



# Pon Pon

Exploratory Phase Report

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# Introduction

This report details the exploration process of our team for discovering a mobile service that we want to design. We have started with a general idea of the problem space we believe is ripe for a mobile solution. Using our hunt statement as a focus, we conducted several rounds of user research, each time extracting insights that helped us to narrow the focus. Combining user research along with the competitive analysis and literature review, we have been able to identify the type of services that users would like to have.

## Hunt Statement

Our group was formed based on a common interest in discounts/coupons for business with some sense of location-awareness, and we started out with two initial hunt statements:

1. Designing a mobile service to connect customers to the local discounts that are around them. For example, a local bakery was offering the first 100 customers that day a free cupcake, but many people weren't aware of this unless they happened to walk into the bakery, or knew someone who was aware of this offer.
2. Designing a mobile service to assist customers in recognizing the discounts that are available at stores they are close to. For example, walking along the street, you could receive an alert notifying you about a current discount at a clothing store which you expressed interest in.

We decided to explore coupon/discount use among local stores and national chains (details in the user research section), and after discussing the results, were able to generate a single revised hunt statement:

***We want to research current distribution and redemption of coupons in order to design a context-aware mobile service that creates a new coupon experience for both merchants and their customers.***

Through our discussion, we decided that the important part of our research was to further explore the experience of using or distributing coupons from both merchants' and customers' perspective. We also wanted to explore social, timing, location, and other factors which affect how coupons are used.

# The SET Factors

## Social

### Influence of other people

A prior study indicated that people tend to use the coupons given by their friends more often than ones received otherwise [1]. This trend also aligns with the increasing use of various social networks.

### Mentality change based on accessibility

Excessive amount of coupons damages the exclusiveness and results in being treated as an advertisement. This breakdown in communications between merchants and customers results in the lose of value creation on both ends.

### Diversified behaviors

We can clearly see the distinction of people who actively seek coupons and those who might not even use ones that come in their way. Understanding these behavior differences will help us define our target users.

### Trust Issues

The numerous possible source of coupons nowadays makes the validation process hard for the vendors, thus creating misunderstandings and breakdowns.

### Mismatch of context

When people think of a certain coupons they came across, they often forgot to bring it to the store and won't want to put an effort in using it afterwards.

## Economy

### Down economy

The downturn of the economy rises people's awareness in their spending, this tends to motivate them to look for and use coupons, creating a saving mentality.

### Coupons as a method to generate additional sales

Merchants of all kinds tend to use coupons as a way to adjust inventory, promote new products, or simply attract more customer.

## Technology

### Large number of smartphone users

With the drastic increase of smartphone users, the rising average of mobile computational power introduces new potentials for the types of content we can distribute to users on the spot.

### Adapting emerging technology

With the introduction of technologies like Geo-fencing and NFC (Near Field Communication), richer user context can now be defined.

### Widespread use of GPS

Current smartphone users frequently use maps for navigation or for location-based application.

## The Product Opportunity Gap

Considering the SET factors identified, we believe there is an opportunity for a service to bridge the gap between the consumers and the merchants. One aspect we can look at is how social influence of people on coupon usage can be leveraged. Also, by providing coupons at the right context, we can create more values with the customers and avoid crowding them with uninterested coupons. By providing a reliable distribution channel allowing easy distribution and validation, merchants can more effectively leverage coupons in bringing in new customers.



## Competitive Analysis

The mobile coupon market is a crowded space. We investigated existing competitors in order to identify a gap in the market and position our mobile service accordingly. We identified two major types of existing mobile applications - those that find nearby coupons based only on the user's location and those that require users to check-in to local businesses.



### Location-based

**Yowza!!** is a free mobile application available on the iPhone and iPhone touch. In order to make the coupons available on other mobile platforms, Yowza!! has partnered with Where, a location based service platform. Users can browse nearby coupons based on their current location and receive push notifications about deals from their favorite stores. Customers can redeem their coupons at the store straight from their phone. Merchants pay a monthly subscription fee (\$59/mo per store) to offer coupons on Yowza!! Service is limited only to brick-and-mortar stores, and merchants can run 3 coupons at a time. Merchants receive real-time results of coupon redemption and can modify their coupons at any time.



