

Tools Used



Circle

A private clubhouse
for your people — and the new ones



Premise

UX Research

User Persona

Ideation

Workflow

UI Design

Usability Testing

Challenge

For many young professionals, the transition from college to adult life is marked by a surprising and often unspoken challenge: the difficulty of forming and maintaining close friendships.

Long work hours, remote jobs, frequent relocations, and the natural fading of college friend circles have created a silent epidemic of loneliness, even in bustling cities.

Today's social landscape is a paradox. In a digital world overflowing with tools, there's still no platform truly designed for emotional closeness or shared presence with friends.

Opportunity

This gap in the market presents a significant opportunity to create a new kind of social platform—one designed not for broadcasting, but for building real, lasting bonds.

By focusing on "stickiness" rather than just virality, we can build a product that becomes an indispensable part of our users' lives.

Objective

The core objective of this MVP is to create a space where friends who've drifted apart can stay deeply connected — not just in touch, but truly present in each other's lives. It also aims to help users form new, meaningful friendships based on shared interests, not just shared chats.

Unlike traditional social platforms overloaded with algorithms, followers, and noisy group chats, Circle focuses on doing things together to build genuine connection and belonging.

make digital hangouts feel as effortless and fun?

design a private space for unfiltered friendship?



How Might We..

turn passive scrolling into active participation?

help friends build memories, not just messages?

build new friendships that go beyond small talks.

Why How Might We?

I went with the "How Might We" approach because instead of getting stuck on fixing group chats, it pushed me to explore a wider range of creative solutions.

Most importantly, it kept me focused on the real human feeling I was chasing: that effortless, cozy feeling of just hanging out with your best friends.

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Surveys & Interview Analysis

“I’ve met cool people at events, but we never stay in touch.”

“Most apps are about followers or showing off.”

“I wish there was a reason to interact that didn’t feel forced.”

“It’s so awkward to message someone out of the blue just to hang out”

Target Audience (Age group: 24-35)

Individuals who are experiencing "performative exhaustion" from mainstream social media.

Young professionals who are navigating post-college life.

Those geographically separated from their core group of close friends , making real-world hangouts infrequent.

The primary research conducted via an online survey and interviews, revealed a powerful narrative:

- **The Problem is Universal:** A staggering 91% of relevant respondents find it "harder" or "somewhat harder" to maintain close friendships.
- **The Real Need is Activity:** The response to “what would make a social app more fulfilling?” was not "better chat features." Users explicitly asked for "frequent activities," "games to be played together," and ways to "facilitate shared experiences."
- **Performative Exhaustion is Real:** Users expressed a deep fatigue with the pressure of public social media, using phrases like "feels performative and fake."

