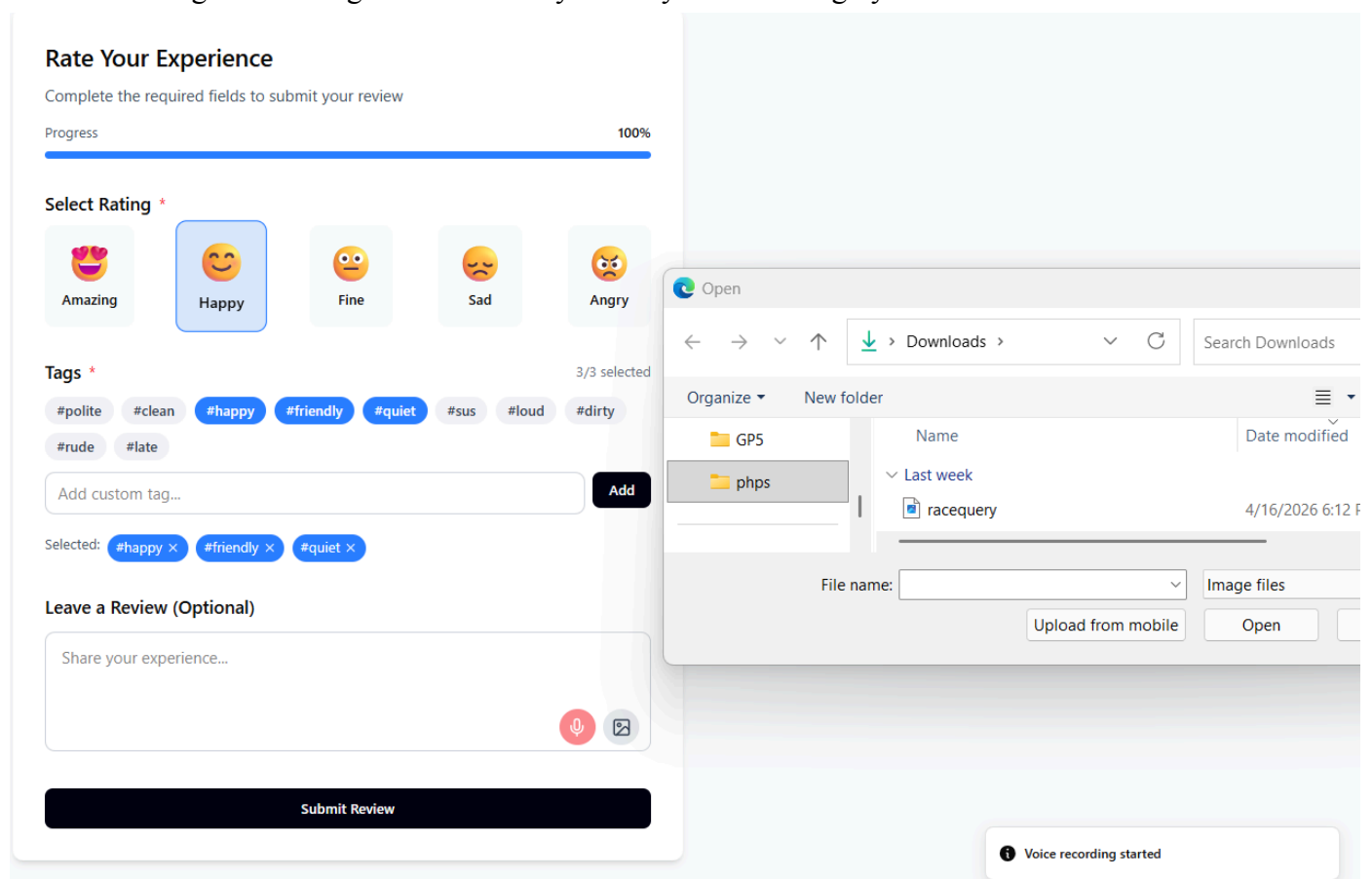


2. Based on the quick sketches of the Uber rating system design app, we have asked two of our colleagues who have had more than 30 Uber experiences for their feedback on our design. The picture on the left is our drawing. The goal there is to make a smooth transition for each progress by clicking on the Uber emoji, then it will pop up bubbles where we can tap on it to select the rating. And on the right, it provided one clear page where we can do everything on one page. Our reviewers stated that it is so much easier and less time-consuming for riders to rate everything on one page without needing to click on the bubbles. So we have decided that in our prototype, we will use one page, with minimum clicks, clarity, and make it simple and straightforward. In conclusion, we have created a final fast sketch to sketch our prototype, but this time we make sure that it only requires a minimum of 3 clicks for users to clearly give the necessary rating. We also included an optional button for users to record their voice so they do not have to type, and it makes it less time-consuming. It's also optional for people to give a photo and video as evidence to provide proof of the Uber experience. Here is our last fast sketch for the Uber app :



For our **third design**, we changed the layout again based on what didn't work in the first two versions. Based on the feedback we received, the first design had too many screens, and the second design still used pop-up bubbles that made the process feel slow. So in this version, we removed all extra steps and put everything onto **one clean page**. The emoji, tags, voice record, and photo/video options are now stacked in a simple top-to-bottom flow. This makes the rating faster, clearer, and easier for our users to finish with only a few taps.

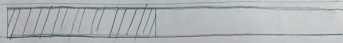
Prototype: In our final prototype design, we have created a Figma-based prototype and a sketch-based prototype to showcase our designs. [Figma](#): By clicking this link, you will be redirected straight to our Figma website for you to try out our design yourself.