**MobiQpons** offers a platform for third party developers to display advertisements for nearby coupons on their mobile apps. The company uses a pay-per-click model. The merchant pays 7 cents/click. The third party developers receive a portion of that money, after MobiQpons takes a cut. MobiQpons claims that because the deals they are showing are local, they are more relevant to app users and that developers will see a higher click through rate than other advertising platforms. In this model, an additional value creator is introduced along with customers and merchants: the third-party developer.



**Groupon** recently launched a hyperlocal feature, known as "Groupon Everywhere". The feature was created due to a recent partnership with JiWire, a wi-fi and mobile advertising network, and will allow users to access group deals within a specific neighborhood within their city, based on their location. Groupon is a huge player in the group based coupon space. Merchants create a Grou-

pon stores and apply to run deals. Typically, Groupon charges the merchants 50% of all coupons sold. The Groupon demographic is young, mostly female, educated users with a good income.



**Placecast** Shopalerts is a hyperlocal advertising platform built on geo-fencing technology. Geo-fencing allows businesses and brands to create pre-defined maps of any location, redefining the term "hyperlocal". This technology can penetrate walls, so the service knows exactly where a user is within a certain location, like a mall or large store. Users opt-in to the Shopalerts service, which makes them more receptive to the advertised deals, according to Placecast. Users can receive Shopalerts message via SMS, so they do not have to have a smartphone to access the deals.



### **Check-in Based**

**Foursquare** is location based social network in which users to check-in to places on their mobile phones, allowing them to share their current location with their friends and discover new places nearby. Foursquare allows businesses to "claim" these places, which lets the business access statistics about their place and track loyal customers, promote specials, and create deals. When users check in to a place, they can receive a deal that the merchant created. They can also see a list of nearby places, with an icon indicating if there is a deal. Foursquare offers various kinds of deals, so that the merchant can target frequent customers, new customers, or their "mayor" (the user with the most check-ins at that place). This service is free to both merchants and customers.



**Facebook** recently launched a deals feature, to go along with Facebook Places. Like Foursquare, Facebook Places allows users to check in to locations and share with their friends. When a user launches Facebook Places, they see a list of nearby places. Places with deals are indicated with a deals icon. Users can also check in with their friends to receive group deals. The service is free to both customers and merchants.



**Gowalla**, like Facebook Places and Foursquare, also allows users to check-in to different places. Merchants can claim their business on Gowalla and offer promotions when a user checks in. Gowalla does not allow users to discover other places nearby that are running promotions. Like other check-based services, Gowalla is free for the customers and merchants.

## Competitors Summary

	Charge to Consumers	Charge to Merchants	Social Media Component	Merchant Analytics	Customers "Check-in"	Push Notifications to Customers
<b>Yowza!!</b>	Free	Subscription (\$59/mo.)	N	Y	N	Y
<b>MobiQpons</b>	Free	Pay-per-click (\$0.07/click)	N	N	N	N
<b>Groupon</b>	Free	50% of coupon sales	N	Y	N	N
<b>Placecast</b>	Free	Subscription	N	N	N	Y
<b>Foursquare</b>	Free	Free	Y	Y	Y	N
<b>Facebook Deals</b>	Free	Free	Y	Y	Y	N
<b>Gowalla</b>	Free	Free	Y	N	Y	N

## Literature Review

Our literature review consists of only one paper: “An Exploratory Field Experiment on Actual Usage of Discount Coupons” which was created to explore the effect of a consumer’s behavior based on how he/she received the coupon. The paper explored distributing coupons through e-mail or SMS (short message service) for mobile phones.

The authors of the paper reached the following conclusions from their research work.

1. Coupons that were sent through e-mail were forwarded on at a much higher rate than those coming from SMS (partially due to the fact that people who use e-mail often will be used to the act of forwarding e-mail, but not for SMS messages), but e-mail and SMS coupons were redeemed at roughly the same rate.
2. Coupons that a person receives from a peer will be used more often than coupons that a person receives directly from a merchant, due to a higher level of trust among peers as compared to merchants.
3. Building on the previous point, because of the dynamics of a social network, and due to the standards and tenets that are established and expected by members, there is less of a worry of **facing deception** from fellow members. As a result, coupons that a person receives from someone in their social network are also more likely to be used than those from a merchant.