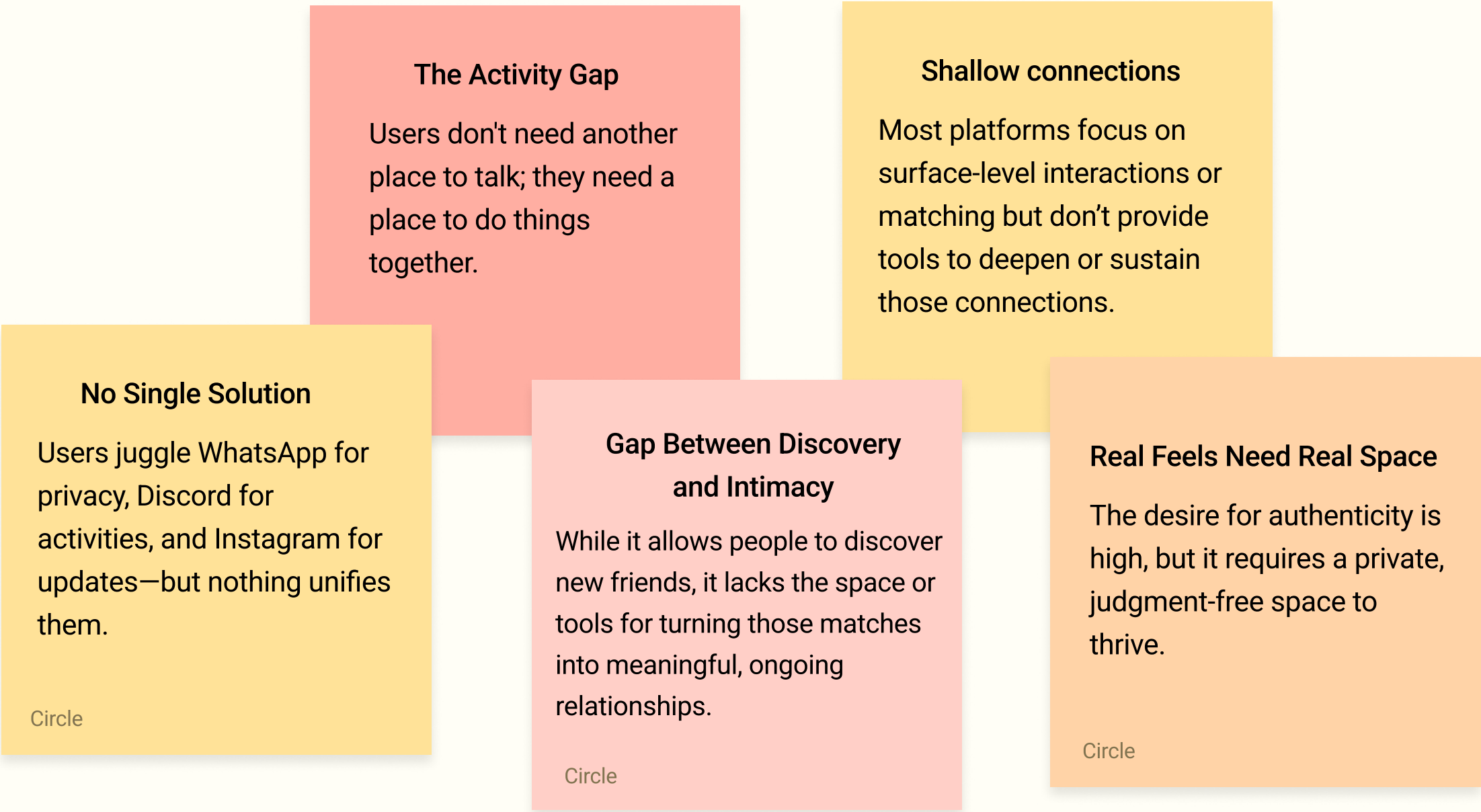


Competitor Analysis & Audit

I audited the key players, analyzing their strengths and weaknesses for our target users. A review of the existing market showed that no single platform provides a holistic solution.

Platform	Pros	Cons
	• Encourages authenticity • Simple daily interaction • Low effort, high emotional return	• Limited to once-a-day posts • Not designed for ongoing conversations • Shallow connections if not already friends
	• Designed for friend groups & communities • Organized spaces (chat, events, calls) • No follower count or likes	• Still niche with low user base • Lacks in-app discovery • Can feel too structured
	• Strong community features • Voice channels for real-time interaction • Customizable roles and spaces	• Can feel overwhelming and cluttered • Not built for close friend circles • High learning curve for casual users
	• Watch parties with synced video/audio • Built-in YouTube/Netflix integration • Feels like hanging out	• Lacks deeper social features • Interaction is tied only to media • Not ideal for group dynamics
	• Focus on friendship matching • Built-in safety features • Easy to use & visually appealing	• Swipe-based model can feel transactional • Conversations often don't last • Doesn't support group or shared activity spaces

Key Takeaways



Our research painted a clear picture of a fragmented landscape. There is a massive, un-served gap in the market for a private, simple, and persistent "clubhouse" that consolidates all the ways real friends hang out. This is the gap that Circle is purpose-built to fill.



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User Persona

To bring our research to life, we created our persona, “anxious achiever Alex”



Demographics

Name: Alex

Age: 27

Occupation: Software Developer

Location: Bengaluru, India

Relationship status: Single

Tech comfort level: High

Quote:

"I miss how easy it was to just hang out back in college. Now, even watching a movie together feels like planning a mission."

Personality

Thoughtful

Nostalgic

Emotionally reserved

Awkward

Loyal

High achieving

About

Alex is a high-performing developer who spends most of his day solving complex problems and working long hours. Social interaction often takes a backseat, but he deeply values the friendships he built in college. He scrolls through social media to unwind but ends up feeling disconnected or drained. He craves genuine moments of connection but lacks the time, tools, and emotional energy to create them consistently.

Goals

- Reconnect with old friends in meaningful ways
- Maintain emotional closeness despite physical distance
- Meet new people organically without pressure
- Find a low-effort way to socialize that feels real

Frustrations

- Group chats feel noisy but shallow — all memes, no moments
- Coordinating online hangouts feels harder than it should be
- Existing platforms feel performative or overwhelming
- Real-time hangouts are hard to align with busy schedules
- Feels emotionally unfulfilled after casual digital interactions

Empathy Map



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Possible Solutions

1

Private space for close friends

Focused on rebuilding closeness between existing friends. A private space—a digital clubhouse—where users could watch movies, play games, and share moments with their closest circle.



Key insight: A product that only supports old connections can't solve the broader loneliness problem.

Drawback

While this addressed the pain point of drifting friendships, it ignored a key insight from our interviews: **many users felt lonely after moving to new cities and had no structure for making new friends.** This approach only supported people who already had strong social connections, creating a massive barrier to adoption and excluding a large part of our user base.

2

All-in-One Activity Hub

A feature-rich social playground where users could do a wide range of activities like:

- Collaborative moodboard
- Personal/ Group journal
- Watch party
- Multiplayer games



Key insight: Users want meaningful interaction, not a toolkit. Too many features dilute emotional clarity.

Drawback

In test it became overwhelming. Many users felt **“too many tools and no clear purpose.”** Some features like journals and moodboards felt like homework rather than fun, while others were underused or lacked context. The result was a product that felt chaotic and unfocused, especially for users already dealing with digital fatigue.

