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EM757 Group Project #2 User Research Report

Organization: Taiwanese Overseas Students Association (TOSA)

Project Statement

The website aims to enhance engagement with the Taiwanese Overseas Students Association at Boston University by increasing students' willingness to participate in future events and fostering a sense of community. TOSA's mission is to promote Taiwanese culture and help Taiwanese students connect. It will support this mission by raising awareness among students, particularly newcomers to Boston, about TOSA's presence and activities. It will offer a user-friendly, bilingual platform (English and Traditional Chinese), featuring up-to-date event information, cultural content, and networking opportunities to engage both Taiwanese and non-Taiwanese students.

Persona hypothesis

Based on the class lecture, relevant user variables that are significant to the research will be based on the following:

- Demographic variables: age, gender, school, race, major, where he/she is from, college, high school, family's financial situation
- Behavioral variables: activities, attitudes, aptitudes, motivations, skills.

The Taiwanese Overseas Students Association envisions the website to be college students and master's students user base. Therefore, the age range will be around 18 to 25 years old. The user will likely be new to Boston, consisting of male and female students interested in exploring Taiwanese culture and networking with other Taiwanese students. For race, the users

will likely be students with strong Mandarin communication and reading skills and those who grew up in Taiwan. The financial situation for the users' families will likely be from the upper class in Taiwan due to high tuition fees for colleges around the Boston area and living expenses, or families from the middle class require students on financial aid and scholarships to afford college.

For behavioral variables, users will likely be active in club activities, spend at least 1 hour daily on social media, and participate in monthly TOSA events. Users view TOSA's website as a crucial resource for finding information about past events and expect an easy-to-navigate platform that can be accessed from both laptops and cell phones. Users are mostly undergraduates, and fewer graduate students majoring in fields such as Business, Engineering, Communication, or Computer Science. They are motivated to stay connected with the Taiwanese community abroad and find support and resources for navigating life as an overseas student, such as advice on academics, internships, and legal matters. Their skills are experienced in using online event platforms such as Eventbrite and social media for updates and communication.

User research method

Research Procedure

Our team conducted ethnographic research individual interviews with four members of TOSA's from both leadership and general members team on Boston University's campus, primarily in the George Sherman Union study areas on October 24th and 25th. We specifically selected these participants based on our hypothesized user variables:

- Leadership roles representing different aspects of TOSA's operations
- Varied time duration of involvement with the organization

- Different levels of experience with TOSA's current social media presence and activities

- Mix of undergraduate and graduate students

- Diverse academic backgrounds

Each interview lasted approximately 45-55 minutes and followed a semi-structured format. The interviews were conducted in both English and Mandarin Chinese(depending on the participant's preference), to ensure comfortable and natural communication.

Questions for Two Leadership Team Members:

1. Organizational Overview and Goals

   ○ What is TOSA's mission and vision?

   ○ What are the challenges that TOSA faces in reaching potential members?

   ○ How do you measure the success of TOSA's activities and engagement?

   ○ What are your goals for TOSA's digital presence?

2. Communication Strategy

   ○ Currently, how does TOSA communicate with members and/or potential members?

   ○ What are some of the challenges you face with the TOSA's current communication methods?

   ○ How do you manage event promotions and member engagement?

   ○ Have you received any suggestions about TOSA's future digital presence?

3. Website Needs and Vision

   ○ What are the key features that you think would benefit TOSA most in a website?

   ○ How would a website help complement existing social media channels?

- ○ What content would need regular updates?

- ○ How do you envision maintaining the website long-term?

4. Member Engagement

  - ○ What are the most common questions or requests you receive from members?

  - ○ How do you currently handle member registration and event sign-ups?

  - ○ What resources do members frequently seek?

  - ○ Do you think it is necessary to balance the needs of different member groups (undergraduate vs. graduate)? If yes, how do you want to achieve this through the website?

Questions for Two General Members:

1. Discovery and Initial Engagement

  - ○ How did you first know about TOSA?

  - ○ What motivated you to join TOSA?

  - ○ Tell us about your experience when first trying to get involved.

  - ○ How easy was it to find information about TOSA and its activities?

2. Current Experience

  - ○ Are you currently staying updated about TOSA events and activities? If yes, how?

  - ○ What are some of the challenges you face when trying to access TOSA information?

  - ○ How often do you participate in TOSA events?

  - ○ What types of events or activities interest you most?

3. Digital Interaction Preferences

  - ○ How do you use social media to engage with TOSA?

- ○ What devices do you use most to access TOSA information?

