

Behind the scenes of

Flipkart

ILLUSTRATION LIBRARY

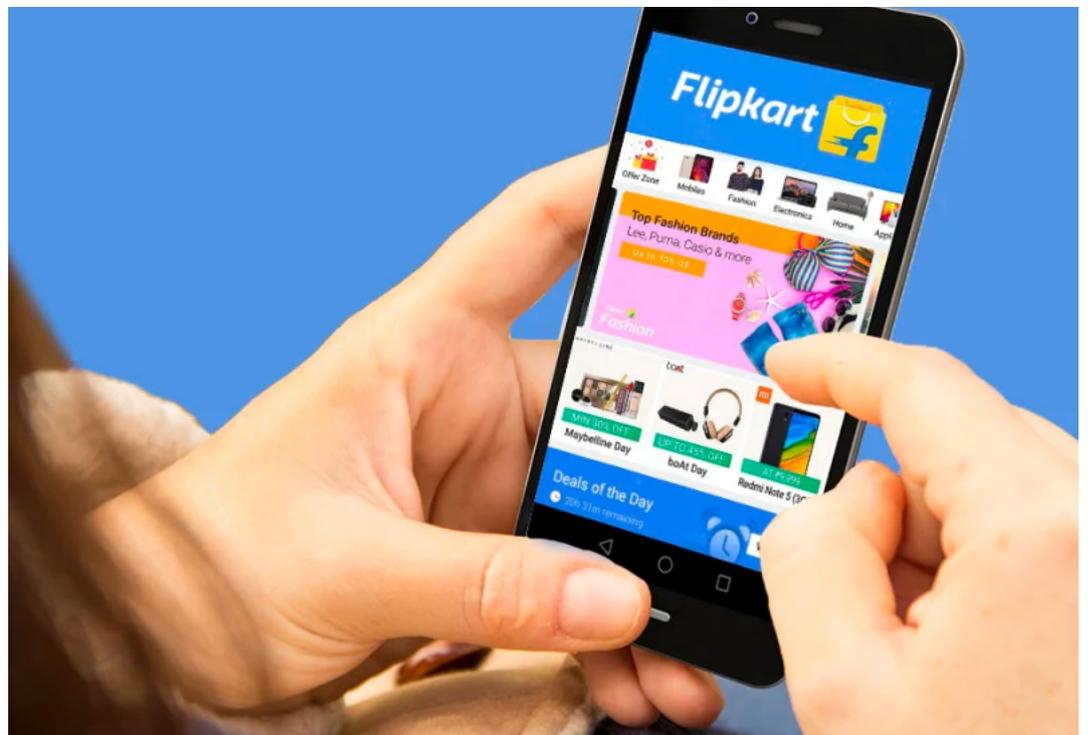


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Background

Flipkart is an Indian multinational **e-commerce company with millions of products** across categories such as consumer electronics, fashion, books, home essentials, groceries, and lifestyle goods. The service competes primarily with Amazon India, and has achieved dominance, holding over **40% of the market share** in the Indian e-commerce industry.



Problem Statement

Flipkart conducted continuous user research to understand how people perceive and interact with the platform. While it was rated highly on features such as search, discoverability, filters, product range, and even pricing and discounts, there was one area that research consistently showed Flipkart was underperforming.

Flipkart wasn't receiving favourable reviews on user experience and had a low Net Promoter Score of 26%.

Insight

Flipkart was giving its customers everything from a user-friendly app to unbeatable prices, but there was one thing missing — **delight**.

Ideation

We began by **brainstorming about ways to improve delight on the platform**, and arrived at some promising possibilities. Upon further scrutiny of the research findings, it was found that a great deal of **customer frustration was reported during roadblocks in their experience, with a 63% drop-off rate at such points**. For this reason, the error state revamp idea stood out as the winner.

Micro-celebrations

Micro-interactions at key touchpoints in the order creation experience - celebration confetti, emojis, fireworks, etc. - these could be themed for different occasions

Festival banners

Animated banners on the homepage to celebrate events (like google doodles) - they could be for festivals, international 'days', sale events, etc.

Exciting Errors

Delightful illustrations across the experience - especially error states - to redirect the customer to a happy state and alleviate frustration

Solution

Once we knew the nature of the solution, I decided that **illustrated characters could be used to tell stories across the experience and become helpful friends that guide users** in their interactions. It thus became apparent that we would need an illustration system in place. I took the initiative to form a team of graphic designers, product designers, and copywriters for the task.

We defined the scope of the project, as part of the larger Design Library System:

- To **identify strategic touch points** to introduce the solution across the app
- To **craft a visual system** for illustrations
- To **define a tone of voice** and copy guidelines for the same
- To **create a repository of illustrations** and animations that could be used across the platform by any designer in the team
- To **create guidelines and training** for other designers to replicate and create their own assets within the system

Platform Audit

Use case identification

Having thoroughly examined the app and traversing multiple user journeys ourselves, we found various opportunities to introduce delight through our solution. We looked at more than just error states, identifying order updates and emailer as possible areas too.

However, we chose to begin with **3 key error states as the pilot project for testing.**

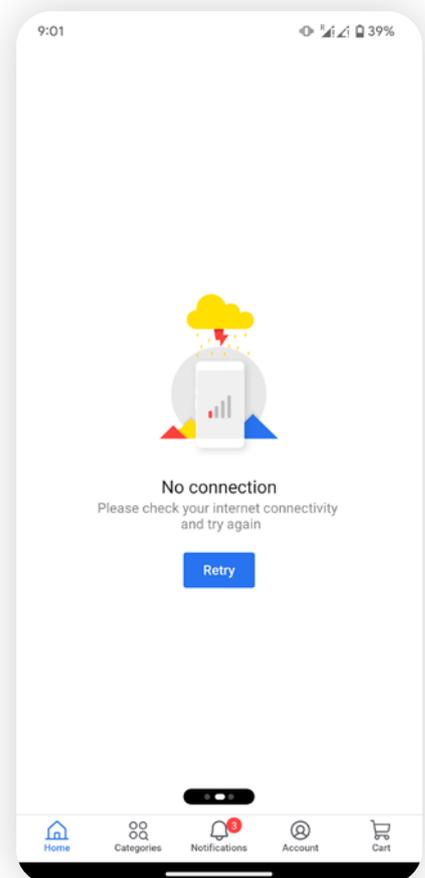
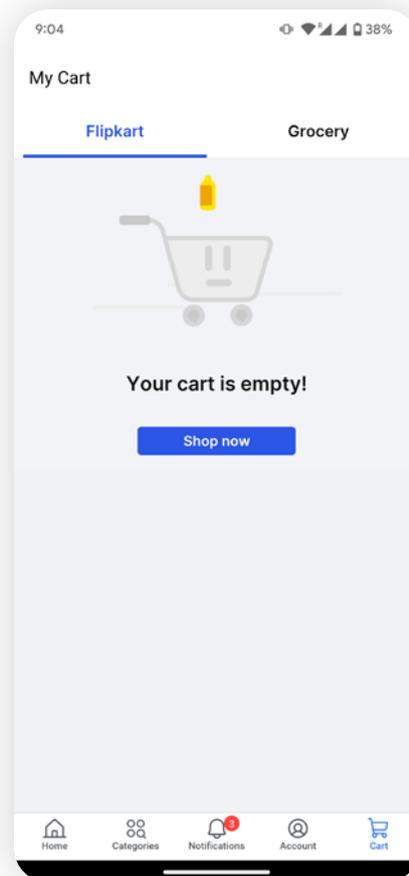
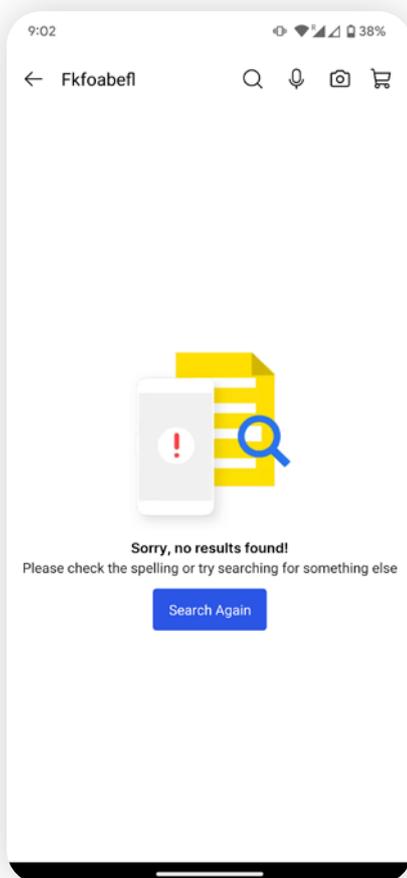
Error states	Order updates	Emailers	
No connection	Confirmed	Order updates	Confirmed
No location access	Shipped		Shipped
No addresses saved	Out for Delivery		Out for Delivery
No payment methods saved	Delivered		Delivered
Payment declined	Feedback, rating		Feedback, rating
Incomplete profile	Suggestions		Suggestions
No results found	Order cancellation		Order cancellation
Empty cart		Welcome	