Proposed Solution



Circles & Hubs

After multiple iterations, I arrived at a balanced, dual-layered model that captures the full spectrum of modern friendships

Friendship isn't either/or — it's both.
It's the comfort of your close friends and the curiosity to find new ones.

Circles — A Private Inner World

Circles are small, invite-only spaces for your closest friends or people you've deeply connected with.

Hubs — Gateway to Discovery

Hubs are interest-based public communities that help users bond through shared experiences.

Why This Solution Works Best

- Solves both key needs – staying close to old friends and meeting new ones.
- Supports emotional boundaries – private Circles for depth, public Hubs for discovery.
- Reduces noise – no follower counts or algorithmic feeds, just real interaction.
- Mimics real life – meet in shared spaces, grow into close groups naturally.
- Drives organic growth – discovery fuels connection, which fuels retention.

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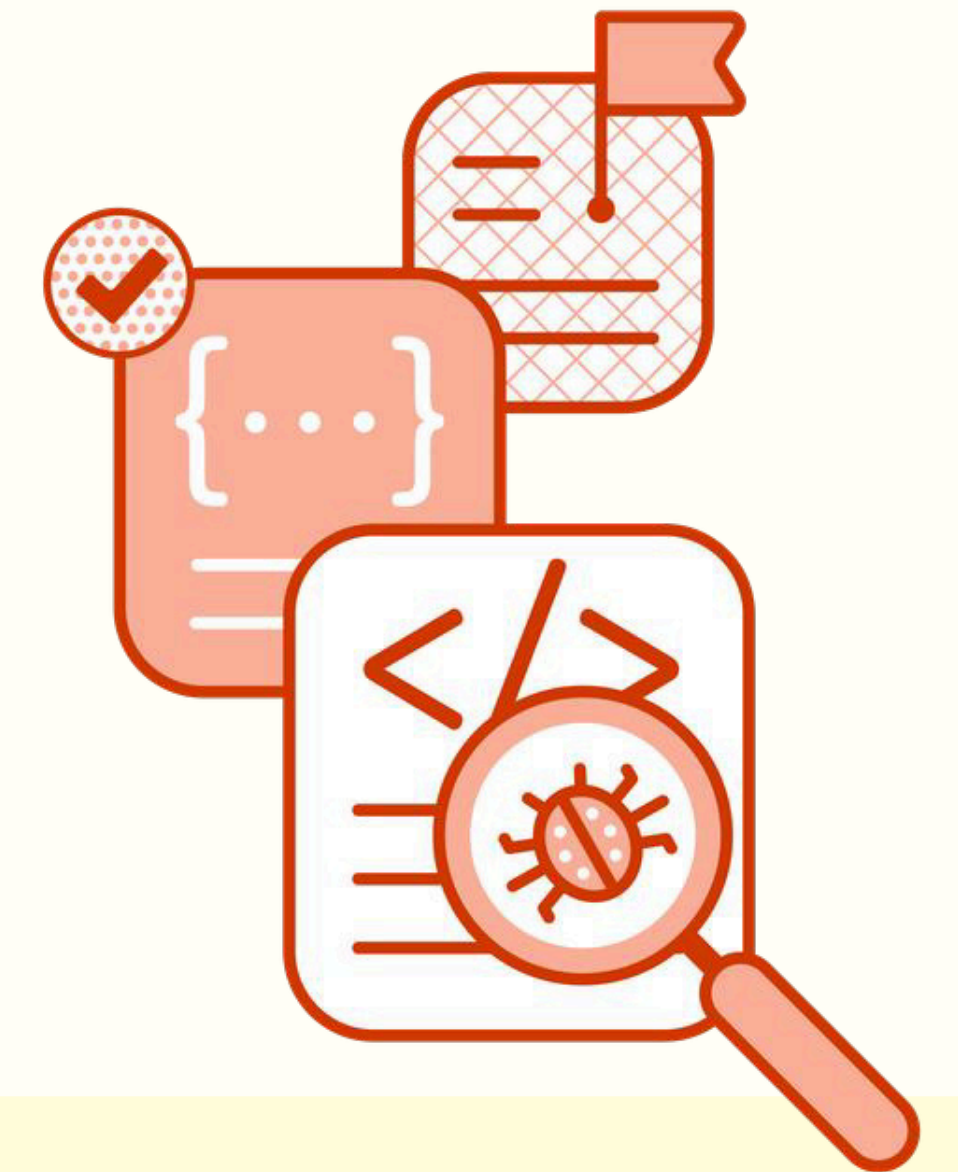
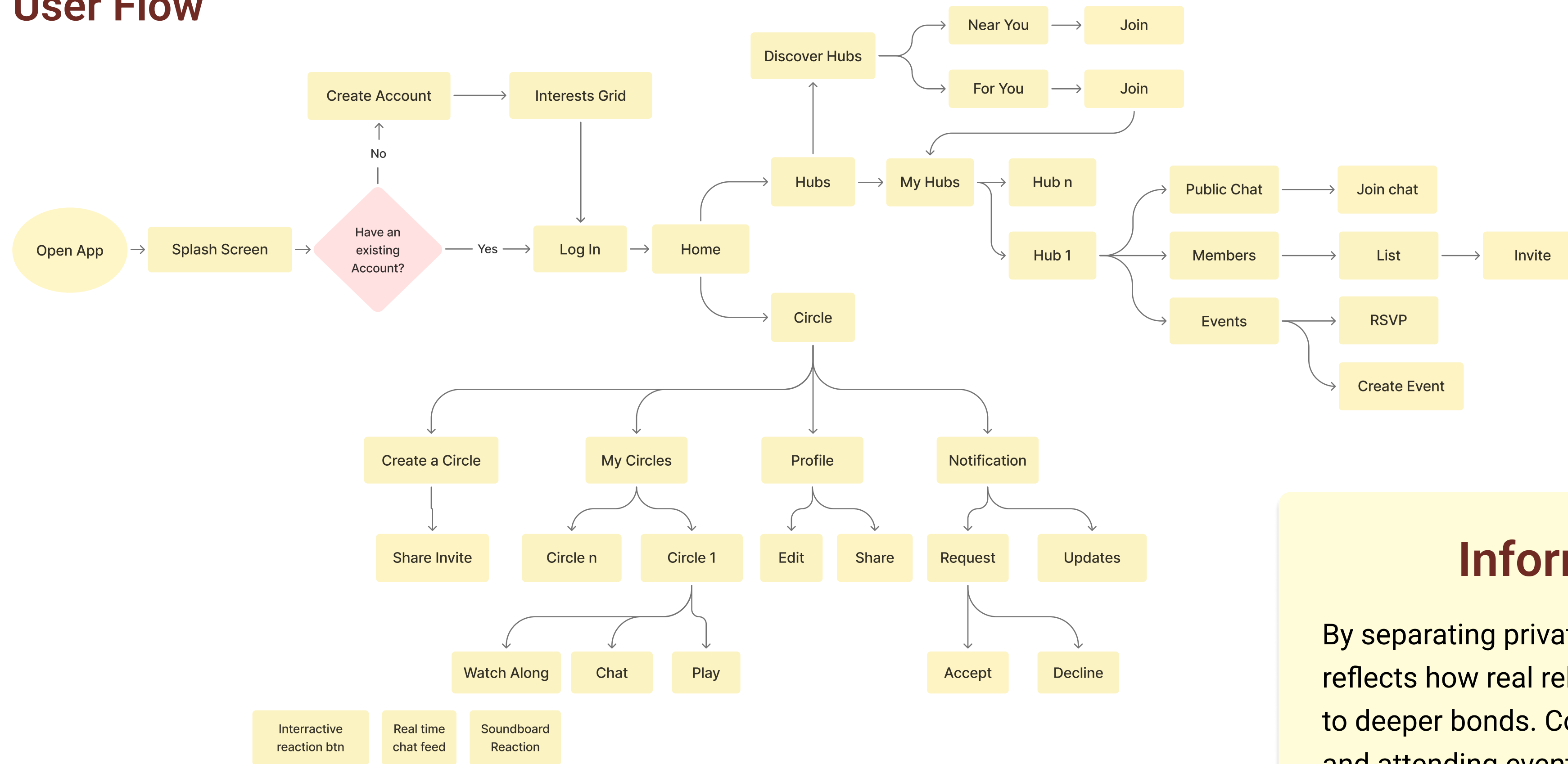
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User Flow



