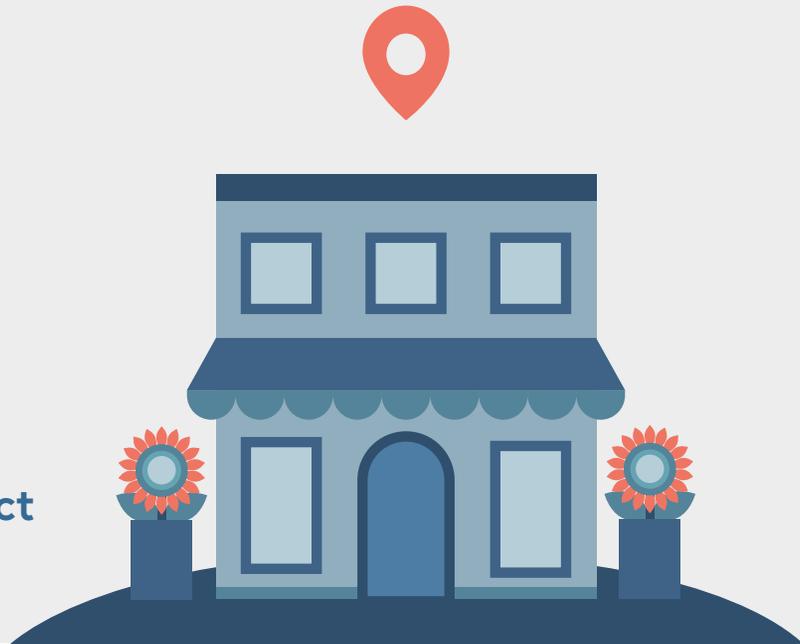


# nearbuy

An E-Commerce Solution for Local Businesses

Carmen Johnson  
Cleveland Institute of Art  
Graphic Design Thesis Project  
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# Problem Statement

Small, locally owned businesses are vital to the economic growth and development of small towns and rural communities. However, as consumers are increasingly drawn to the convenience of online shopping platforms, many small business owners have yet to venture into the e-commerce world due to a lack of time, money, and technical knowledge.

# Thesis Statement

By disregarding the advantages of selling products online, small business owners are missing the opportunity to reach additional consumers, boost their profits, and better accommodate their customers. In order to make the implication of e-commerce less daunting for local business owners, I have designed a mobile application that will allow businesses to easily and affordably sell their products online. By creating an e-commerce platform for local businesses to sell their products and services, consumers will also be able to shop locally at their convenience and from the comfort of their own homes.



# Stakeholders

## Primary

Small Business Owners  
Local Consumers

## Secondary

Community Members  
Chamber of Commerce

## Tertiary

Tourists/Visitors Bureau

# Local Matters

Local businesses are a crucial component in the economic and cultural growth of small towns throughout the United States. Supporting locally owned businesses benefits small communities in a variety of ways.

**1**

**Enhance Local Economy**

**2**

**Increase Job Opportunities**

**3**

**Support Charities**

**4**

**Environmental Impact**

**5**

**Create Sense of Community**



# 68%

of each dollar spent locally is re-circulated throughout the community.

## **Economic Growth & Sustainability**

The economic development of small towns and rural communities relies heavily on locally owned businesses. Small businesses are vital in order for small towns to achieve financial sustainability, as they increase job opportunities, encourage entrepreneurship, and re-circulate commerce. These three key factors not only influence the economic growth of these communities, they also impact the quality of life for the citizens who reside there.

## 52%

of employees in the United States are employed by small businesses

## 91%

of local business owners contribute to local charities or non-profits

## 64%

of new jobs have been created by small businesses since 1995

**A community without small businesses is a community without character.**

Residents in small communities value a good quality of life, with a flourishing downtown and a wide variety of consumer choices. The continuous support of small businesses is essential in order to create a unique, diverse, and prosperous community.

# The Rise of E-Commerce

E-commerce, also known as internet commerce or electronic commerce, refers to the buying and selling of goods and services using the internet.