Platform Audit

Current experience

For the three error states that were identified as critical, we studied the existing experience to understand the approach in terms of design and copy. We found **several shortcomings in the experience**:

- Straightforward copy and **literal vector representations**
- **Inconsistencies** in buttons, copy formatting, layout and illustration size and treatment
- **Un-intuitive use and hierarchy of color**
- Static illustrations with **no animation**

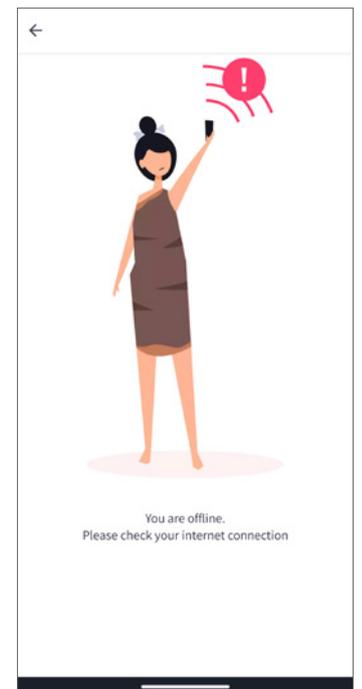
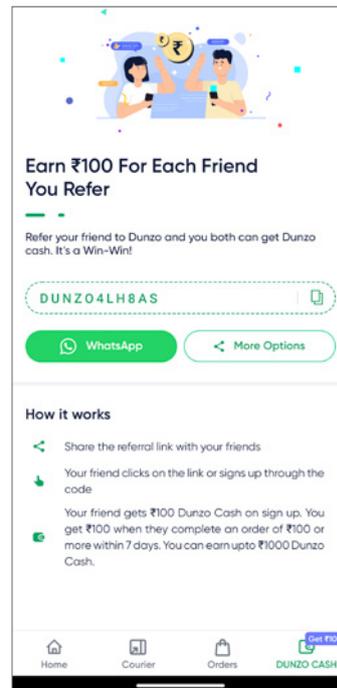
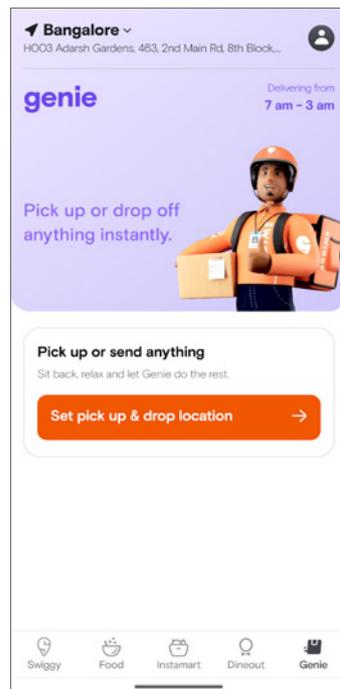
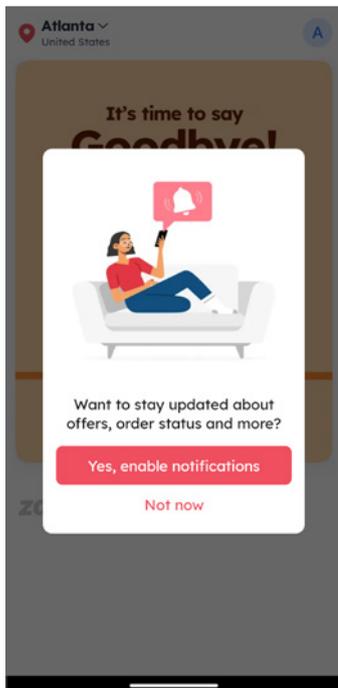


Research

Competitor analysis

Having found opportunities for improvement in our experience, we also looked at the way our competitors approached illustrations in theirs.

- Most companies used **generic, stock-like illustrations**
- There was **no obvious connection between the style and the company**
- There were **no innovative scenarios** depicted

