



LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY

GROUP PROJECT

Final Report

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Contents

| | | |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 1 | Introduction | 4 |
| 1.1 | Background | 4 |
| 1.2 | The Customer | 4 |
| 1.3 | The Team | 4 |
| 1.4 | The Idea | 5 |
| 2 | Project Plan | 6 |
| 2.1 | Gantt Chart | 7 |
| 2.2 | Team Roles | 7 |
| 2.3 | Project Management | 8 |
| 2.3.1 | Team Communication | 8 |
| 2.4 | Resources | 9 |
| 2.5 | Software Development Approach | 9 |
| 2.6 | Technical Considerations | 11 |
| 2.6.1 | Mobile Application | 11 |
| 2.6.2 | Server-Side Systems | 12 |
| 2.7 | Risk Assessment | 14 |
| 3 | Idea Analysis | 17 |
| 3.1 | The Idea | 17 |
| 3.2 | User Value Proposition | 19 |
| 3.3 | Business Value Proposition | 21 |
| 3.4 | Business Model | 22 |
| 3.4.1 | The problem solved? | 23 |
| 3.4.2 | B2B | 23 |
| 3.4.3 | B2C | 25 |
| 3.4.4 | Subscription Model | 25 |
| 4 | Literature Review | 27 |
| 4.1 | User Interface Design | 27 |
| 4.2 | App Development | 28 |
| 4.3 | Effects of Music | 29 |
| 4.4 | Competitors | 30 |
| 4.5 | Music Sources | 31 |
| 4.6 | Legal Issues | 31 |
| 4.6.1 | Public Performance License | 32 |
| 4.6.2 | Entertainment Licensing | 33 |
| 4.6.3 | Music | 34 |
| 4.7 | Geolocation | 34 |
| 4.8 | NFC | 35 |
| 4.8.1 | Viability | 35 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 5 Requirements | 36 |
| 6 Design | 43 |
| 6.1 System Architecture | 43 |
| 6.2 UI Design | 45 |
| 7 Implementation | 58 |
| 7.1 Inter-Service Communication | 59 |
| 7.2 Audio Streaming | 61 |
| 7.3 API | 62 |
| 7.4 Authentication | 63 |
| 7.5 Speaker Adapter | 64 |
| 7.6 UI | 65 |
| 8 Evaluation | 68 |
| 9 Conclusion | 69 |
| References | 70 |

List of Figures

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 1 | Phases in the James Martin approach to RAD | 11 |
| 2 | This is the playlist part of the app where users can add their favourite songs as well as up-vote and down-vote any songs within the playlist. | 21 |
| 3 | This is the activity page; this is where the online presence of the business starts to grow. Please refer to figure 2 for a look at the placement of image adverts. | 22 |
| 4 | This lean canvas has taken inspiration from Peter Drucker and his theories on firms as well as aspects of Michael Porter's value chain maps. | 23 |
| 5 | Subscription packages | 24 |
| 6 | The pricing scheme ¹ | 33 |
| 7 | Proposed Choona system architecture | 43 |
| 8 | Light grey, black and light blue | 46 |
| 9 | Dark grey, white and orange | 46 |
| 10 | Thoughts behind the Choona logo | 47 |
| 11 | Bonvenocf font ² | 47 |
| 12 | Lato font ³ | 47 |
| 13 | Welcome screens | 49 |
| 14 | Login screen | 50 |
| 15 | Side menu page | 51 |
| 16 | Playlist page | 52 |
| 17 | