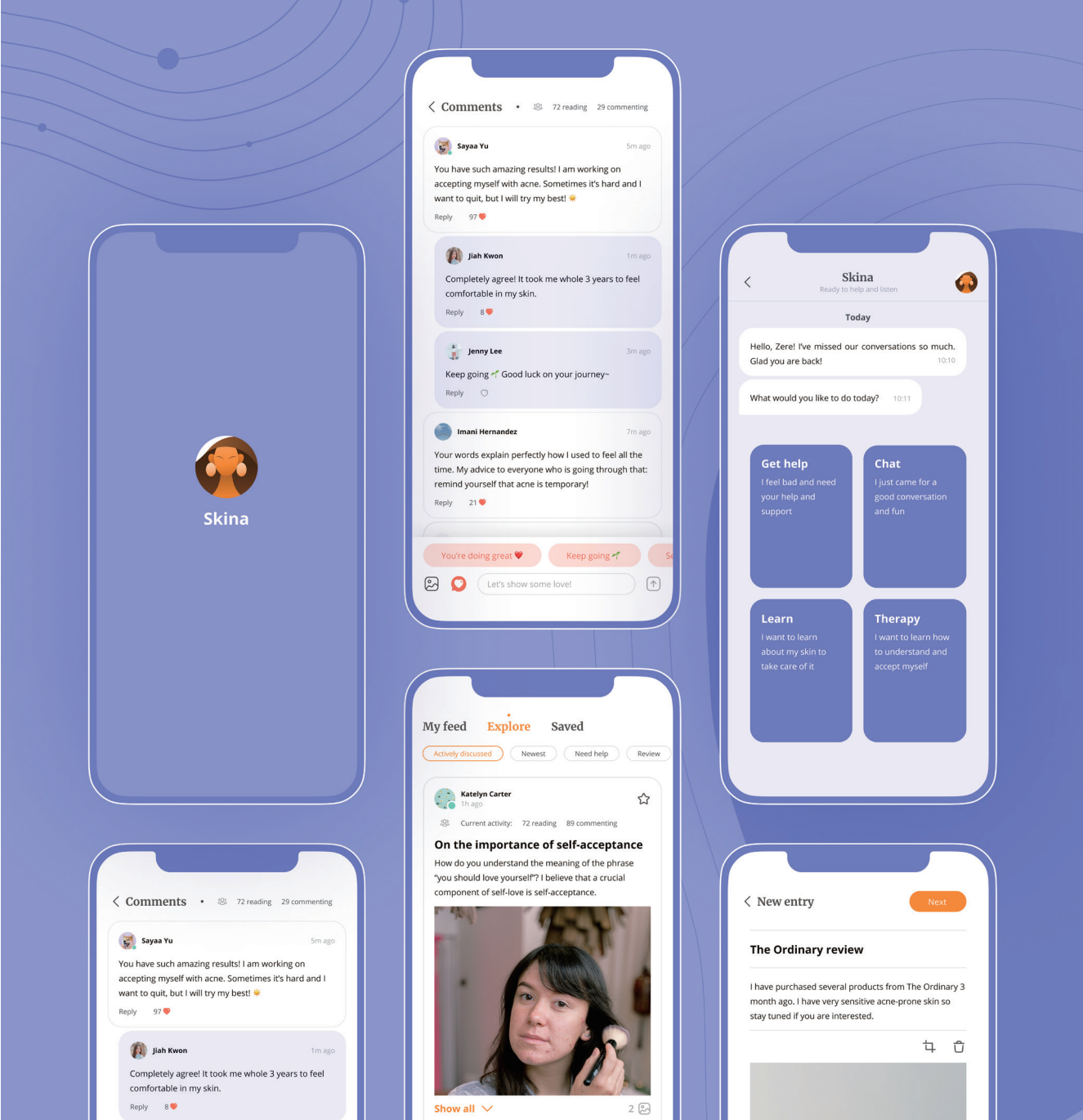# Skina

Togzhan's Letter

Thank you for spending some of your precious time reading this Chronicles. I hope my work will help students who decided to design digital products and services while majoring in Industrial Design.

It will be challenging and demanding, but I want you to remember that you are not alone! Other students did it, so will you. Even though we had fewer chances to learn UI and UX design, we can do the great design if we try.

Also, don't feel discouraged if your work doesn't match your vision and expectations. Just do your best, and you will see what will happen after some time.

Skina

; a mobile social media platform

Togzhan Kussainova

Department of Design
+7.778.166.2163
tgzhn1@gmail.com
tgzhn1.myportfolio.com

Skina was born with a mission of reducing the challenges acne poses to people. Skina provides a safe place for people with acne to share and record anything related to their skin condition, as well as get emotional support and learn to embrace their skin through conversations with artificial intelligence.

Background

Acne vulgaris is a complex chronic skin condition characterized by lesions, or "pimples," mostly on the face, back, and upper chest. It maintains a top 3 skin condition among the general population, by estimates being experienced by 80% of people. During the last 20 years, there was slow progress in finding and developing effective acne treatment. The exact cause of the disease remains unknown. Yet, there are countless standard and alternative medical remedies to control its symptoms - lesions, as at the moment, there's no single definite cure to get rid of acne completely. Even if the one with acne has clear skin for a while, it doesn't guarantee that lesions won't appear in the future.

Multiple studies point out that acne affects more than skin. The unpredictable course of the disease, struggle to find an effective treatment, and the negative perception of acne in society could cause psychological stress correlated with acne's severity. In turn, it may lead to low self-esteem, psychosocial and emotional impairments, and increased chances of developing anxiety and depression.