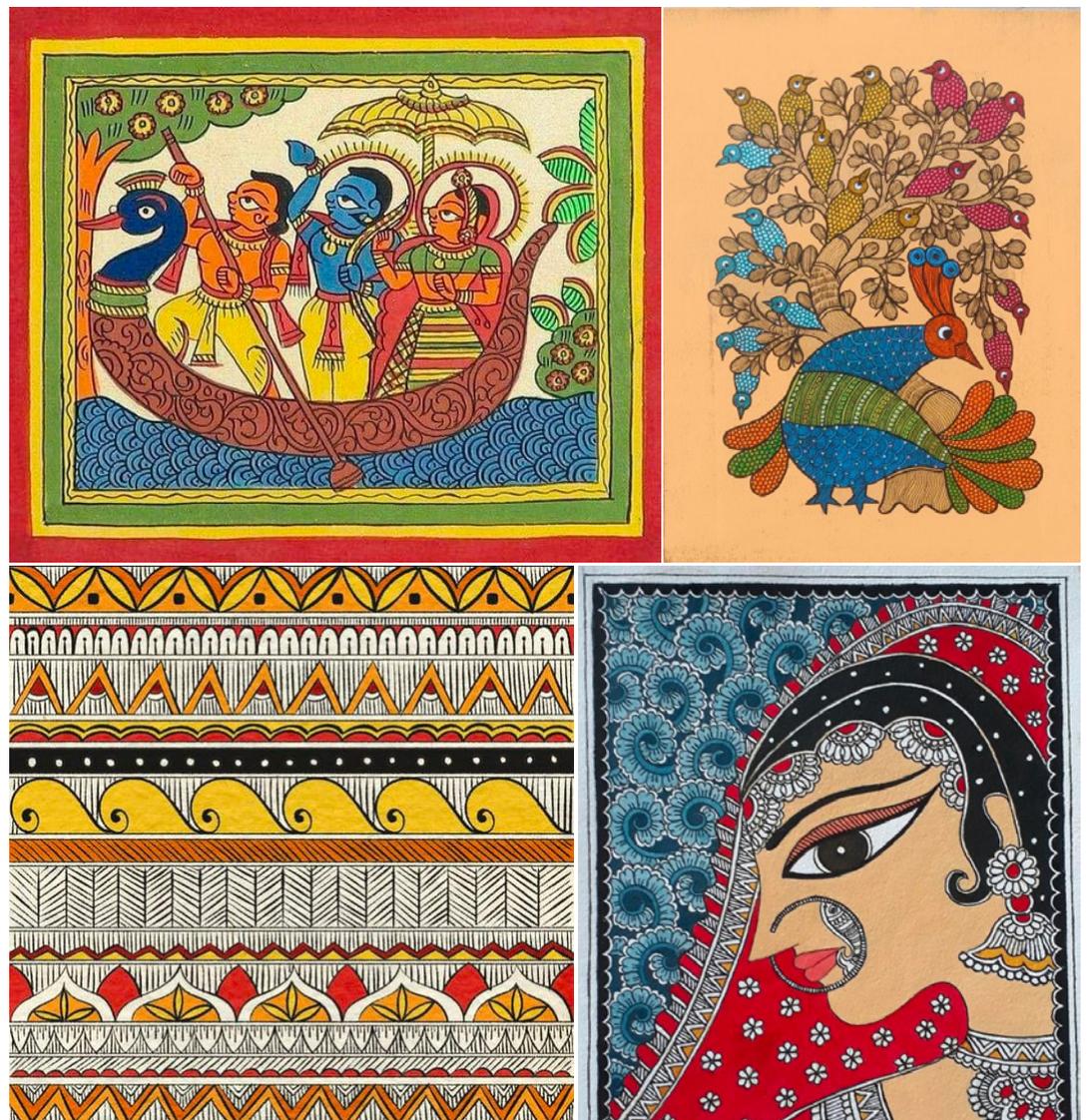


Exploration

Embracing our ethnicity

This led us on a quest to identify a unique approach for our illustrations. Considering that Flipkart was celebrated for being a successful Indian startup, we thought it appropriate to **reflect this Indian-ness on our platform, through this illustration system**. This, we felt, would also lend a **relatability** to the characters so that users could see themselves in them.

We began by studying prominent Indian art forms including Madhubani, Gond, Pichwai, and more.



Exploration

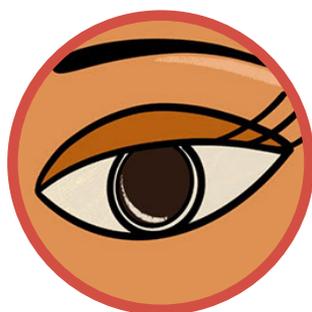
Distillation

We identified the **core features** that made these art forms distinctly Indian and that brought character to them. These features were then **translated into a vector style** that was suitable for use on a digital platform.

Line and dot patterns



Dramatic doe eyes



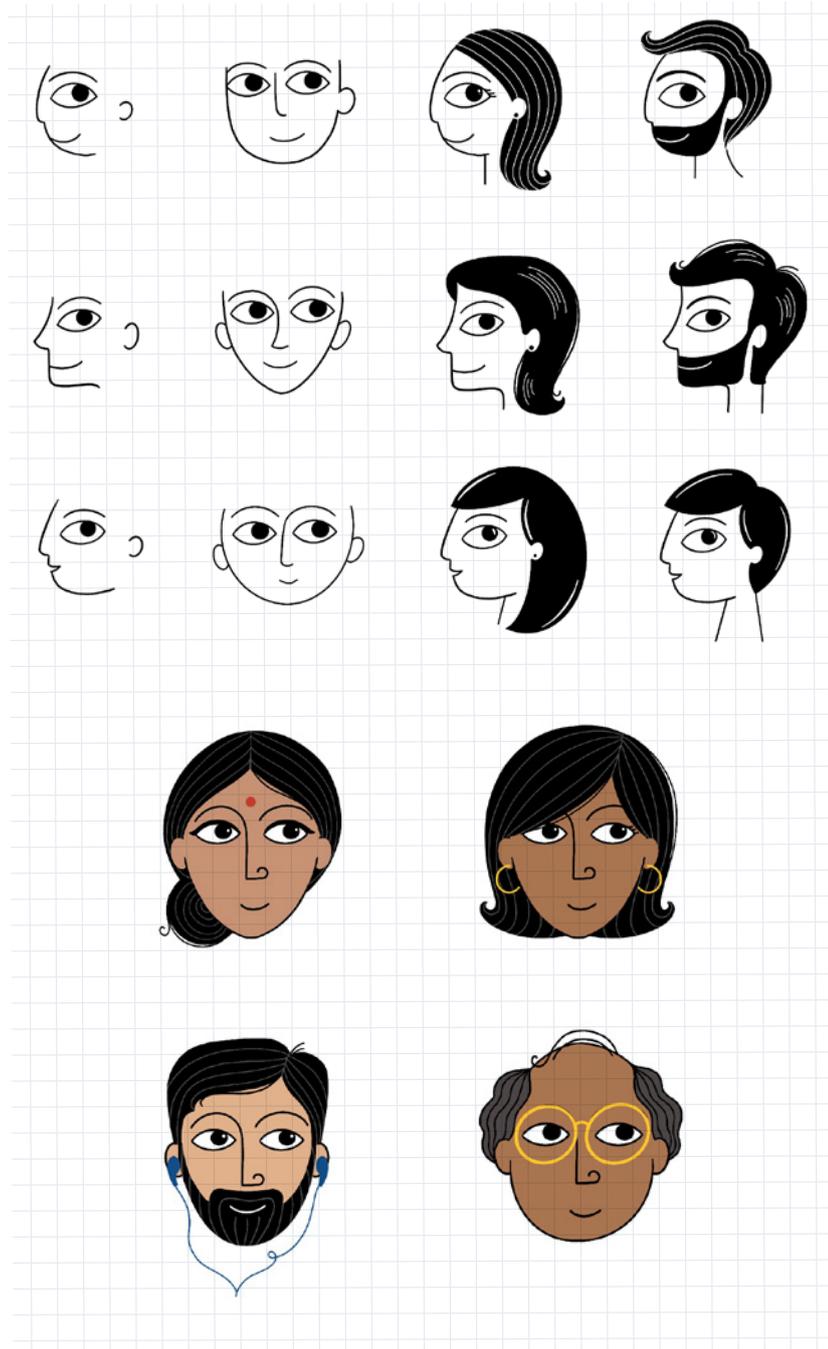
Ornaments and details



Characters

Foundations

With the core elements in place, I tried to build the foundations for the characters from their **face shapes, profiles, hairstyles, skin tones, and details.**



Characters

Persona development

In order to develop a set of characters that would feature in the stories for each of the use cases, **we decided to study the people that made Flipkart**. This led us to divide the characters between customers and partners.

We identified that **the key partner profile would be the delivery agent** as that was the person customers most often faced and was pivotal in the order experience.

For the customers, we used insights into the customer base to define **5 profiles based on demographics and shopping behaviors** across the product categories.