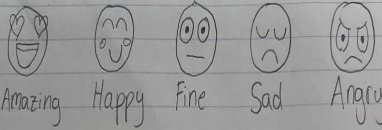
Rate your experience

complete the required fields to submit your review

Progress



Select Rating

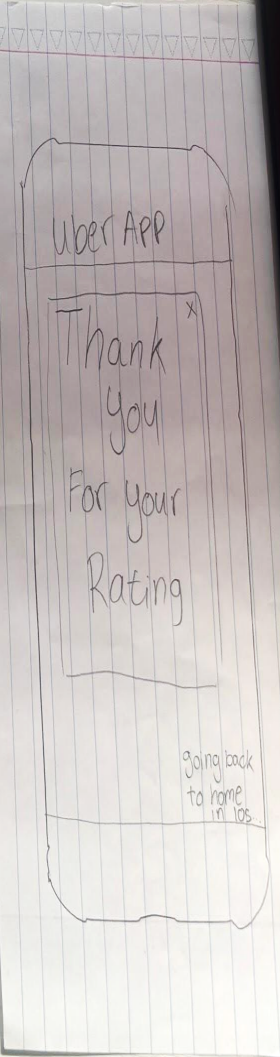
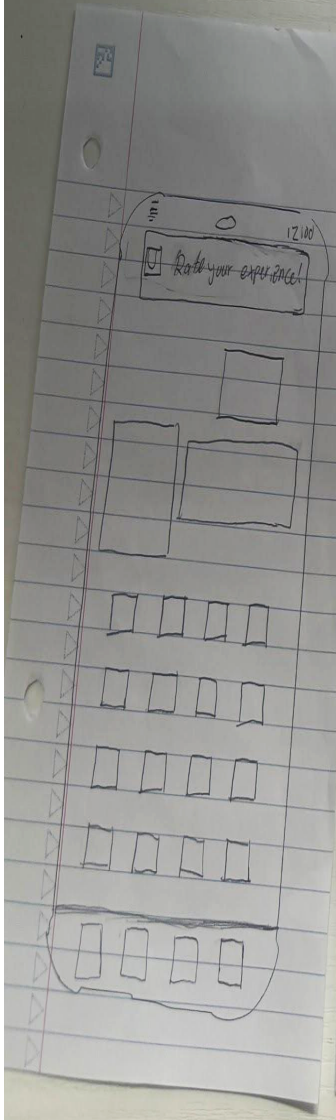
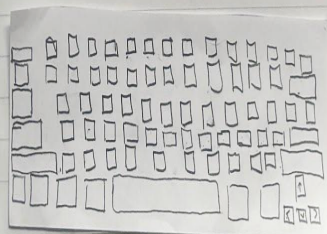


Tags

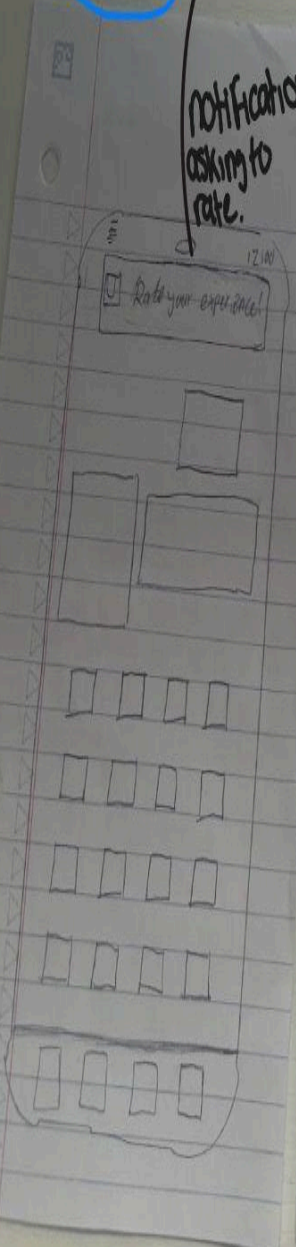
- # Polite # clean # happy # friendly # Quiet # Sus
- # Loud # dirty # rude # Late

Leave a Review (Optional)

Share your experience



First Screen



notification asking to rate.

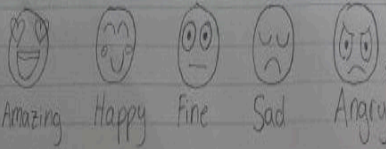
Second Screen

Rate your experience
Complete the required fields to submit your review

Progress

← progress bar: auto updates as you progress

Select Rating



emoji selection

Tags

- # Polite # clean # happy # friendly # Quiet # Sus
- # Loud # dirty # rude # Late

(Add custom tag) Add

↑ tag Select
↑ Optional add tag

Leave a Review (Optional)