Skina

Those who surround people with acne tend to underestimate the amount of pain and frustration they have to deal with daily due to this condition. Having acne is already challenging for an individuum, which on top of that is complicated by tactless remarks, lack of emotional support, and discouragement to seek professional mental help.

Togzhan Kussainova

Concept

Skina is a mobile social media platform with target users being females in their 20s who struggle with acne.

Even though acne is maintained as a top 3 condition among the general population, many myths and misconceptions surround it due to the taboo's existence to show or mention acne. Skina encourages users to feel free to share or discuss anything related to acne and their skin. It's the first step in removing a feeling of shame for one's skin so that it becomes nothing more than a medical condition in the future.

Traditionally, social media platforms have a reputation as places where people try to look their best, and the retouch tools help achieve that. Even though people are aware of retouch existence and the fact that faces that appear on those photos don't exist in real life, they keep comparing themselves to nonexistent "perfect" faces. It results in frustration and self-esteem issues, and it's even more emotionally challenging for those with acne as they don't look like people who get praised on social media

Skina

for their looks. Skina aims to create a warm and empathetic atmosphere for its users, where each could enjoy themselves without competition. It's a place where you can be authentic to yourself.

The application has built-in artificial intelligence, whose name is Skina, and she cares deeply about well-being of her users. A journey to self-acceptance is hard and long. Sometimes there are ups and downs. Skina provides quick relief for those who experience low points because of acne and counseling to accept yourself with acne and not be affected by it anymore.

Because people with acne tend to be in a depressed mood frequently, there are bright colors to cheer them up. Violet color is a color of imagination and spirituality. It is mainly used when the user interacts with the AI intelligence to create a calm atmosphere for personal conversations.

Togzhan Kussainova

Iteration 1

Concept #1

The first concept that I implemented was resembling Reddit and was relying a lot on collective intelligence. Skina was supposed to be a platform where users post updates and progress on their acne treatment. Other users can control the quality of posts through the "up-vote/down-vote" system. In this way, posts that receive the highest number of "up-votes" (good quality or interesting posts) would appear in the feed more frequently. Users were given a reward point if the post they created was popular or actively participated in the community life. All user posts were stored in 2 types of diaries: private and public. Public diaries were visible to everyone, while private could be visible only to the user. Users were supposed to browse through the documented treatment of other users, get inspired by it, and try those methods themselves.

Skina

In the second iteration of my concept, the majority of things stayed the same. It was still supposed to be a platform for posts, where people could share their treatment stories, read stories of other people, and try those treatments themselves. There was still a diary and "up-vote/down-vote" system. I got rid of the point reward system as I thought it wasn't appropriate for my concept and was too childish. This time, I planned that there would be an AI chatbot Skina, who will support the user during a hard time, but interactions between Skina and user were not developed well. I also wanted to include an interaction where users could ask and answer questions of other users, thus helping each other find out what's going on with their skin or getting advice on the treatment.

Concept #2

Togzhan Kussainova
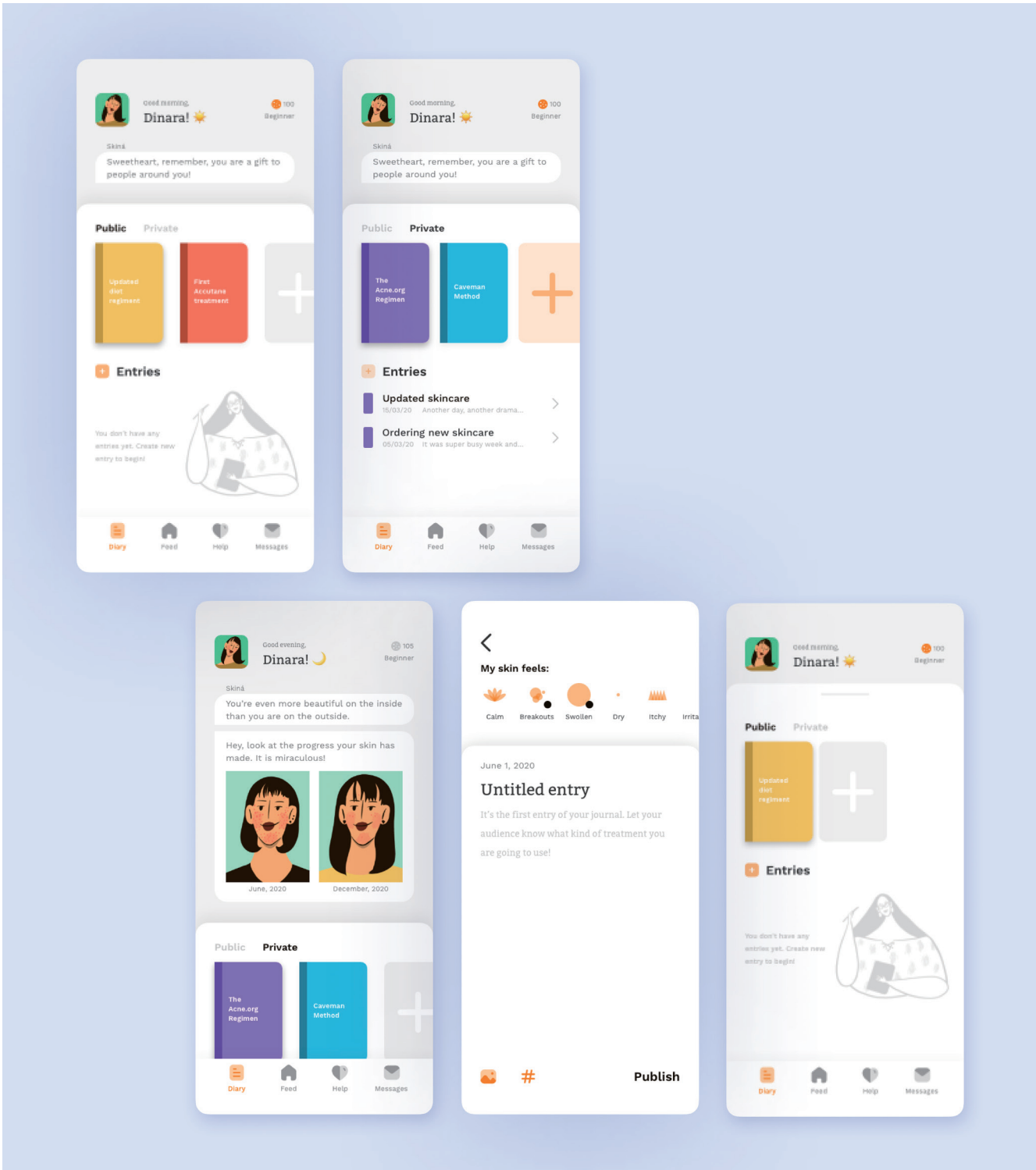
The first interface design (Concept #1)

