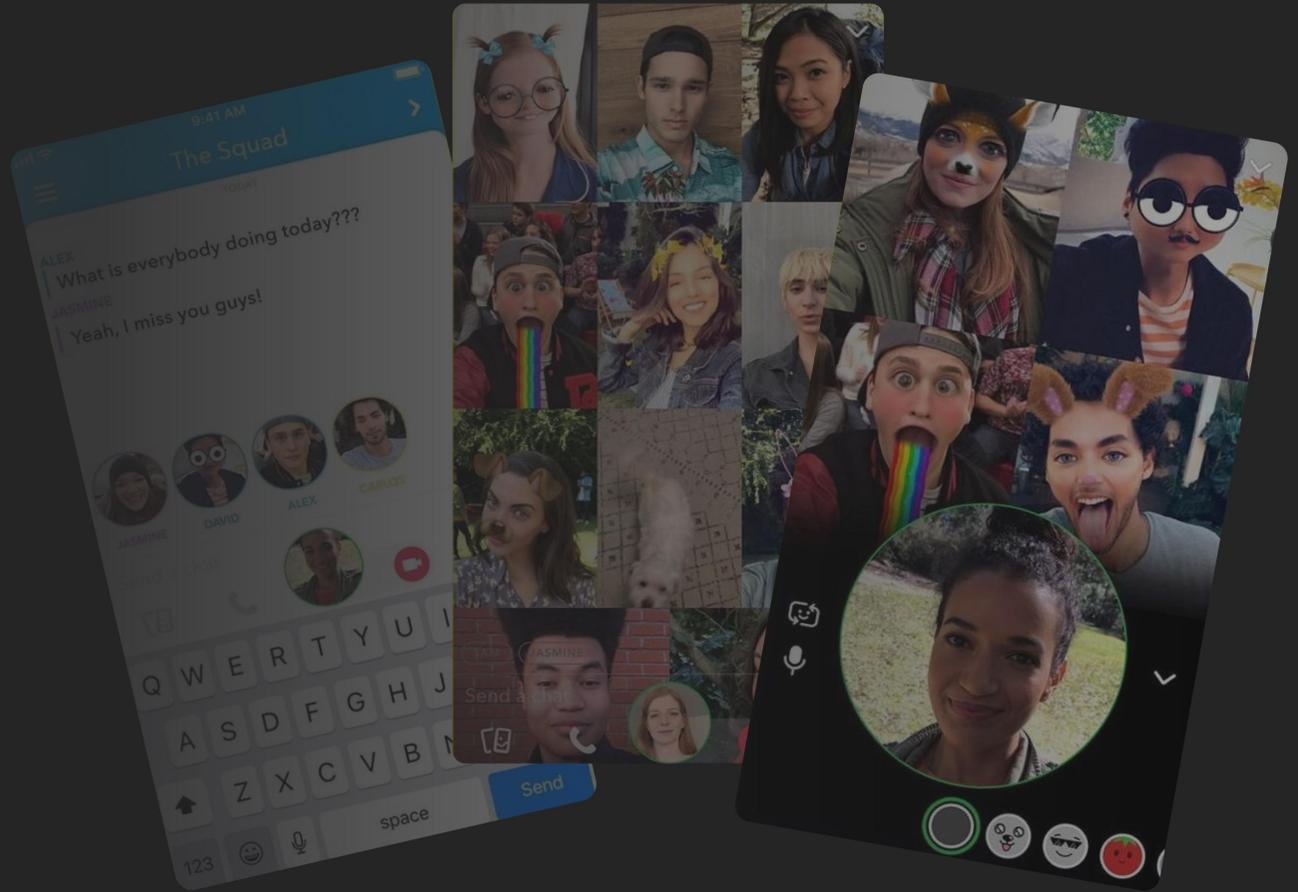