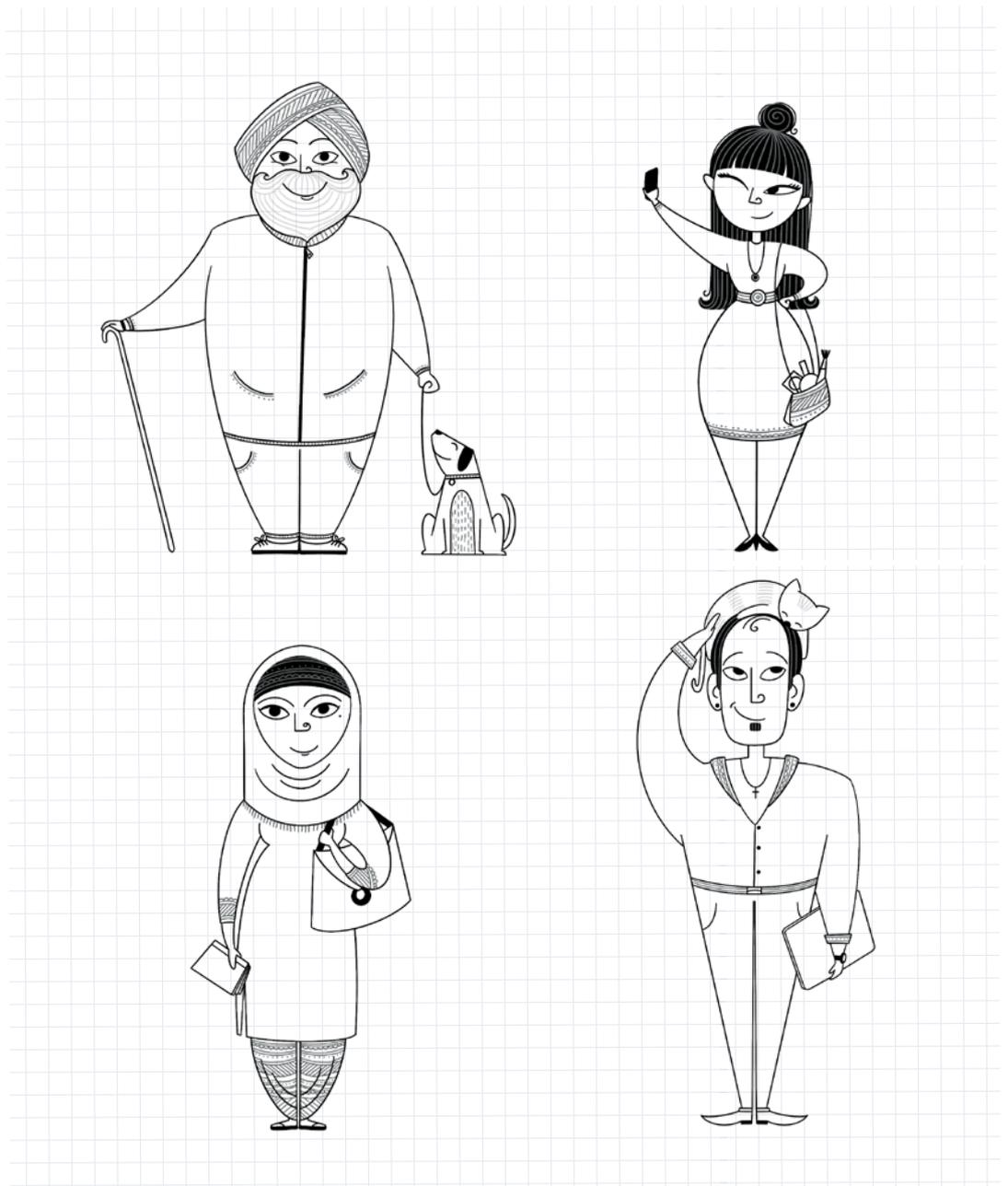
We fleshed out each of these profiles with their **key attributes, personality traits, shopping categories** and even gave them names!

	Customer profiles					Partner profile
Name	Minnie	Savio	Rose	Mrs.Chopra	Ranveer	Hari
Life stage	Child	Young adult	Adult	Middle-aged	Senior	Adult
Occupation	School	University	Professional	Homemaker	Retired	Delivery exec
Origin	South-east	South-west	North-east	West	North	Central
Traits	School and extra-curricular activities	Engineering student	Beauty blogger	Loves cooking	Has a grandchild	5-star ratings
	Eats lots of candy	Has to have all the latest gadgets	Has own channel - tutorials, products	House-proud	Pet dog	Known for being polite
	Loves dressing up and playing	Tech podcasts and videos	Big fan following	Has a husband and two kids	Likes to take walks	Always on time
Shopping interests	Accessories, school supplies, toys, and candy	Electronics and books	Makeup, fashion & photography equipment	Household products, groceries and kitchenware	Sportswear, toys and pet essentials	

Characters

Iterations

Having identified the profiles that would be illustrated, initial iterations began with simple **digital sketches of how to combine their attributes with the stylistic decisions** previously taken including patterns and detailing. Emphasis was laid on **bringing out their personalities and adding delightful behavioral touches.**



Characters

Iterations

One character - Ranveer - was chosen to further explore the style, experimenting with shapes, color, stroke, shadows, and finishing. The final style **struck the balance between the Indian style and the digital space**, using basic shapes, no strokes, solid colors, sharp shadows, line patterns, and expressive faces.



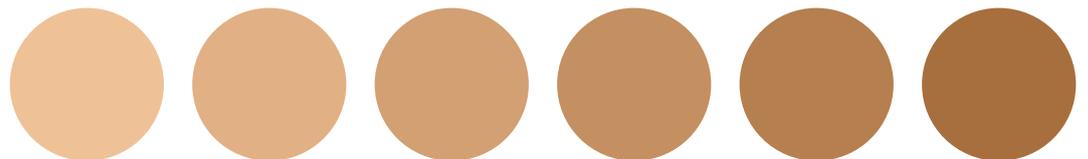
Characters

Colors

A color palette was derived for each character from the Flipkart extended brand color palette. Each character's colors were chosen based on their personality and appropriateness to their usage. The versatile yellow, one of Flipkart's primary colors, was used across all characters for brand recognition.



Since all the characters were from different parts of the country, the **skin tone palette was diverse**, ranging from fairer tones from the north to darker ones from the south. This was done to ensure inclusivity and accuracy.



Characters

Environments

After the characters were developed, I proceeded to work on **environments and supporting objects** that would add context to the narratives. I tried various approaches in terms of color to establish a **hierarchy between foreground and background**.

The grayscale approach was chosen for being the **least distracting, while still adding context and creating hierarchy**.



