

Don't get the halibut cheeks!

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STOP PANIC BUYING AND START LIVING WITH THE HELP OF AN AMAZON ALEXA SKILL AND A COLLAGE TOOLKIT

PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study differentiates between impulse buying (driven by whim) and panic buying (driven by fear). It proposes a way to prevent panic buying and related behaviors, such as hoarding (Byas, 2020; Nassauer, 2020; Nicas, 2020). In line with recent design research (Antin, 2020; Hoolohan & Browne, 2020), the proposed design intervention combines an Amazon Alexa Skill (conversational AI) with a Collage Toolkit (participatory design) to empower consumers to take their grocery shopping decisions into their own hands. This two-part intervention was designed to benefit both individual consumers and the communities to which they belong.

OBJECTIVES/PURPOSE

1. **Understand** panic buying behavior during a pandemic.
2. **Empower** consumers with knowledge about their grocery buying options.
3. **Transform** panic buying tendencies into healthier behaviors.

METHODOLOGY

This study used the following experience design methods (Sanders & Stappers, 2013):

1. **Say Method:** An unstructured interview with the design researcher's husband uncovered some thoughts and feelings tied to grocery shopping during a pandemic.
2. **Do Method:** Observations (both participant observation and observation of the design researcher's husband) revealed behaviors related to meal planning and grocery shopping during a pandemic.
3. **Make Method:** A collaging workshop with the design researcher's husband helped visualize the participants' grocery wish list.

Designed to be used in tandem with the Amazon Alexa Flash Briefing Skill, the Collage Toolkit developed for the Make Method can be applied to other scenarios in which consumers want to chart out their wish list before they leave the house. Materials for a physical collage include paper of any size and color, any kind of writing utensils, and scissors. Instead of or in combination with analog methods, digital tools such as [Metaverse](#) and [Padlet](#) could also be used effectively.

DESIGN INTERVENTION

Amazon Alexa Flash Briefing Skill

[This skill](#) delivers current data pertaining to food supply shortages and grocery-related news updates. Equipped with this information, consumers can make more educated shopping decisions rather than feeling panicked to buy food that they don't really want or need.

Collage Toolkit

Designed to be used in tandem with the Amazon Alexa Flash Briefing Skill, the Collage Toolkit presented in the Methodology section helps consumers map out their grocery wish list before they leave the house. This two-part intervention empowers consumers to make reasonable buying choices in an otherwise stressful and unstable shopping environment.

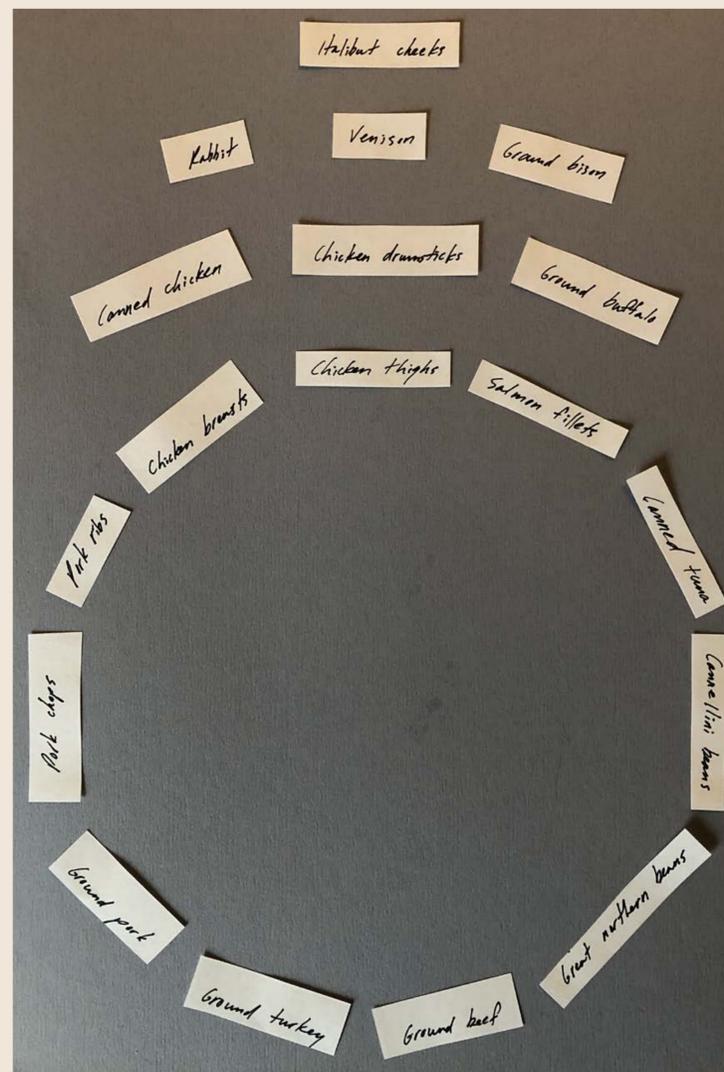


Photo from the design researcher's collaging workshop with her husband, in which participants labeled, cut out, and arranged pieces of paper to visualize the most desired food (bottom circle) to the least desired food (progressing up and away from the bottom circle) in a particular category (protein)

CONCLUSIONS

The Amazon Alexa Flash Briefing Skill, combined with the Collage Toolkit, equips consumers with the information they need to make educated food buying decisions. By using conversational AI in conjunction with participatory design to plan meals and prepare to shop for groceries, consumers gain confidence in navigating the stressful and unstable food landscape that accompanies a pandemic such as COVID-19. And by transforming fearful behaviors such as panic buying and hoarding into healthier ones, consumers transform themselves and their communities to lead healthier, happier, more productive lives.

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