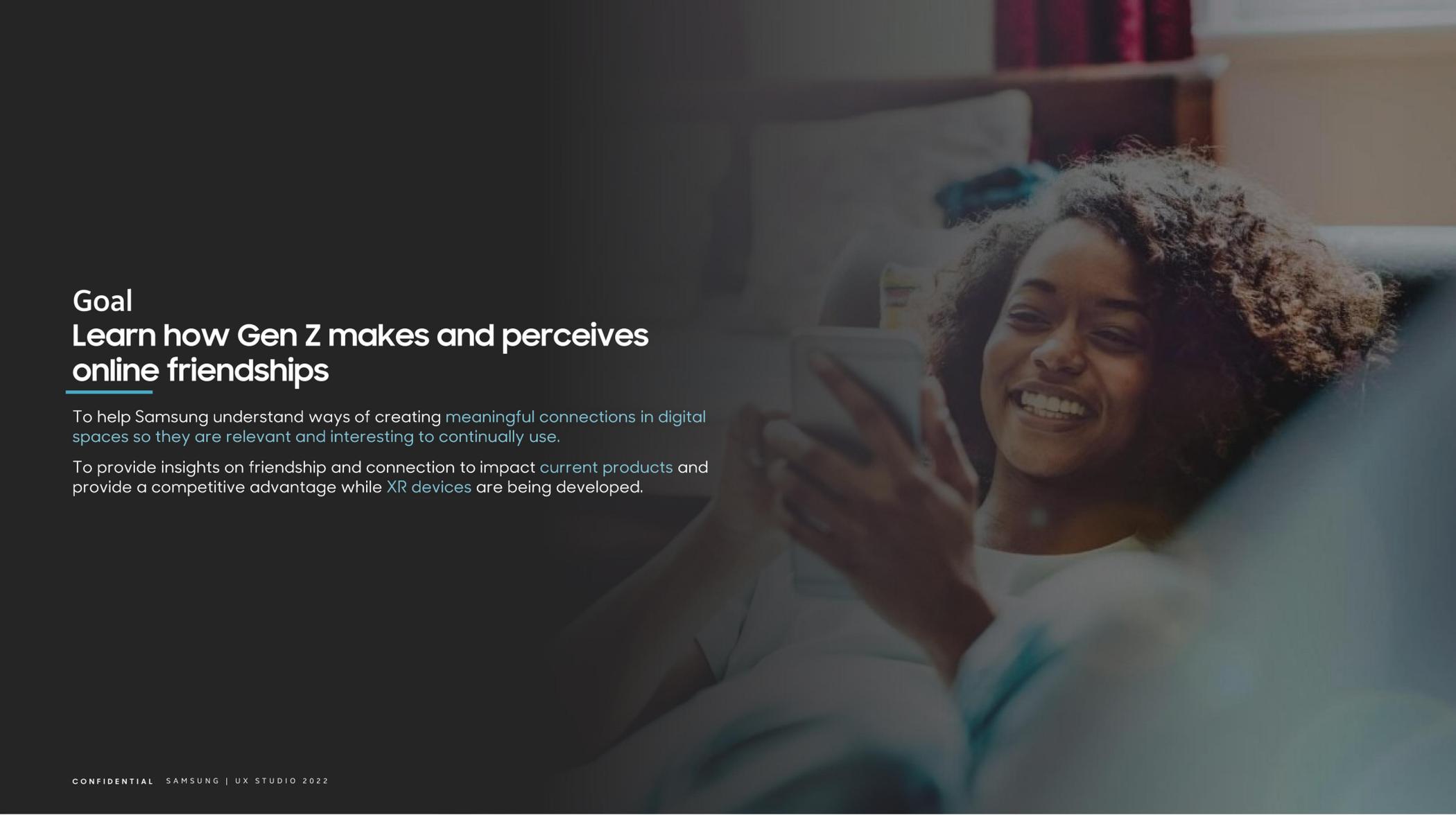