Since the first online sale in 1994, e-commerce has become an incredibly powerful tool for both small businesses and large corporations to remotely sell their products, and growth projections estimate that e-commerce revenues will exceed \$638 billion in the United States by 2022.

**80%**

of customers will research a business online before visiting it.

**51%**

of Americans prefer to shop online rather than in-store.

**36%**

is the average percentage of an American's budget spent online.

# Covid 19 and E-Commerce

The implementation of Covid-19 social distancing practices has forced both consumers and business owners to adapt to the changing circumstances.

Customers have adjusted their shopping habits, and 52% of buyers report that they have switched more of their spending to online since the start of the pandemic. 53% of American shoppers have said that they will continue to shop online through the end of 2020. Even as businesses continue to re-open, e-commerce remains a preferred method of shopping for many consumers.



**“53% of North American buyers said that the pandemic has changed the way they will shop going forward.”**

**- shopify.com**

## **Rising Support for Local Businesses**

Although the pandemic has created new challenges for both shoppers and business owners, it has inspired a rising sense of community. 46% of consumers have reported that they have shopped locally during the pandemic in an attempt to support the small businesses in their community.

# The Benefits of E-Commerce

## Benefits for Consumers

E-commerce is quickly becoming a preferred method of shopping for many consumers. The many benefits of online shopping include:

1. Reviews
2. Online-Exclusive Deals
3. No Traffic/Crowds
4. Accessibility
5. Generous Return Policies
6. Wider Range of Products

## The Benefits of Collective E-Commerce Platforms

Collective e-commerce platforms offer a variety of benefits for both consumers and small business owners:

1. More customer traffic
2. Encourages collaboration between business owners
3. Low cost and little maintenance
4. Allows customers to compare local products
5. Easy to navigate and manage sales
6. Creates a sense of community



# Why don't most local businesses have a website?

**40%** of small businesses do not have a website.

A variety of benefits come with having a commercial website, so why do only 60% of small businesses have one?

**1**

They don't understand how it can help their business.

**2**

They don't believe that they can afford it.

**3**

They don't know how to start one or maintain it.

# The Solution

In order to encourage the economic growth and sustainability of small, rural communities while also promoting a high quality of life for the citizens who reside there, I have created a mobile app that allows local business owners to easily and affordably sell their products and services online, directly to consumers.

