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KUALA LUMPUR



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	03
2. IDEA	03
3. IDEA DEVELOPMENT	05
4. PROJECT MANAGEMENT	12
5. FUTURE PLANS	13
6. PROTOTYPES	14
7. REFERENCES	15

1.0 INTRODUCTION

COVID19 pandemic did not have a good economic impact especially for small SME and retail industry. It is also expected that the pandemic has a long-term impact on businesses and retailers even after the full recovery in the post-pandemic era (Bartik, 2021).

Reopening businesses and retail stores requires some preparation such as practising social distancing, reevaluation of the cleaning process and working from home (Kappel, 2021) which might be cost-effective or might not be working well for the retail industry, however it would not guarantee 100% safety for them and their consumers.

Small businesses have turned to technology and digital platforms for surviving the pandemic, but this might not be enough for them as turning into digital in the current solution, would not bring the complete shopping experience to consumers nor retailing experience for business owners (Kelly, 2020). The matters such as the face to face communications, human interactions and the joy of physical shopping, could make physical shopping & retailing experience better than the digital one.

Considering the above mentioned points regarding the problems of keeping retail industry to be up & running during & after pandemic era and keeping everyone safe, a digital solution would help the situation if it provides a platform that covers the gaps and issues especially at the retail end and brings the real-life retailing & shopping experiences for the users.

2.0 IDEA

The idea to find a solution for the current problem, is to provide a platform that can help retail industry to keep their business running during the lockdown times and in the recovery phase once the lockdown is lifted. The idea includes some features that could bring a close-to-real-life experience of retailing and shopping for business owners and consumers while keeping them safe.

I, together with my groupmate, came up with three ideas regarding this issue and concluded them into the idea of making a fully digital retail shop simulator with real-life transactions. This idea also features a semi-robotic shipping method for safe, swift and eco-friendly delivery using the new delivery drones.

This idea is technically combining the idea of humanless grocery shop solution made recently by Amazon (Day, 2021) where the shops are partially automated, with customers being able to buy products by using a self-checkout station and without being checked out by a human cashier, together with a gaming system that is generally designed and developed to closely simulate real-world activities such as retailing or shopping experience - similar to The Sims video-game made by EA Games (Waite, 2020).

This idea will allow retailers to set up their shops in a virtual world to represent their real-world shop in a digital format in order to simulate the shopping experience similar to a role-playing video game but with real-life interactions and transactions.

The simulated shop which is set up by a business owner, is basically connected to a physical shop's back-end database to synchronize the stock and to perform the transactions from consumers and the shop operators.

To enter the virtual shop, consumers are required to download the shop app or go to the web version of the shop. They either can create their avatar or enter anonymously to the shop - creating an avatar will help them to have a better shopping experience.

Like in the real world, customers can interact with shop assistants and even with other customers in the shop if they're interested. They will be able to zoom in to the items and see a real life 3d-scanned image of that item. Customers will be also able to try the product on the avatar/virtual character that they created on the app - For instance, by creating the virtual characters' physical features similar to the user, they will be able to know whether the shoes they are looking to purchase can fit their feet (in a footwear retail).