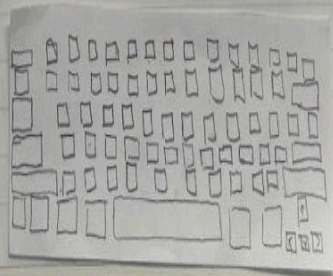
Share your experience

Detailed review section

/ speech-to-text
- add photo

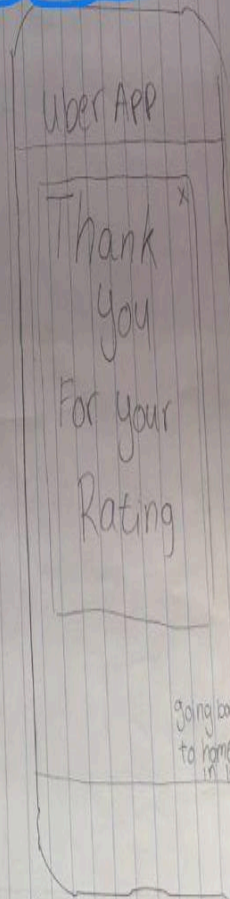
Submit Review

- Submit button



- Pop up key board

Third Screen

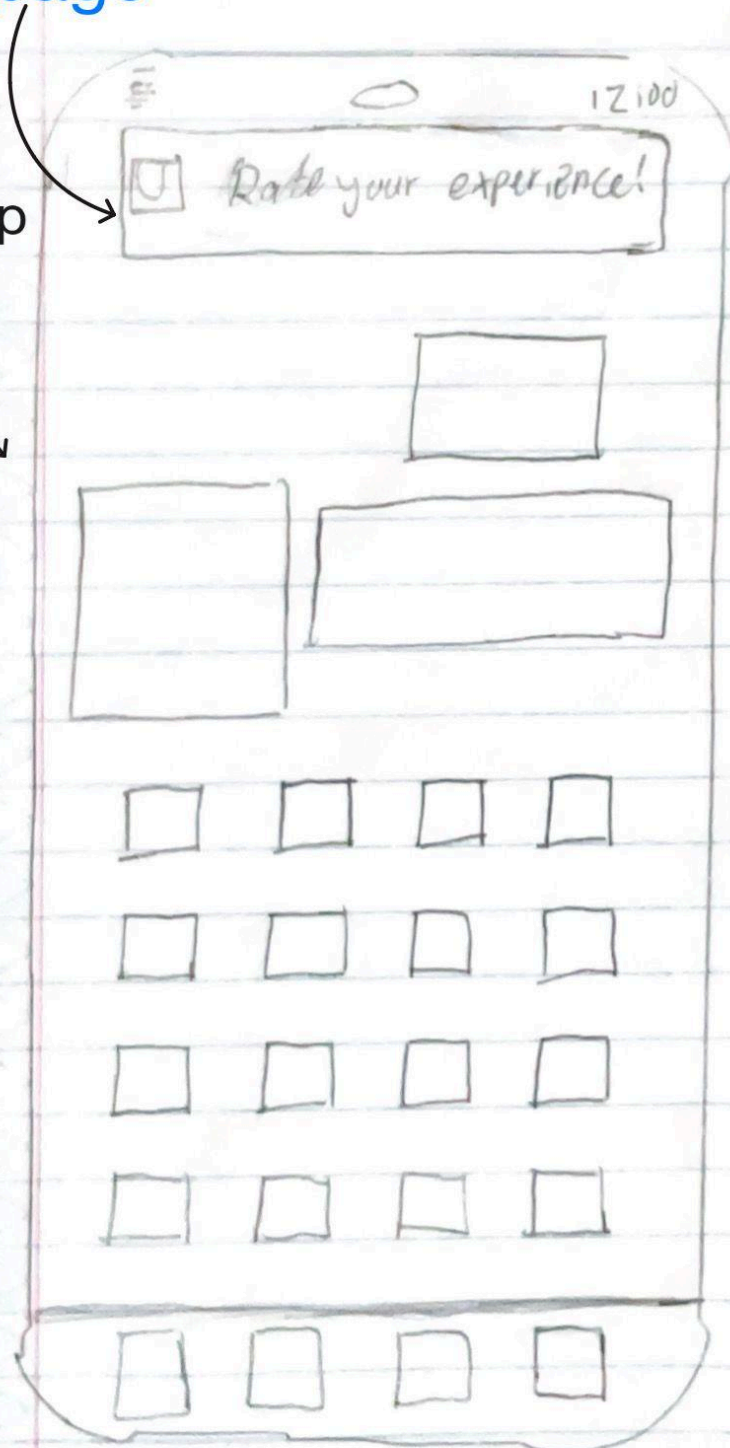


Thank you screen



Click on this notification
which leads to our rating
page

phone
mockup



Main Screen

Rate your experience
complete the required fields to submit your review

Progress



Progress bar that auto-updates as you progress.

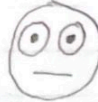
Select Rating



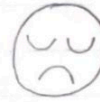
Amazing



Happy



Fine



Sad



Angry

Emoji Selection

Tags

Polite # clean # happy # friendly # Quiet # Sus
Loud # dirty # rude # Late

Tag selection

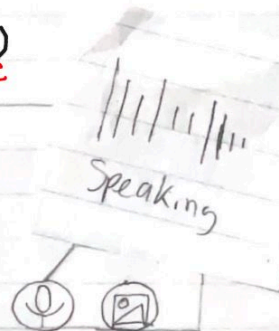
Add custom tag Add

Section for adding your own tag

Leave a Review (Optional)

Share your experience

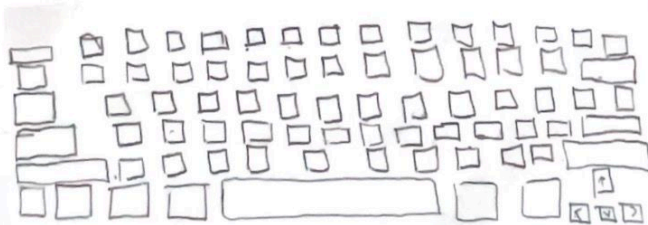
Section for giving more detailed info over your experience



speaking box: pops up when upon clicking mic icon

Leads to the tip page

Submit Review



Pop up keyboard when typing

Once you click on the
Submit button on the main page,
you land here:



Thank you screen

Takes you
back to home
automatically.

We will remind our users through notifications on their phones to encourage them to rate their driver. Once the user clicks on the notification, they will go straight to the “Rate Your Experience” page on the Uber app. Next, they will see an automatic progress tracker that shows their progress throughout the page. First, the user must click on the emoji that resembles their Uber experience. After that, they click on a minimum of 3 tags to give more clarity about the experience. That’s it for the required steps, and finally, the user can easily click “Submit Review.” It’s amazing because that’s only a total of 3 clicks for the user to give a clear rating.

If the user wants to provide deeper feedback, they can add photos or videos as evidence by simply dragging and dropping their files. They can also use the voice-recording button and talk to their phone instantly to provide better feedback. If they prefer typing, they can do that as well.

Behind the scenes, the system we’re improving will first ensure users are encouraged to rate by offering a 20% discount for every 5 ratings they give to drivers. We will also create a system where they can rate the driver during the ride, so they can save time and continue with their activity after being dropped off at their destination. We will make sure that the rating can only be reviewed by the driver and passenger 10 minutes after the ride is completed to avoid awkwardness and to ensure truthfulness and honesty without pressure.

Lastly, we will balance the system by adding the same punishment for passengers and Uber drivers who end up with an average of the “fine emoji.” Passengers with low ratings will experience increased wait times when matching with a driver, and Uber drivers will receive fewer passengers. If their rating falls below the “fine emoji,” our team will investigate the situation and punish them accordingly. We will deactivate their account if they reach the “mad emoji.” But if they maintain good behavior and earn the “heart-eyes emoji,” we will boost their Uber matching speed for both passengers and drivers. In addition to faster matching speed, we will give a 20% discount on the next ride for users each time they rate more than 5 experiences. For drivers, they will gain a bigger cut, 10% more, so Uber will take 30% instead of 40% on the next ride after they rate the passenger.

Evaluation Methods :

For these evaluation methods, we conducted **usability testing** and walkthroughs. We asked 2 peers who use Uber regularly. We gave them the task of “Try to give a happy/good experience to our Uber driver”. From my analysis, they understand how to get to the rating experience page by simply clicking the notification button. Later they selected the emoji that matched happy. So they understand that. But then they click the tag, and it’s very simple and easy. They saw the required and optional buttons to fill it in. Then they simply click submit. So far, based on our usability testing, our peers understand how it works and how to do things.

Based on **the walkthrough methods**, I asked them to follow my instructions, such as 1. Click on the notification icon. As a result, they understand and know where to locate it. Second, click on the emoji. They know where the emoji is and which one to select. Later, I asked them to click on the tags and select 3. They understood, and it was very simple and understandable. Later, I told them that the last thing they need to do is to click on the submit button. They clearly understood the assignment and successfully managed to give a good rating to our Uber driver.

In conclusion, here is the pitch video where you can visually see and understand our design: [Rating System Video](#). By providing emojis and tags, we clearly solve the clarity and bias issues for users. We also reduced the time it takes to provide feedback while still maintaining the quality of the feedback. With a minimum of three clicks, users can give clear ratings backed up by tags and highlighted words that showcase the Uber driver's performance. Even though time pressure is no longer our design focus because we ask for more of the user's input, our design still makes it really fast and quick, but we have completely removed the idea of solving time pressure in our design concept. **Lastly, please disregard anything about putting images and video, because due to privacy concerns, riders are not allowed to take pictures of the driver.**

We also provided an optional button to help users give evidence and support their statements about the experience by adding a drag-and-drop box for videos and photos. We solved the one-sided power shift by giving similar punishments to passengers to protect our drivers. Lastly, we solved the issue where people do not want to rate because they have nothing to gain. By providing discounts and bigger cuts, we encourage and motivate users to give ratings.

The final issue we solved is enabling users to rate the driver on the go, while still allowing reviews to be submitted 10 minutes after the ride ends. This helps maintain truthfulness and honesty by avoiding awkwardness and pressure.