# User Research

Our research begins by investigating the use of coupons with merchants and their customers. Our team performed three stages of research through the exploratory phase. During the first stage, we took a broad focus to determine how different sections of society use coupons. We talked to stores local to the Pittsburgh area, as well as stores that were nationally and regionally branded, and talked to customers that shopped at both types of stores. After discussing our research findings, we decided that we should focus on merchants that were local to the Pittsburgh area, because we would be able to have a greater impact on their coupon and discount policies than a large nationwide corporation that already has well-established coupon and discount programs. The second stage of our research focused on the benefits and issues that local merchants face when deciding to offer their customers coupons. After discussing these results, our team believed that there were very clear problems that prevented these merchants from extracting the full potential of using coupons. Since we decided to focus on local merchants, it was important to get more feedback from the customers of these local stores, so our third and final stage of user research focused on the factors that affect the decisions of consumers to use coupons at local stores.

## Stage 1: Merchants and Customers

Before we went out to talk to the merchants and customers, we started identifying locations of interest that would give us a wide range of merchants and customers to talk to. We chose the Waterfront Shopping Center and shops on South Craig Street in Oakland, to catch merchants ranging from a national presence to a strictly local presence, and to catch customers who shop at these different stores.

S1 is one location of a chain of garment shops in the US. The customers include people of all ages, particularly mothers with families who shop for their kids and husbands. This store offers coupons every week that are specific to the district that this store resides in (so another location of this garment chain could offer completely different coupons than this one). The coupons are distributed by e-mail, hand, on store-sponsored credit cards and social media outlets. From the shop's perspective, the coupons are good for attracting and bringing in new customers.

S2 is one of the larger shops that is located in this Shopping Center. In contrast to S1, this store doesn't offer any coupons to customers, and doesn't have any presence in social networking outlets.

S3 is another chain of stores that is nationally represented, and like S1, it distributes coupons by e-mail, typically over the weekend. Apparently, S3 doesn't have any presence in the social networking outlets.

S4 is a shoe store that specifically targets women between the ages of 20 and 30 years old, as well as children. Like many of the other shops in the Waterfront Shopping Center, this store distributes coupons all the time. It also has a reward programs for repeat customers, and provides them with promotional coupons from time to time. The primary channel of distribution for this the coupons of S4 is through email and it feels that coupons are definitely effective in attracting new customers, and retaining existing customers.

S5 is a wine store have that has several locations throughout Pittsburgh, including the Waterfront Shopping Center. The shop typical customers are 40 to 60 year old people from the Squirrel Hill neighborhood of Pittsburgh. This place offers coupons periodically through a couple of magazines local to Pittsburgh, but doesn't use any other channels for distribution. These coupons are generally offered once every couple of months. Also, S5 has a few discounts that are available throughout the entire year. This place uses no social networking outlets to reach customers, and barely has a functioning website.

S6 is a famous book store that has many locations throughout the US. It doesn't have a particular target audience, because it attracts customers across all types of demographics. The coupons are sent everyday through mail and e-mail for members of the store's rewards program, or only through e-mail for non-members. This store will occasionally post coupons on Facebook that anyone who is a "fan" will be able to use.

S7 is one of the largest retailers in the US among middle-aged customers. The store distributes coupons every week through mail and e-mail. It also distributes coupons through newspapers, Twitter and Facebook. Also, S7 will advertise deals through its website and mobile applications.

S8 is a small-scale Indian store that resells a variety of Indian products. The primary target group for the store is students from the nearby universities in Pittsburgh. The coupons are usually distributed through university magazines and the website <http://pittsburghindia.com>. This store usually will have discounts (normally focussed on student customers) that run throughout the year, and are currently used by the frequent shoppers of this store. S8 has a presence on both Facebook and Twitter, but isn't sure of how to use social media to attract more customers.

S9 is a nationwide chain of fast food restaurants. This store distributes coupons typically through the local Sunday magazines, as well as several websites. Customers have the option to subscribe to coupons using the store's website. This location generally receives 25 to 30 coupons each day, and believes that coupons bring in more customers. S8 has a presence in social networking outlets.

S10 is a small coffee shop that is located near the campuses of a couple Pittsburgh universities. As a result, the majority of the customers at this store are students. It has a history of using coupons to attract new customers. However, the store noticed that coupons no longer attracted new customers and that frequent customers started to forge coupons, so it decided to completely stop offering coupons a couple years ago. Currently, the store will take off 50% of the cost of several products, but customers don't know that they are saving money when they buy it.

