BUILDING BRIDGES IN BETWEEN ECHO CHAMBERS:

EMPOWERING YOUNG-ADULTS IN SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS CONSUMPTION

Social media has revolutionized how we access and share vast amounts of information, fundamentally altering the ways we interact, debate, and form opinions. Social media platforms have become predominant channels for information with personalization algorithms significantly shaping the content we encounter, thus, have a big impact on society. Initially, none of the social media platforms were created with the aim of delivering news. However, as their user bases expanded and their features diversified, a significant portion of their users began perceiving and using them as a news source. The research specifically focuses on the platform X (formerly Twitter), which is selected for its mission to promote and protect public conversation, positioning itself as the town square of the internet.

The design proposals are created to introduce frictions in news consumption, aiming to increase exposure diversity and facilitate healthy online discourse.

This thesis provides design recommendations to introduce friction to incidental news consumption on social media and uncovers users' preferences and concerns about online discussion spaces which aim to foster healthy discourses.

Finally, this thesis advocates for the introduction of frictions into endless social media feeds to bridge echo chambers and enhance the diversity of viewpoints encountered. In other words, this research demonstrates that social media experiences do not always need to be seamless. Thoughtfully introduced frictions can provide moments for reflection and encourage users to engage with a broader range of perspectives, ultimately supporting a more informed and democratic society.

This work represents an initial step towards a more reflective and informed social media experience, contributing to a healthier democracy and a better-informed public.

"Friction exists in many different forms and is not always a feature of design. Descriptively it can be, and normatively, sometimes it should be. Companies have implemented friction-in-design measures, often to serve their own interests and sometimes to promote a societal goal."

(Frischmann & Benesch, 2022b)
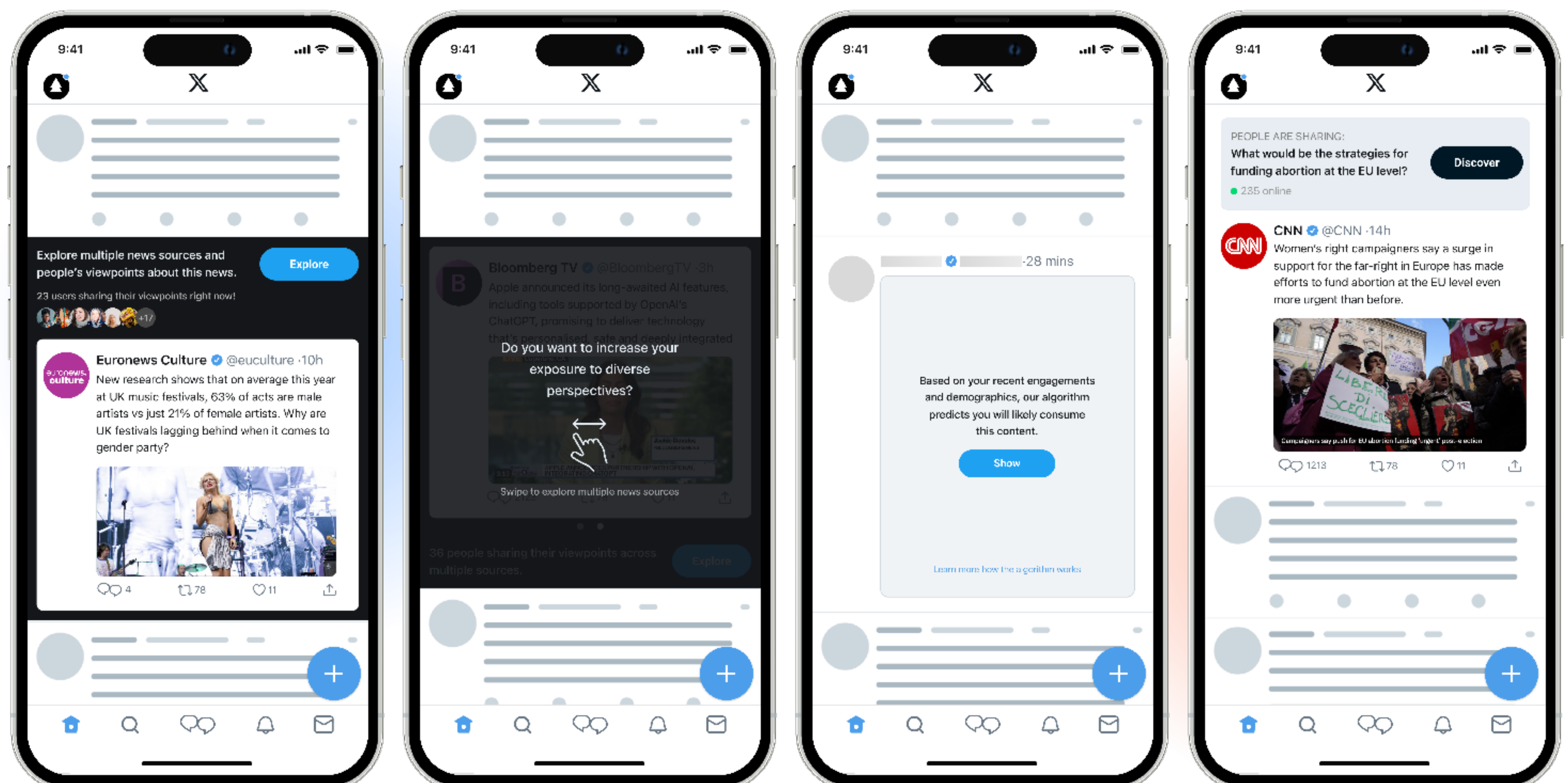
Elif Dilara Bora
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Committee   Dr. Dave Murray-Rust
Dr. Sara Colombo

TUDelft

Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering   **Delft University of Technology**