Final

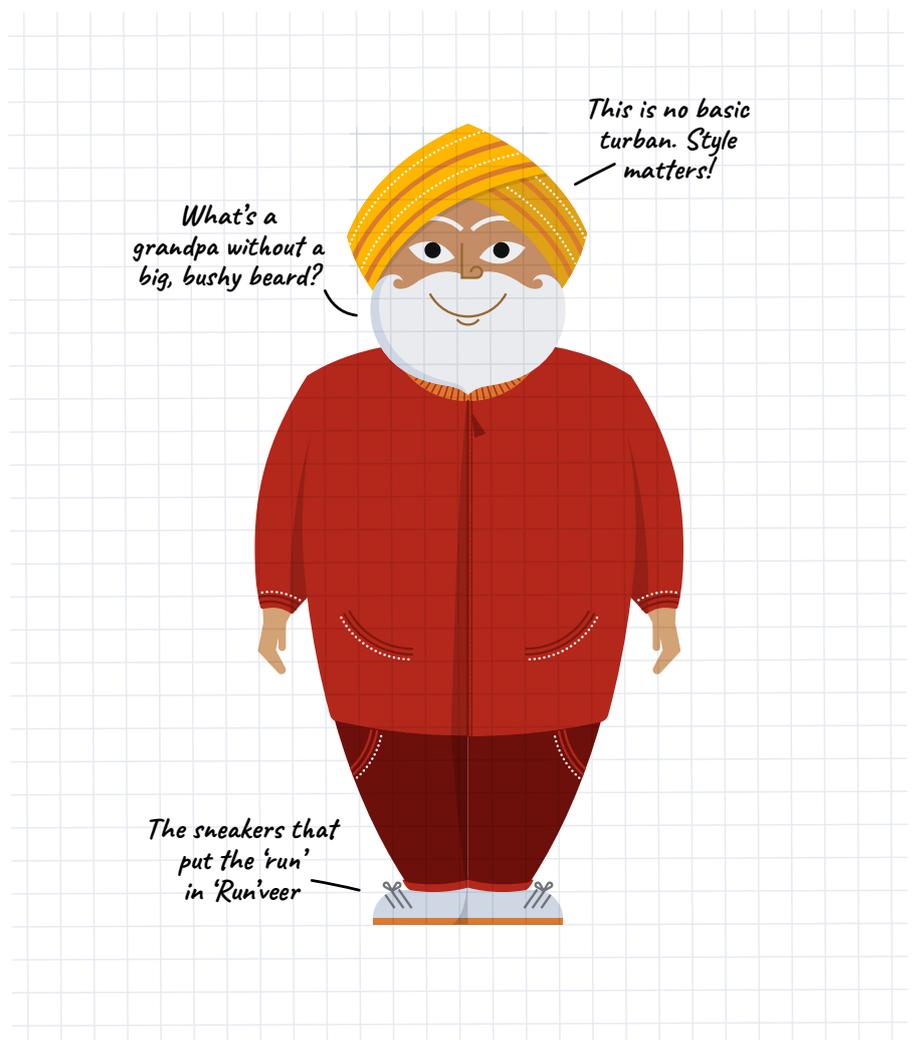
Characters

Design

I developed characters based on the descriptions we had written, color palettes we chose, and a careful study of **relevant, real reference images** for facial features, body types, garments, accessories, demeanor, expressions, and more.

Ranveer

He was given a **turban and beard**, true to his community. He was styled in a **vibrant tracksuit and sneakers** that many Indian men his age usually wear, and patterns were added in his clothing in turban.



Characters

Design

Mrs.Chopra

She was draped in a **traditional saree** whose patterns were directly influenced by the fabrics of that region. Adorned with **gold earrings and bangles, a bindi, and flowers in her hair**, she was styled like a typical Indian homemaker. Her **footwear and hairstyle** were also carefully designed to remain accurate to her persona.

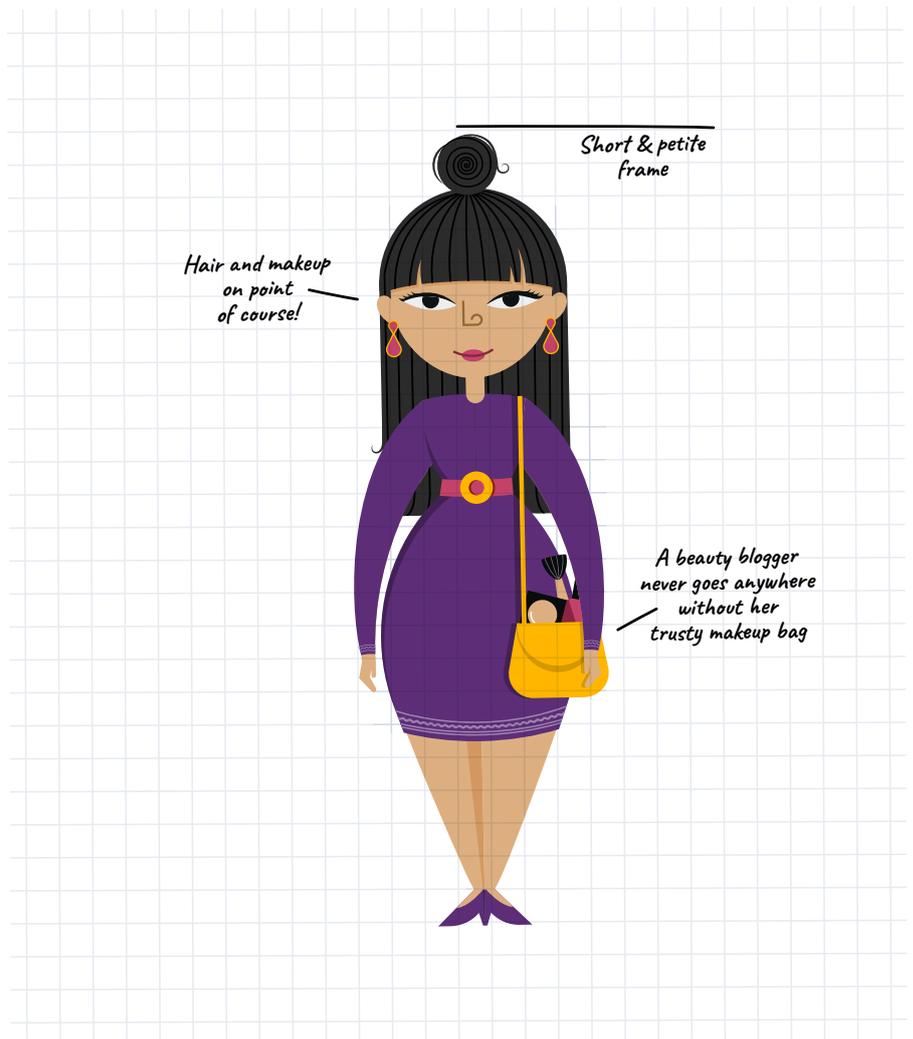


Characters

Design

Rose

She was given the **petite frame** that North-East Indian women are known for, with straight hair, eye shape and a lighter complexion to match. Her **clothing, accessories, makeup and hairstyle all reflect her job as a makeup blogger**, and patterns were snuck in to her dress.

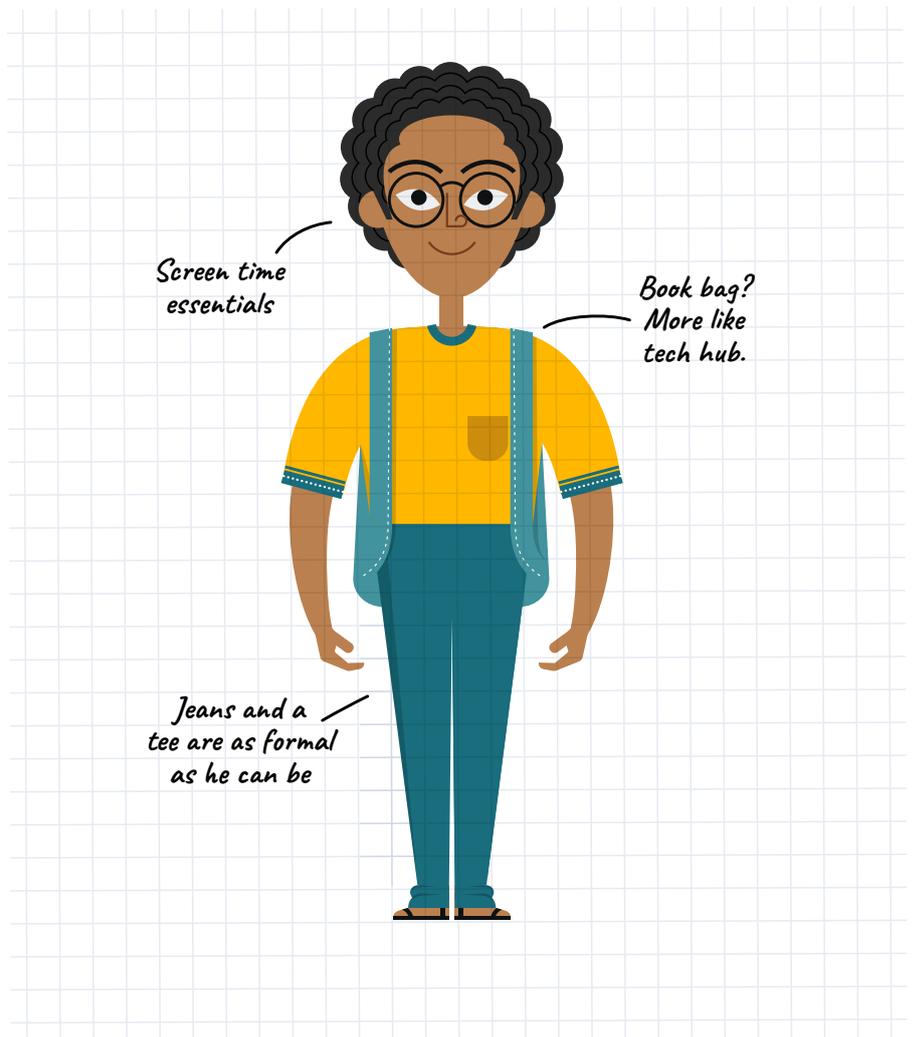


Characters

Design

Savio

He was dressed in the **usual casual attire of a college-going student** – a T-shirt, jeans, backpack and sandals. He was given **spectacles** because of how much time he spends in front of screens as a tech enthusiast, while his **curly mop of hair** is commonplace in Southern India.