In the first interface design attemot looked too bulcky for my taste. It also had a feature called "cookies" similar to Reddit "karma" points to reward its users for the community contribution. It was removed in all later versions.
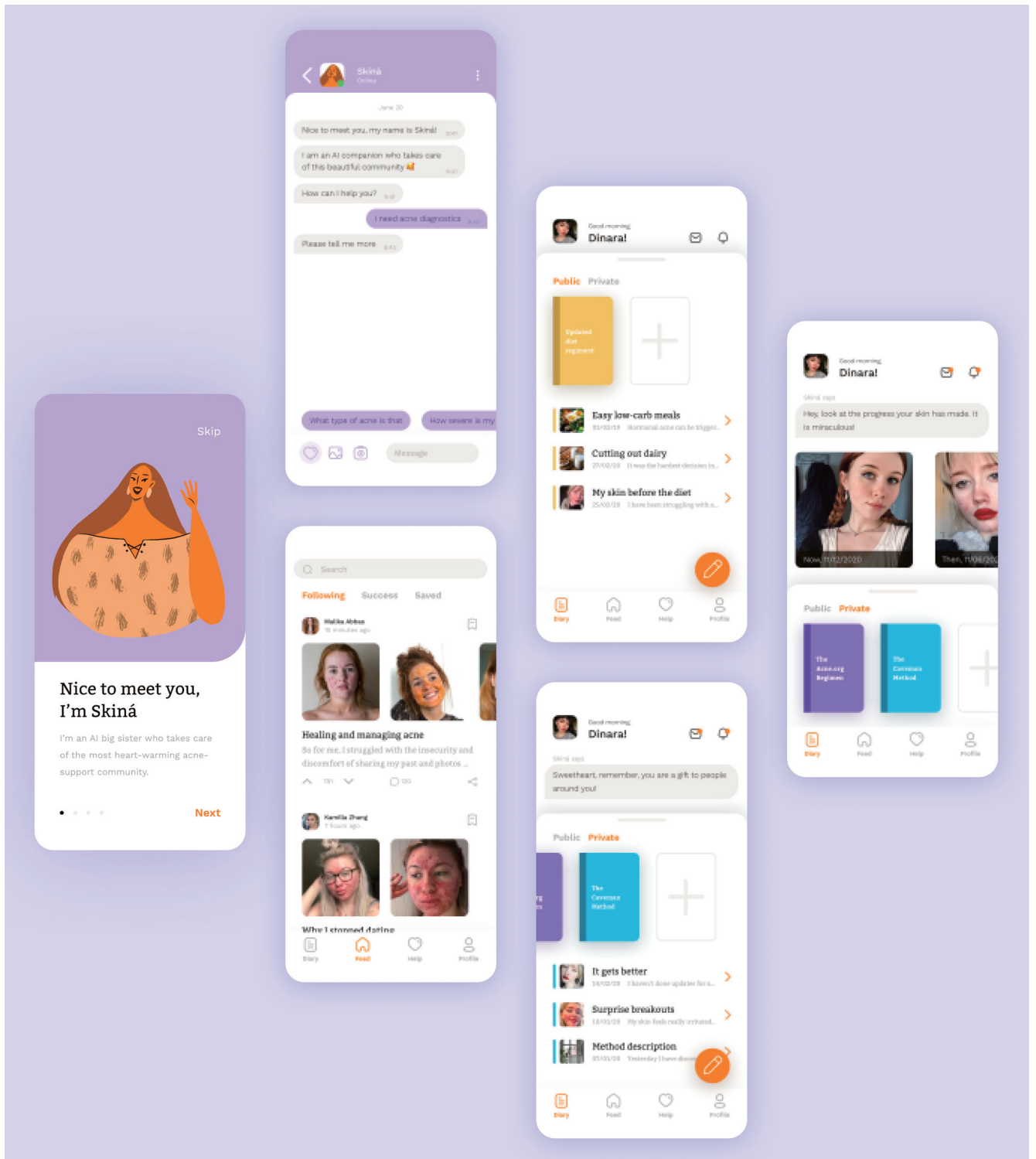
The second interface design (Concept #2)

The second interface design had a cleaner and modern feel. This version was created under a heavy Dribbble influence and would be very inconvenient to use. There was a feature (not showed on exhisting screens) to ask questions and give answers to community members, which wasn't implemented in the final version.

