

[BUILD THEORY FELLOWSHIP · CASE STUDY / 002]

From wanting to build to building to shipped.

Madhupriya Allam could already build software. She could not yet build a business. This is the record of the 24 days in which that changed, and of Madli, the product it produced.

DAY 0

“I want to become an entrepreneur. I don’t know where to start.”

DAY 24

Madli. Built, deployed, being tested by real users.



≡ Madhupriya Allam

[VIDEO TESTIMONIAL]



She told this story herself, on camera.

Six minutes, unscripted, recorded at the end of her cycle. Watch it before you read the evidence.

youtu.be/21oFJUMvKZA

FELLOW 006 · MADLI

She knew how to build software. She didn't yet know how to build a business.

Madhupriya entered with technical capability and entrepreneurial ambition, and **no clear starting point**.

CSE

GRADUATION + MASTER'S

Yes

PRIOR PROJECTS ·
CORPORATE

None

PRODUCT IDEA ON DAY 0

-
- 01 **Entrepreneurial ambition she had carried since graduation.**
The ambition stayed with her. What to build, and how to start, did not follow.
-
- 02 **A real technical foundation. Graduation and master's in CSE, projects built herself, corporate experience.**
The question was never whether she could code.
-
- 03 **AI familiarity, used as an answer engine.**
She had used ChatGPT and Claude, but not to direct an end-to-end product build.
-
- 04 **The missing capability: identify a problem, validate it, define a product, take it into the real world.**
Everything the fellowship exists to install.
-

Not zero technical knowledge. Zero certainty about what was worth building.

She joined without an idea.

She learned what Build Theory actually did, heard what other fellows were building, and decided to bet on the process.

Madhupriya didn't discover Build Theory because she already had a startup idea.

She discovered a fellowship built around something she had wanted for years: learning how to become an entrepreneur and a builder in the AI era.

Then she did something that became the earliest evidence of the value she saw.

[BEFORE ORIENTATION WAS OVER]

She insisted that her brother, Prashanth Reddy, join too.

WHY So he would not miss what she missed

THE BELIEF Market-ready before graduation

01 Practical guidance, market-relevant skills, and the ability to build with AI.
What she felt she had gone without during her own graduation years.

02 Ready before entering the industry, not after.
She wanted him to arrive with the capability already built.

"I don't want him to miss what I missed."

Madhupriya Allam • FELLOW 006 • BEFORE FINISHING HER OWN ORIENTATION

Four or five ideas. None good enough.

The ideation session changed the question from “What can I build?” to
“What is actually worth building?”

STAGE	WHAT CHANGED
ORIENTATION	Understood the fellowship, met the context, and saw what other fellows were building.
IDEAS	Arrived at the next session with 4–5 possible ideas.
IDEATION	Applied structured problem-thinking instead of choosing an idea by personal excitement.
REALISATION	Some ideas solved no meaningful problem, or had no evidence of a market.
NEW LENS	An idea had to earn the right to become a product.

BEFORE	AFTER
~~“This seems like a good idea.”~~	“Who has this problem?”
~~“I could build this.”~~	“Is this worth building?”
~~“People might use it.”~~	“What evidence do we have?”

The first entrepreneurial lesson was not about launching. It was about learning what not to build.

She didn't invent a problem. She recognised one she already lived.

Madhupriya lives in the US and felt the friction of deciding where to eat and what to do, despite having more discovery tools than ever.

The market already had maps, reviews, social posts, saved places, recommendation platforms and group chats.

Yet the problem stayed: **too many options, too little confidence.**

[THE FRICTION, MEASURED]

SCATTERED PLANNING	40+ tabs
FOOD DECISIONS	3–5 per week
TARGET DECISION TIME	Under 2 minutes

People don't need another list. They need help making a decision.

- That became the foundation for **Madli**: a locally ranked food and travel discovery product that gives people three picks with a reason, instead of overwhelming them with options. The product definition frames the goal explicitly as a decision, not a list.

Then she talked to strangers.

The first taste of entrepreneurship was not coding. It was asking people questions and listening carefully.

20+

PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

12+

STRANGERS

06+

SEGMENTS EXPLORED

She started the exercise almost like a project rather than a business. Then she found she enjoyed it: hearing how people discovered places, what they trusted, and where their real behaviour differed from what they claimed.

The interviews were deliberately behaviour-led. Questions focused on what people had actually done recently, not what they imagined they would do.

