

Contextual statement

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Flattie is an application that helps you find a better place to rent, its main focus, however, is not on simply providing a user with available listings in a selected area, it is in showing them a rapid overview of the area, so that they could easily tell what suburbs would be within their price range and then make an educated decision on what place to rent. It has a similar purpose to TradeMe's flatmates and property sections, the app even redirects a user to an appropriate area on TradeMe as they interact with it. Also, Flattie has a much narrower focus, it is not intended as a trading platform and it focuses mainly on one user group - students. The most closely related app, by functionality and presentation, would be NZ Herald's Housing Affordability application (Tutty, 2016). It employs the same technique of an interactive map visualisation as well as relies on user interaction. The only fundamental difference between the apps is that the Housing Affordability app is targeted towards people looking to invest into real estate, or rather scare the majority of the population away. This is where another core difference lies - NZ Herald's app is not so much about helping people find a place to buy, its focus is on raising awareness on the severity of a housing crisis, while Flattie has a more realistic goal, as it targets users with a significantly lower income than an average property investor.

Other similar applications would be TradeMe's own Property Insights (Trademe.co.nz, 2016) and Homes.co.nz (2014), which work in exactly the same way, they provide a lot of relevant information about a property, such as when a property was built, its area size, a number of bedrooms and bathrooms and namely the price. All of that is incredibly useful for investors and again, not so much for people with lower income, who are mainly students, especially in such a city as Auckland. It seems as if the majority of population's needs are not being catered towards.

Flattie has been greatly influenced by and employs the same philosophy as Figure.NZ, a charity with the sole purpose of democratising data (Figure.NZ, 2012) or, in other words, making data accessible and understandable by everyone. Data has a potential to tell great stories with multiple points of view, unlike current media outlets providing mostly one-sided opinions. Data is the purest form of information as it is unopinionated, it is there for individuals to interpret as it is, it also promotes analysing and thinking rather than consuming readily available information through an intermediary. Most datasets, however, especially the governmental ones, are an improperly formatted mess, which keeps them from being accessible. This is why initiatives such as Figure.NZ are important.

All in all, Flattie takes its own approach concerning the housing crisis, it looks at it as an opportunity for filling out a need, finding a place to live, utilises an open governmental dataset and renders that information in a visual and accessible way for everyone to use.

References:

- [1] Tutty, C. (2016, August 30). Housing affordability. Retrieved October 31, 2016, from <http://insights.nzherald.co.nz/article/housing-affordability>
- [2] Property Insights. (2016). Retrieved October 31, 2016, from <http://www.trademe.co.nz/property/insights>
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- [4] Figure.NZ. (2012). See New Zealand clearly. Retrieved October 31, 2016, from <https://figure.nz/>