Characters

Design

Minnie

While she was to look like a schoolgirl, her clothes were designed intentionally to look either like her **school uniform or just a regular pinafore**. Her hair was pulled up into **pigtails** as is the mandate in most schools. Her **hair accessories and Mary-Janes** add to her persona, while fun patterns made her clothes even more child-like. Her proportions were different from the adult characters, with her **head to body ratio** being slightly skewed.

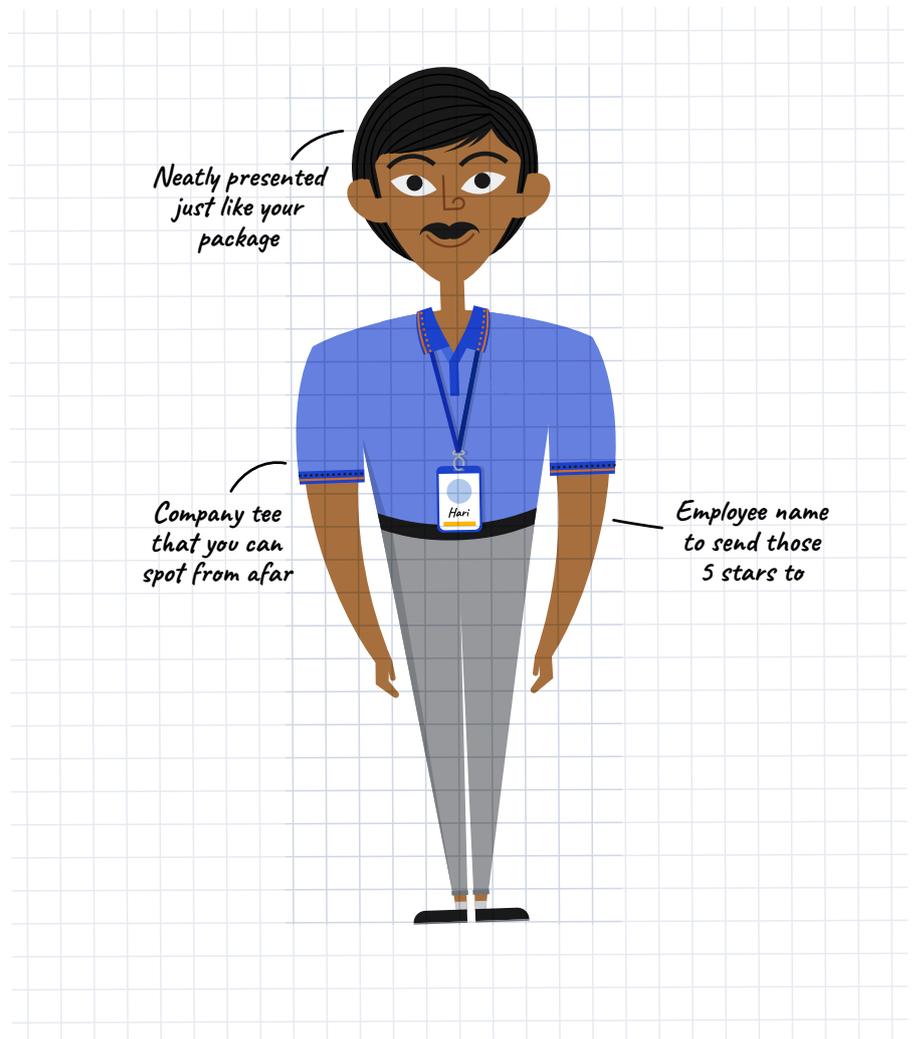


Characters

Design

Hari

As a Flipkart delivery agent, he was clad in the **standard uniform, with his badge around his neck**. Patterns, however, were added for a little touch of flair to his uniform. He was given a **moustache** as many men in the Indian service industry sport, and **neatly parted and combed hair** as per Flipkart's grooming guidelines for support staff.

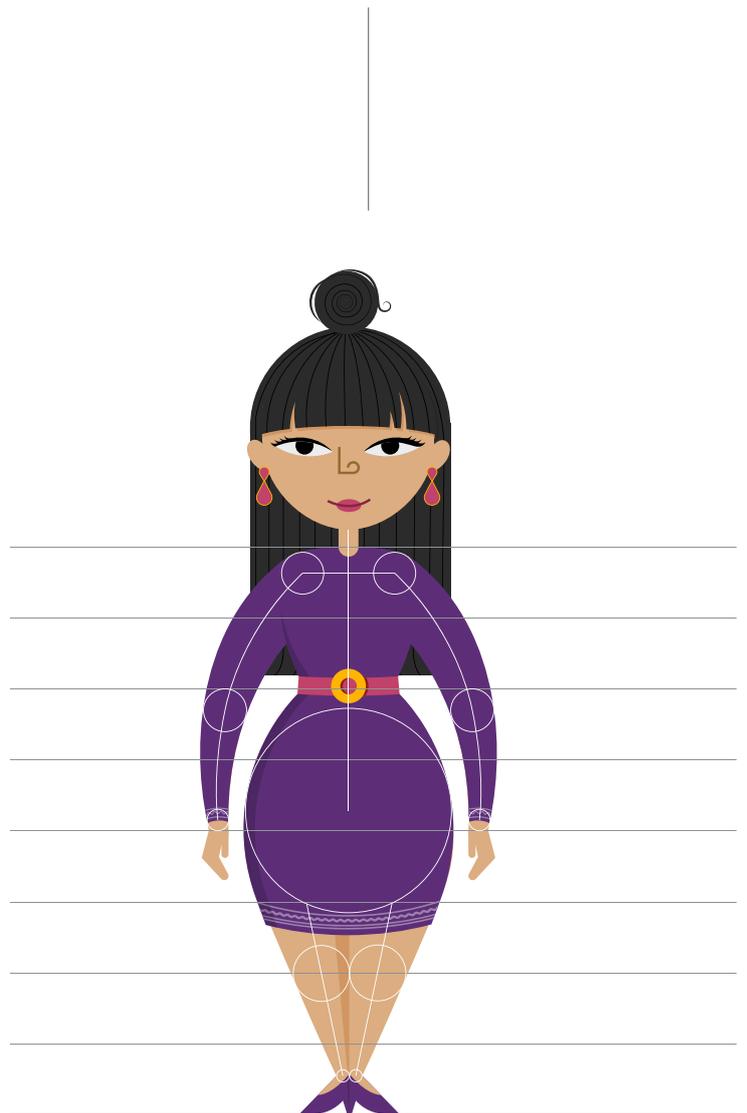
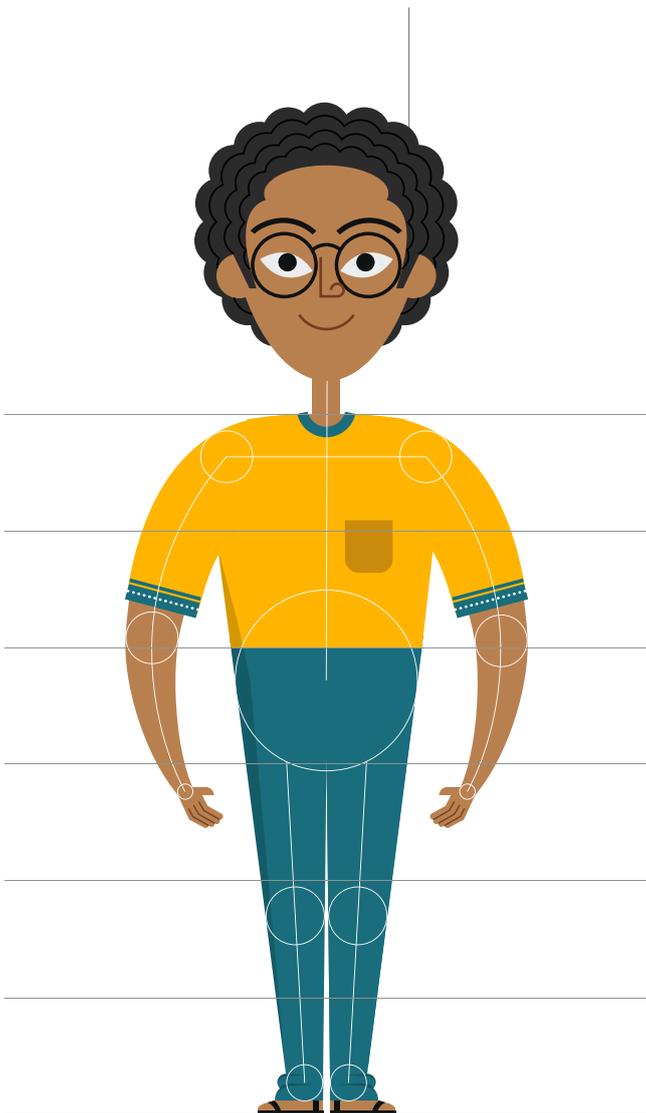


