Funl

Introduction

Funl is a mobile/web-based application that allows users to ask and answer questions to the population, while viewing results through demographic filters such as: race, sex, gender, religion, age, etc. Funl emphasizes both diverging and converging opinions to bring to surface empathetic viewpoints within demographics we are foreign to. Now more than ever, polling predictions are off on their calculations and are misleading the popular vote from elections across the board. The people in this world are not as predictable as we once thought they were. The 2016 US presidential election has proven this and has called the attention for widening our understandings of the people we think we know. In attempt to create a better understanding of each other as well as our own thoughts, Funl emphasizes the importance of preference-based information straight from the source, you. Funl leverages information in a way that makes data visualization more accessible, understanding, and enjoyable to explore on a personal and public level. The world is filled with unique and curious individuals. The ability to understand one's thoughts and feelings is a step forward in creating a well diverse mind. Conversations become more meaningful, ideas become more innovative, and actions become more thoughtful. Funl offers a platform where individuals can become well-rounded in topics as light-hearted as, what are the best toppings on a pizza? Or as serious as, what are your greatest political priorities? To embrace unique viewpoints around the world, Funl strives to create empathy through data visualization in a polling platform.

The need for empathy

The 2016 Presidential campaign was one of the biggest low points in America I have witnessed throughout my lifetime. With the country in almost a 50/50 split in viewpoints, I have never seen so much arguing, hatred, and demonizing of others. However, America was put in a tough situation. With media outlets skewing perceptions of both primary candidates, it was difficult to formulate accurate views of any candidate. This is what I strive to fix within my creative practices. To provide a platform where the information comes straight from the people and not third party sources. A platform that allows one to not only express what they strongly believe in, but to stop and understand what others are expressing as well.

The majority of the world was caught by surprise after the 2016 Presidential election. With the popular-vote candidate not winning, the country was confused, scared, nervous, and distraught. The election was an example of how we don't know our country as well as we thought. Despite what is morally "right" or "wrong", people will always have a shifted opinion or belief from you. In Lee Grayson's article, *Things That Affect a Person's Beliefs*, he discusses how individuals formulate beliefs and opinions through influences such as: Cultural/Home, Education/Formal Training, and Learning Experiences[1]. There are many influences that affect a viewpoint. If people could empathize more efficiently it would drive more informed

[1] Grayson, Lee. "Things That Affect a Person's Beliefs." Synonym. August 29, 2013. Accessed April 18, 2017. http://classroom.synonym.com/things-affect-persons-beliefs-5484.html.

thoughts, conversations, and ultimately solutions. To empathize is a means of understanding and not only understanding where something comes from, but why. This becomes a way to diversify the way people look at life and the way people communicate with others.

One may criticize that a digital platform like Funl cannot create empathy. Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are doing the very same thing right now. Funl is not meant to create empathy for you. It is to help provide new insights that lead to empathetic viewpoints and thinking by exposing an individual to a diverse set of opinions. Furthermore, Funl is more than a platform to express and view results from individuals around the world. It becomes a platform where an individual can create personal connections through the data visualization of results. The filtration feature of the platform allows for one to do this. The filters help one to explore new data sets and formulate new understandings of results to questions and the people answering them.

Filters

One of the most unique aspects about FUNL is the opportunity to filter results through specific demographic data. Furthermore, a user can compare multiple filter sets to each other allowing for optimal data viewing angles. Social media outlets with polling systems do not have a feature like this. What the filters do is more than isolate the results, however they provide a platform that helps one analyze and formulate patterns within the data leading to empathic connections. Data can be

hard to digest, especially when there is a lot of it. The filters help organize this data and allow one to scope in on it and understand it on a personal level. This helps Funl create a platform that connects with the user.

As a designer, a big conflict I must consider is making filters fun and unique, but also meaningful. Looking back at Grayson's article, *Things That Affect a Person's Beliefs*, I looked at the influences that sculpt a person's belief. Grayson explains how culture and home are one influence that affects someone's belief[2]. With this category I can pull filters that derive from this influence such as: religion, number of siblings, single parent household, hometown, etc. By doing this it creates an opportunity for the user to create connections from results to filters and then eventually leads to data. Funl becomes the Google analytics of questions through a more accessible platform.