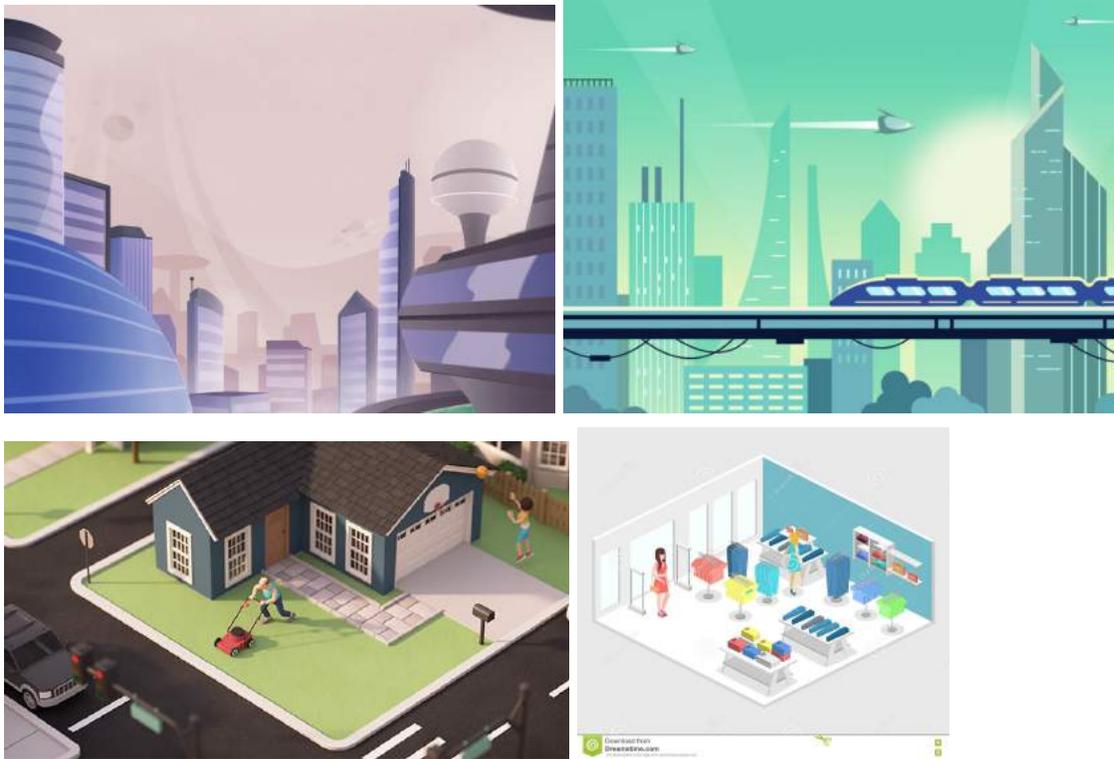
At the check out, consumers are required to pay for their purchases using real money or the e-wallet. The app also could have some gamification features to improve the shopping and selling performance on both sides of the business (Scott, T) - For instance, giving extra points to consumers for each purchase where consumers could redeem their points for some free items.

In the end, the consumer will also get the option to choose their collection/delivery methods. They can choose a physical collection if they would like to do so. They can also ask for surface or drone shipping. The shipping can be also tracked in the app using services such as Google Maps.

3.0 IDEA DEVELOPMENT

After our discussion with our lecturer regarding the idea approval, I have collected a few art style to choose our art style and direction which need to be modern, youth and gaming:

3.1 Art Style & Direction

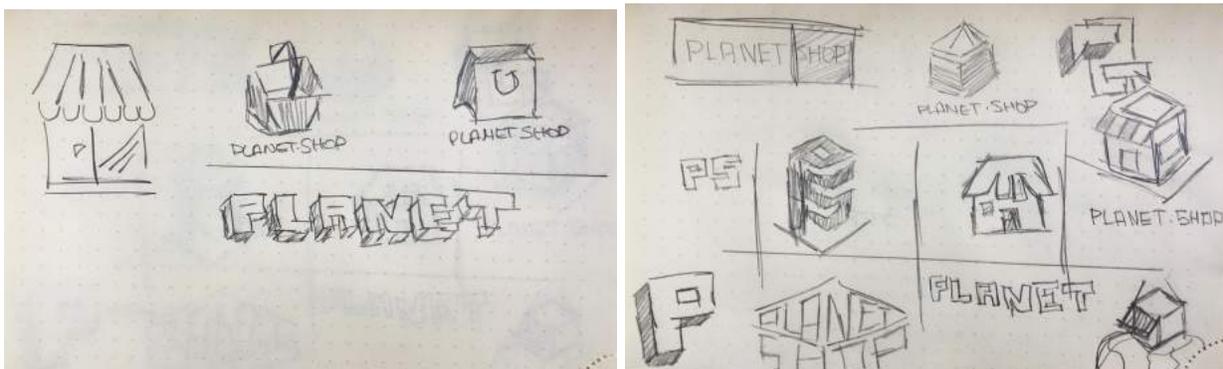


3.2 Branding

As for the branding, I have sketched a few concepts for the logo and general identity system. In order to make the branding connect with the users (Coila, 2019), my idea was to make it look related to gaming style.