Iteration 2

Problem   As I completed iteration 1, I was not satisfied
with the outcomes I created. I have identified a
severe flaw in my previous design process. Even
though I had a design challenge and scope, I
researched the wrong direction. Therefore, during
the semester, I struggled to extract useful insights
from it. Suppose I wanted to help people to find an
effective holistic remedy through my application.
In that case, my research should have focused
on how people with acne search for remedies at
the moment to pinpoint existing problems in a
process and offer a valid solution. If you would
ask me what kind of problem I was trying to solve,
I couldn't answer you. I focused on how acne
affects people emotionally and what they do about
it, but it was still too broad and messy. Therefore, I
decided to do iteration #2.

Skina

Thus, I decided to define the problem once again. I initially wanted my application to help people accept themselves, but I think in iteration #1 I defined inappropriate design challenge. My newly defined design challenge: "How can I help people with acne to feel better about their acne?." I interviewed a psychologist to determine why people are bothered by acne and how does she help people feel better without healing acne.

Further steps

Togzhan Kussainova

Outcome

In the end, I created a mobile application concept that doesn't teach people how to manage their acne but rather how to accept themselves. You can read every decision explanation on the next few pages.
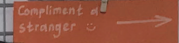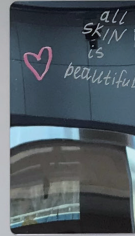
For the exhibition, I prepared posters, promotional and prototype demonstration videos, postcards, and interactive stand decorations.

For my stand, I wanted to create a feeling that you are in your bathroom in the morning, prepared to leave your home for a day, and you hear a soft inner voice telling you kind and encouraging words.

Skina
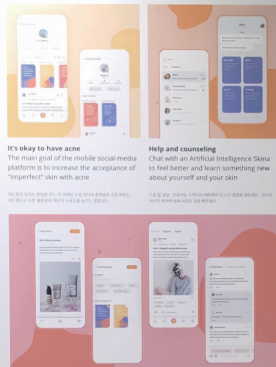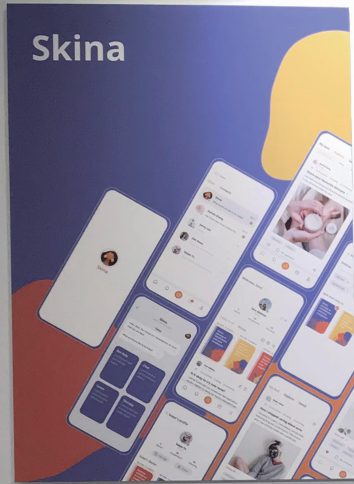
At the UNIST exhibition

Me and my child at the UNIST exhibition. I used some skincare products to decorate my stand. Because one of Skina's features is to give complimemts to users, visitors could write their compliments on a sticky note and attach them on the wall

01. Diaries

Each diary is beautiful and unique, just like each person's skin. At Skina, all posts created by a user are stored in diaries with a customizable design.

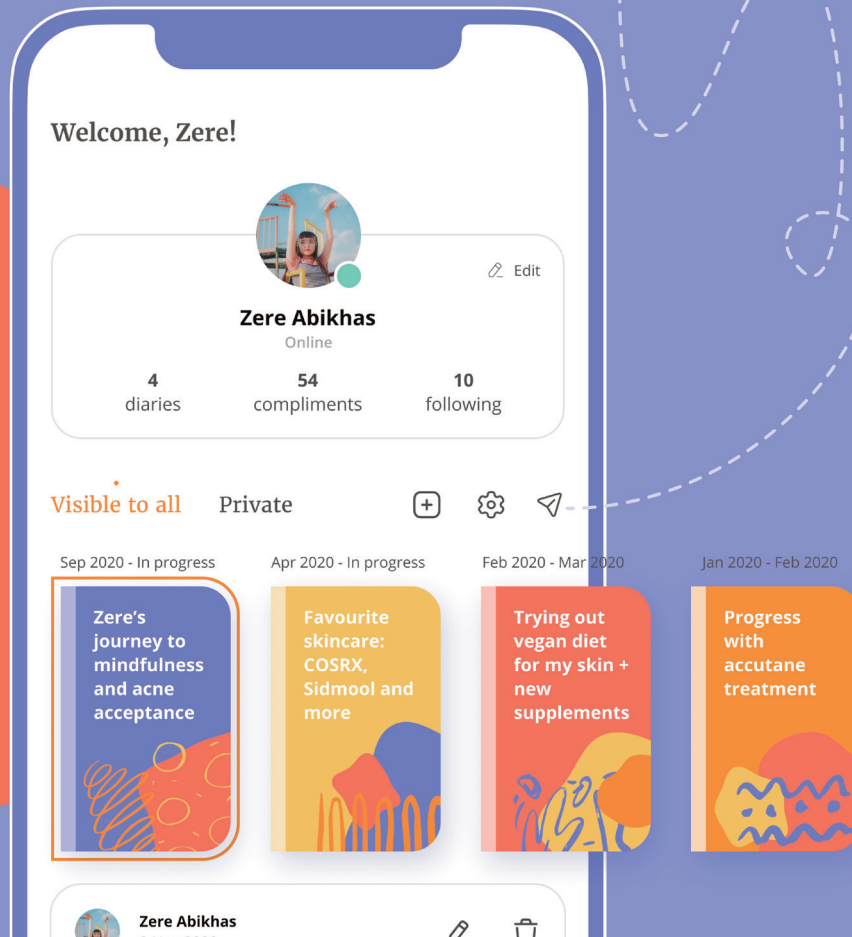Often, people have no idea how strongly acne is affecting their loved ones. Skina allows synchronizing a diary with a preferred instant messenger app so that family and friends can stay updated.