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Primary Research

Interview Questions for Uber Driver (normal, not luxury, 100+ rides) & Lyft Driver (normal, not luxury, 100+ rides)

- 1. How would you describe Uber's current rating system and how it affects you as a driver?
- 2. How often do you check your rating, and how do you feel when it changes?
- 3. Have you ever received a rating that felt unfair or unclear? Please explain what happened.
- 4. Do you think passengers understand how much their rating impacts your job and workflow?
- 5. What do you wish passengers could explain more clearly about your performance?
- 6. Out of 10 passengers, how many usually leave a rating or tip? How do you feel about that?
- 7. How does the current rating system affect your daily stress, income, or ability to get rides?
- 8. If you could change one thing about the rating system to make it more fair and clear, what would it be?

Interview Questions for Passengers (college student, uses Uber minimum 2x a week, 30+ rides)

- 1. How would you describe Uber's passenger rating system and what it means for you as a rider?
- 2. How often do you check your passenger rating, and how do you feel when it changes?
- 3. Have you ever received a rating that felt unfair or confusing? If so, what happened?
- 4. Do you think drivers understand your needs or preferences during a ride?
- 5. Out of 5 rides, how many drivers do you usually tip? How do you decide when to tip?
- 6. Out of 5 rides, how many drivers do you think rate you? How do you feel about that?
- 7. Has the rating system ever affected how you behave or how comfortable you feel during a ride?
- 8. If you could change one thing about the passenger rating system to make it more fair or clear, what would it be?

Answers :

Uber driver :

1. *Yeah, I understand how the rating system works. Usually passenger rates us after a ride and our entire job depends on it. One bad rating can drag everything down. We can get deactivated and stop working.*

2. *I check my rating pretty often. Honestly, every time I see it drop, it hits me. It's frustrating because I never know what caused it. It feels like I'm being judged without any explanation, and it adds a lot of stress to the job. Passengers have the rights to rate but they abused it.*

3. *I've definitely gotten ratings that felt unfair. Sometimes passengers are upset about traffic, or the GPS route, or even their own mood, and they take it out on us. It feels bad because we don't get a chance to explain our side or defend ourselves. We only see 1 star and not enough explanation.*

4. *I don't think passengers realize how much power they have. Their rating can affect my income, my ability to get rides, and even my job security. Meanwhile, they don't face the same consequences. It feels very one-sided.*

5. *I wish passengers knew how much effort I put in keeping the car clean, driving safely, being patient, following the GPS, trying to be respectful. The rating system doesn't show any of that. It doesn't highlight the good things we do or the experience we try to give.*

6. *Out of 10 passengers, maybe 2 or 3 tip. And honestly, it's discouraging. We put in a lot of work, and most people don't think about it. As for ratings, most people do rate, but not always fairly. Some give 4 stars even when everything was fine, and some give 1 star for things I can't control.*

7. *The rating system affects everything — how I talk, how I drive, how careful I am. I'm always worried about doing something "wrong" even if it's small. It makes the job more stressful than it should be because one bad rating can change your whole week.*

8. *If I could change one thing, I'd make the system more balanced. Passengers should be held accountable too, not just drivers. And ratings should come with explanations or tags so we actually know what happened. It needs to be fair for both sides, not just the riders.*

Uber passenger answer:

1. Yeah, I know how the passenger rating system works. Drivers rate us after the ride, and it basically shows whether we're easy to work with or not. I don't think it affects us as much as it affects drivers, but it's still something I'm aware of.

2. I check my rating every once in a while, maybe once a week. When it drops, I'm always confused because I don't know what I did wrong. It's a weird feeling because there's no explanation, just a number going up or down.

3. Yeah, I've gotten a rating that felt unfair. One time I was quiet during the ride because I was tired from class, and I think the driver took it the wrong way. My rating dropped for no real reason, and it felt kind of random.

4. I don't think drivers always know what I prefer. Sometimes I want music, sometimes I want silence, sometimes I'm in a rush. The rating system doesn't really show any of that, so drivers just guess. It doesn't reflect personal needs at all.

5. Out of 5 rides, I probably tip 1 or 2 drivers. It depends on the ride — if they're friendly, safe, or help with bags, I tip. But I'm also a college student, so I can't tip every time.

6. I think most drivers rate me, maybe 4 out of 5. I don't mind it, but it's strange not knowing why they rated me a certain way. It feels like a silent judgment sometimes.

7. The rating system definitely affects how I act. I try to be extra polite, close the door gently, and not make any mess because I don't want a bad rating. It makes me more cautious than I normally would be.

8. If I could change one thing, I'd make the system more transparent. I want to know why my rating changed and what I can improve. And I think passengers should also face consequences if they're consistently rude or disrespectful. It should be fair for both sides.

From these interviews we can understand the problems that drivers and passengers are having. On the driver side they are having problems such as power imbalance because they noticed that passengers aren't affected by the Uber rating system. They do not get impacted in the same way the driver does, which is immediate deactivation and reduction of customers. It is unclear and one-sided, because one bad rating can significantly decrease their entire score, and drivers often receive unfair ratings for things outside their control. On the other hand, the interviews revealed that passengers have little transparency, and prioritize convenience.

Bobby (Passenger):

1. Fairly simple, but kind of annoying since there are a lot of steps, and I'm usually in a rush and forget to rate.
2. I don't check my rating often, the only time it really bothers me is when it gets a low rating or something less than 5 stars because I'm typically just on my phone during the drive.
3. I have never had that problem before so I can't really answer that question. I have only ever had positive reviews from my drivers since I'm pretty respectful and talk to them occasionally.
4. I'd say so, I don't really have any needs or preferences, but I do know that a lot of drivers have accommodations or will give you water or play music if you ask them kindly.
5. Out of 5 rides, I'd say maybe 2 times I probably tip. I usually forget to because it's not on the same screen, and not going to lie I usually spend my money immediately afterward so I can't tip when I open the app again. I really only tip when I don't forget or if I know I have a bit more money in my account.
6. I'd say around 3 out of 5 drivers rate me. Usually the number is pretty high, but I don't really pay much attention to it to be honest. I really just use the app to get from point A to point B and don't care much about anything else as long as I don't get banned.
7. I think it does subconsciously. I am pretty quiet or chill on my phone and just stay like that until I get to where I need to be. I tend to be more reserved since I don't really know what drivers categorize as bad behavior and I don't want to be too loud or obnoxious.
8. I think maybe adding the ability to have things on one page would help. Or some sort of notification reminding you to rate somebody.

Jay (Passenger):

1. I'd say it's pretty straightforward, there are some things that kind of annoy me, but I usually do them.
2. It really depends on the night and how it went. If I think I may have been a little to reckless, then I will check it just to make sure I didn't get a really low rating. I do feel kinda upset at the moment, but it was probably for a reason.
3. I haven't received a rating that has felt unfair, but I think sometimes I do think that until I piece the night together, then I realize it was probably a reasonable rating. The only time it would be unfair is during the day since I'm usually on my phone, but who know I could be too loud or annoying or something.
4. Eh, I think some drivers do but not all of them. I've had drivers hand me water or have puke bags, hand sanitizer, play music, or just talk a lot. Some drivers do none of those things, so it's really just luck in my opinion.
5. I'd say 4 out of 5 times. I normally tip 25%, but the times I don't tip are usually when I think the driver was a little too reckless or driving fast/making me nervous.