S11 is an Indian restaurant that is well known throughout the Pittsburgh student community for having delicious entrees, and for its 50% off after 9 PM deal. It doesn't offer any coupons and doesn't reach out to customers through any other advertising channels. The restaurant is usually crowded during the weekends, so it doesn't appear to need to attract more customers through coupons.

C1-C3 is a group of people that includes 2 females in their early 40's one male in his late 30's. They only use coupons "that come to them" (through email or the mail most typically) as they don't really spend time to look for them (nor desire to spend time). Email is the primary source their of coupons, and these people tend to use coupons at stores with a nationwide presence like stores like Macy's or Bed Bath & Beyond.

C4 is a female who uses about coupons 3-4 times per week at shops like Bed Bath & Beyond. This consumer in feels that she uses coupons at basically the same shops and uses email and magazines as the medium to find coupons. Also, she feels that coupons encourage her to try out new items and to go to new shops

C5 is a male who uses coupons that are mostly in electronic form (typically from amazon.com) and rarely used paper coupons, either printed from a computer or in a magazine or newspaper. He compares the prices and determines the worth of the coupons online before deciding to redeem one.

## Key Findings From Stage 1

We noticed from our research that the stores that had a lot of chains represented throughout the country had their own ways of advertising their deals and the coupons, whether it was through physical mail, newspapers, magazines, e-mail, rewards/loyalty programs, store-sponsored credit cards, websites, and social networking outlets. On the other hand, the local merchants were either unaware of how to properly use social media, or didn't know of the proper ways to distribute their coupons. The few number of local merchants that did offer coupons believed that coupons brought in new customers, and encouraged existing customers to continue to come.

Based on this data and our subsequent discussion, we decided that we wanted to find the factors encouraged or discouraged small merchants to provide coupons to

their customers. During our second stage of exploration, we concentrated on finding out this information directly ~~from the owners of the shops~~, and not just from an employee working there. Also, we decided that we would be in a better position to identify and analyze trends if we focused primarily on restaurants and food stores, considering the fact that food is perishable, and these shops generally ~~have to sell all food that is cooked on a given day because they will throw out/give away any that is left over when they close.~~

## Stage 2: Local Merchants

S12 is an Indian restaurant in Squirrel Hill neighborhood of Pittsburgh, which just recently has opened up. The owner of the store emphatically declared that he never offers any coupons, that he feels that coupons are basically just gimmicks, and that his customers are aware of this. This store doesn't have web presence at this time, but the owner frequently checks the reviews about his restaurant in Yelp! and Urbanspoon. It came somewhat as a shock when he declared that he doesn't advertise about the shop in magazines or newspapers either.

S13 is a famous bagel bakery in Pittsburgh, which has several locations throughout the city. This store generally doesn't advertise in magazines because it has been located in the same place for 18 years, and people in the neighborhood know about the shop through word of mouth. The shop generally doesn't offer any discounts except for a "coffee mug" deal that is promoted during December and January of every year. The store estimates that about 100 people use this particular deal every year.

S14 is a well known ice cream shop in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood of Pittsburgh. The store has a website and a presence in social networking outlets. It offers 20% for fans of the store on Facebook, and additionally offer a 20% discount for people who "check-in" to the shop using Facebook Places. However, the feature isn't used by many people, and it appears that the customers are not aware of this potential discount (due to poor advertising). The shop owner said that less than 3 people use this feature every week. S14 used to have happy hours deals in the past earlier, which would get advertised on the menu board that is located right outside of the shop, but it stopped this promotion without any reason. Usually, the store will provide coupons through clipper magazines, which in turn are used by many people.

S15 is a shoe shop that provides discounts twice a year — during January and June. This store doesn't use coupons and doesn't have online presence, either through a website or social networking.

S16 is a coffee shop that has been operating for many years. This shop has a web presence, yet the owners don't believe they are getting any use out from it. The store

doesn't advertise in any newspapers, and used to have a happy hour discount, but stopped the offer due to its poor response. While the store offered this happy hour discount, it didn't use any channel to advertise the news. In contrast, the owners have another shop in Indiana where such these same deals are advertised through Twitter and receive a large positive response from the students in the area. They have offered coupons twice in the past as a partnership with a brewing company, and discovered there was a 35% conversion rate from the coupons.