Skina

Acne is a sensitive and personal issue, and at first, some might feel uncomfortable opening up. Users control who can view their diary: all platform users or only themselves.

Welcome, Zere!

Zere Abikhas
Online

✎ Edit

| 4 | 54 | 10 |
| diaries | compliments | following |

Visible to all   Private

Sep 2020 - In progress   Apr 2020 - In progress   Feb 2020 - Mar 2020   Jan 2020 - Feb 2020

Zere's journey to mindfulness and acne acceptance

Favourite skincare: COSRX, Sidmool and more

Trying out vegan diet for my skin + new supplements

Progress with accutane treatment

Zere Abikhas

Crafting their own diary cover lets the users express themselves, be authentic, and make the diary truly their own.
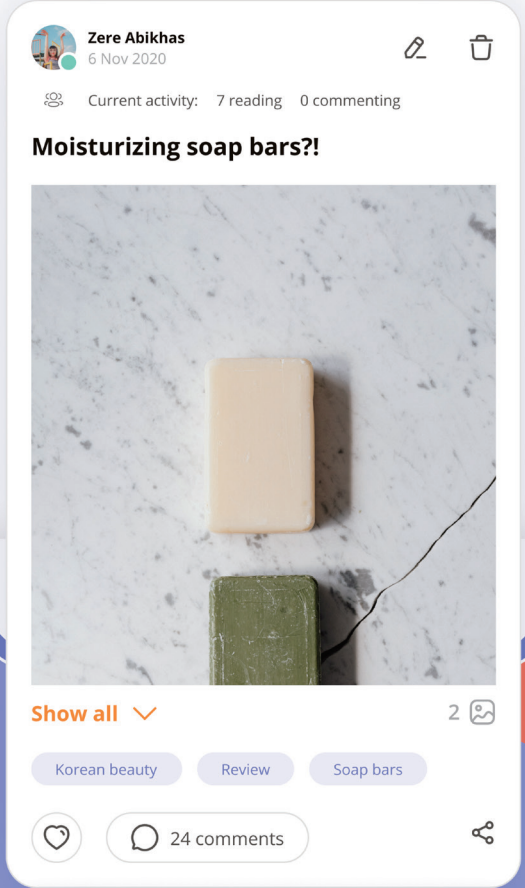
Posts written by users are called "entries". For user convenience, all related entries get stored in the same diary. Once in a while, the artificial intelligence Skina encourages users to re-read their past entries to practice mindfulness, as it is the first step on their journey to self-acceptance.
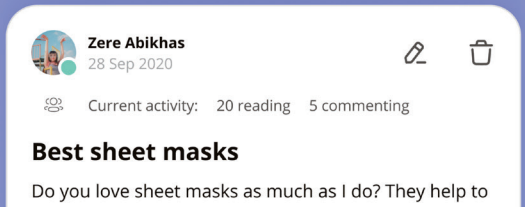
Togzhan Kussainova

There is a common fear of showing acne in daily life or on social media as "inappropriate". Writing entries encourages users to express their suppressed feelings and thoughts without being afraid of others' judgment.
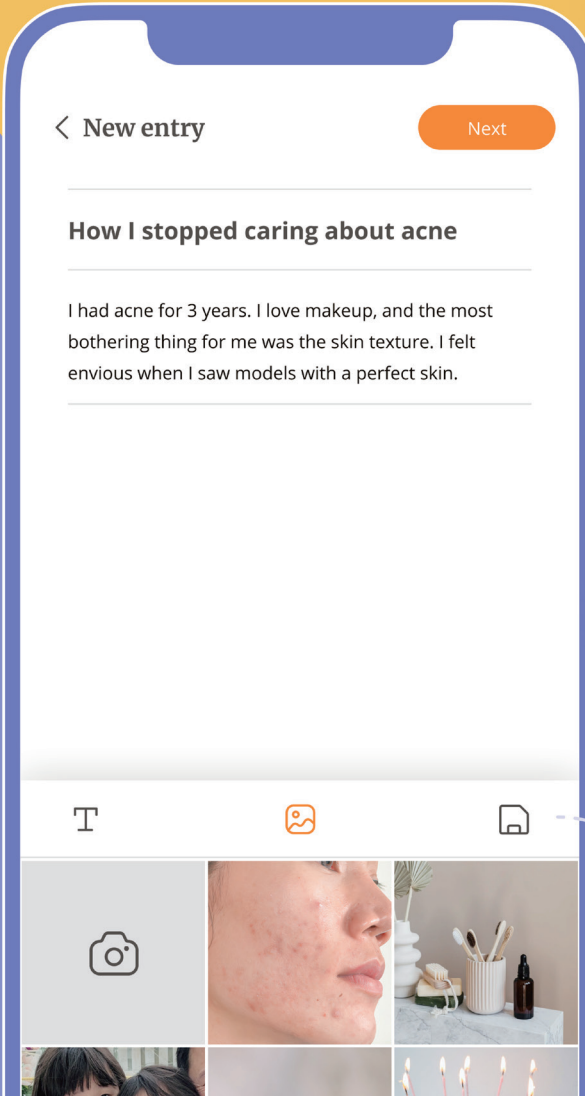
How I stopped caring about acne

I had acne for 3 years. I love makeup, and the most bothering thing for me was the skin texture. I felt envious when I saw models with a perfect skin.

That's how my skin looks these days. Some might say that it doesn't look that bad. However, it took me a lot of time and conscious effort to live my life and not be ashamed of my looks.

