

Subgents - Speculative Design Pictorial

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ABSTRACT

In a capitalist world, people seek pleasure. People work all day and then are looking to break their boundaries after work. In some cultures, rituals have been created that allow people to break their boundaries after work hours. These rituals usually include drinking and drugs. In our work we tried to exacerbate this phenomenon, by creating a platform of agents who will replace the users in their day-to-day pursuit after mundane routine so that they can unload the burden of the day without worrying about other commitments. This project raises questions, what kinds of futures could we create by paying agents to replace us? And what will count as crossing the line? An agent who will answer your WhatsApp calls on your behalf? Zoom? Or maybe even hiring an agent to go to bed with your wife?

Author Keywords

Capitalism; pleasure; Ritual; Alcoholism; Agents.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND / MOTIVATION

The connection between work and alcohol was the initial idea that guided us through this project. Brainstorming about the connection between the two and reading about different cultural behaviors that are related to work and labor. Apparently, this connection is arising from a variety of different cultural phenomena, one of which is of particular interest to us. We found out

that drinking as a way to communicate has become so common in Japan there's a word for it: Nominication. And in general, drinking after work became so common that it became a ritual in Japan, with terminologie and rules. Many Japanese are trapped in this impossible situation of chasing their own tail, and drinking at the end of the day is just a part of their routine. This drinking culture became so excessive they drink to the point of fainting and losing consciousness in the middle of the street with work clothes on. This raised many questions; What if the ritual was extended to the workplace hours (and not only after work)? What if there was a solution that allowed people to attend rituals without harming their routine? What if the nomication ritual was a part of the law system (mandatory for all adults)? What if society status was determined by how much/ when do you drink?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In our exploration of the connection between work and alcohol we focused on the Japanese culture. We were specially inspired by an article about Japan's Toxic Drinking Culture [3], it describes how companies employees in Japan often feel pressured to drink excessively with their superiors or else miss out on promotions. As a result, walking through any metropolis at night without tripping over a passed out drunk is almost impossible. Moreover, drinking as a way to

communicate has become so common in Japan there's a word for it: Nominication. [6,5] Japanese word 飲み (nomi) meaning "to drink" + the English word "communication." = Nominication. This term often describes work-related drinking. Work-related drinking has become a ritual in Japan, with terminologie and rules: If you've received an invitation, it requires you to block your entire night off. The only thing drinking isn't an excuse for? Missing work.

Drinking with coworkers, business associates, customers, and clients after work also plays a vital role in Japanese society. It helps building relationships and even concluding business agreements. Correct behavior at these social events in terms of attire, language, and manners receives considerable attention in social training provided by parents at home, professors in the university, mentors in the workplace, or trainers in corporate new-employee orientation programs. Managers incorporate nominication strategically as part of their leadership responsibilities. [4]

RELATED WORK

Our research was based on the desire of people who work all day to unload every yoke in the evening. The film "Another Round" [2] describes it perfectly. Four teachers who struggle with unmotivated students and feel that their lives have become boring and stale. They agree to a set of rules: their BAC should never be below 0.05 and that they should not drink after 8:00pm. The

movie shows another yet similar perspective of labor and drinking and how people turn to drinking when they struggle with routine or mundane tasks in their everyday lives. Many movies were made on this connection between alcohol and the will to work and so this project decided to focus on the other perspective. Drinking rituals not as an incentive to “survive” work, rather than drinking rituals as some sort of freedom providers and the spectrum between everyday constraints to breaking them in the end. This perspective raises many questions; What is more important? being free or employed? Why does society have the need to do it all? If everyone is desperately looking to this sweet afternoon release, are we even living our lives as we should as a society or did capitalism take over? At what cost?