S18 is a local restaurant chain to the Pittsburgh area, with a location in the neighborhood of Squirrel Hill. The creation and distribution of the coupons is directly handled by the corporate office, and this location finds that about 5 - 10 people bring in coupons to use each day. This store has had loyalty programs before, but they weren't able to determine how many of their customers were using it. It has a presence on both Facebook and Twitter, but the store isn't an active user on either. They have found that giving back to the community has increased the number of customers that come, probably from a sense of pride about the store.

## **Key Findings From Stage 2**

As we narrowed down our focus to small scale merchants, it was easy to identify the problems that they face. One of our important findings that reflected from Stage 1 was that small merchants have Facebook and Twitter pages, but don't know how social media will help them to reach out to the customers. Also, some of the merchants initially started posting deals in Facebook and Twitter, and as the days went by, they couldn't provide updates that kept up with the pace that the younger generations have when using these tools. Social media plays a major role based on the location of the shop. Shops within college campuses who use social media found that they gained more customers whenever they posted an update.

We came across several shops that used to have happy hour deals, but they had to stop offering the deals due to a lack of customer response. When we investigated the medium that was used to announce these deals, we found that they were advertised on menu boards outside of the shops. It appears that not reaching a wider audience was the primary reason for lack of patrons that took advantage of these deals. Some of these merchants offered year long deals and discounts as a measure to attract customers, and to create the perception that items were sold cheaper. Only few shops tried doing promotions where they worked together with other shops, or with other organizations such as libraries or radio stations.

While we talked to the various representatives of the shops, we saw them express a true desire and motivation to serve the community surrounding them. They believed that being good to the neighboring community brings in more customers. Some of these merchants used loyalty programs at one point, but they stopped offering them

because they were unable to gauge the success or failure of those programs. The novel concepts like Facebook Places were complete unknowns to them, and the few shops that did utilize it didn't see many customers use it.

### **Stage 3: Consumers**

C6 is a male in his early 20's who usually redeems coupons that he has learned about from friends (through email or word of mouth). He has subscribed to get coupons from a couple of sites, like Quiznos. Unfortunately, He often loses coupons that are in paper form. Even though he feels that some coupons are worthless, he will still use them because they are in his possession when he is purchasing an item. He uses social media very actively, but has never used it before to search for coupons. He has used Groupon only once and felt that half of the time the deals that were offered weren't for things that he would be interested in purchasing.

C7, a woman in her 50's, uses a lot of coupons. She will retrieve coupons and tips from the website moneysavingmom.com. However, she doesn't have a smartphone, and doesn't know what Groupon is. She prints the coupons from her computer, and takes them to the shop after planning what she will buy. She looks for deals and attempts to combine coupons before making a purchase. This customer has some access to social media, but mainly uses it to check in on what her children are currently doing, and wasn't aware of Facebook's feature Pages option that would allow her to track coupons.

C8 is another customer in his early 20's, who uses discounts at local grocery stores regularly, but doesn't use coupons there. He will only use coupons only if he believes that it is a good offer. He uses location-based services to find shops nearby, which also helps him to travel to his favorite shops, which prevents him from needing to remember specific routes or addresses. He has a smartphone, but does not have a Facebook page.

C9 is another user in his late 20's, who receives physical mail that contains coupons, and feels that many of these coupons are for items that he isn't interested in. He is very diligent in keeping a constant watch for coupons that represent an attractive deal for something that he would want. There have been times when C9 has tried to use a coupon without realizing that it has already expired, and will find at times that the coupons he opens up in the mail have also already expired. This consumer owns an android mobile, is a facebook user, and has a GPS system in his car that he uses to locate the places he goes to shop by entering the store's address.

C10 owns a Nokia phone that allows her to surf the Internet, but she rarely ever uses this feature. Along with this internet-capable phone, she owns and iPad device. She

normally won't use coupons unless she is shopping at drug stores, super markets, or electronics boutiques. If she has coupons for clothing retail outlets, she will use them, but she believes they are harder to find, and she generally will find sales for clothes that she uses while she is in the middle of shopping. She also subscribes to department stores mailing list because she doesn't come across many smaller stores that offer coupons. She receives coupons by signing up for a membership to loyalty and reward programs, and uses coupons depending on her need for the product.