3.2.1 Sketches

I have done some sketches for branding/ID (project logo)



3.2.2 Logo

The logo uses an isometric store symbol (to deliver the message of the idea) while the logotype is using a typeface that is looking like a maze game and the popular snake game.

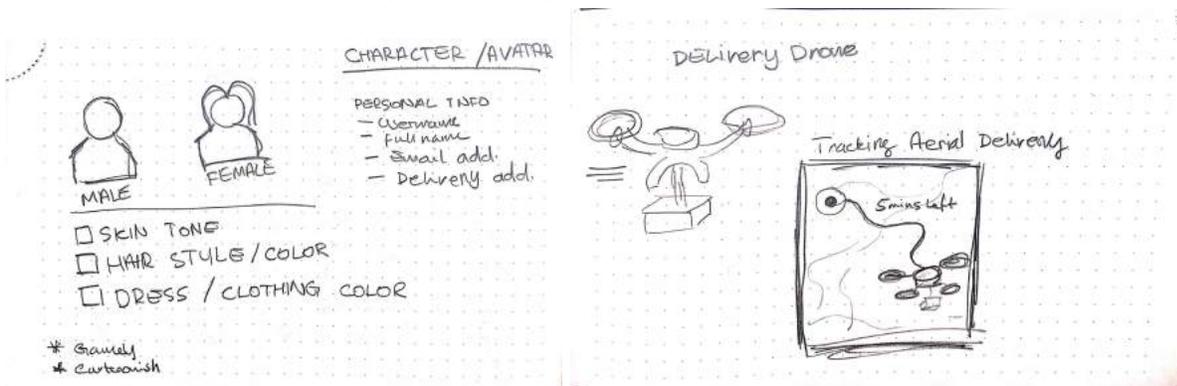


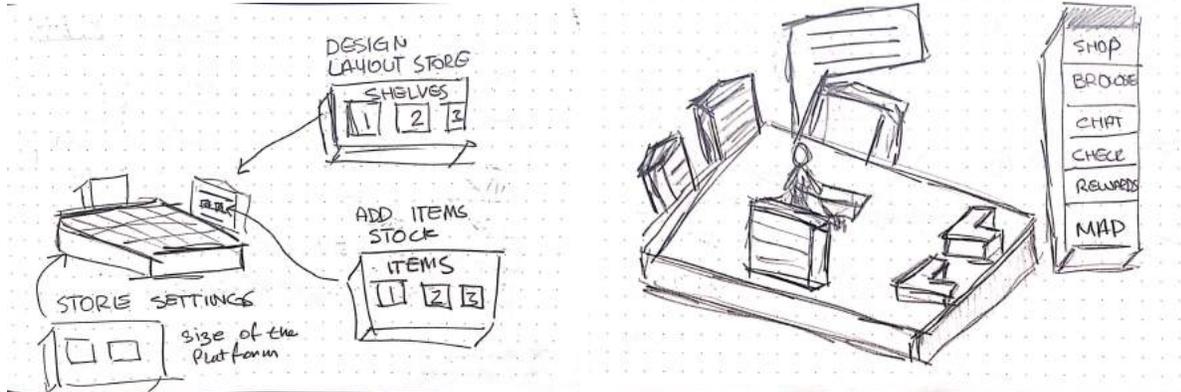
3.3 Design

Here are some references I collected for the general design. In order to give a better impression of the perspective and 3-dimensional view and control to store owners and users, we decided to go for Isometric design (Significant Bits, 2009) which is also quite common in game design.