SPECULATIVE RESEARCH

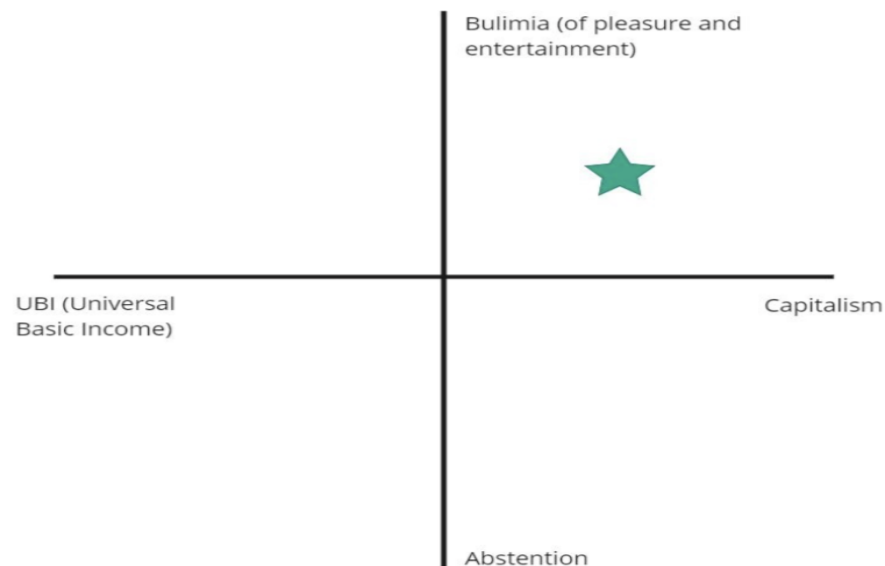
EXPLORATION THROUGH COLLEGE

The collage (see figure 1) was made out of pictures of drunk businessmen taken from different articles we read. The idea was to cut every character and place them in a classic work environment in order to show the conflict between who they are during the day, and how they are at night. Workplace implies a well put together environment where the social and ethical rules are clear and strict while the characters state implies losing one self and not following these rules, the combination of the two brings out the differences and shows how far these two words are from each other and yet these people are in a never ending chase to achieve it all.

SPECULATIVE SOCIETY: POLITICAL SPECTRUM

The political spectrum describes our speculative environment through axes (figure 2). One axis is the universal basic income versus capitalism. and the other is abstention versus what we have defined as a bulimia of pleasure. Our focus is on the range between capitalism and what we have called “bulimia of pleasure”. We call it bulimia because just like bulimic

people lose control over their eating habits, while the people we are talking about lose control after work hours. This range between seeking pleasure and extreme capitalism creates this impossible situation of chasing your own tail, of people who work all day and break all boundaries after work. A work hard play hard culture that never stops.