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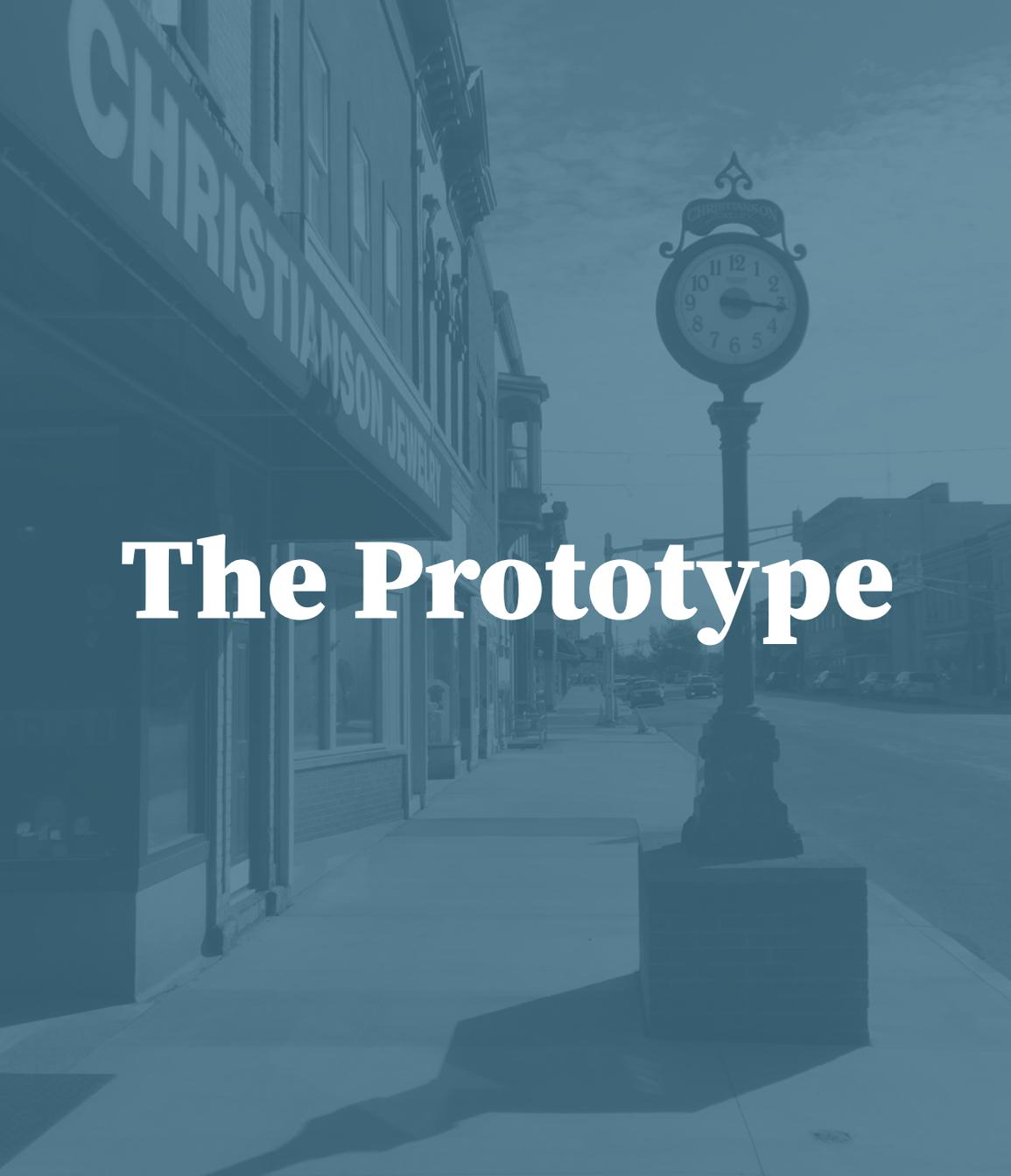
## Key Features

Individual store pages for each business that allow customers to view their product listings, contact information, hours, and more.

The ability for customer to search for specific products in their community, or to search by category.

A GPS mapping system to help customers find each business, and explore the stores in their community.

The ability for customers to order products directly off of the app for both pick up and delivery, with an easy to navigate payment system.



# The Prototype

## Kendallville, Indiana

**Population:** 9,834

**Median Age:** 38.6

**Median Household Income:** \$51,241

The citizens of Kendallville value their traditional, rural lifestyles. These residents support their local businesses, are budget-savvy and prefer to buy American products.

This community is currently looking for ways to improve their downtown, encourage entrepreneurs to start new businesses, and support their existing small businesses.

# User Research

I invited local businesses in my community to participate in a survey to assess their needs and to determine if my application would benefit them.

**43%** of respondents stated that they would use a mobile app to sell products or services online

The main challenges facing small business owners:

1. A significant decline in customers and threat of business closure due to COVID-19.
2. A shortage of time.
3. Shrinking margins and shortage of products.

## Merchant's Priority List of Features

1. Easy to Use
2. Easy and Affordable Payment Processing
3. Unlimited Product Listings
4. Networking with Other Businesses
5. GPS Locator Service
6. Ability for Customers to Leave Reviews
7. Ability to Share Information (Hours, Special Events, Etc.)
8. Ability for Consumers to Contact You Through the App
9. Resources on How to Market, List, and Manage Online Orders
10. Ability to Provide Special Discounts Through the App

# Persona #1



## Sarah Miller

*Local Shopper*

### DEMOGRAPHICS

Age: 34

Location: Kendallville, IN

Education: High School Diploma

Occupation: Office Clerk

Family: Married, 2 Children

**“I would love to support my local businesses, but their short hours conflict with my busy schedule.”**

### BIOGRAPHY

Sarah resides in Kendallville, Indiana. With two young children and a full time job, she has very little time to shop at her local businesses. She is very anxious about COVID-19, and she tries to spend as much time as she can at home. She is glad that she can safely and conveniently order most of her groceries online, although she feels bad that she isn't able to consistently support the small businesses in her community that are struggling.