It also depends on if they talk or if they don't. Mainly I just tip based on the vibe I'm getting from the driver.

- 6. I'd say on average 4 out of times. I usually do get ratings, they are mostly all 4 or 5 stars since I just talk to them most of the time, and we start to get along. Some of them still rate me high, even if we don't talk at all. I think it does matter though because some people probably won't want to drive me if my rating is low, but i don't really know exactly how that works.*
- 7. I'd say a little yeah. Most of the time I just try to stay on the drivers good side. As long as we can start and hold a conversation I'd say the drive goes well.*
- 8. Maybe remind people to tip. A lot of people just get out of the car and go to where they were dropped off and close the app. It doesn't say much about tipping or rating someone until you open the app again. At that point I still do tip, but I can see how people might forget to.*

Luke (Driver):

- It's sort of weird, but it definitely means the most when working for Uber. It is what decides if I am able to give rides or not, so it's really important. It's how I make more money on the side.*
- I check my rating daily. If it goes up I'm pretty excited since that's good news. If it goes down I'm not too worried, unless it goes down a significant amount, then I'll start worrying a bit more.*
- I've definitely received confusing reviews. I talk and provide water or play music if the passenger requests it, and sometimes I'll get 4 stars. It's definitely odd, I don't really know what I have to do to get 5 stars from some people. I think that part is pretty confusing.*
- I don't think they do since a majority of them are in college and don't really realize the consequences of what a significant amount of bad reviews can do to me and how it affects my employment.*
- I think they should explain in more detail exactly why they gave a bad review or a lower review than I thought they would've given me. In my opinion, maybe adding more context describing exactly why would be a huge game-changer for me.*
- Honestly, in a college town it's pretty hit or miss. Some leave none, some leave a little, and others tip generously. I'd say about 6 out of 10 leave decent tips, and the others leave a little bit or none.*
- It is definitely stressful trying to maintain a high rating, but the stress really comes from having to take rides and just being in the car for extended periods of time. I'd say everything piles up and just ends up being stressful in general.*
- I would want the passenger to be able to leave more feedback or information in their rating if it's bad. I think that's pretty justifiable from my point of view. Just more information so Uber can at least get more evidence before fully enforcing a punishment.*

Secondary Research

We conducted research and collected data on gig-economy labor, algorithmic decision-making, bias in rating systems, and platform governance. Our documentation includes links, summaries, and key insights from academic papers, news articles, and industry analysis. We highlighted power shifts towards the passengers and unfairness within the system. We understand that riders can simply give bad ratings to drivers, such as 1 star, and it impacts the overall rating of the driver similarly to student GPAs. If we get a C-, it will affect our overall GPA by a huge number. If the Uber driver's rating goes below a certain percentage or falls to 4.5, the Uber driver can get fewer passengers, which leads to the deactivation of their account, meaning drivers are banned from working with Uber. On the other hand, if Uber drivers rate a passenger, they simply do not get any punishment. This research challenged assumptions about neutrality in the rating system and how design choices can reinforce or mitigate power imbalance.

[Uber Is Getting Sued Over Its Allegedly Racist Ratings System](#)

Based on this website, it is mentioned that "Uber Is Getting Sued Over Its Allegedly Racist Ratings System". It explains that drivers can be fired for falling below a 4.6 average even when the low ratings are discriminatory. According to the article, Thomas Liu alleges that Uber violated the Civil Rights Act by terminating minority drivers through their rating system. He proceeded to argue that Uber knew about this, and still continued to use its current rating system even though there are racial biases against drivers like himself. Liu also states that passengers would cancel rides after accepting once they could see his photo, and that they would ask him in an unfriendly tone where he was from. He argues that the rating system is flawed because events like that would happen to him frequently, to the point where his Uber account was deactivated. This further proves our decision on shifting away from a star-rating system since there are other things that are involved with it aside from just feedback. It seems to function as both that and a system that increases racial and societal biases, which is something that would negatively impact both our drivers and passengers. We directly address this by straying away from that and instead using emojis and tags, which won't negatively impact our customers' lives.

[\(28\) The 5-Star Fallacy: How Uber ruined the single-point rating system | LinkedIn](#)

Based on this LinkedIn article, they are saying that people feel pressured to give 5 stars even when the ride was okay. By the end of the ride, it made people make snap decisions, and some people avoided rating because the system felt unclear or stressful. The issue with this entire system is that a driver needs at least an average score of 4.6 to avoid having their account deactivated. However, the issues start arising when people give 4 stars or less because that negatively impacts the drivers rating drastically. It doesn't really mean what people think it means. In the article, Yackowski also suggests that people go back to the traditional rating system of Poor, Fair, Average, Above Average, and Exceptional. Another thing she suggests is that Uber actually clarifies exactly what

they are taking into consideration with their rating system. She also goes on to give more suggestions on how Uber should improve their rating system and what they could do to help their drivers such as a performance platform that assesses various different categories, assessments, rewards for improvements and a few other things. This further proves that there are major flaws in their current rating system that should be taken into consideration. This is exactly why we target those flaws specifically in our redesign by incentivizing drivers and passengers, allowing them to use tags, add media, write detailed reviews, rather than forcing them to quantify their emotions into a number. Instead we have them use an emoji that actually shows how they felt their ride actually went.

[At what rating will Uber deactivate you?](#)

Based on this website, the data shows that a consistently low rating will set off red flags at Uber HQ. You will risk deactivation if your rating goes below 4.6. The issue is that Uber doesn't give a clear minimum rating, it basically varies by location. Most people simply aim to stay above 4.6-4.7 because that's where the usual cutoff typically is. Making the most important range of the rating system just 4.6-5. This basically makes their entire rating system flawed and inefficient because the other numbers don't even matter or count towards this if people are just mainly using that range. However, the problem here is that if someone who is having a bad day and gives a 2 or doesn't rate at all, this negatively impacts the driver because it either lowers their score or simply doesn't change anything at all. There's no way to actually differentiate poor service or a rating that was just given due to emotions or unfair reasoning. Our redesign tackles this through our emoji system, tags, and the additional review box which ultimately gives more context and information about each rating that is given. Changing the entire rating design system was the best way to tackle the biases and unfair system that Uber currently implements. It makes it harder for weird outlier ratings to negatively impact a driver's ratings without any actual explanation.