Information Architecture

By separating private Circles from public Hubs, the structure reflects how real relationships grow — from shared interests to deeper bonds. Core actions like chatting, memory-sharing, and attending events are organized by purpose, not algorithmic feed, reducing noise and distraction. This layout makes it easy for users to navigate between deepening existing friendships and discovering new ones, all within a safe, clutter-free environment.



UI Design

STYLE GUIDE

Colour Palette

Typography

ROBOTO

Light	Regular	Medium	Semi Bold	Bold
ABCDEFGHIJK LMNOPQRSTU VWXYZ	ABCDEFGHIJK LMNOPQRSTU VWXYZ	ABCDEFGHIJK LMNOPQRST UVWXYZ	ABCDEFGHIJK LMNOPQRSTU VWXYZ	ABCDEFGHIJK LMNOPQRSTU VWXYZ

Inter

Light	Regular	Medium
ABCDEFGHIJK LMNOPQRSTU VWXYZ	ABCDEFGHIJ KLMNOPQRS TUVWXYZ	ABCDEFGHIJ KLMNOPQRS TUVWXYZ

MARKO ONE

Regular
ABCDEFGHIJK LMNOPQRSTU VWXYZ



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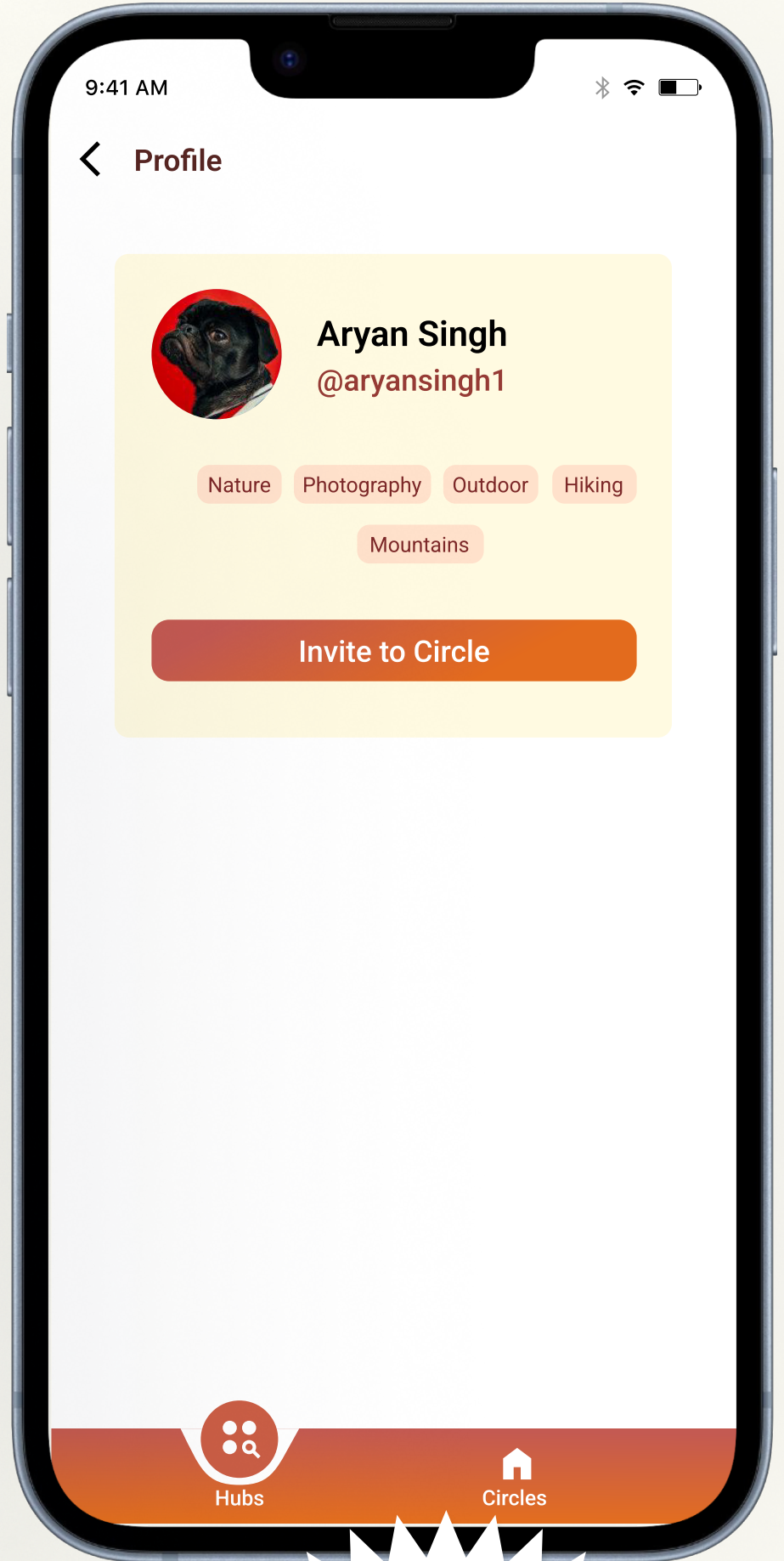
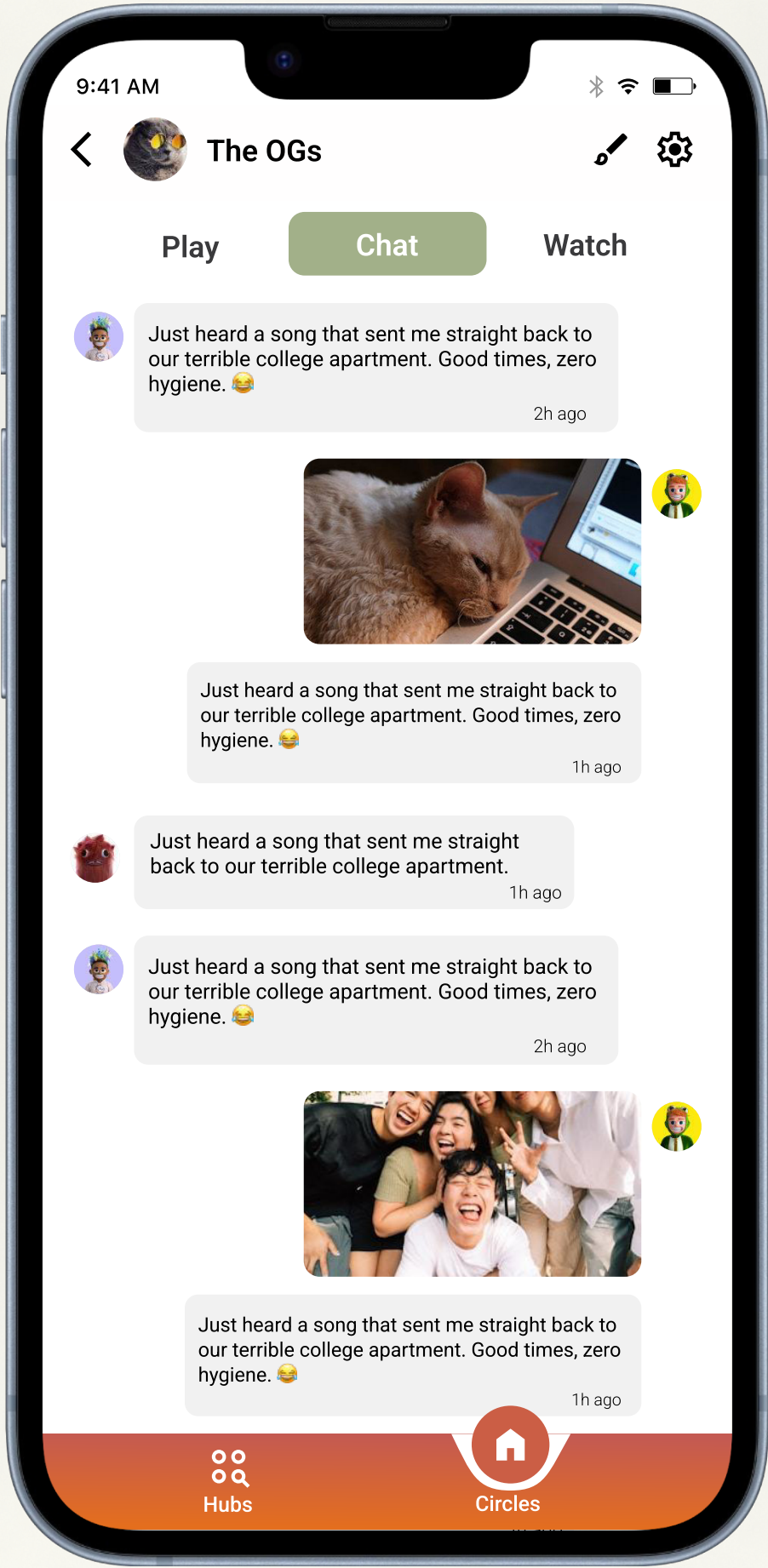
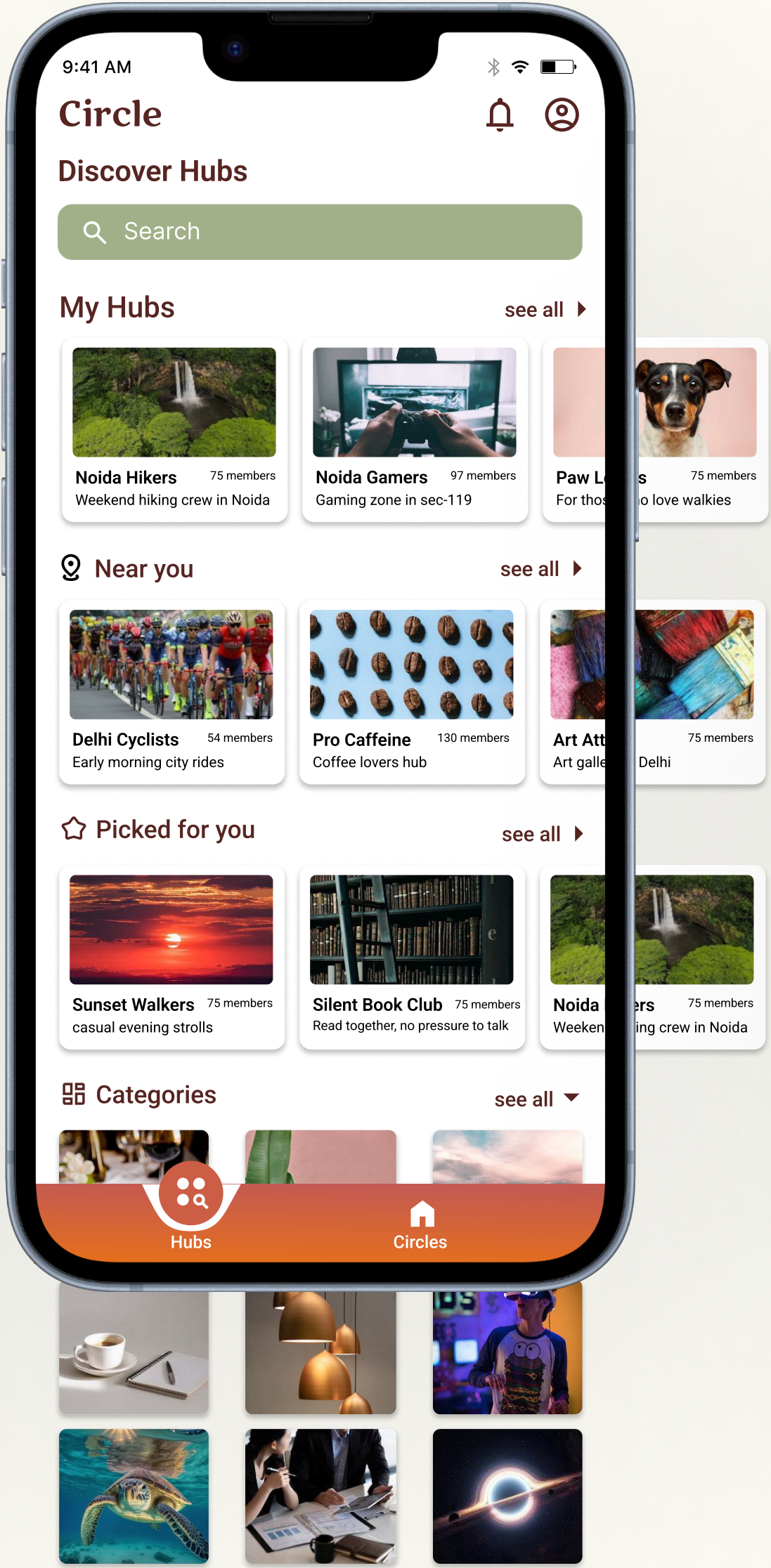
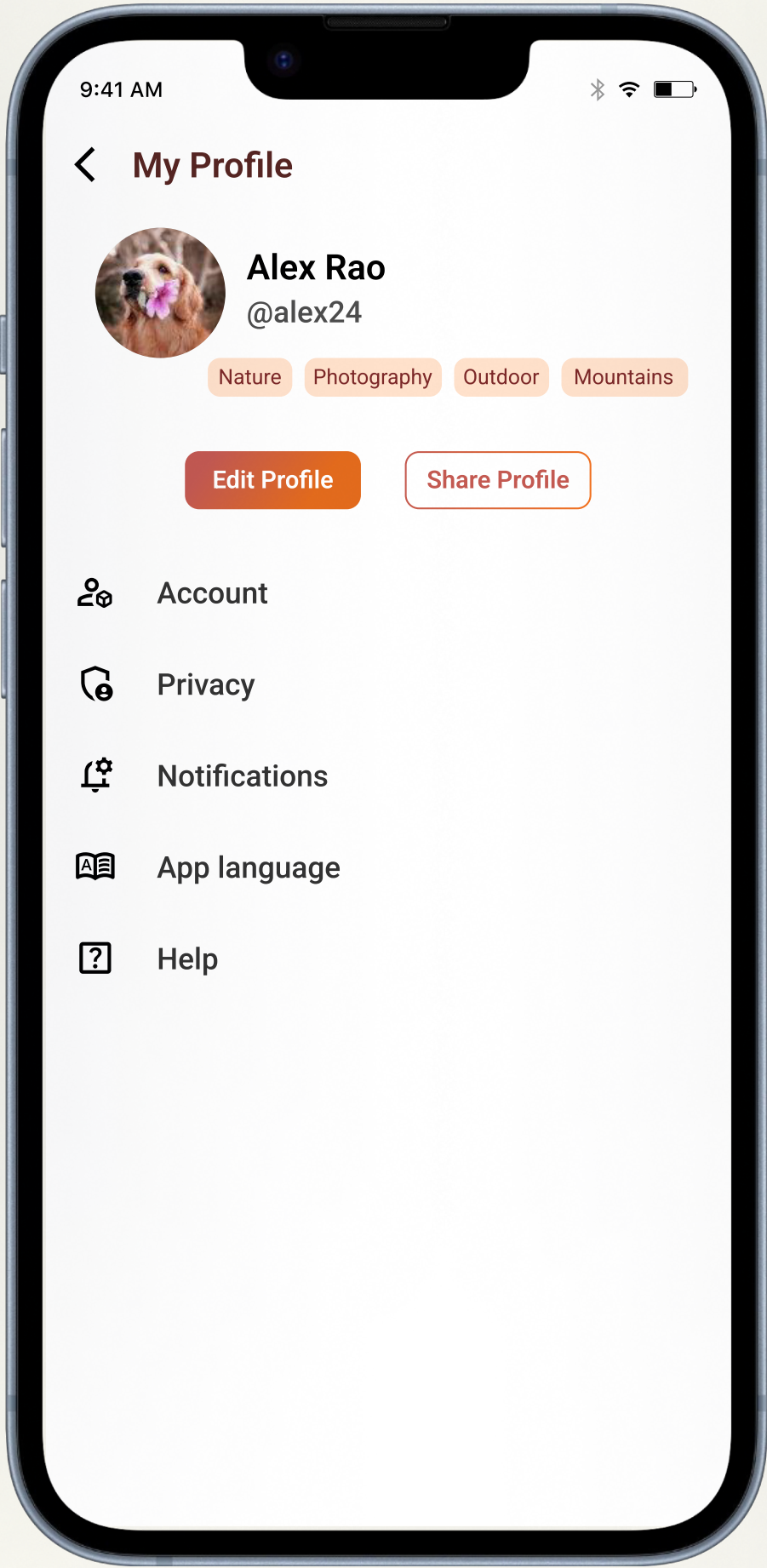
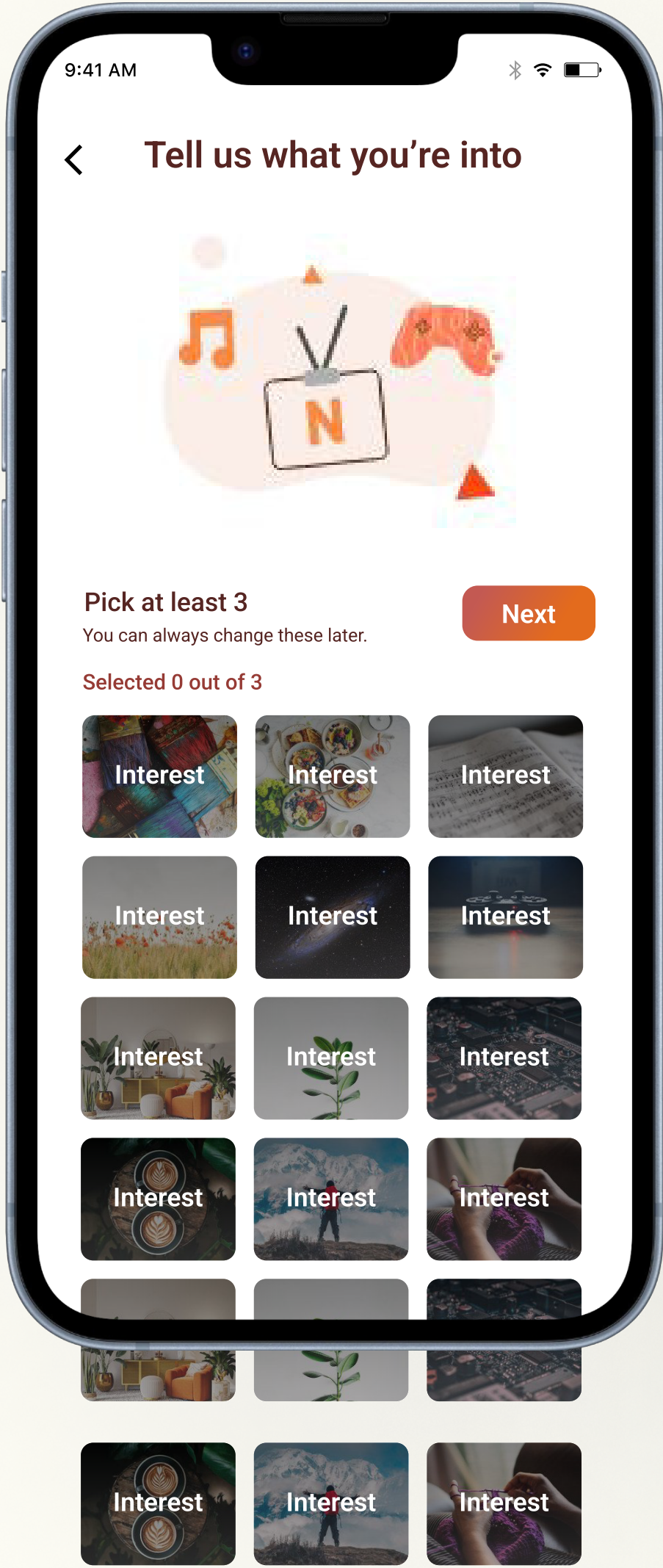
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[See it in action](#)

I conducted a round of moderated remote usability tests with a high-fidelity Figma prototype. The goal was to move beyond my own assumptions and see how real users would navigate the app's core flows. The insights we gained were invaluable, revealing how small details can make a huge difference.

 Key Findings & Design Iterations

Public Profile Anxiety

- Users feared oversharing in Hubs, confusing it with Instagram-style profiles.
- ✓ Added clear copy explaining that the Discovery profile is minimal and separate from private Circles.

“What Now?” void in Hubs

- Users joined Hubs but didn’t know what to do next.
- ✓ Introduced a “Say Hello” chat prompt and highlighted the next event with “See who’s going” to boost engagement.

Surprisingly Popular Soundboard

- Users laughed at the Watch-Along soundboard, then used it enthusiastically.
- ✓ Made the soundboard a core feature with plans for future customization — playful interaction builds comfort.

Circle Invite Felt Too Intense

- Users hesitated to invite new acquaintances directly into Circles.
- ✓ Added an intermediate option: “Start private chat” before “Invite to Circle” to mirror natural trust-building.

COMPONENTS