### MOTIVATIONS

Convenience



Speed



Values/Preferences



Affordability



Safety



### GOALS

1. To find unique stores
2. To support local businesses
3. To keep her family safe

### PAIN POINTS

1. Local businesses have short hours that interfere with her busy schedule.
2. COVID-19 makes her anxious about shopping in-store.

## Empathy Map

### Says:

I want to support my local businesses.  
I'm worried about COVID-19.  
Where can I find what I need?

### Thinks:

These hours are inconvenient.  
I want to shop local, but I don't want to risk getting COVID-19.  
What is best for me?

### Feels:

Annoyed  
Anxious  
Exhausted  
Stressed

### Does:

Researches businesses online before shopping there.  
Purchases groceries and other products online.  
Lists pros and cons.

# Persona #2



**Jane Andrews**  
*Local Business Owner*

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Age: 42

Location: Kendallville, IN

Education: Associates Degree

Occupation: Boutique Owner

Family: Divorced, 2 Children

**“I need a way to reach more customers, I’m just not sure how to accomodate their needs.”**

## BIOGRAPHY

Jane has owned a boutique in Kendallville for the past 3 years. She loves living in a small, tight-knit community, and she often contributes to local charities and organizations. At her boutique, she sells clothing, jewelry, and other accessories. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, she has noticed a significant decrease in customers visiting her store. She needs to find ways to reach additional customers in order to stay afloat.

## MOTIVATIONS

Convenience



Work/Life Balance



Financial Stability



Affordability



Safety



## GOALS

1. To reach more customers
2. To improve her community.
3. To sell more products.

## PAIN POINTS

1. COVID-19 has caused her to lose many customers.
2. She doesn't have enough time to build and maintain her own website.

## Empathy Map

### Says:

I want to reach as many customers as possible.  
I want to help my community.  
I want to encourage customers to shop locally.

### Thinks:

I wish I had more time.  
How will my business stay afloat?  
When will the pandemic be over?  
How do I reach more customers?

### Feels:

Stressed/Overwhelmed  
Overworked  
Exhausted  
Worried about closure

### Does:

Networks with other businesses.  
Posts on social media.  
Talks to customers.  
Researches marketing ideas.

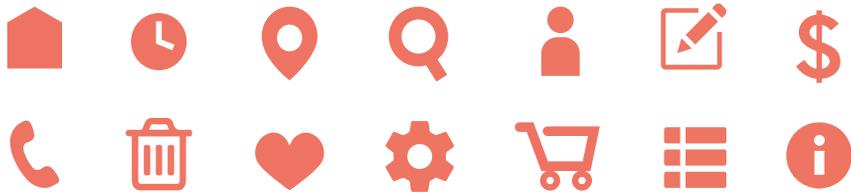
# Brand Identity

## Europa

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn  
Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

## Source Serif Pro

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn  
Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz



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# Prototype Link

<https://xd.adobe.com/view/e46b89a6-a810-4540-9ba2-c2bea5d47554-b138/screen/989bd053-1f85-48f9-84ca-f3abd8248377?fullscreen>

# Marketing Strategies



In order to draw customers to the Nearbuy app and take some of the burden of marketing off of small business owners, I have cultivated a list of marketing strategies that will be implemented when the application is fully developed.

1. Give \$10 to get \$10
2. Work with social media influencers
3. Chamber of Commerce collaboration
4. Accessable and printable in-store signage
5. Distribution of stickers and ephemera
6. Informational videos
7. Social media advertisements

# Stickers & In-Store Signage

FIND US ON

## nearbuy

The shopping app for local businesses.



Scan this QR code to find our location on Nearbuy, the shopping app for locally owned businesses.

You can use the app to learn more about our store, view or purchase our products online, and support the local businesses that make your community unique!



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**Thank You!**