‹ **New entry**   Next

Skina

The entry editor is a minimalistic and effective tool for effortlessly creating posts of any length. The user decides how many paragraphs or images to include in a post. Unfinished posts get saved as drafts for later editing.

02. Entries

Acne adds its fair share of stress to life. Speak out on anything and release tension: from how acne affects you emotionally to the kind of treatment you are currently undergoing.

Labeling posts with appropriate hashtags helps to find relevant entries quickly and easily.

Written entries get posted to the feed, where others can view them; they are also saved to a diary for the users to reflect on their past journey.

Togzhan Kussainova

< **Final touches**   Share

Hashtags

Add 1 to 6 hashtags

Discussion ✕   Anxiety ✕   Acceptance ✕

Save new entry to

Zere's journey to mindfulness and acne acceptance

Favourite skincare: COSRX, Sidmool and more
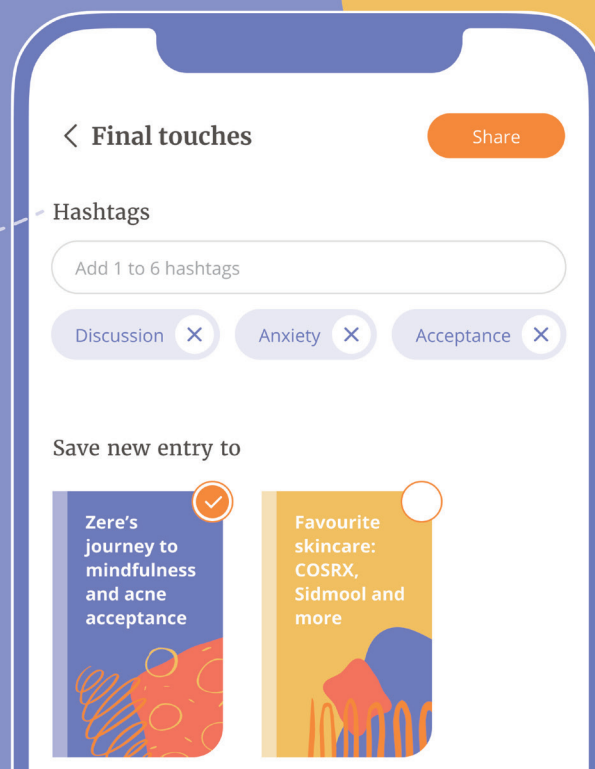
03. Feed

Discussion is the first step towards normalizing acne in society. The feed highlights exciting opinions and stories to read and digest.

Through "Explore", the user discovers activ[e] posts to join live discussion immediately o[r] entries they would enjoy.

To never miss new entries from authors they like, users can follow them and read their posts in "My feed". The number of followers is never revealed on the personal profile to prevent toxic comparison and competition, encouraging the users to focus on themselves.

Through the "Like" button, the users can indicate what kind of content they enjoy and get personalized recommendations. The likes count is hidden for the same reason as the number of followers.
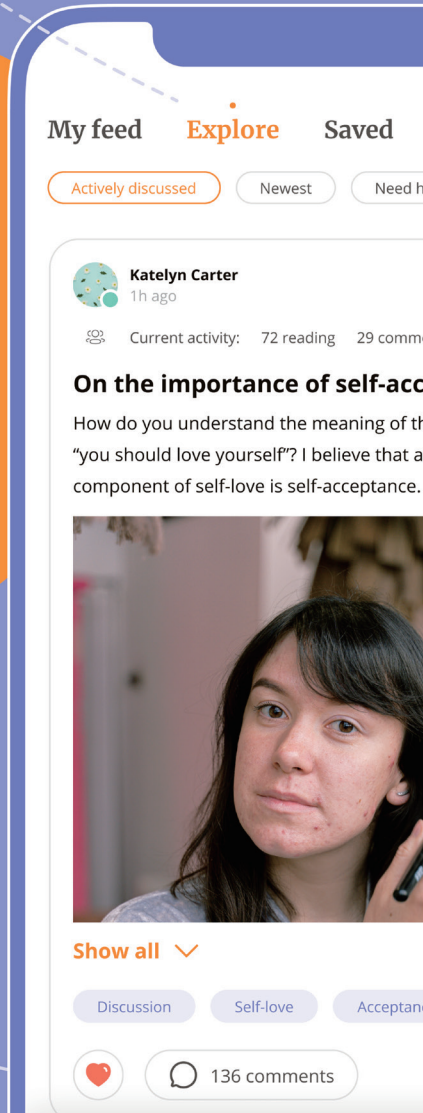
My feed   **Explore**   Saved

Actively discussed   Newest   Need h[elp]

Katelyn Carter
1h ago

Current activity: 72 reading   29 comm[ents]

On the importance of self-acc[eptance]

How do you understand the meaning of th[e] "you should love yourself"? I believe that a[...] component of self-love is self-acceptance.