SPECULATIVE DESIGN PROPOSAL

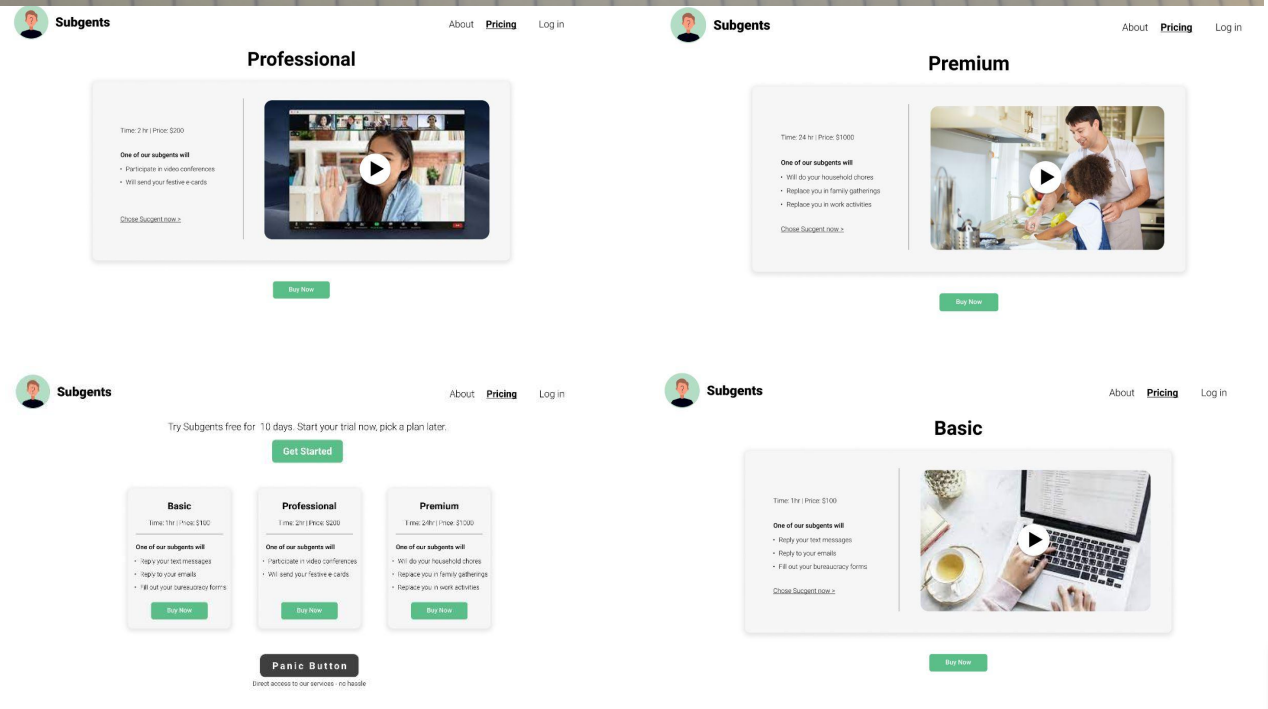
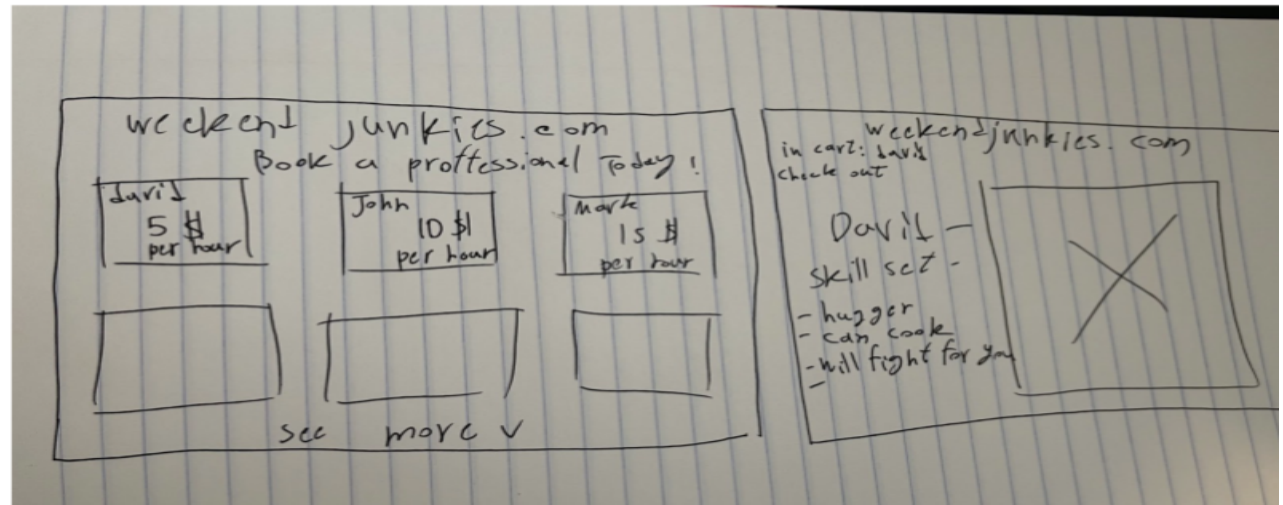
Everything we learned and brainstormed was taken into consideration in our process of finding a fitting product. Numerous diegetic prototypes were discussed; An app that rates your social status according to how many rituals you've completed, Seating in public places is affected by the numbers of your followers on social media and more.

The concept of Nomination was the inspiration and starting point which took us to a path of exploitation using questions that were raised along the road and our collage. The main thing that intrigued us is the dissonance between the workplace and after work life and so a product to emphasize this idea was needed. We then asked ourselves what if there was a platform that allowed people to perform their rituals and release stress while someone else was doing their day to day tasks?