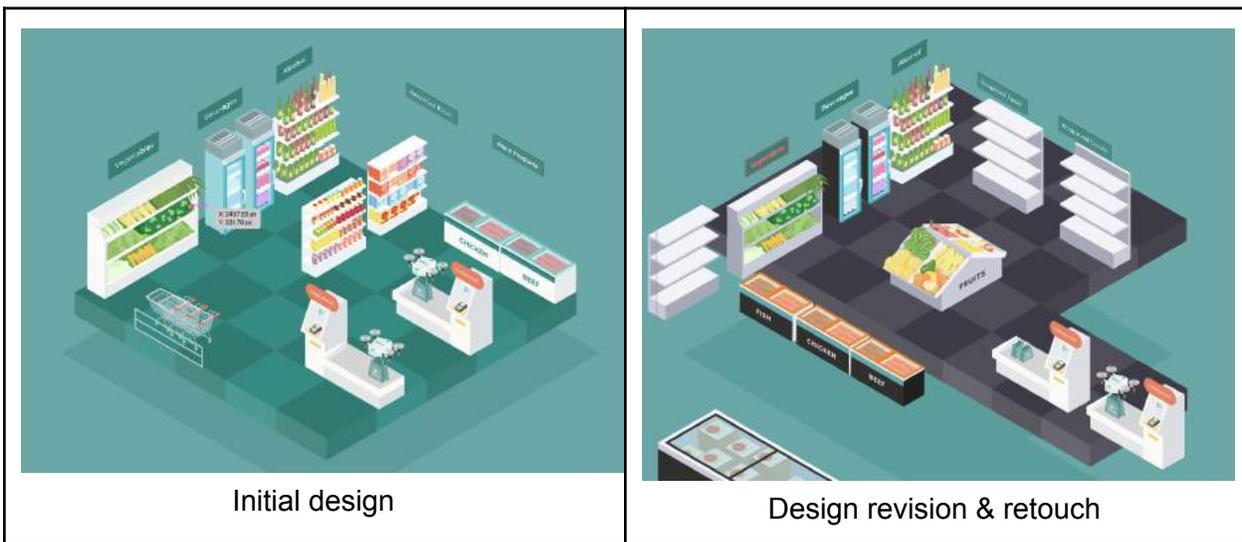


Here are my sketches for the general design of the platform and its interface.





And below is the design done by my groupmate based on the sketches and references. The first design (left) is done by my groupmate, and the revision/retouch (right) is done by me:



3.4 UX and Interface Design

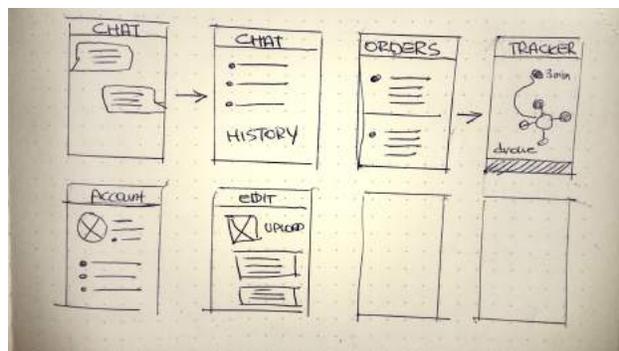
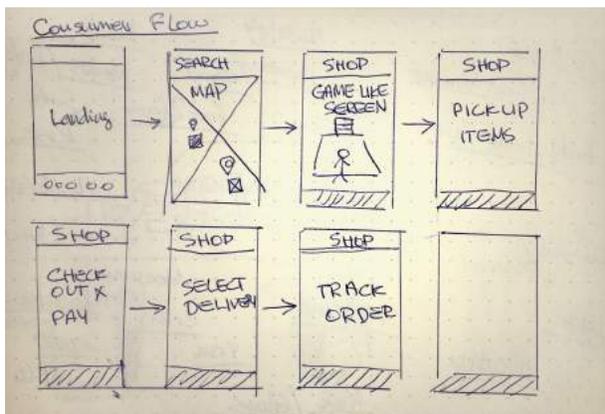
As the Planet Shop platform is on mobile app, we need to design two app prototypes for this project - One for owners and one for consumers. Below is the structure and flow for the app.

App Structure, Sitemap and Flow

RETAILER VERSION	CONSUMER VERSION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up / manage retail shop • Data entry the stocks • Manage orders • Chat / Help consumers • Trigger / track delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create / manage account • Do shopping • Place orders • Chat with owner / shop assistants • Manage / redeem rewards

<p>UI Main Menu</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Shop • Orders • Chat • Stocks • Account 	<p>UI Main Menu</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shop • Orders • Chat • Rewards • Account
<p>MY SHOP Shop lay out and settings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shop layout - Size & dimensions - Bots settings <p>ORDERS Orders placed by consumers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Check out for delivery/self-collection - Review / track order <p>CHAT Assistance chat with consumers</p> <p>STOCKS Stocks in storage room</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Database entry - Images & pics <p>ACCOUNT Account management for the shop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Owner profile - Ratings / Reviews 	<p>SHOP Look up for shops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Search - Map (location) - Browse the shop - Cart / Basket - Chat - Interaction with owner/assistants/other users - Ratings / Reviews <p>ORDERS User's orders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current Cart - Order status - Order history <p>CHAT Chats and conversation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shop owners - other consumers <p>REWARDS Rewards / gamification points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - View status - Redeem <p>ACCOUNT Account management of user</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - User profile / Avatar / Address etc - Ratings / Reviews