WHAT SHE ASKED

WHAT SHE WAS TRYING TO LEARN

How did you discover the last new place you tried?

Real discovery behaviour and trusted channels.

Did it match your expectations?

Trust and recommendation quality.

Do you plan food and activities together?

Whether food and travel belonged in one product.

Who are you usually with?

Occasion and customer context.

What would make you actually use a solution?

Conditions for real adoption.

The interviews didn't just validate Madli. They changed it.

The strongest signal was **decision fatigue**, not a lack of apps.

OBSERVATION

WHAT IT CHANGED

People struggled to choose despite many existing apps.

The core job became better decisions, not more discovery options.

Couples had different preferences for the same outing.

Occasion alone was not enough; personal vibe and interest mattered.

Working professionals had tight time windows.

Fast, time-aware recommendations became a priority.

Gen Z friend groups cared about aesthetic and tone.

Brand and visual language became product requirements.

Older adults were less likely to adopt a new app alone.

Adoption became a design problem, not only a feature problem.

01

Ask

Behaviour-led questions, real people.

02

Listen

Record what they did, not what they say.

03

Find patterns

Rank the pain by how often it repeats.

04

Change the product

Let the evidence move the scope.

Then the thinking had to become a specification.

Madhupriya wrote the PRD herself, turning research and product thinking into a document another builder could execute.

PRD LAYER	WHAT MADHUPRIYA DEFINED
VISION	What Madli is trying to change in food and travel discovery.
PROBLEM	Why existing tools create options but fail to create confident decisions.
ICP	Primary and secondary users, with behaviour, pain points and goals.
ALTERNATIVES	Google Maps, TripAdvisor, Instagram, WhatsApp, Beli, Wanderlog and others.
SOLUTION	Locally weighted ranking, contextual intake, three recommendation outputs.
FLows	Location and intake through discovery, planning, sharing and logging.

[THE CENTRAL PROMISE]

Three recommendations or plans, each with a reason. A decision, not a list.

From product thinking to an executable build.

She wrote the MVP herself, then refined it through the fellowship. The first version was detailed and mostly right; minor flow issues were found and fixed inside the session.

23

V1 SCOPE AREAS

04

USER ROLES

04

COMPLETE USER FLOWS

MVP SYSTEM

WHAT IT COVERS

DISCOVERY	Food search, place search, filters, three picks with reasons.
CONTEXT	Location, who it is for, occasion, and hard constraints.
TRUST	Local weighting, ranking sample, pairwise logging.
PLANNING	Bridge tap, maps, saved plans, sharing.
MEMORY	Bookmarks, visit logs, personal ranked list.
OPERATIONS	Admin, analytics, catalogue, claims, moderation.

Madli became a product before it became software.

The identity and the interface were designed deliberately, ahead of implementation.

STAGE	WHAT SHE DID
NAME	Fixed the product name as Madli.
ARCHETYPES	Defined the brand personality and the emotional direction of the product.
TYPOGRAPHY	Selected to create one consistent visual language.
COLOUR	Built around the chosen brand archetypes.
DESIGN SYSTEM	Created with Build Theory team guidance.
SCREENS	Designed the full frontend experience using Claude Design.
ITERATION	Reviewed the first version, identified tweaks, refined the screens.