C11 owns a Samsung phone that isn't capable of connecting to the Internet, and has never used a smartphone before. She uses coupons whenever she is able to get her hands on one. This user normally finds coupons through magazines and newspapers (which she buys every day while at work), through which she actively searches for coupons, focusing primarily on those for restaurants or pharmaceutical products. Also, this user is able to get coupons or information regarding deals from friends through email or word-of-mouth. She has signed up for membership credit cards at some major department stores, and will sometimes gets exclusive deals based on the credit cards. Often, this user finds that she goes out of her way to buy items that she didn't intend to buy, but had a coupon for (which she usually later regrets). Sometimes she forgets the date that coupons expire, if the coupon is for something really important to her, she will mark the coupon expiration date on a calendar that she places on the refrigerator. C11 also expressed that coupons definitely encourage her to try out new stores and products, which gives her thrilling new experience, but also gets her to spend more money than she would like.

C12 doesn't like coupons because he usually is unable to find an offer for an item he likes, and particularly isn't a fan of buying an item just because he gets something for free with the purchase. Instead, he prefers loyalty programs. This user has an iPhone and believes that if he ever receives coupons on his phone, he only wants to see coupons that are for items which he has an interest in buying.

C13 uses local coupons primarily for shopping for clothes, and usually won't go into a clothing store unless she has a coupon that she can redeem. This user likes to shop at Giant Eagle because of their loyalty program that gives discounts on various items that are sold there. She usually prefers to use paper coupons against the online ones, and sometimes will buy newspapers to look for coupons that interest her (although about 90% of the coupons she uses are ones that she receives, not ones she finds). At times, C13 will use her smarthpone to redeem coupons because the merchants only need to enter in a coupon code, and she can show the coupon to them on her smart phone. This user believes that she gets overwhelmed with all of the coupons that are sent to her, which sometimes causes her to miss deals that she would have been interested in. However, all of these coupons server as a repository for her, and whenever she decides she wants to go to a store that she frequents, chances are she will be able to find an active coupon in her email.

### Key Findings From Stage 3

From our user research with ~~customers, we got some findings which we present here.~~ Customers ~~often lose coupons and~~ find it difficult to keep track of coupons ~~because~~ ~~often,~~ the ones interested in coupons face an overload of it. Email coupons ~~on that~~ ~~lines,~~ work better as customers don't lose them and can print them anytime they want. But, ~~it is also agreed that~~ there is an overload of email/online coupons as well. Merchants do not seem to have made enough use of the "social media" space to promote coupons and customers do not seem to be aware of the existing coupon deals promoted on the social media pages. Also, customers fail to often keep track of the expiry dates of coupons (online/paper) and realize that it has expired only when they try using it. Social media affects the usage of customer coupon usage—customers knowing about a friend using a coupon **see it as a way of validating the value of the deal/coupon** and tend to follow on his friend's path. Consumers are irritated by the ads that often show up deals that don't even remotely interest them—the needs of the customers are just not matching with the existing coupon providers.

# Research Insights

## Small scale merchants

- They are under the impression that coupons bring in more and new customers but not sure which media to use.
- They have presence in social media but not sure if that helps.
- They cannot keep up with the pace of the youngsters in social media.
- Social media helps only among the youngsters.
- Novel concepts like Facebook Places are not used by the many people.
- They have had loyalty programs in the past, but dropped them as a result of not knowing how to gauge the success of them.
- They used to have happy hours, but dropped them due to poor advertising.
- Coupons are usually sent through Sunday magazines.
- They have discounts running all throughout the year on certain products to give a perception of items being cheaper.
- They want to serve the local community better so that they can gain more customers.
- They have run promotional programs that partner with others in the past, though not many success stories.

## Consumers

- They often lose coupons and find it difficult to keep track of coupons.
- Coupons sent over email can be kept track of and printed any time.
- They are overwhelmed by the large numbers of coupons in Sunday magazines.
- They usually don't have saved coupons with them always.
- They find it hard to search the coupons of their interest.
- They are not aware of the nearby deals.

## Personas

Through all of our research (talking to users, reading relevant papers, and looking for similar products now available) we saw that there are two main parties in the coupon realm: the merchants (which could be a local store owner, a franchise owner, or just a manager of a nationwide store) and the customers (the people who use these discounts to buy an assortment of items, both in person and online). Given this, it makes perfect sense to develop personas within these two categories. However, we felt that these are two very broad categories, so we needed to create a couple of customer personas and a couple of merchant personas in order to better capture the diversity of desires, needs, and action that our users will represent. Here are the personas that we developed

# Sarah Rodriguez

Location: Pittsburgh, PA  
Age: 20

Student at CMU, studying Civil Engineering

Single, never been married, no kids



## Background

Sarah is originally from New York, NY, and she came to CMU to study Civil Engineering. She had never been to Pittsburgh, PA before coming to CMU for her Freshmen orientation. As a typical college student, Sarah has a clear interest in trying to save money on everything, particularly when it comes to eating.