Show all ∨

Discussion   Self-love   Acceptan[ce]

136 comments

ctively discussed
y or to find new

Comments • ⚇ 72 reading 29 commenting
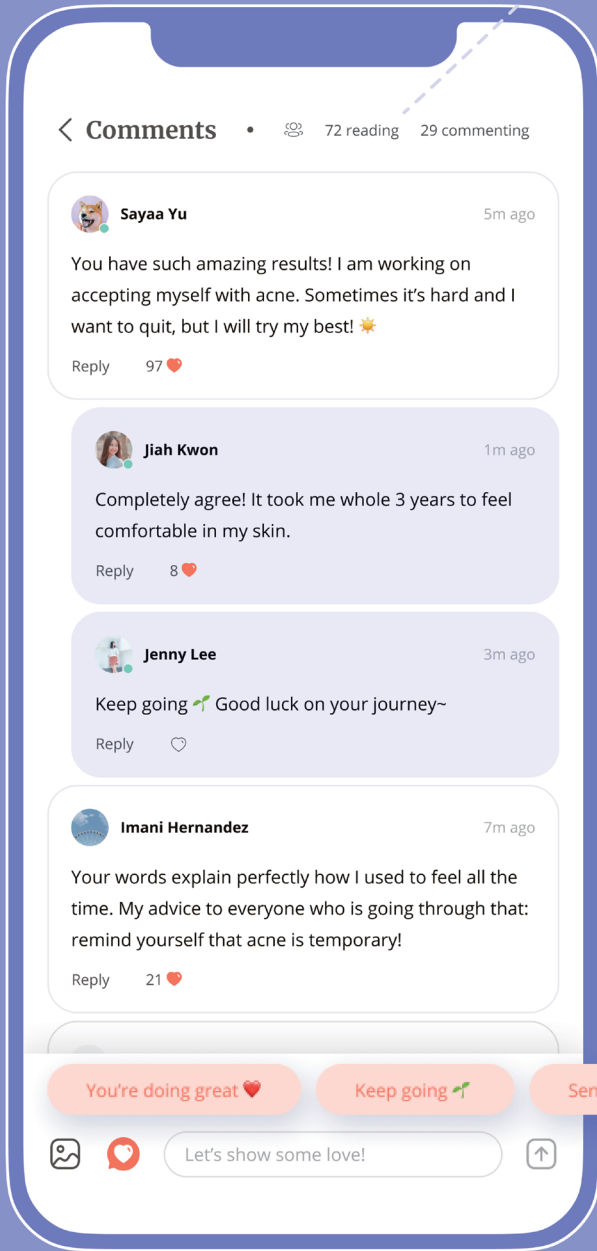
Being able to track engagement with
the post facilitates smooth and
productive discussions.

Sayaa Yu   5m ago

You have such amazing results! I am working on
accepting myself with acne. Sometimes it's hard and I
want to quit, but I will try my best! ☀️

Reply   97 ❤️

---

ed help   Review

☆

mmenting

cceptance

f the phrase
t a crucial
ce.

Jiah Kwon   1m ago

Completely agree! It took me whole 3 years to feel
comfortable in my skin.

Reply   8 ❤️

Jenny Lee   3m ago

Keep going 🌱 Good luck on your journey~

Reply   ♡

Expressing empathy is highly
important — Skina helps to find warm
words to make the day brighter.

Imani Hernandez   7m ago

Your words explain perfectly how I used to feel all the
time. My advice to everyone who is going through that:
remind yourself that acne is temporary!

Reply   21 ❤️

2 🖼️

tance

You're doing great ❤️   Keep going 🌱   Sending support 🌻

🖼️ ◉   Let's show some love!   ⬆️

⤴️

Skina
Ready to help and listen

Today

Hello, Zere! I've missed our conversations so much. Glad you are back! 10:10

What would you like to do today? 10:11

Get help

I feel bad and need your help and support

Chat

I just came for a good conversation and fun

Learn

I want to learn about my skin to take care of it

Therapy

I want to learn how to understand and accept myself

Interaction between the user and the A.I. occurs inside a chat-room as if messaging a close person to share personal problems. Skina can quickly comfort someone who is highly upset, entertain with a conversation, teach skin biology and skincare basics or act as a private therapist to solve mental issues.
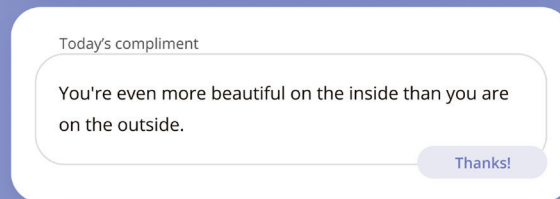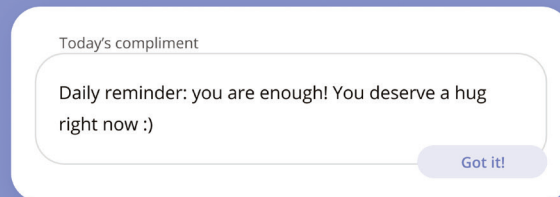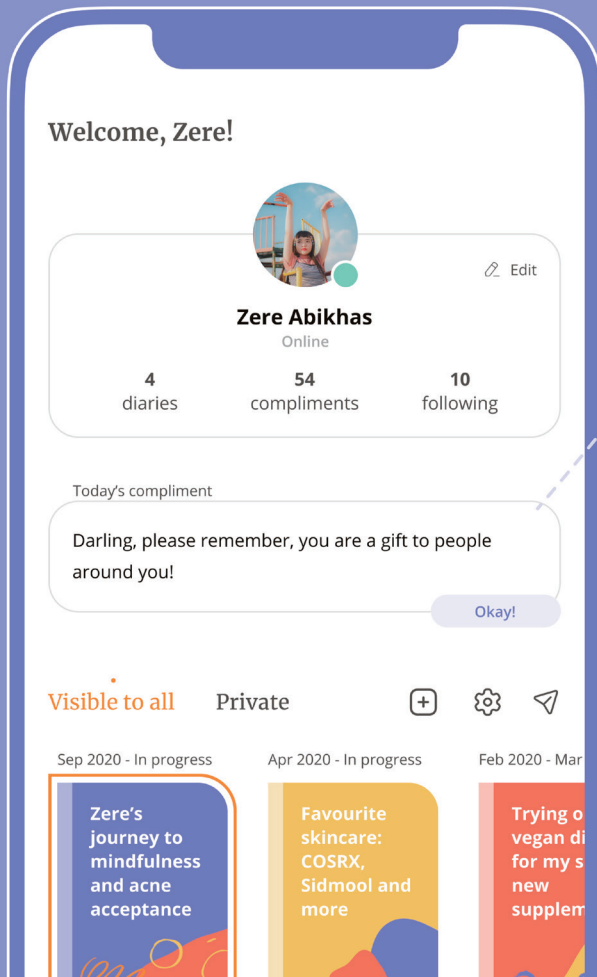
There are 4 A.I. interaction scenarios available for users to explore depending on their needs and wishes.