[Effects of Smiley Face Scales on Visual Processing of Satisfaction Questions in Web Surveys](#)

In this study, researchers used eye-tracking techniques/experiments to assess how people process smiley face scales in comparison to regular text-based scales. What this experiment showed us was that the people that were being tested actually spent less time reading through the questions when they added the smiley face component to them. Even though they spent less time, the results were of the same quality as the text-based results. Essentially, this experiment allowed the researchers to observe that the emojis made the process faster, while still maintaining high accuracy. Another thing that was observed through this experiment was that the smiley face approach also works better for people who have a hard time reading or have a lower comprehension. This works because the faces communicate the meaning/emotion without having the particular need to rely on the text to explain the surveys. This matters a lot for our design decision

because of the flaws in the rating system and the timeframe in which people actually engage in rating post-ride. In any case, the last thing someone wants to do is stop and think about what 2 out of 5 stars or what 3 out of 5 stars actually means, and how they should rate based on that approach. Our emoji design removes that problem entirely. We allow the user to communicate their feelings and emotions through the emoji, which allows the users to actually engage with the rating in a more genuine manner instead of just typing or clicking whatever, just to finish the entire process. This also gives us more reasoning as to why we moved away from the traditional five-star rating system. We didn't move away from it just because of bias or fairness issues, but also because it requires a bit more cognitive work that we don't need the users to experience, while the emojis simply lower the amount of cognitive load they take on.

[Incentives Can Reduce Bias in Online Reviews](#)

What we found in this study from the National Bureau of Economic Research is how incentives can actually affect the quality of reviews. What this paper found was that reviews often include selection bias, due to people with extreme opinions being more motivated to share them in comparison to people with moderate/normal opinions. Ultimately, this results in a hugely biased distribution of reviews. However, what this study showed was that if reviews are incentivized, then it brings the people with moderate/normal views back into the picture. By bringing them back into the picture, it makes the overall distribution more accurate and they actually represent better data. Another key highlight from this article is that it was shown that the incentives didn't cause people to leave dishonest reviews. It was actually shown that there were more people participating and the quality of the reviews stayed the same. The researchers said, "we do not find this type of tradeoff between offering incentives and accuracy of reviews." This quote sums up the reasoning behind why we chose to incentivize reviews and incorporate a discount for people who do leave honest and detailed reviews. What we gathered from this study was that without something like incentives the average user is most likely not going to engage with our review-box in our design. However, if we do include incentives, then we get more participation and a larger quantity of honest and detailed reviews that provide more documentation on the user experience during the ride.

[Reforming Uber Driver Ratings: The Need to Count Unrated Rides](#)

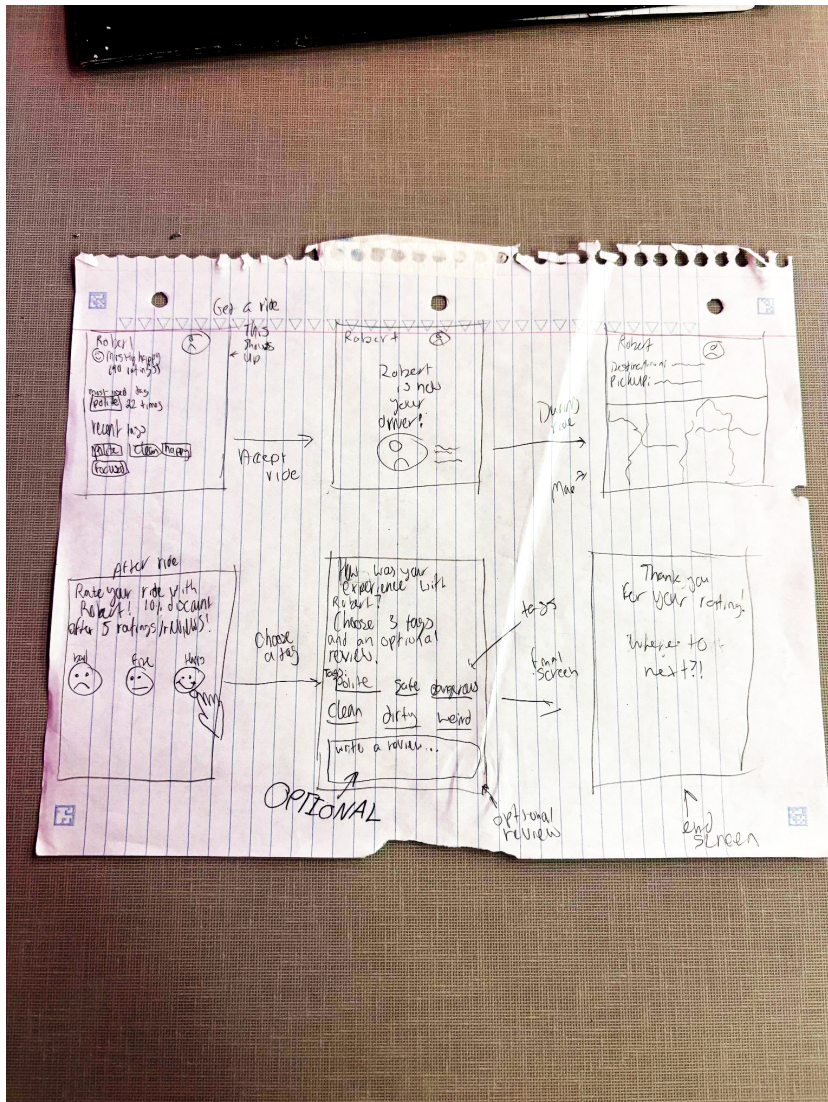
Uber's current rating system is considered inefficient because it does not accurately reflect driver performance and instead spreads bias and incomplete information. According to Yale Insights, rating systems can be misleading since "ratings actually are taking into account things that are unrelated to the quality of service," showing that scores are not a reliable measure of performance. This makes the system inefficient because it evaluates drivers based on subjective or biased factors rather than actual service quality.

Similarly, the article on improving Uber rating fairness explains that ratings are often skewed by user behavior, where negative experiences are more likely to be reported than positive ones, leading to unbalanced results. This reflects inefficiency because the system does not capture the full range of driver performance, instead overrepresenting problems and underrepresenting normal, successful rides. Together, these sources show that Uber's rating system is inefficient because it is biased, incomplete, and not an accurate indicator of true service quality.