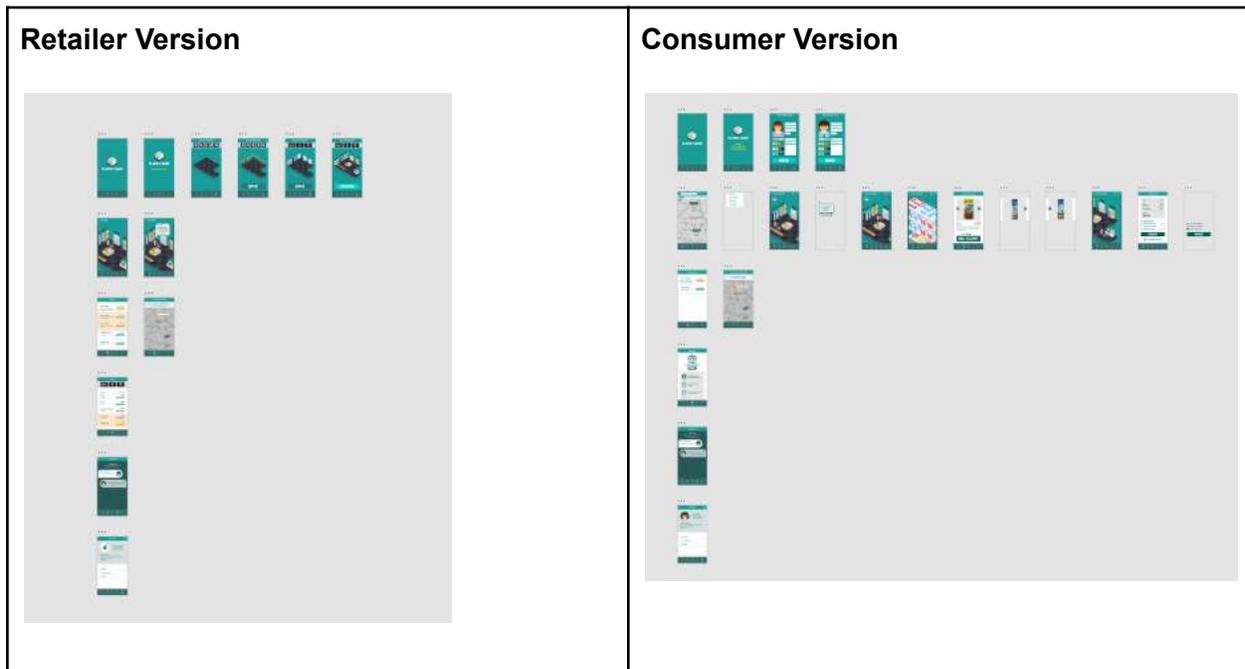
And here is the app fidelity:



Considering that in UI design everything stems from knowing your users, including understanding their goals, skills, preferences, and tendencies (Usability.gov, 2021), my concern

for designing the app interface was to make it user-friendly as much as possible and make it work as simple as it could be so that a even a traditional retailer or a shopper would use it as easy as in real-life application.

Below are the screenshots from the app development phase:

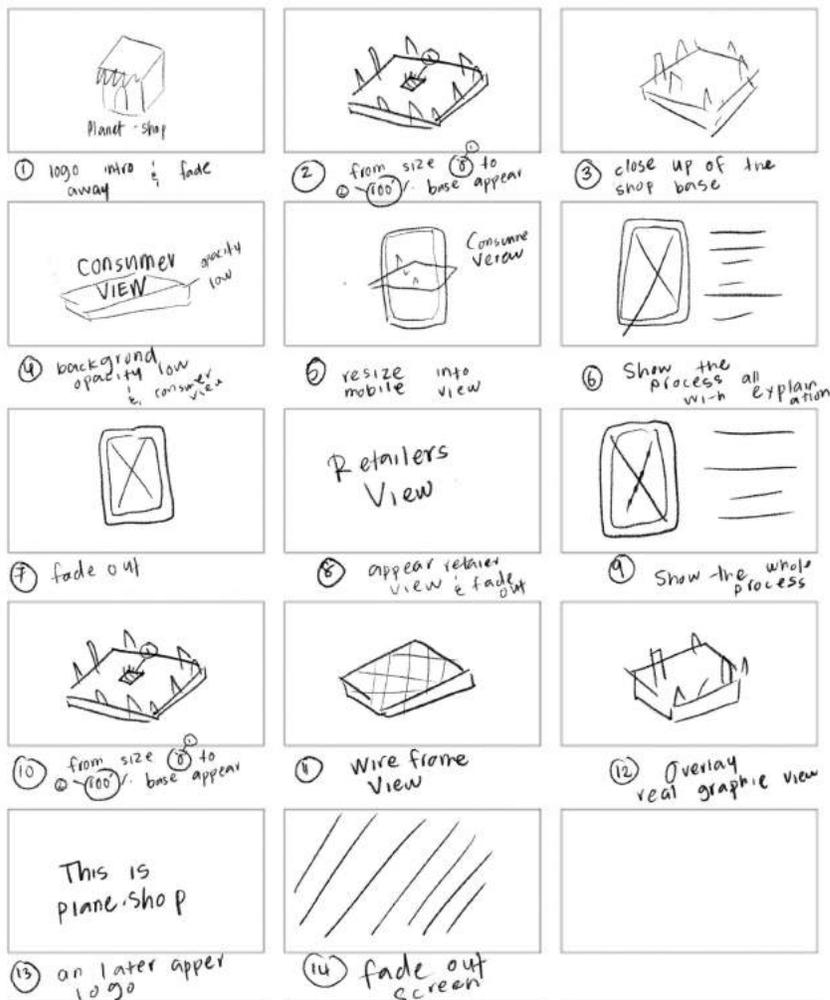
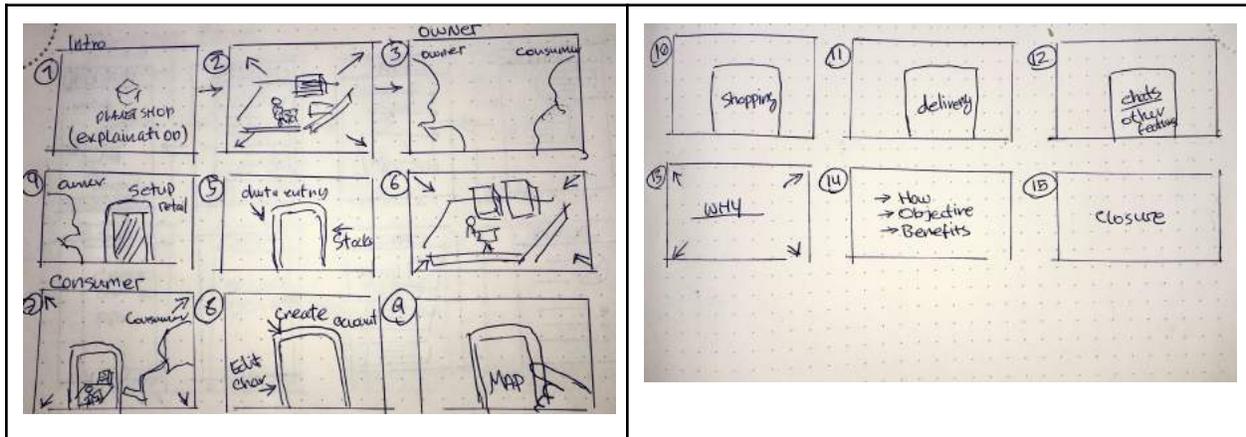


3.5 Demonstration Video (Animation)

In order to document our idea application we need to provide a demonstration video. We decided to go for an explainer video as explainer videos are more effective because they combine audio and visual stimulus to explain a concept in a simple and understandable way (Putnam 2021) for our prototype.