Gen Z & Online Friendship

October 2022

1 Goals



A young woman with curly hair is smiling and looking at her smartphone. The background is a blurred indoor setting, possibly a bedroom or living area. The overall tone is warm and positive.

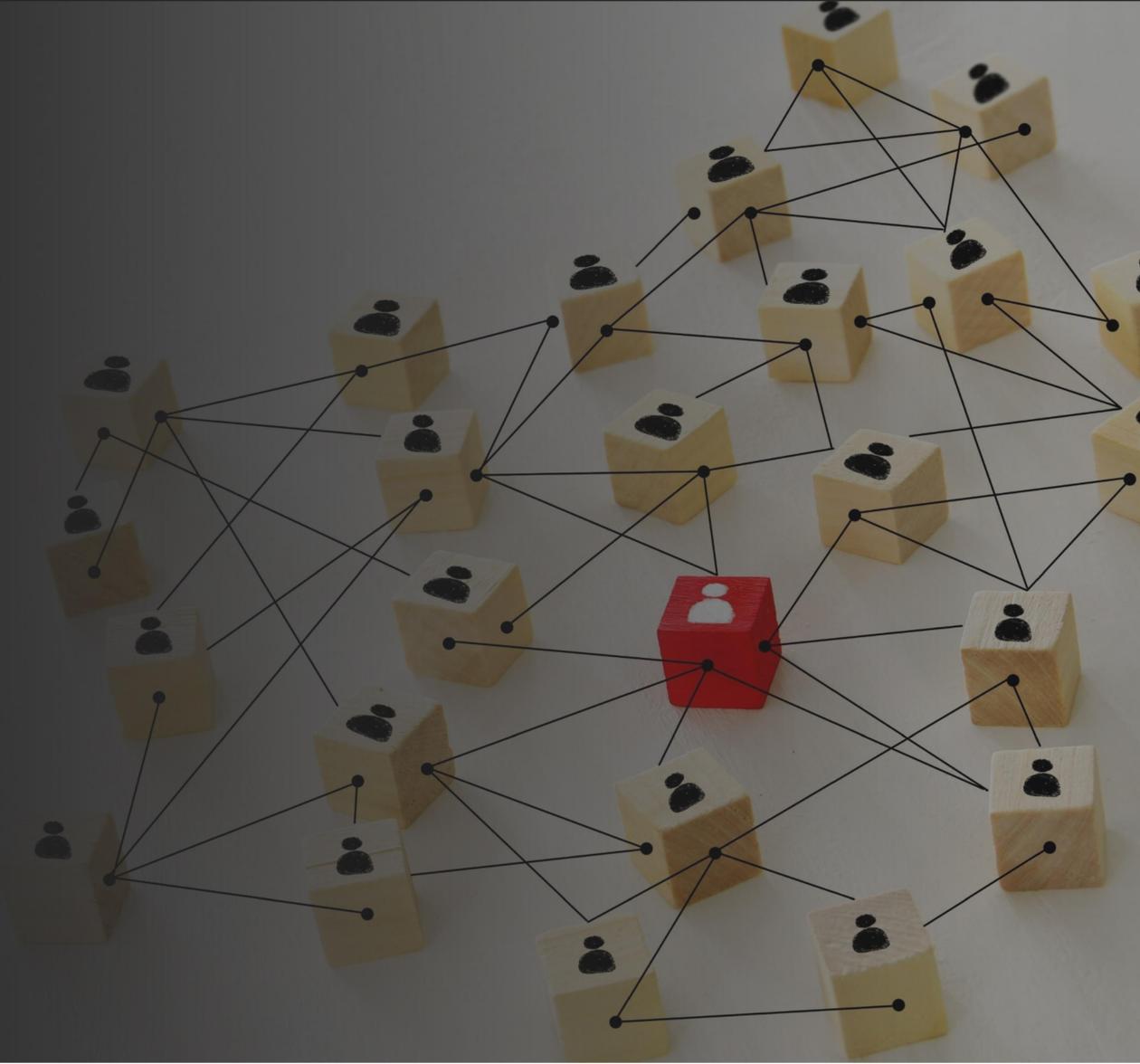
Goal

Learn how Gen Z makes and perceives online friendships

To help Samsung understand ways of creating meaningful connections in digital spaces so they are relevant and interesting to continually use.

To provide insights on friendship and connection to impact current products and provide a competitive advantage while XR devices are being developed.

2 Signals



Gen Z is using alternative online platforms and methods to socialize and make friends



Online gaming plays a large role in socializing and making friends.



The COVID Pandemic, isolation, and its impact on the generation's coming of age.



Gen Z's shift away from Facebook to TikTok, Instagram and, Snapchat.



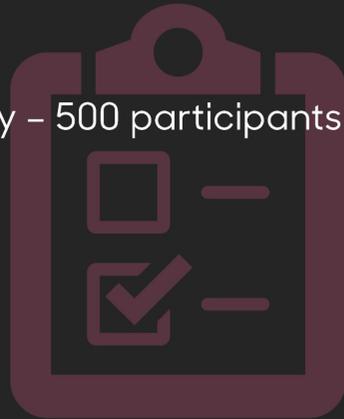
3 Method

Two phases of online research

Phase 1

Quantitative survey – 500 participants

Online US dscout survey



Phase 2

Qualitative diary – 98 Gen Z participants

Online US dscout diary



Phase 1 – All generations

Quantitative survey – 500 participants

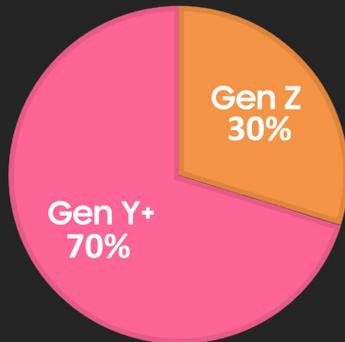
Online US dscout survey



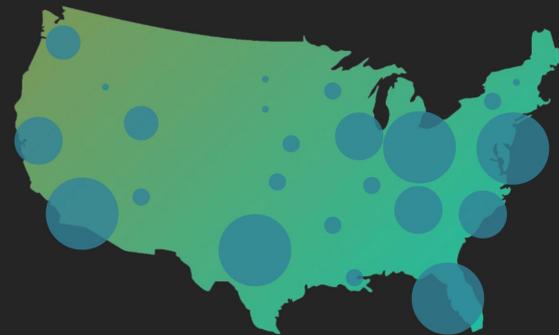
Goals

- Investigate which **apps and services are used** when making friends online.
- Understand if **online friendships are valued**.
- Understand **differences between Gen Z and older generations** – Y, X, and Boomer (Gen Y+), when making friends online.

Generational Breakdown



Location



Phase 2 – Gen Z Focus

Qualitative diary – 98 Gen Z participants

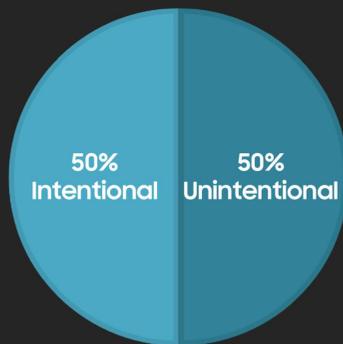
Online US dscout diary



Goals

- Overview of the online friend making experience for Gen Z.
- Understand what works or does not work in the process.
- Determine opportunity zones in online friendship for Gen Z.