## Goals

- End** Sarah wants to be able to save money when she goes to stores, whether it is to eat, or to shop.
- Experience** Sarah wants to be able to easily access information about various coupons and discounts, and doesn't want to have to do extensive research or put in a lot of effort to get these discounts.
- Life** As a college student, Sarah doesn't have much money to spend, and needs to use it wisely, so she would like to take advantage of as many discounts as possible. She also wants to explore what the city of Pittsburgh has to offer, because she may not stay in the area past her graduation from CMU.

# Rachel Simmons

Location: Pittsburgh, PA (Regent Square)

Age: 35

Nurse at UPMC ShadySide

Married with 3 kids (2 boys: 5, 11; 1 girl: 7)



## Background

Rachel has lived in Pittsburgh for most of her life. She got her bachelors in Nursing from the University of Pittsburgh, got a job at UPMC, and decided she wanted to settle down in Pittsburgh, PA. Rachel is really interested in identifying discounts and finding coupons for stores throughout Pittsburgh so that her family can save money on everyday things as well as luxuries. She wants to identify discounts for items and services that she really cares about as easily and quickly as possible, and not deal with searching through a ton of coupons (whether online, a newspaper, or a magazine).

## Goals

- End** Rachel wants to identify deals and offers for her family at local stores in the Pittsburgh area, and she doesn't want to exert a lot of time or effort in the process.
- Experience** Rachel wants to have a satisfaction that she is getting the best "bang for her buck" and is saving her family money, while setting a good example of spending for her children. She also wants to feel more connected to owners and employees of the local stores that she frequents.
- Life** Rachel wants to ensure that her family lives within their means and establishes good habits of saving and budgeting money, which will help for future expenditures such as college, and retirement.

# Irene Wong

Location: Pittsburgh, PA  
Age: 30

Owns a Chinese restaurant in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood

Single, never been married, no kids



## Background

Being the first generation Chinese-American born in the US, Irene saw the hard times that her parents experienced running their restaurant. After graduating from college and working for a software company for a couple of years, she decided to help her parents with their business, and eventually took it over from them. She wants to take her business to a new level by attracting a younger crowd through the use of social media, like Facebook, on which she created a page where she shares Chinese culture and happy hour deals for example. She also checks on other sites like Yelp for comments on the restaurant.

## Goals

- End** Despite having a healthy number of customers that regularly eat at the restaurant, Irene really hopes to attract new customers since as she develops plans to expand her business.
- Experience** She wants to provide a cultural experience for all of her customers, giving them a space where they comfortably indulge themselves while enjoying authentic Chinese food.
- Life** Irene's ultimate vision is to contribute to the effort to promote authentic Chinese cuisine to the American population over the more commonly recognized "American" Chinese food.

# Tim Soloven

Location: Huntington Beach, CA  
Age: 43

Owns a small clothing chain based in Southern California

Divorced with 2 kids (15 year old boy, 12 year old girl)



## Background

Tim started his clothing business after quitting his old job at a marketing firm, where he no longer felt challenged by his work. Due to his passion for fashion and business, Tim has really enjoyed running his own store, including negotiating contracts with factories to designing his store layouts. He has put in a lot of effort to ensure that when customers walk into his store, they start a unique experience that won't soon be forgotten.

## Goals

- End** Tim would like to find ways to encourage his customers to be come frequent shoppers, not just to pick up something, and never come back.
- Experience** Tim would like ~~for~~ all of his customers to have an enjoyable shopping experience, which they can't wait to tell to their friends, families, and colleagues
- Life** He would like to connect with people by finding the right clothes at the right price for them, and eventually would like to develop a brand for low budgets that still shouts out quality.

## Conclusion

This report has shown our entire exploration process for designing a mobile service. We have started from a very general idea, and have worked to narrow down this focus, and extract insights by talking to our potential users of this application. Our next step will be to take our insights, and develop specific design ideas.