- ○ Are there any features that would make you visit a TOSA website regularly?

- ○ How would you like to interact with other members online?

4. Cultural Connection

- ○ How does TOSA help you maintain connection with Taiwanese culture?

- ○ What role does language preference play in your TOSA experience?

- ○ What additional resources or support would you like from TOSA?

- ○ How could TOSA better serve your needs as a member?

We finally asked each of the interviewees to do an interactive website mockup review by:

- ● Participants reviewed examples of other cultural organization websites (TASA, CSSA).

- ● Provided feedback on layout preferences and desired features.

This comprehensive research approach allowed us to gather diverse perspectives and insights from both active members and leadership, helping us understand the full spectrum of user needs and expectations for the TOSA website.

Moderator: Mia Wang, Phoebe Li

Note-taker: Patrick Lu, Zhenguan Zhu

User personas

(ChatGPT used to generate persona photo)

1. Identification of important user variables

Demographic variables:

- Jen Quan Huang

- Age: 18

- Location: Boston, Massachusetts.

- Education level: undergraduate

- Personality background: Familiar with and have a strong inclination towards Taiwanese students or culture.

- Socioeconomic status: Middle class in Taiwan
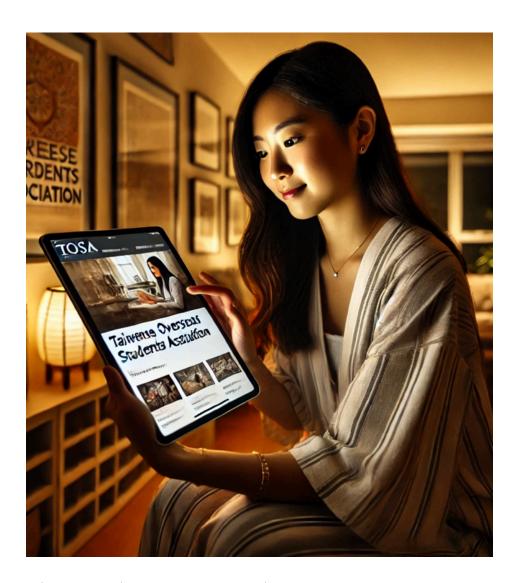
Behavioral variables:

- Activities: Participation in cultural events, clubs, and networking opportunities.

- Attitudes: Interested in exploring both Taiwanese & American (Boston) culture and building a community abroad.

- Aptitudes: Skilled in using online platforms for event registration and social connection (e.g., Eventbrite, Instagram).

- Motivations: Driven by the desire to connect with other Taiwanese students. Find support/resources or have fun for overseas college life.

- Skills: Tech-savvy, and proficient in Mandarin.

2. Personas construction for primarily users

- Jen Quan Huang has just started his freshman year at Boston University. He hopes to be happy and shares his happiness with friends. This is his first time studying abroad from Taiwan, and he has experienced many firsts in Boston, a whole new city compared to Hsinchu. Overwhelmed by the cultural differences and the challenges of making friends on an unfamiliar campus, Huang feels a bit homesick. He decides to Google search for Taiwanese organizations at BU and clicks on the TOSA website. On the website, Huang looks for upcoming events, hoping to find a Taiwanese organization that feels like home. He tracks some past events to ensure he really wants to join. He finds an event,

"Welcome Night for Taiwanese Freshmen," and registers via Eventbrite. The event description mentions that a sophomore or junior will be assigned to him, which excites Huang to attend. He hopes to make new friends and build connections with Taiwanese culture at BU through this event. While browsing the TOSA website, he also notices the TOSA Instagram account. He views and follows it on his iPhone, which allows him to see photos of past events and visualize feelings about the TOSA organization.

Second Demographic Variables

(ChatGPT used to generate persona photo)

- Name: Sarah Chen

- Age: 24

- Location: Boston, Massachusetts (Originally from San Francisco Bay Area)

- Education Level: Second-year Master's student at Boston University's Questrom School of Business

- Personality Background: American-born Taiwanese (ABT), fluent in Mandarin from Chinese school, annual family trips to Taiwan, and speaking Chinese at home

- Socioeconomic Status: Upper-middle-class parents are first-generation immigrants who emphasize maintaining language and cultural ties

Behavioral Variables

- Activities: Active in both Taiwanese cultural organizations and professional networks, regularly participates in Chinese-speaking events

- Attitudes: Comfortable in both Taiwanese and American cultural contexts, values maintaining strong cultural identity

- Aptitudes: Natural at bridging cultural gaps, experienced in Chinese-language professional settings