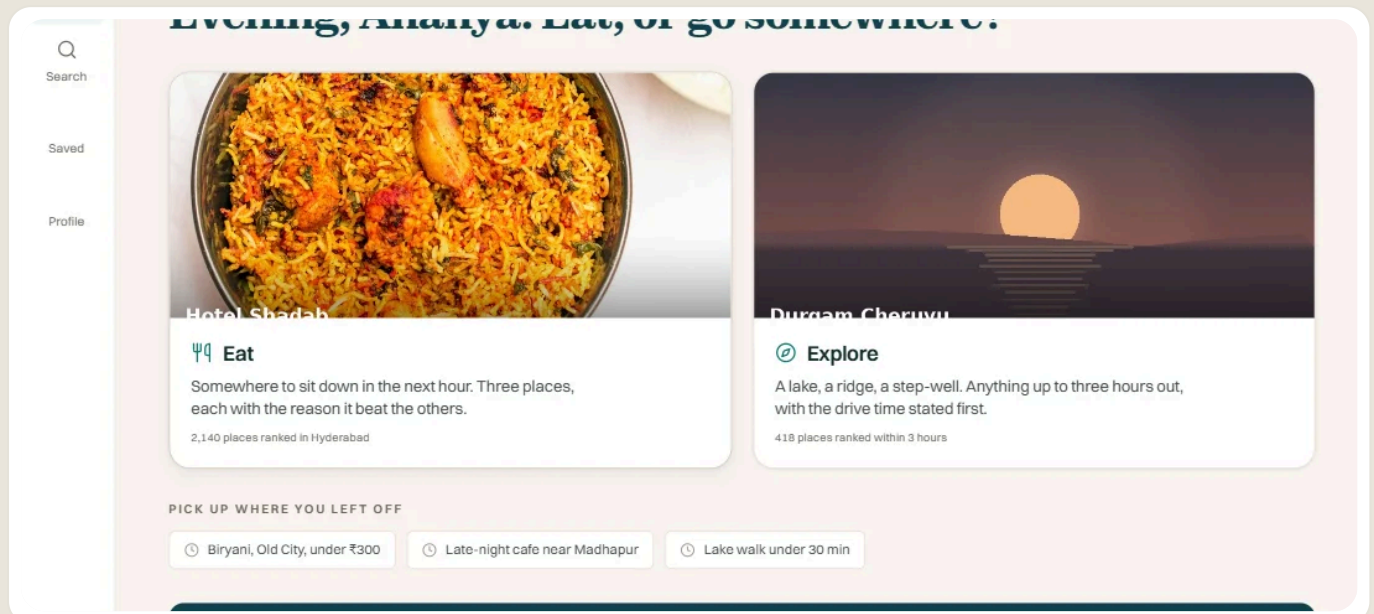
[DESIGN PRINCIPLE]

AI should not replace product taste.

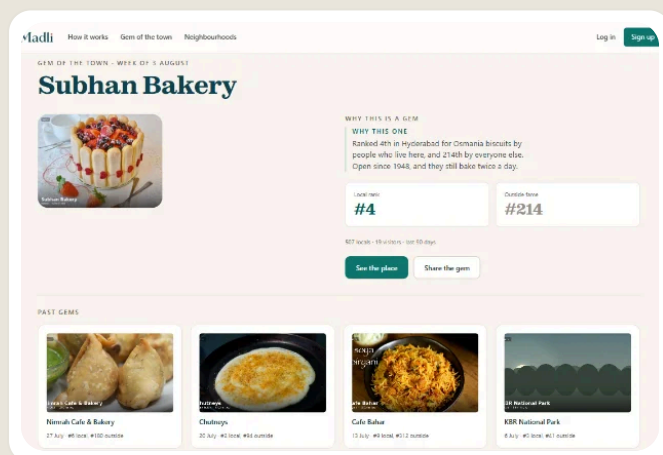
She learned to hand the design system, the requirements and the constraints to the AI, so the output moved toward an intended product rather than a generic interface.

Madli.

Designed and built by Madhupriya Allam. Deployed and being tested by real users.

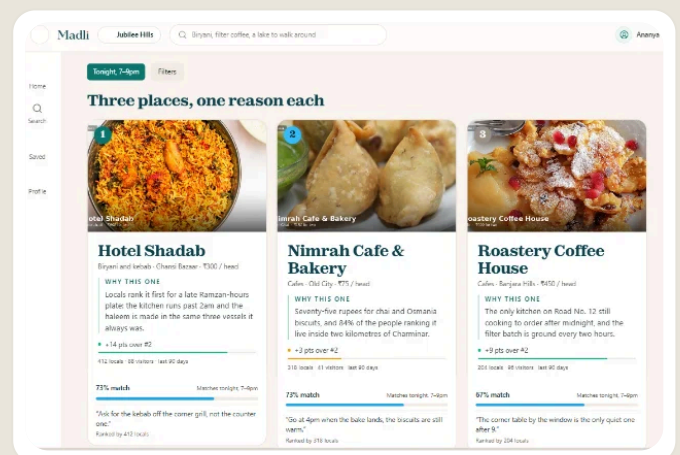


SCREEN 01 Entry point: search for something to eat, or explore the town.



SCREEN 02

Gem of the town: the highest ranked place in that category, in that town.



SCREEN 03

Three places to visit, each with one reason why.

[LIVE AND IN TESTING]

Built in 24 days, by someone who had never shipped a product.



She already knew technology.
She learned how to direct it.