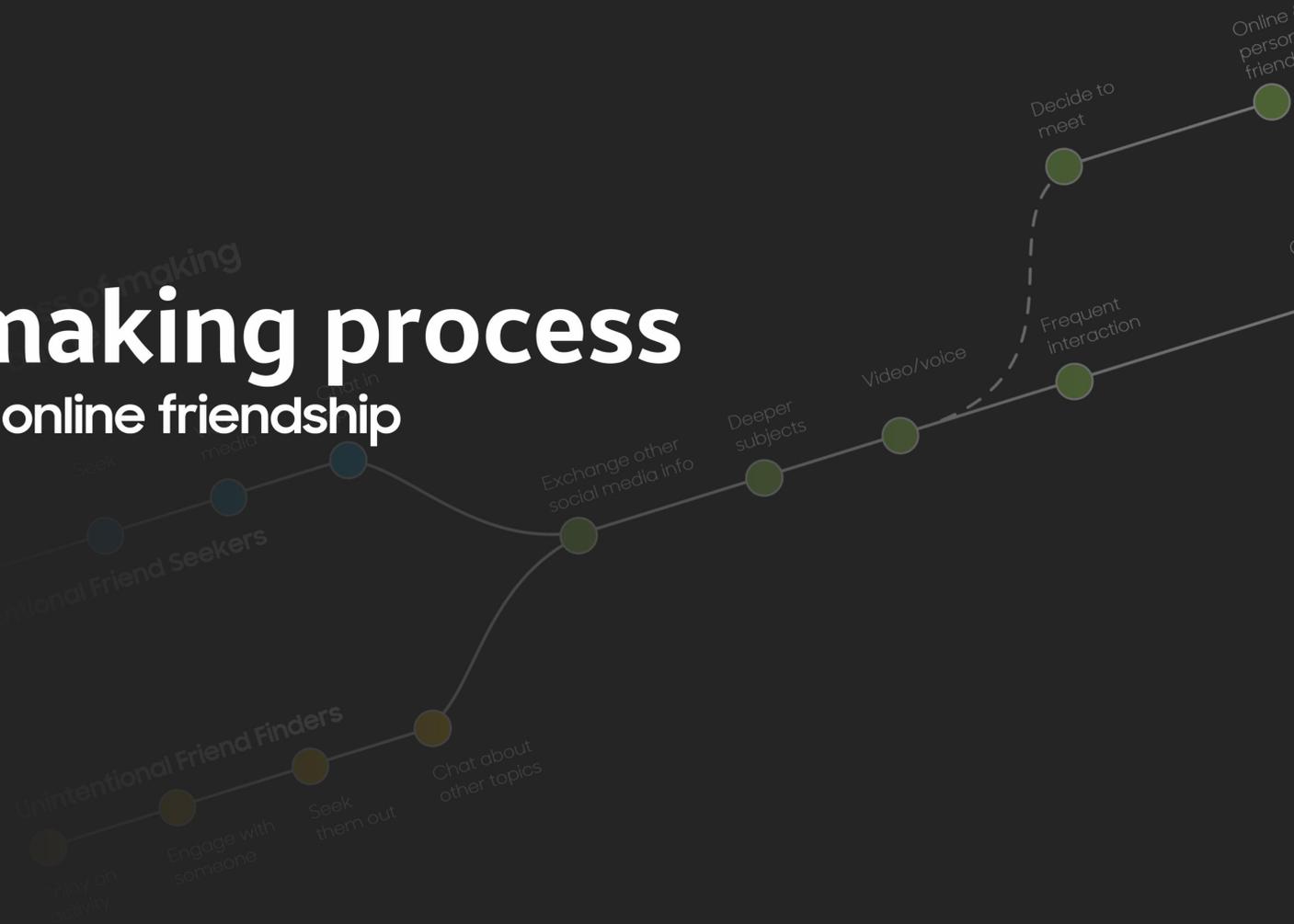
Intentional Friend Seekers versus Accidental Friend Finders



- Intentional Seekers – specifically looking to make friends online.
- Unintentional Finders – engaged in another activity (like gaming) and happened to make friends.
- Motivations for groups are different.
- Recruited each to understand if the experience was different.