- Motivations: Seeking to strengthen community ties with other Taiwanese students while building a professional network

- Skills: Fluent in both English and Mandarin (reading, writing, speaking), familiar with Chinese social media platforms

Persona Narrative

- Sarah Chen is a second-year MBA student at Boston University. She grew up in the Bay Area with her Taiwanese parents, who ensured she stayed connected to her culture. She attends Chinese school every weekend, speaks Mandarin at home, and visits her family in Taipei every summer. During her undergraduate years at UC Berkeley, she was very active in the Taiwanese Student Association and served as its vice president. When she started her MBA program, she quickly made friends with other Mandarin-speaking students. One of them told her about TOSA during lunch. That evening, she checked out the TOSA website on her iPad. She felt right at home reading through the Chinese content and liked how the organization kept its Taiwanese identity while welcoming everyone. While browsing the website, she sees that TOSA is planning a Mid-Autumn Festival celebration next month. She also finds information about a "Career in Taiwan" panel where successful Taiwanese-American professionals will share their work experiences. This caught her attention, and she noticed that TOSA needs graduate student volunteers to help plan their professional events. Since she had experience planning cultural events during her undergraduate days, she signed up. She thinks this is a great chance to use her skills while meeting other Taiwanese professionals in Boston. The website also has links to join TOSA's WeChat and LINE groups. She joins both groups right away to stay updated about future events. Through the member profiles on the website, she finds other ABT graduate students who share similar interests in keeping their Taiwanese culture while pursuing their careers.

Web project statements

Problem & Vision Statement

TOSA currently does not have an official website and primarily operates through social media accounts on Instagram. According to one of our interviewees, he joined TOSA as a sophomore after his Taiwanese friend recommended it to him. He had never heard of TOSA before. After browsing the TOSA Instagram account and attending several events, he found it to be a group of wonderful people and regretted not meeting them earlier.

The lack of an official website makes it difficult for Taiwanese students, especially freshmen who are not familiar with BU's organizational resources, to find and join TOSA. This low level of exposure leads to low social presence recognized by potential users is the main problem for TOSA, as it decreases the number of new members and may harm the organization's activity level in the long term. Both Taiwanese students at BU and TOSA organizers hope to establish an official website to enhance TOSA's influence by increasing its exposure. This would provide more potential members with the opportunity to learn about TOSA and actively engage in its events.

Thus, the goals of both users and organizers are aligned at this stage. Users want a better experience, such as knowing about and joining TOSA at first time arriving in Boston, while organizers want to provide a better user experience by connecting with more potential Taiwanese students as soon as possible. Helping TOSA establish an official website consistent with user and organizer goals which further benefit them both.

Persona-based context scenarios

Leo Wang, who is a freshman, recently arrived in Boston from Taipei and is looking for a way through the city's bustling student life. At SPLASH, he learned about TOSA which is an association that brings Taiwanese students together for cultural and community events. He decides to visit the TOSA website on his laptop to learn more about this organization.

Upon landing on the homepage, Leo feels comforted by the familiar Traditional Chinese text alongside English, which makes him feel like home. He immediately clicks on the "ABout Us" page, where he reads about TOSA's mission to foster a supportive Taiwanese community at BU. This appeals to him because he's excited to make friends with other Taiwanese students who share a similar cultural background.

Next, He is curious about upcoming events so he decides to visit the "Events" page and discovers that TOSA is hosting a Mid-Autumn Festival celebration. Then he registers for the event and imagines the taste of mooncakes and the sight of lanterns. Leo also explores TOSA's networking opportunities and finds that the organization hosts regular cultural exchange nights. He found out that everything here makes him feel like home so he decided to join TOSA's Line group to connect with other students and stay updated on future events.

Design requirements

Jen Quan Huang

1. A "New People" section that highlights upcoming events like "Welcome Night for Taiwanese Freshmen" and provides an overview of TOSA's community.

2. Easy event registration integrated with platforms like links of Eventbrite and Instagram for quick access in order to help Huang feel comfortable with TOSA's community and ease of joining events.

3. A social media feed and photo gallery to show past events. The website can build Huang's excitement by visually connecting with TOSA's activities.

Sarah Chen

1. Design professional networking features including a "Career Opportunities" section and information on events like the "Career in Taiwan" panel.

2. Setup links to join Wechat and Line groups, so Sarah can be able to connect with other professionals and stay updated on event details.

3. A volunteer portal where Sarah can easily sign up to help plan events, with special opportunities for graduate students interested in cultural and professional activities.

Note. Proofread by Copilot