



# YOUNG ADULTS' RESPONSE TO NEW BADGING CONCEPTS

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# SUMMARY

We conducted 1:1 in-depth interviews with seven young adult infrequent online community contributors to better understand their perceptions of new badging designs, as well as to gauge their awareness, understanding, and perceived benefits of badge awards.

We found that they value meaningful interactions over earning points and badges. This was not surprising since prior research has shown that this age cohort strongly values authentic, meaningful online interactions and content.



# PROJECT SCOPE

## CLIENT

Social Media Company A (SMCA)

## TIMEFRAME

6 weeks

## MY ROLE

Lead UX Researcher

## TEAM

Product Manager, Product Designers

## METHODS

Literature review, In-depth interview,  
Concept test

## TOOLS

Zoom, Excel



# PROJECT OVERVIEW

## BUSINESS OBJECTIVE

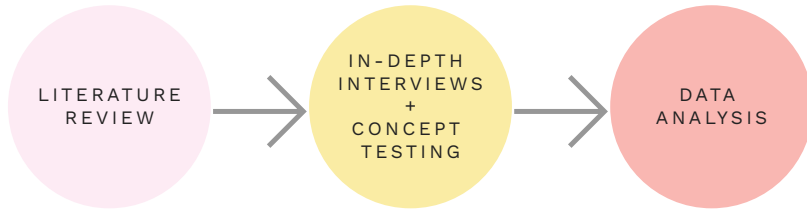
Increased user engagement in SMCA's online communities has potential for the highest return-on-investment in product improvements. Two segments with greatest potential for growth are young adults and infrequent group participants. Therefore, it is important to understand what types of incentives, if any, would motivate these cohorts to participate more often in their online communities.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

We sought to understand young adult and infrequent online community participants' perceptions of new reward badging designs. We also wanted to gauge their awareness of, understanding, and perceived benefits of badges in general. And, we hoped to gain an understanding of whether this particular type of incentive would motivate these cohorts to participate more often in their online communities.



# METHODOLOGY



# STUDY TIMELINE

## WEEK ONE

Kick-off Meeting

## WEEK TWO

Literature  
Review

## WEEK THREE

Develop Discussion  
Guide + Screener

Work with Designer  
to develop concept  
mocks

## WEEK FOUR

Recruit  
Participants

## WEEK FIVE

Interview  
Participants

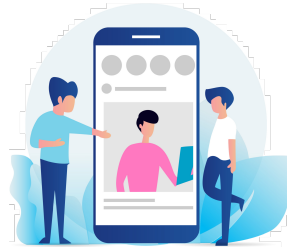
## WEEK SIX

Analyze Data  
  
Write Final  
Report



# FINDINGS

- While participants did not mind the overall badge and point system, they were not motivated by badges and points to participate more in SMCA's online communities.
- Participants had negative reactions to the gamified feeling of the badges and points, stating that it does not align with why they value SMCA's online communities.
- Many participants were concerned that “Top Contributor” would negatively impact the online community because of its perceived focus on content quantity over quality.
- Participants wanted meaningful, value-based badges rather than badges based on quantity of engagement.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Emphasize value-based badges, such as ones focused on others' interactions with member posts, or members supporting each another.
- Allow admins to create/customize badges that make the most sense in their specific online community.
- Provide more clarity about "Top Contributor," emphasizing the quality-based metrics alongside the quantity metrics.
- Conduct additional research to better understand member perceptions of other members' badges and how that may influence their online community interactions.
- Customize messaging for this cohort to be collaborative, not gamified, focusing on contributing to the community rather than "leveling up."



# IMPACT

My recommendations were used to inform product changes, which resulted in a 2.6% increase in young adult original online community content contribution.



# REFLECTIONS

- The designs in this research study were not personalized, and participant reactions and experiences might have been different for personalized content/posts.
- Participants did not interact with the prototype on their own device. Participants were shown the designs with the moderator navigating on their behalf.
- If I had more time and resources, I would have worked with design and engineering to create designs with personalized content that participants could access via their smartphones.
- The insights from this research study are qualitative, so can only offer insights into the “how and why” behind participants’ feedback, and is not intended to size opinions and opportunities.
- The participants in this research study were recruited via SMCA’s internal recruiting team, which has a very low response and high no-show rate. If I could do the study again, I would use an outside recruiting source.