4 The friend making process

An overview of Gen Z online friendship

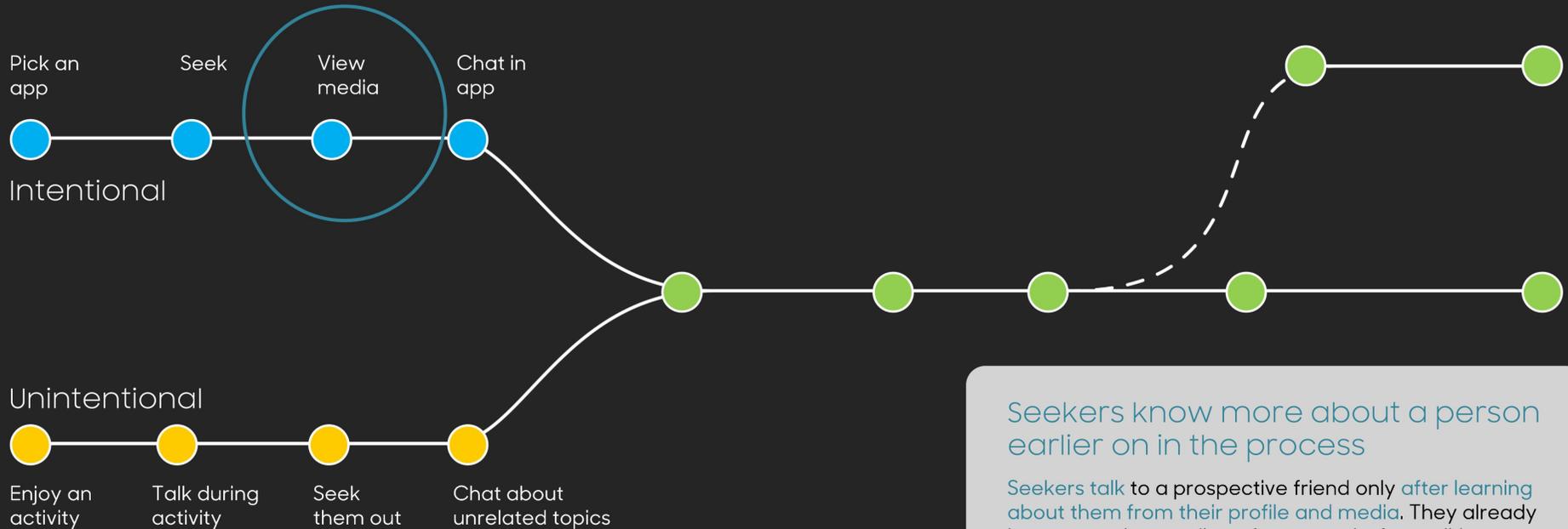


Online friendships are currently more important to Gen Z than other generations

45% of Gen Z responses indicated that online friendships are important to them, in comparison to just 36% of Gen Y+ (Gen Y/X/Boomer).

Online friendships are a way to explore the world that is low-cost and within Gen Z's means. Gen Z is still relatively young, in school, and may not have the time, money or autonomy to meet friends in real life.