Methodology

Before Funl came into the picture, I was pursuing a previous mobile app I was working on called Empower. As I began to assess what had to be done for this project it became clear me to that I was struggling. I needed to hire a developer to create my app. Furthermore; I needed a lot of money to hire this developer. On top of that there was a lot of ambiguity on whether or not I would be able to hire the right developer and if they would keep their promises on deadlines. I was spending more time figuring out logistics than working on the project itself. I am a designer who wanted to design. Empower is a project that requires many moving parts that I

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[1] Grayson, Lee. "Things That Affect a Person's Beliefs."

did not have. This project was a passion of mine, but not appropriate for the constraints of IP. I started to look at other possibilities.

Funl is a collaborative effort that I became apart of summer of 2016. At this point consisting of two other students, Connor Borrego and Matt Pierce, under the Center for Entrepreneurship and College of Engineering. However, Funl was left on the back burner as soon as school started. After my realization of the ambitious leap it would take to pull off Empower, It became clear to me that this was the perfect opportunity to pursue Funl as a collaborative effort.

Research

As a designer my process differs depending on the circumstances, however it will always start with research. The research starts with what I know, what I want to know, and constantly asking questions throughout the process to help me better understand what I need to know. I knew Funl was going to be a digital platform, but I needed to figure out if this platform was best to exist on a mobile or desktop. I began asking myself questions like, what kind of interactions do I want people to have with Funl? What kind of experience should they have? What is going to attract a user to come back and use Funl again and again? Addressing these questions and researching pros and cons to mobile vs. desktop platforms, I was able to understand Funl a little better and know that I wanted to create a mobile platform for it first. This decision was based on many factors such as that mobile is the most accessible digital platform. The majority of Internet usage comes from mobile and this number

is marginally increasing every year. Best practices are to design responsively across multiple platforms and the common saying in the digital marketing world is, "design for mobile first". During this process I also explored who the target audience for this app would be. The uses for Funl are meant for anyone and everyone to contribute to; therefore I did not want to limit this app to one specific audience. However, in order to get people on the in the beginning we are planning to address Millenials as that is the most accessible audience to us.

After establishing what type of audience was most appropriate for the app, I needed to solidify the core and secondary features of Funl. Planning out core and secondary features helps me shape main touch points that users will interact with. Some of the core features are: Personal Feed, Asking a Question, Answering a Question, Viewing Results, and Setting Filters. These features will help prioritize a direction in design as far as visual and experiential hierarchy within the user experience.

The next step in my process was to create user flows based off of the core features. User flows are the process in creating the path a user follows through an interface to complete a task (also referred to as user journey). This process helps me visualize how users will interact with touch points throughout the platform. Furthermore, I realized throughout this process that this platform was most suitable for permanent bottom navigation. This type of navigation can be found in popular social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Having a bottom navigation allows a user to quickly access main touch points with minimal interactions.

Wireframing

Wireframing is the process of creating the skeletal framework of interfaces to help better understand the basic component layout of each interface. This process finalizes what will go on each interface, however this does not mean finalizing the visual aesthetics. Wireframes are strictly to understand where components such as buttons, text fields, text, etc. are in relation to the user flows. These two combine together to help me understand how the user interacts with the platform in means of usability, custom features, and how easily they are able to navigate the platform between these functions.

Branding

Throughout these processes I was simultaneously working on branding and identity for Funl. This consisted of creating a logo, color scheme, type hierarchy, and other branding assets. This process was necessary to develop at the same time I was undergoing other design methods because they work hand-in hand. I needed to understand who the platform was for and the experience a user has within the platform in order to understand what kind of branding to design. On the other hand, I needed to establish a face to the platform before fully creating interfaces so that I can follow a consistent design.

Digital Renderings

This stage is where I take my wireframes and start to finalize them digitally. In short, I focus on how the app visually looks within this process. Throughout the digital renderings I'm keeping in mind my target audience, content, and goals of usability. Keeping these things in mind will help me understand what sort of design, look, and feel I should be going for. Furthermore, keeping in mind what actions, buttons, and content are more important than others so that I can design them appropriately within the screens hierarchy in terms of color, texture, size, and placement.

Feedback

The December review was a crucial moment for Funl. After hearing the feedback and outside points of views of my project I began to digest the main takeaways. I needed to enhance the data visualization aspect of Funl. The platform naturally wants to be a data visualization tool with the highlighted filter feature. So I began to further explore how I could improve the data visualization in a way where the user can have an intuitive, yet informative experience. This resulted in exploring how one would compare filtered results with another set of filters, along with the UX of these interactions within the feature.