Our chosen prototype was weekendjunkies.com that later turned into Subgents, A platform of agents who will replace people in their day-to-day pursuit so that they can unload the burden of the day. see the initial mock up and some of the product screens (figure 3+4).

Asking ourselves, what kinds of futures could we create by paying agents to replace us? And where does the line cross? An agent who will answer your WhatsApp call on your behalf? Zoom? Or maybe hire an agent to go to bed with your wife?

In terms of the A/B manifesto [1] we wish to describe our design proposal as social fiction, something that makes us think and using provocation, it creates an alternative world to the existing one and it changes society to fit the world rather than changing the world to fit society.



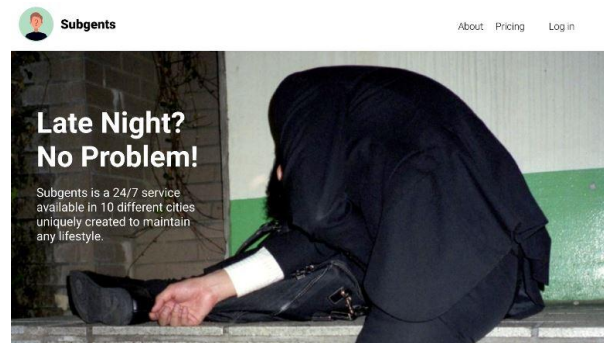
DIEGETIC PROTOTYPE VIDEO

In the final prototype video the flow of the imaginary platform is shown. There are three pricing options- basic, professional and premium. In the basic one a subgent will answer your whatsapp messages, emails or anything text related. In the professional package a subgent will participate on your zoom calls for you using deep fake technology, and in the premium package he will physically replace you in your home, do all your daily chores for you, even with your wife and kids. The video suggests an alternative world where it is normal for other people to take over your life for you, even with the most intimate and precious moments. The way the product is designed and presented in the video is similar to other products today such as Fivver which makes it even more believable and normalizes a ridiculous situation.

DISCUSSION

Hiring someone to replace you with certain tasks is not an unusual phenomena, many people pay money to a maid, or babysitter, while they themselves are at work, which is absurd in itself. But this speculative project is different in two ways. 1. It takes things a few steps further 2. The idea of allowing strangers to enter our home just to unload all the toll we have gained at work is the essence of this speculative work and where work becomes interesting. This work brings to discussion people boundaries, perhaps identifies them, and allows people to imagine themselves in this place of giving up all intimacy and friendship all in the name of the capitalist chase. The project shed light on what we may become as a society if boundaries won't be set. The project dehumanizes not only the users but also the subgents, people who are willing to work in pretending to be someone they are not - all in the name of the chase. This capitalist chase is more sacred than anything else and everyone is working for it and disregards real values like family and the option of a calm and happy life. We as society forgot what the essence of being content and

happy is. This brings to notion a never ending regression where no one is pleased and can never leave the hamster wheel created. In this constant chase where does tradition values stand? Where lies the importance of family? The importance of inner peace? It almost seems like people are willing to give up on it all just to stay in this impossible chase after status and pleasure.



CONCLUSION

In modern society with the growth of social media, social status and capitalism is stronger than ever. The need to have the perfect career and perfect family is everywhere. New media also provides a sense of immediate pleasure, everything you desire is one delivery away and with time passing these services are getting bigger and faster. More and more of those services are created to answer that need for constant pleasure. These products are costly and require the average human to have the funds to cover it. This combination creates this impossible chase after status and pleasure which causes people to never stop chasing their own tails. Work hours are long and hard in order to achieve it and some societies are desperate for release or some sort of help to get them through another work day. Life is stressful, there are only 24/h a day and it is getting less and less the more our world strengthens this absurd capitalist culture. This article focuses on the japanese culture where people almost act like corporate

robots during the day and like a completely different person at night when they participate in rituals involving drinking with co workers, this has become a part of their day to day activities. The product presented in this article is based on this notion and more. Future research may include other societies and their habits around work and after work hours, in Ireland for example 44% of irish workers admit to having been drunk at work [7], or The Czech Republic, that has the highest consumption per person of beer and has held this title for the past 18 years [8] and more. Other possible research may include studying social work groups and behaviors and the connection to everyday life.

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