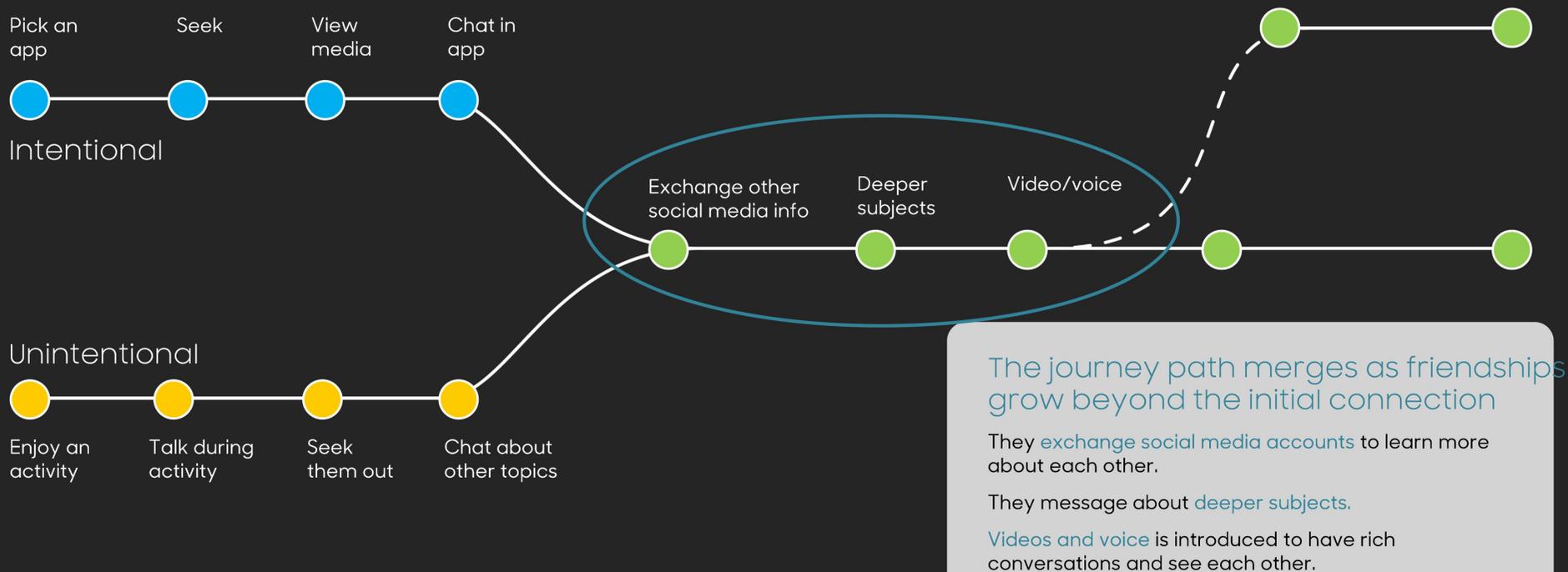
The process of making friends online



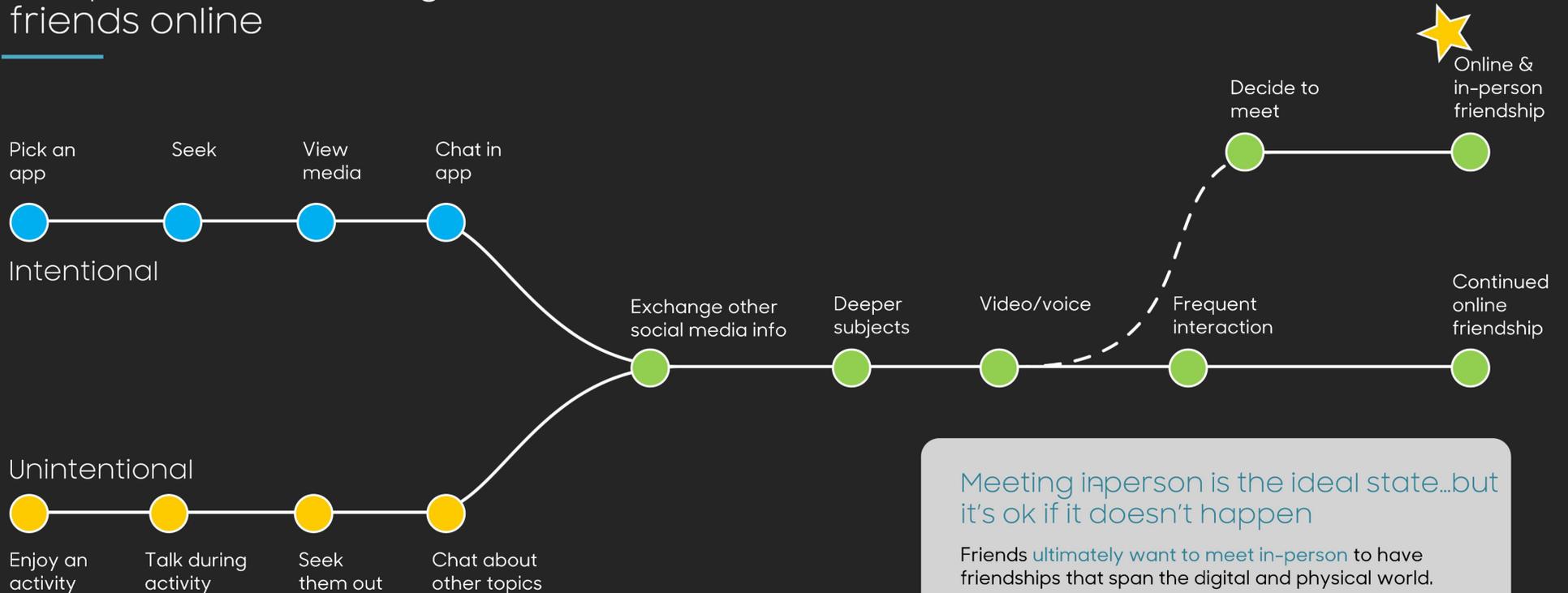
Seekers know more about a person earlier on in the process

Seekers talk to a prospective friend only **after learning about them from their profile and media**. They already have an understanding of a person before talking to them.