Another issue that was addressed during my review was the filter feature. The downfall with the filters is that there needs to be a filter that includes everyone or at least the vast majority) so that people do not feel excluded. One specific example

that was an issue within the filters was choosing a gender. There are more than 60 identifiable genders; this is a current design issue that the world is dealing with. So I started to ask questions again like, how can I design the filters features that allows an option for everyone, does not clutter the interface, and is intuitive and efficient at the same time. After further exploration I started to wireframe ideas that lead to sub categories and drop downs. My solution is basically to group filters into main categories and have sub categories with more specified items within them. A user could also search for the exact item within a category if they already know what they are looking for. A user also has the ability to create a new item within a filter if there is one they do not see. Lastly, a user can choose from previous filters chosen for quick access. After finalizing design revisions I began to create assets to show how the platform should be used.

Animating

I wanted to create an animation of the apps core features to demonstrate to people how the app works and how one interacts with it. While, also showing them the unique features the apps holds in order to get their interest and show them why the app was created. The animating process is long and tedious. Some things I need to consider when animating are the transitions and motion of the interfaces as one is interacting with it. Some questions I'm asking during this process are how does one screen transition to another? How fast are these transitions happening? What are the clicked states of buttons? I also am using call outs throughout the animation to point out specific features to the viewer. The animation is an essential part to my

gallery installation. If someone cannot understand the motives and uses for the

platform, it is useless in itself.

Creative Work
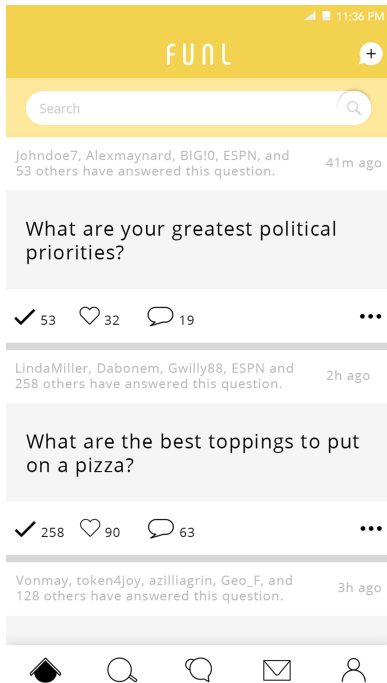
This is the personal feed section of Funl. It acts as the "home". Here you will find a feed of questions that people you follow have recently answered or are currently trending. As you can see you can find a variety of questions from both silly to thought provoking. The diverse set of questions allows the app to be suitable for a wider audience.
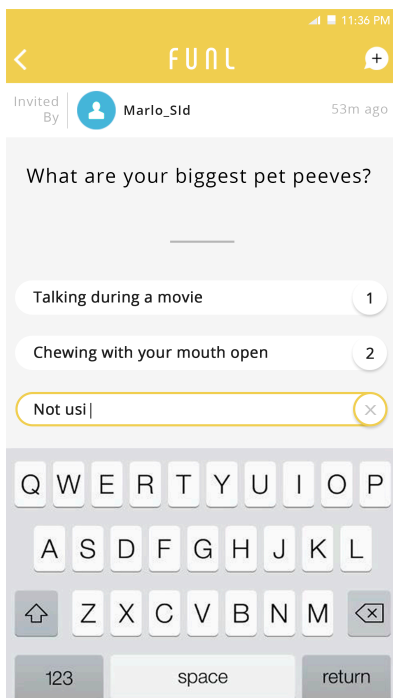
Answers are prompted with no visual indication of what the results are or what people have previously answered for the specified question. This is to create a legitimate experience when answering with no outside influencers.
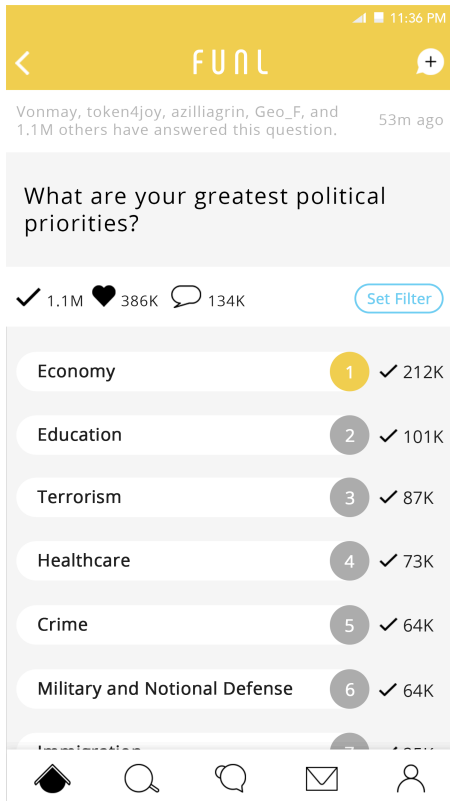
Results are shown from most common answer to least common. The results are defaulted with no filter. Within this display you can view the answers along with the number of votes for each answer.