The breakthrough was not
learning to code. It was learning
to **orchestrate an AI-native build.**

INPUT	OUTPUT OF THE LOOP
PRD	Context, constraints and desired behaviour become product decisions.
DESIGN SYSTEM	Claude Design plus iteration produces the frontend mockups.
FRONTEND	Claude Code with repository context produces a working interface.
SERVICES	Supabase, auth and integrations make it a functional product.
FEEDBACK	Test, identify the issue, prompt, iterate, refine the build.

[BUILD ENVIRONMENT]

REACT

TYPESCRIPT

VITE

PLAIN CSS

GITHUB

SUPABASE

NETLIFY

AUTHENTICATION

GOOGLE MAPS APIS

Frontend direction was locked around React, TypeScript and Vite, with the design system’s tokens carried straight into implementation.

A technical problem became a learning opportunity.

Madhupriya had never integrated Google Maps into an application. During the build, she learned the complete path.

STAGE	WHAT SHE LEARNED
QUESTION	How can Madli show maps and place-related information?
RESEARCH	How to search for the right Google Maps capabilities and APIs.
CLOUD	What Google Cloud Console provides, and where APIs and credentials live.
KEYS	How API keys work and how the application uses them.
PROMPT	How to give Claude Code enough context to implement the integration.
BUILD	Integrated the required maps functionality.
TEST	Tested the behaviour and iterated where output missed expectation.

The deeper skill wasn't Google Maps. It was going from "I don't know how to do this" to "I know how to find out, explain it to AI, implement it and debug it."

What changed.

The same technical background. **A completely different operating model.**

BEFORE BUILD THEORY

AFTER 24 DAYS

~~Wanted to be an entrepreneur, didn't know where to start~~

Takes a problem through validation, definition and build

~~No structured way to evaluate ideas~~

Uses problem, customer and market evidence before committing

~~Used GPT and Claude as answer engines~~

Directs AI with context, constraints, edge cases and expected output

~~Could build technical projects~~

24 DAYS

Takes a PRD through design, development, integrations and iteration

~~No structured customer discovery for a business~~

Interviewed 20+ people, 12+ strangers, and shaped the product on it

~~Didn't know how to integrate Google Maps~~

Researches APIs, works through cloud consoles, directs implementation

She expected Build Theory to help her build a product. She left understanding the system behind a product that can survive in a market.

24
DAYS

The artefacts, and the capability behind them.

The fellowship didn't produce the work for her. Madhupriya produced it, with guided support.

01	Customer interview research Evidence from 20+ conversations, including 12+ strangers.	PHASE 01
02	Product Requirements Document Product, users, problem, solution and flows, defined in writing.	PHASE 01
03	Refined MVP The executable scope and behaviour of the V1 product.	PHASE 01
04	Madli design system Brand, typography, colour and interface foundations.	PHASE 02
05	Frontend designs A complete visual specification, created with Claude Design.	PHASE 02
06	Deployed product Madli, running and being tested by real users.	OUTCOME
07	AI-native build capability Directing AI through design, development, integration and iteration.	OUTCOME

These aren't certificates of participation. They are **evidence of work she actually produced.**

The product is evidence. The builder is the outcome.

Madhupriya came looking for a way to become an entrepreneur. She left with a repeatable method for moving from uncertainty to a shipped product.

01

Notice

See a real inefficiency or unmet need.

02

Validate

Talk to real people, challenge the assumption.

03

Frame

Define the problem, user and product clearly.

04

Define

Decide the smallest useful version.

05

Design

Build the system and interface before code.

06

Build

Direct AI through the development process.

07

Ship

Deploy, test against reality, iterate.

REPEAT

On the next problem

The method transfers. That is the point.

“You are providing more than you are promising.”

MADHUPRIYA, BUILD THEORY FELLOW

What she expected was help building a product once she had an idea. What she found was a process for thinking like an entrepreneur and operating like a builder.

Don't take our word for it. Take hers.

Madhupriya recorded a video testimonial at the end of her cycle: what she came in for, what actually happened, and what she can do now that she couldn't before.



[TAP PLAY TO WATCH HER TELL IT]

[Video testimonial · Fellow 006]

**Madhupriya Allam on the
24 days that built Madli.**

youtu.be/2loFJUMvKZA

[IN HER WORDS]

“You are providing more than
you are promising.”

[APPLY]

edupodx.com/buildtheory

24

DAYS, FROM START TO
SHIPPED

20+

CUSTOMER INTERVIEWS

07

ARTEFACTS OWNED

[MENTORS FROM]



Bower
School of Entrepreneurship



Founders First Network



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