The process of making friends online



The process of making friends online



Meeting inperson is the ideal state...but it's ok if it doesn't happen

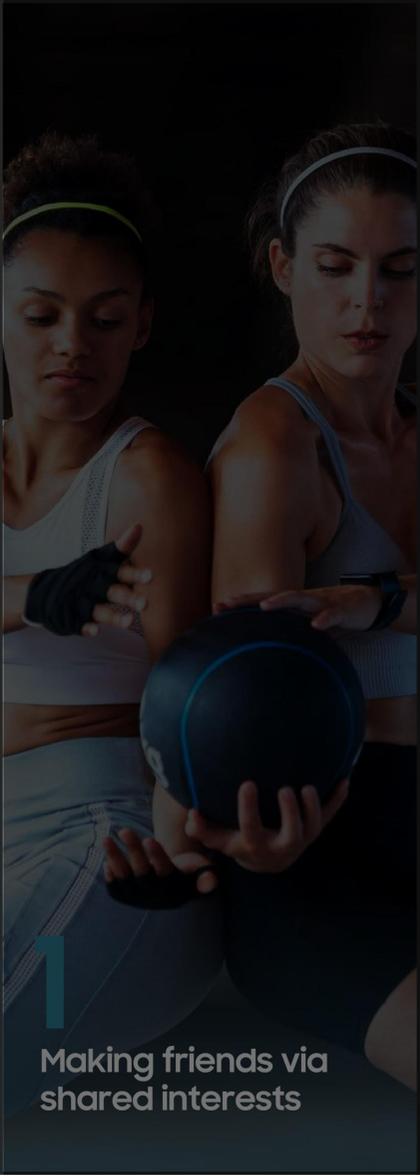
Friends ultimately want to meet in-person to have friendships that span the digital and physical world.

If they can't meet in person, it's ok. Gen Z has grown up knowing online-only friends - this is normal and common.



Top five insight zones

Gen Z and online friendship



1

Making friends via shared interests



2

Slowly opening up and wanting to stay safe



3

Online communication hasn't adapted



4

Real-life barriers to online friendship



5

Online friendships span apps and identities

53

The unmet communication needs of online friendship

Online communication methods haven't adapted to online friendship, leaving Gen Z with unmet needs. Even when friends have common interests they may need help talking; there are times when the conversation may not convey emotion properly or starts to wane. Frequent, rich, and safe means of communication is needed to help friendships grow, or else it will wither.



5.3 The unmet communication needs of online friendships

Friends want clearer and more emotive ways of communicating

Text and emoji lack cues and depth that help convey meaning and emotion, however safety and fear keep new friends using text-based communication longer than they want.



Did the 🧚 of 💖 have any 💎 in her 🧚? She probably did. I know she had a pet 🦁, 🐯, and 🐼. She also spent a lot of 💰 on 👠 and 💍 too!

Text and emoji don't adequately convey emotion

"I feel like conveying tone is much more difficult over text. I'm good at joking around and gushing how others feel in person, but text, I don't know if my jokes will land or if they get what my emoji mean." Ren B.



Moving too quickly is considered creepy behavior

"It's awkward to ask for some other method [of communicating] because we both realize that creepy people on the internet exist. I want to interact with them in different ways but I don't wanna rock the boat and risk losing them." Aneil M.

5.3 The unmet communication needs of online friendships

Conversations end because friends can't think of what to say or how to respond

Keeping a conversation going can be hard, **not having a new comment or topic means chatting stops.**

Being confronted with **not knowing what to say** can cause a friend to respond **in-authentically** or **take a very long time** to think of a response.

In both cases, if the pause lasts too long there can be a negative affect on the relationship.



Not being sure of how to reply to a message means not responding

"I wish for automatic suggestion of what to reply back to the texts. Sometimes...you have to think of what to reply to the person so you forget."
Elaine P

5.3 The unmet communication needs of online friendships

Deep personal conversations happen and people need supportive spaces for them

Serious conversations cover topics like mental health. These discussions need to take place in **a safe space that effortlessly conveys emotion and intent** so friends can **focus on giving each other support** without worrying how something may have come across.



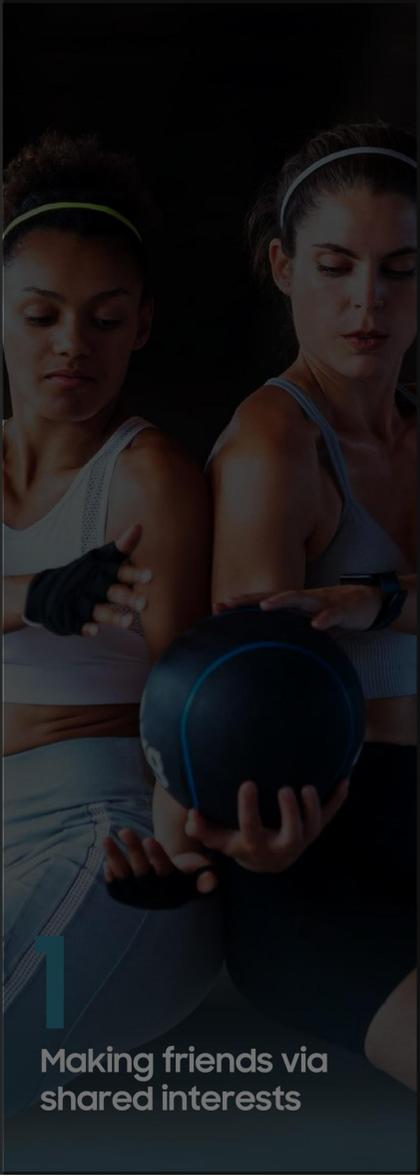
Communication must convey the emotional support friends give for serious issues

"I have talked to [my online friends] very seriously about my mental health, about the way I am feeling about different things in my life. And they have done the same with me." - Stacey S.



