



ENHANCING INTIMACY WHILST DINING APART

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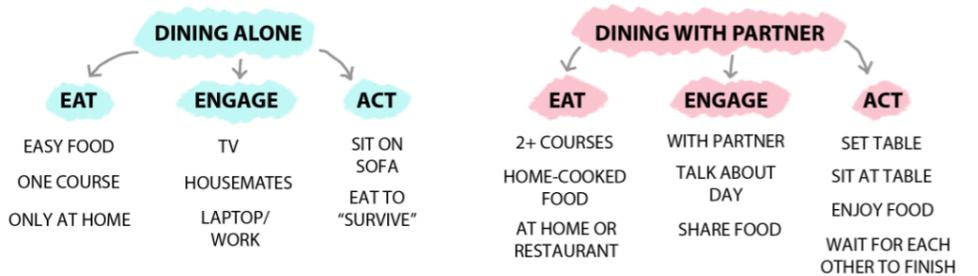
RESEARCH



My main user research so far has come from cultural probes. I deployed a series of kits comprising of a disposable camera and a set of postcards. The aim of these probes was to explore how people eat - both whilst dining alone and with their partner. I am currently exploring which factors change across the two situations - ie. where they eat, what they eat and how they feel whilst doing so.

I have received several kits back and have begun compiling the data. This is presenting a key insight into people's behaviour whilst dining. I am able to draw out several key differences between dining alone and with a partner and these are solid starting points for beginning to design a solution. It is evident that people dine alone completely differently to how they dine with a partner.

Below are the key themes and mannerisms I have identified as differences between eating alone and eating with a partner.



INFLUENCE & INSPIRATION

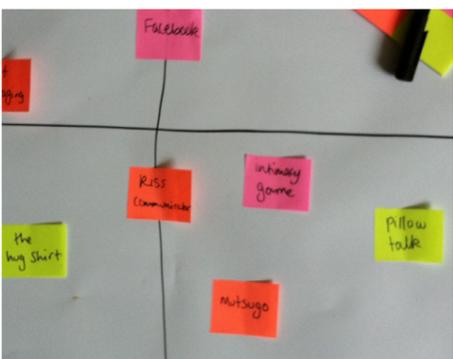
I have been plotting projects and products I find inspiring or relevant on a large wall chart. I place them on a scale of "hard" communication (eg. mobile phones, webcams) to "soft" communication (wearables, physical interaction, etc) and divide them by one-way communication and two-way communication. This has proven not only a great way to manage my inspiration, but also provides a clear context regarding where my work is going to fit.

Currently finding inspiring:

Bloom - An interactive wearable that visualises the human touch
<http://www.fashioningtech.com/profiles/blogs/bloom-the-emotional-side-of>

Pockets - A short film about intimacy and the significance of objects
<http://www.mystreetfilms.com/content/pockets>

Good Food - A blog revolving around food/eating including social aspects



METHODS

CULTURAL PROBES have been deployed and several have been returned. It is possible I will send out more specific ones at a later date.

FOCUS GROUPS will be held over the coming weeks to talk to people in more detail about how they feel about eating alone.

CASE STUDIES contain rich information and data and are turning out to be a key resource and I have been reading a lot of academic papers on the subject.

NEXT STEPS

Having identified the main differences between dining alone and dining together, my next step is to brainstorm potential solutions and build some prototypes and mock ups to explore solutions. The key themes I am focussing on at the moment are:

FEELINGS: Many people have said they use their evening meal with their partner to discuss their feelings; namely how their day has been.

ENVIRONMENT: When eating with a partner, people tend to eat at a dining table, whereas when eating alone, this is often on the sofa, in front of the TV, or in a more casual environment.

MANNERS: When eating alone, the standard format (and etiquette, to some extent) changes. For example, individuals usually only eat one course instead of two or three, and they often do not set the table or use a napkin.

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