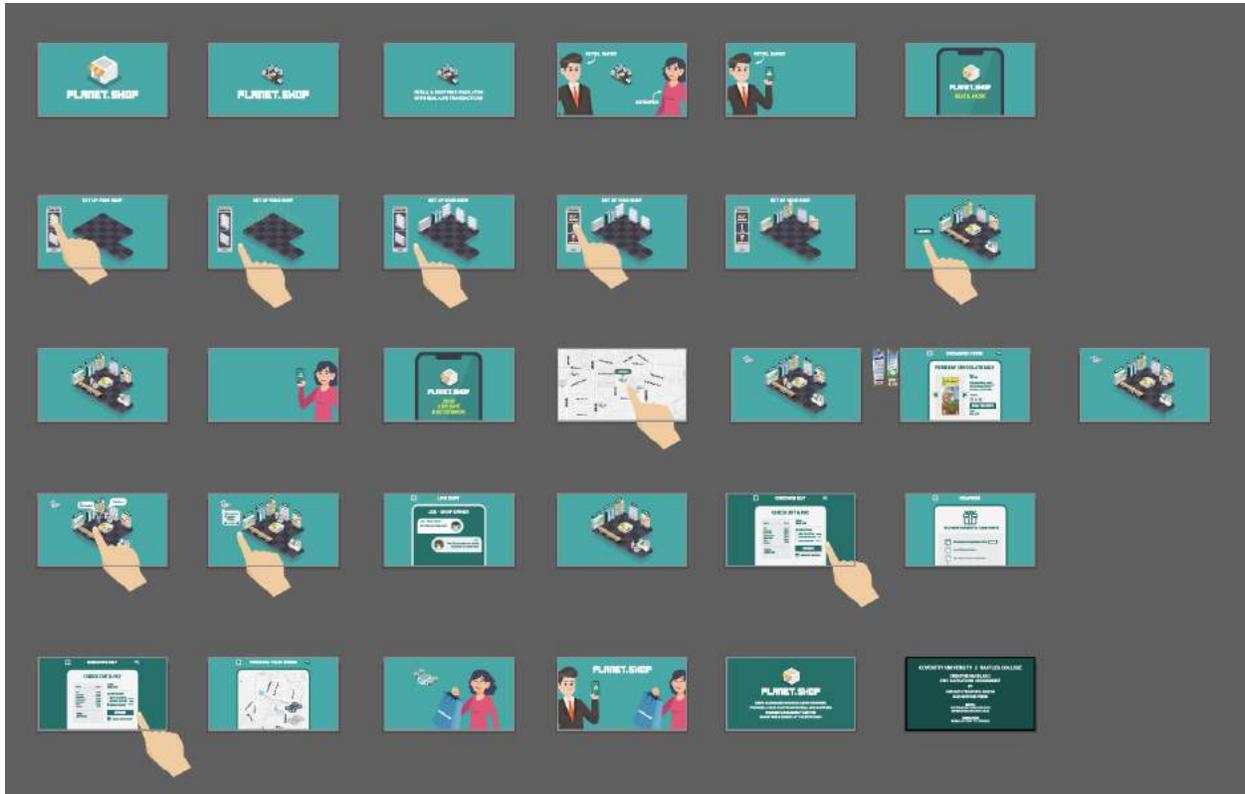
To share our visions, identify problems at an early stage and make the production process smoother (Caplan, 2017), I and my groupmate drew a storyboard each as follows:

3.5.1 Storyboard



3.5.2 Keyframes

In order to speed up the animating process, keep them consistent and ease editing (Academy of Art University, 2021) I drew 31 keyframes based on the above storyboard:



3.5.3 Scripts / Narration

Next, I started writing the script for the video. As the video is an explainer, the script needed to be available as a voice-over. It also needed to be explaining all the features & benefits of the idea. The scripts were converted from texts to audio files (MP3 format) using a text-to-speech bot we have found online at wideo.cc website.