Filters are organized within categories. In order to fully include each choice within each filter, dropdown lists are provided for a specific filter choosing experience.

A user may also choose from recent filters chosen for quick access.
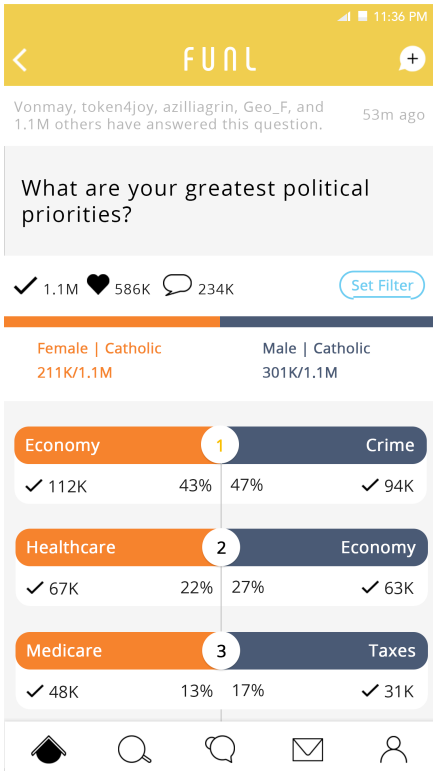
Compare multiple filters to each other to find patterns and insights within the specific groups. Colors are assigned to each filter for easy recognition of what data belongs to which filter. Within this view, results are shown head to head to see how each filter set ranked their most common answers. From here you can also identify the percentage of voters within the filter set who voted on the specific answer along with the total number of votes for the particular answer.

Fixed above the results is the current filters you have set. Within this information shows how many total voters who answered this question reside in this filter.
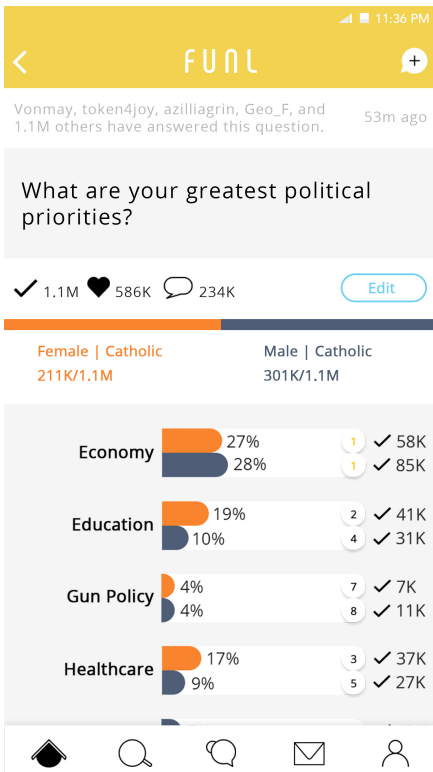
Here you can view a different angle of the results with the same data. In this view filter sets are compared in relation to each answer. So one may analyze the commonalities within specific answers they may be particularly interested in. Furthermore, it also compares how each filter set ranked the particular answer.

Conclusion

Funl is a digital platform that offers more than the ability to answer and ask questions. Funl's filter and comparison features allow for the platform to become a data visualization tool. To view isolated results in comparison to a wider context gives the user an opportunity to make their own inferences at their own pace. Funl allows users to stop wondering and start asking, while realizing answers to questions they asked themselves. To compare and analyze your answers to people around the world and understand that data in a way you've never visualized is the core of the platform. Funl reinvents the way we ask, answer, and view other opinions in light of creating a sense of digital empathy. By understanding other's opinions allows one to be more mindful within the thought process. A mind that is exposed is a diverse mind. Funl attempts to reveal and share opinions from people around the world in attempt to create diverse thinking within our everyday lives.

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