Sharing deeply personal stories help friends cope and form stronger bonds

"We really connected over pain and mental health and, you know, going through a dark spot. That's how we really meshed and connected" - Sara A.



1

Making friends via shared interests



2

Slowly opening up and wanting to stay safe



3

Online communication hasn't adapted



4

Real-life barriers to online friendship



5

Online friendships span apps and identities

Overcoming real life barriers to online friendships

Because of their relatively young age, Gen Z is bound by many constraints.

Whether just out of college or in school, Gen Z doesn't have a lot of time or disposable income, making meeting new friends in real life hard.

Younger Z's are further restricted by school schedules and parental rules



5.4 Overcoming real-life barriers to online friendships

Online friends want to share moments in real-time but face barriers to being online together

Friends desire to connect in real-time to share moments together. Work, school, and family obligations get in the way, especially for Gen Z'ers who are in school or inflexible entry level jobs.

Living in very different time zones further complicates being able to talk in real-time.



Friendships span the globe – one friend may be asleep while the other is awake

"We live about 10 hours apart, though both in the US. The ability to video chat isn't present because of those time zone differences." Lucie E.



Inflexible schedules prevent them from being online at the same time

"I wish that our schedules lined up more! He works and I'm a full time student, so our schedules can be a bit off." – Nakia B.

5.4 Overcoming real-life barriers to online friendships

Online friends really want to meet in-person but are unable to

Online friends would love to meet and have online + in-person friendships. **Distance and money are barriers for online friends to travel and meet, especially for cash strapped and time constrained Gen Z'ers.**



Meeting is a key goal for online friends but distance is a huge problem

"I would wish we could teleport and meet up and hang out in person. That is the only thing that is missing I feel like." Shachar W.



Money is the biggest barrier to overcoming distance

"I wish I had more money! The only barrier is really distance, so if we both had more money, we would probably be able to hang out." Gabriella N.

5.4 Overcoming real-life barriers to online friendships

Distractions and forgetfulness spells death for conversations and friendships

Forgetting to respond isn't intentional. **Real life** **distracts friends and they forget to respond.** If a conversation languishes too long the **friendship can fall apart**, this is especially true for new friends.



Getting distracted by **higher priorities in real life**

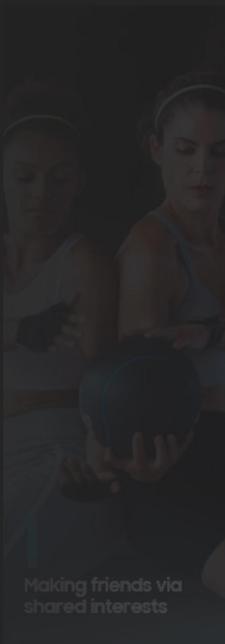
"I wish I had a cadence reminder in which to speak to one another. We often hermit for months at a time [due to work] and forget to speak." - Mia M.



When the **conversation stops relationships end**

"I'm so flaky. Like I forget to message back. They forget the message in return. You know, the relationship just kind of falls apart." Lydia R.

6 Summaries



5.3 The unmet communication needs of online friendships

Summary

Online communication methods haven't adapted to online friendship, leaving Gen Z with unmet needs. There are times when the conversation may not convey emotion properly or starts to wane. Frequent, rich, and safe means of communication is needed to help friendships grow, or else it wither.

Gen Z's top communication needs

New friends want clearer and more emotive ways of communicating

Text and emoji lack cues and depth that help convey meaning and emotion, however safety and fear keep new friends using text-based communication longer than they want.

Conversations end because friends can't think of what to say or how to respond

Keeping a conversation going can be hard, not having a new comment or topic means talking stops. Being confronted with not knowing what to say can cause a friend to respond inauthentically or take a long time to respond. In both cases, if the pause lasts too long there is a negative impact on the relationship.

Deep personal conversations need a safe space

Conversations cover serious topics like mental health. These discussions need to take place in a safe space that effortlessly conveys emotion and intent so friends can focus on giving each other support without worrying how something may have come across.

5.4 Overcoming real-life barriers to online friendships

Summary

Gen Z doesn't have a lot of time or disposable income, making meeting new friends in real life hard. These challenges prevent them from connecting when they want and responding when they mean to. **Friends need help staying connected when time, money, and memory get in the way.**

Top real-life barriers for Gen Z

Schedules prevent online friends from sharing moments in real-time together

Friends desire to connect in real-time to share moments together. Work, school, and family obligations get in the way. Living in very different time zones further complicates being able to talk in real-time.

Online friends really want to meet in-person but are unable to

Online friends would love to meet and have online + in-person friendships. Distance and money are barriers for online friends to travel and meet, especially for cash strapped and time constrained Gen Z'ers.

Distractions and forgetfulness spells death for conversations and friendships

Forgetting to respond isn't intentional. Real life distracts friends and they forget to respond. If a conversation languishes too long the friendship can fall apart, this is especially true for new friends.