Characters

Body construction

In order to ensure that there was a system in place for the illustrations, the logic for the characters' body construction was defined clearly.

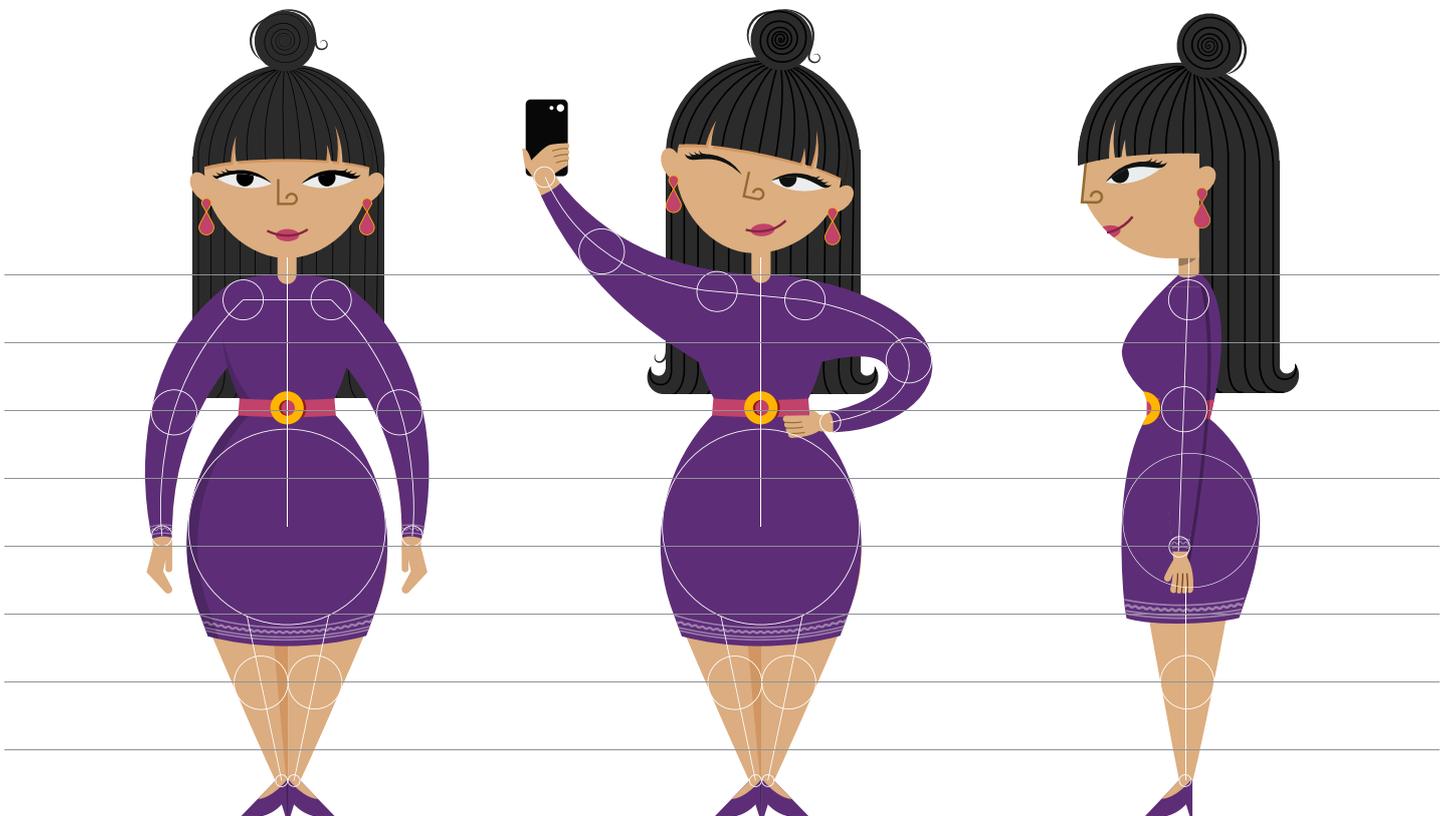
- Men were composed with a **ratio of upper to lower body** as 1:2, while for women it was 1:3
- Men were given **wider shoulders**, while women were given **wider hips**
- Though their limbs were curved as in the traditional art forms, **joint placement was still defined** in order to ensure appropriate movement/bending of their limbs



Characters

Body mechanics

Having defined the joint placements, different views were created to show how they were applied in practice.



Use cases

Scenario setting

Now that the set of characters was designed, the error states were revisited and we **brainstormed on different ways we could depict them.**

The following considerations were used:

- **Clarity of message** for ease of use and understanding
- Opportunities for **creativity and delight**
- **Suitable characters** for each scenario
- Potential for **animation**
- **Indian-ness and relatability**

The final scenarios were decided ensuring they met all the above criteria.