Limitations: Time

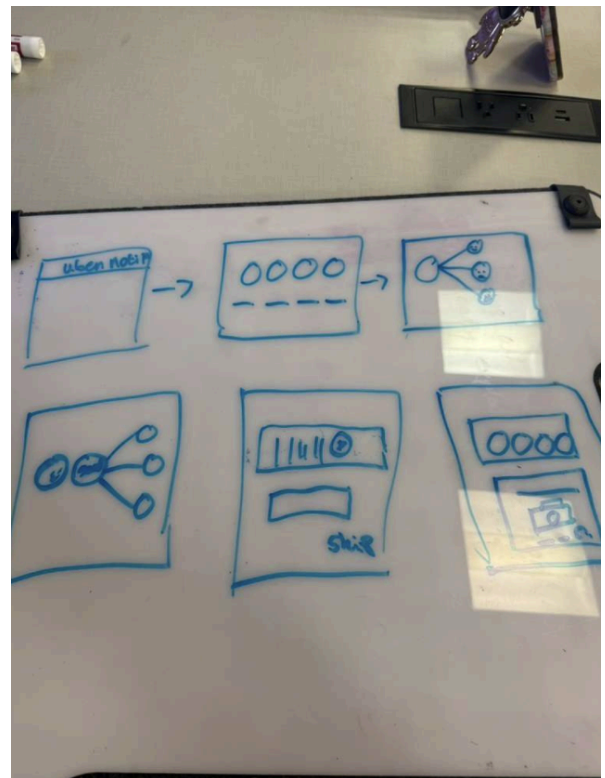
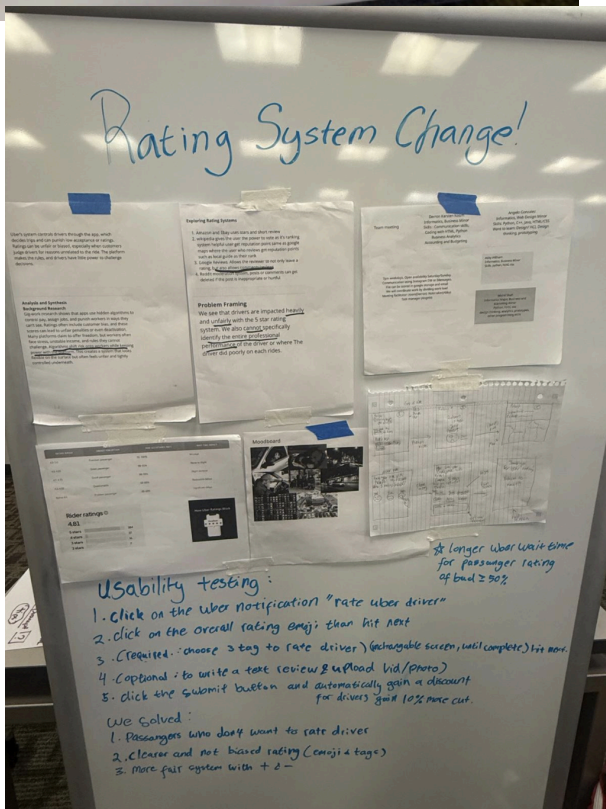
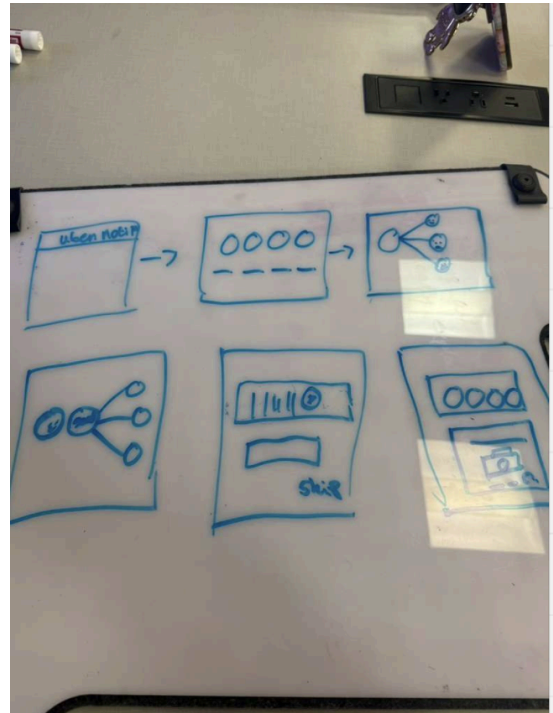
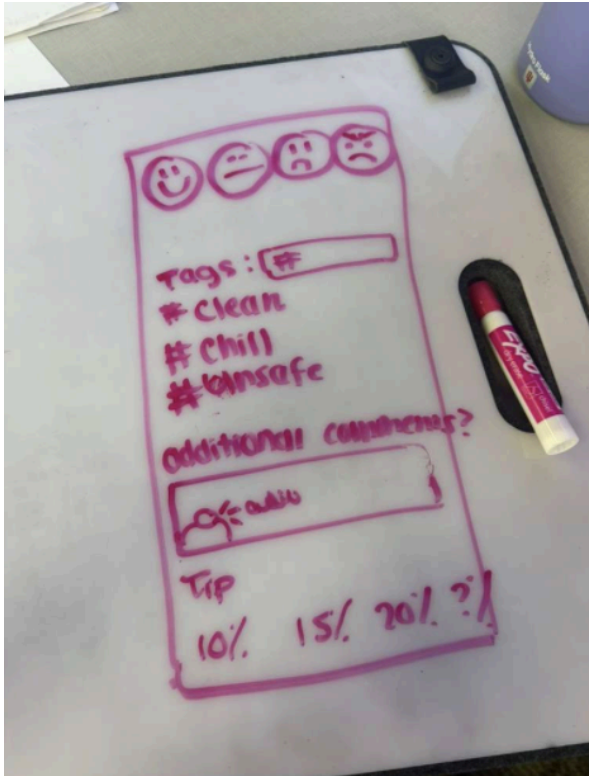
Design images/iteration