04. A.I. Skina

Having acne is emotionally challenging. Skina is an Artificial Intelligence that helps to get through hard times and achieve mental well-being.

One can never know what others are going through, and when they are at their lowest. Skina's daily compliments remind how precious each person is and cheer up users with words of encouragement.

Welcome, Zere!

Zere Abikhas
Online

4	54	10
diaries	compliments	following

Edit

Today's compliment

Darling, please remember, you are a gift to people around you!

Okay!

Visible to all   Private

Sep 2020 - In progress   Apr 2020 - In progress   Feb 2020 - Mar

Zere's journey to mindfulness and acne acceptance

Favourite skincare: COSRX, Sidmool and more

Trying o... vegan di... for my s... new supplem...

Today's compliment

Daily reminder: you are enough! You deserve a hug right now :)

Got it!

Today's compliment

You're even more beautiful on the inside than you are on the outside.

Thanks!

Togzhan Kussainova

Epilogue

> "...I don't want my projects to be just **pretty**.
> They also need to be potentially useful to people "

Describe yourself as a designer.
I care that all projects I create, no matter small or big, have a meaning and aim to solve people's problems. Even though I'm a highly visually driven designer, I don't want my projects to be just "pretty." They also need to be potentially useful to people. I love the 2D design and have a strong motivation to get better at it.

Why did you decide to do application design instead of product design?
During the winter vacation of 2020 and right before the start of Creative Design 1, I decided to pursue a UX designer career. I understood that I don't have any strong UX projects in my portfolio, and I need some if I want to pursue a Master's degree or get hired. You have a chance to work on a single project for one year in Creative Design 1 and 2 to make it great, and I took this opportunity to make Skina.

What is your overall impression of the exhibition?
I think it was good. Students who were in charge of the physical space organization did an excellent job. The venue looked pleasant and professional. Also, exhibition promotional materials looked cool. There were a couple of unexpected moments for me. I wasn't expecting that you could bring extra decorations to your exhibition stand and that you have the freedom to hang objects on walls. Bear that in mind when preparing for the exhibition! My first stand looked very plain as I had only two sad-looking posters, iMac, and postcards. I went to Daiso to purchase decorations and make my stand look better one night before the exhibition opening. That was hell. Please don't make my mistake.

What did you learn through Creative Design 1 and 2?
I can say that I learned a lot. I became more independent as a designer. On other courses, you would follow a syllabus carefully crafted by a professor. However, when you have all responsibility and make critical decisions for your project, you grow up. Also, because I was in charge of everything, it made me more confident. I know that I would fail in the worst-case scenario and need to come back to correct my mistake. Well, I've already experienced that. I keep in mind that I didn't know any better solution and did all I can, and if I want to correct previous work, it means I'm growing.

Togzhan Kussainova

"...when you have all responsibility and make critical decisions for your project, you grow up "

What would you advise students who are taking Creative Design 2?
I beg and urge you to complete your project from Creative Design 1 to about 80% and above. You will be very busy preparing exhibition materials, and there will be not so much time left for your project improvement.

How should I approach user problems for my project?
I was responsible for creating my plan for Skina, which was hard for me. After Creative Design 1, I was stuck and had no significant progress for the whole summer semester. After weeks of self-reflection, I realized that the way I approached user problems was slowly leading me to this critical point, where I needed to return several steps and fix my mistakes to move forward. I suggest you spend a significant amount of time at the beginning stage of the project to formulate your problem statement. Approach project with this question in head: "How can I improve the "X" experience for the "Y" users." Be as specific as you can. You may begin with a simple observation that will lead you to the "X" experience. Then, study every aspect and detail of the "X" experience, identify problems, and suggest your solution.

Which tools and design resources could you recommend for digital products?
Several things proved useful to me:
1. Figma - it's a free tool for UI prototyping and collaboration. It has many great plugins that speed up your workflow and very easy to use. Tip: you can use it not only for UI design but for posters, presentation slides, and even CVs (I wish I could do Chronicles there)
2. Dribbble - a great platform to get inspiration and interface colors for your project. Caution: be careful, as most interfaces you will see on the platform are just eye-candy. Don't try to replicate those interfaces - they frequently have terrible usability and user experience. Tip: use it only to reference a style of a particular element or sample colors from there. Find a couple of successful applications and reference their layout and user experience.
3. Cofolios.com - a website with links to UX/UI design student portfolios who got internships at the big companies like Google, Apple, Uber, and more. You can reference the workflow/style of their project presentation or get ideas for your next project.

References

Karen Fratti Updated Oct 04, & Fratti, K. (n.d.). This girl's before-and-after acne selfies are going viral for an important reason. Retrieved December 11, 2020, from https://hellogiggles.com/beauty/this-girls-before-and-after-acne-selfies-are-going-viral/

Togzhan Kussainova

* All other visual contents were created by Togzhan Kussainova, the author of this issue.