Error states

Put down ideas here - be descriptive
Try to use different characters, let's not be too negative, but redirect customer

EMPTY CART

Minnie sitting in the cart, holding binoculars

Minnie sitting in the cart and looking bored

Rose sitting in a cart with her legs dangling out - check Aparna's deck in dump folder

Rose bent over and looking into the cart. She could be half disappeared inside

Rose stuffing the cart with things

NO CONNECTION

Ranveer shaking his phone

Savio with his phone dismantled, trying to fix it or something

Mrs.Chopra holding her phone out of the kitchen window trying to get signal

Rose holding phone looking panicked that she can't post something

NO SEARCH RESULTS

Rose looking angry with her full wardrobe empty and clothes on the floor, like she has tried searching for something

Minnie on the floor throwing a tantrum ^A

Savio looking sad with empty lunchbox

Ranveer and his dog searching for something, dog can be sniffing

Mrs.Chopra raiding the house/kitchen cabinets searching

Use cases

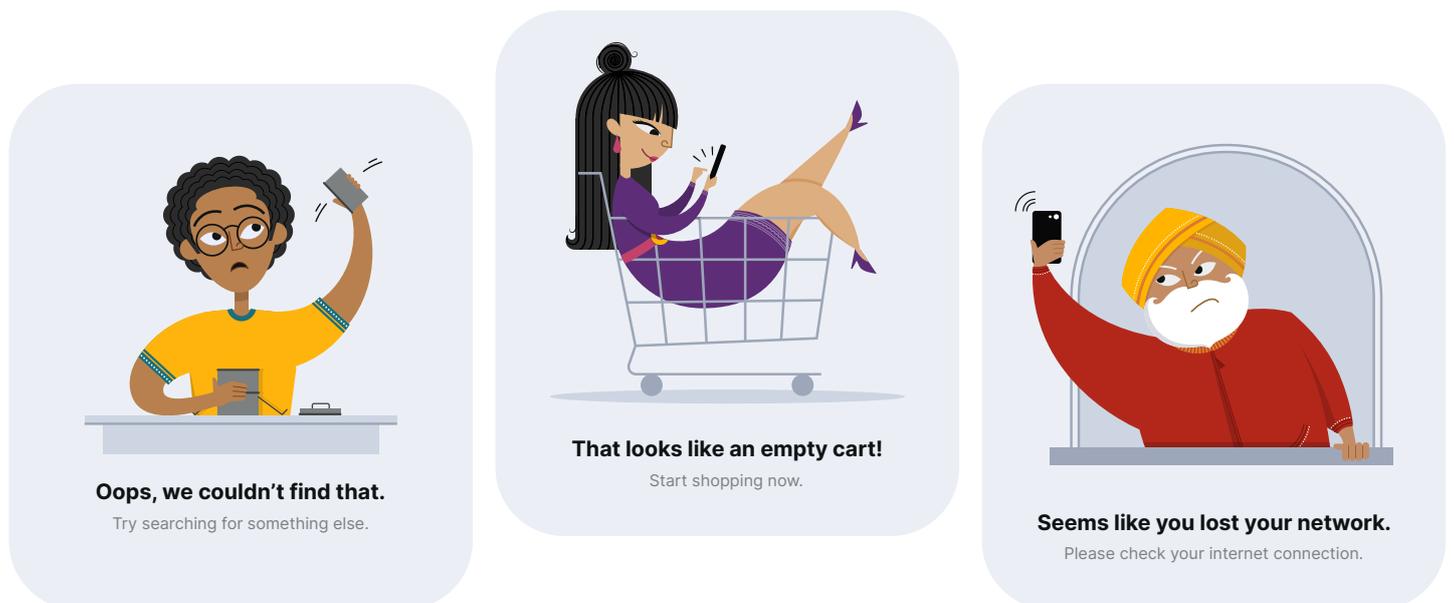
Illustration

I then **illustrated the chosen scenarios**, keeping in mind the guidelines set for the environments of each. The characters' expressions were carefully created to show **empathy for the user's state of mind** in that instance.

The illustrations were **restricted in their size** so as to fit correctly in the screens and maintain consistency.

The copywriter on the team provided copy for each error state, keeping the **messaging direct but with a touch of friendliness**. A second line was added to help **redirect the user back to a happy state**.

The layout and typography ensured a **logical hierarchy of information**.

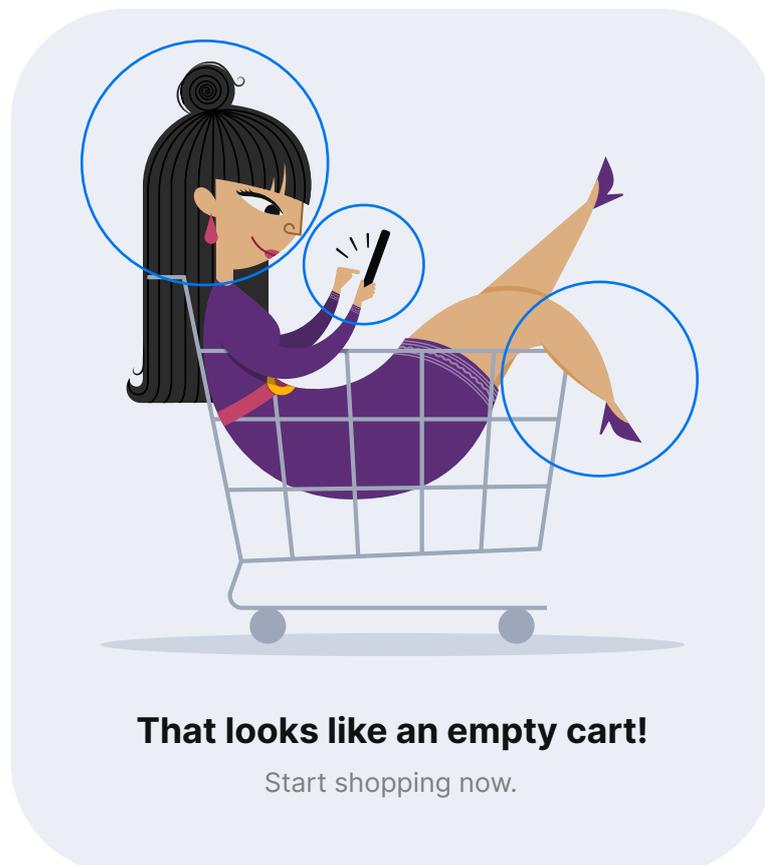


Use cases

Animation

All the illustrations were planned to be animated, and therefore developed in layers that were then exported to **After Effects to create delightful, looped animations**. These were then developed into **Lottie files** and handed over to the developers to be integrated seamlessly into the experience.

They were designed such that **even the static versions would communicate the message effectively** if the user's device did not animations.



Library

Once I had developed the characters, initial error states and guidelines, the other designers in the team were tasked with **populating the library with various poses, expressions, and views of each character along with usage notes** so that other designers could easily integrate illustrations into their projects.

Savio

19 yo

Karnataka

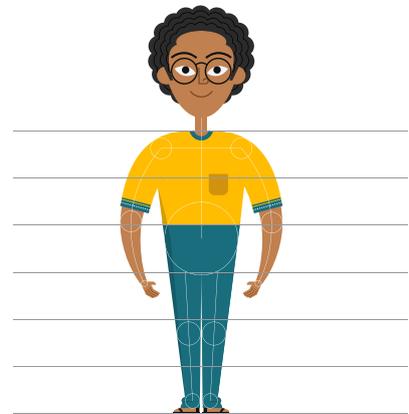
Engineering student

Category usage: Electronics, TV and Large appliances, Books, Student essentials

Standard



Body construction



Facial expressions



Poses

(For use as is, objects may be changed, new poses to be created using body dynamic chart)



Next Steps

Testing

The error states were implemented and after my departure from the company, they were also included as part of larger usability testing protocols.

The **NPS was reported to have increased by 9 points**, which in large part was attributed by the research team to the enhancement of error states as users expressed delight whenever they encountered them.

Expansion of the system

Following the successful usability testing, the team was to proceed with **developing the other error states** and the proceed to order update screens and emailers.

During this process, the **library would grow** and enable more design opportunities and equip the design team with more assets at their disposal.

The End

I wish I'd thought of an illustration
for this use case – maybe Hari looking
sad as he's driven to a dead end?