3.5.3 Animation

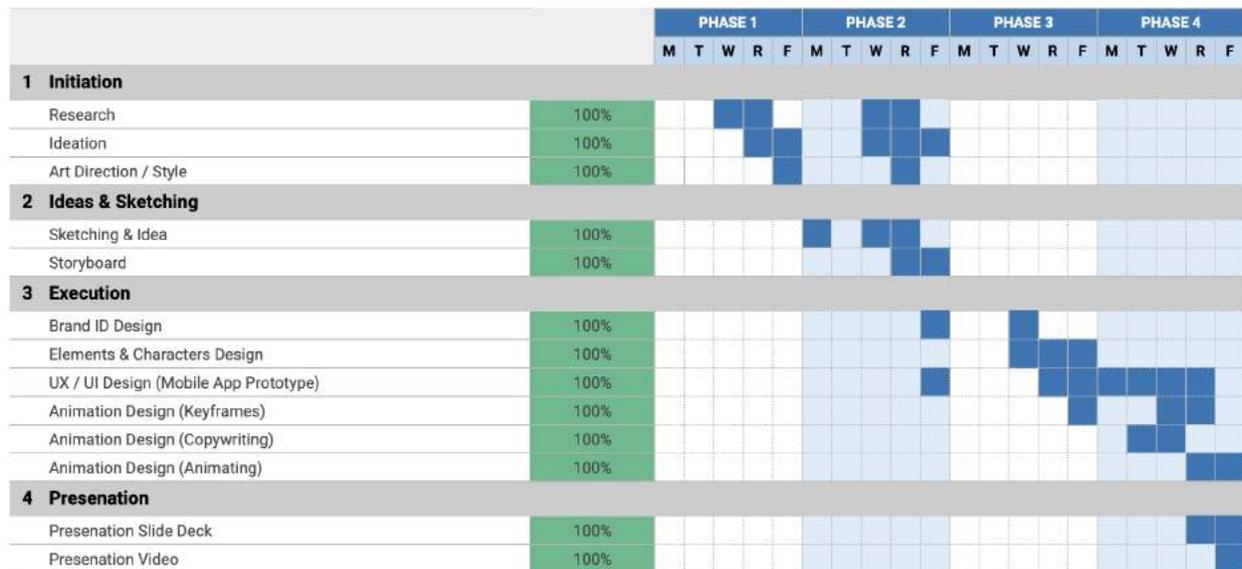
My groupmate started executing animation in Adobe After Effect app, adding the narration and sound effects to the video. After a few reviews, we polished the animation video as much as we could and compiled it for the final stage.

4.0 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

To have a proper plan for executing on strategic goals and to ensure that what is delivered is right (Aston, 2021), we created a gantt chart to track and manage our project. We broke down our project into four phases and tasks as follows to make it more manageable and to maximize our productivity (Stojanovic, 2021).

4.1 Gantt Chart

The first and second phases were planned for initiation, idea and sketching. The implementation started from phase 3 onwards.



4.2 My Contributions & Involvement

Here is the list of my involvement including the tasks which were assigned to me in this project:

- Research (Regarding the problem statement & possible solution)
- Ideation
- Art Direction & Styles
- Concept & Sketching
- Storyboard
- Brand ID and Logo Design
- UX Design and Prototyping
- Animation Design (Improvement and retouches of designs by groupmate)
- Animation Copywriting (scripting)
- Animation Final-cut & Revisions
- Presentation (Slides and video)

5. FUTURE PLANS

As for anticipatory planning and taking this idea to the next level, the following ideas and features can be added to Planet.Shop application to make it more functional and useful.

- **Supplier & B2B Version** - this app could have a B2B mode whereby suppliers can also present their businesses on it so retailers and businesses can easily access their stores/warehouses to check their stock, price lists and availability for B2B transactions.
- **Customer Halls** - Planet.Shop could have a community hall where users can gather, communicate with each other, talk about their shopping experiences and even off-topic matters. This will engage more users with the app and create shopping/retail communities.

6. PROTOTYPES

- **Link to Presentation Video (Demonstration Video)**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_lu4sJ32dXU
- **Link to App Prototype (Retailer Version)**
<https://youtu.be/B-67zpipCtQ>
- **Link to App Prototype (Consumer Version)**
https://youtu.be/yW9ju2E_QDU
- **Source / Project Files:**
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/14RGt2DHP7KOf675Qg-D3xlomZHCdHhqh?usp=sharing>
- **WIP Journal:**
<https://schah.online/downloads/documents/planet-shop-hackathon-journal.pdf>

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