Initial Design Sketches



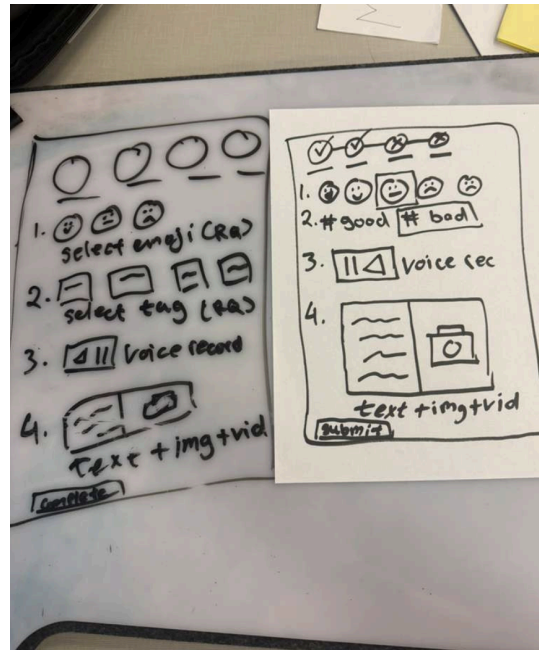
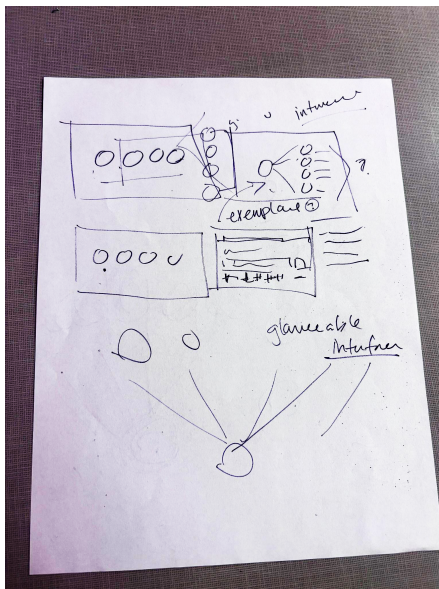
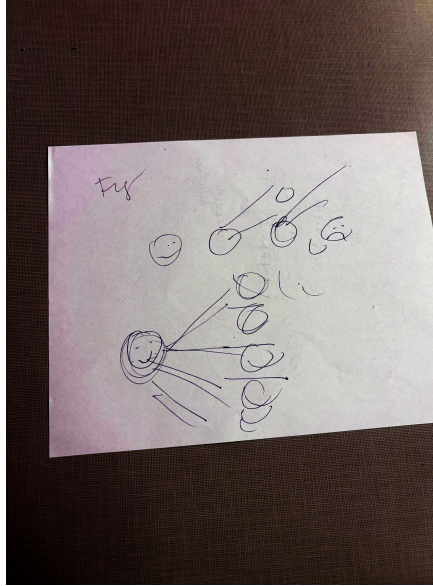
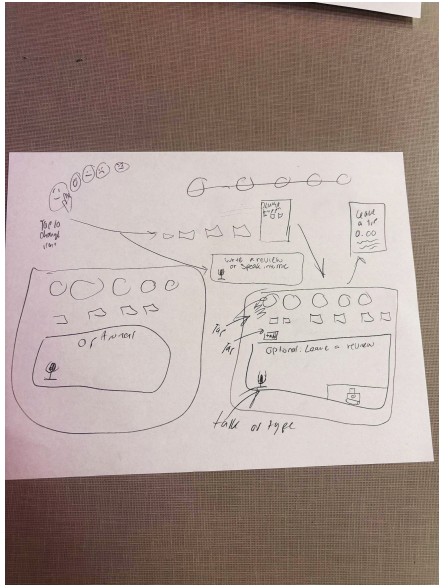
- We chose to go with emojis due to stars being ambiguous, hardly anyone uses the middle stars, its either 4-5 or 1 star, and the users can't replicate emotions using a star system
- Tags were used because the user can explain a bit more about why they gave that rating
- Review box adds more important details if the users feel like providing those
 - Gives us a lot more feedback and data as to why these ratings are being made
- Providing incentives for doing the optional review box
- **Issues:**
 - Too many steps in original flow
 - Too many screens, ultimately leading the user to probably getting off the app

Ideation and Group Critique:

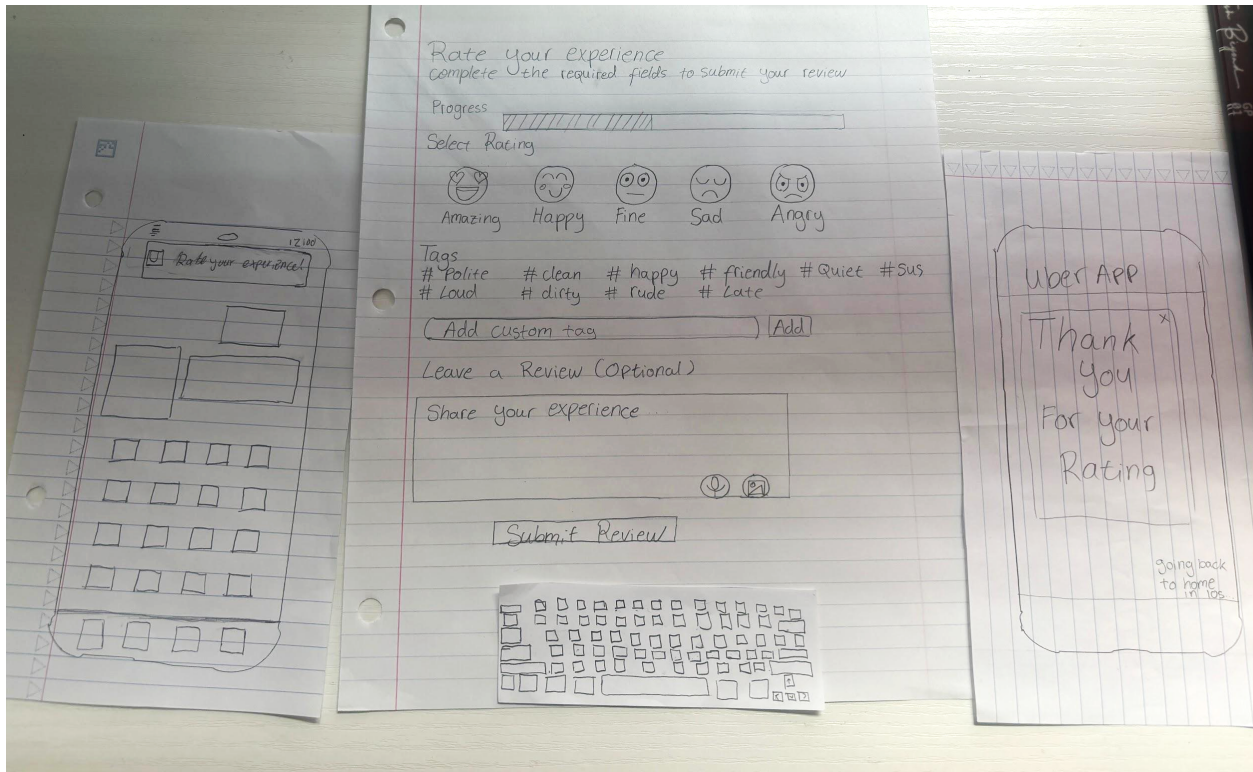


Design Sprints:

- Highlighted possible issues and things we may be able to fix
- Led us to our final design which has less clicks and everything on one page that doesn't scroll



Final Prototype:



- This shows the entire UX. We go from the home screen where we click on our notification, telling us to give a rating!
- User clicks on that, and goes through the whole flow.
 - We added a progress bar that auto-updates as you fill out the sections
 - Everything is on one page, and you don't have to scroll to fill anything out
- **Steps:**
 - Click on the emoji you resonate with the most
 - Add 3 tags or custom tags
 - **Can be finished here:** Click **'Submit Review'**
 - Leads to tip page with a **"Thank You"** message.
 - **If continuing:**
 - Can either fill out the review box with text or use our speech-to-text option for faster on-the-go reviewing.
 - Can also add photos/videos for more evidence as to why you gave a specific rating.
 - Click **'Submit Review'**
 - **Done**
 - That is the entire rating process we came up with. It is time-efficient, accessible, and clear for any user whether they speak English or not. You can be finished with the rating form in less than 30 seconds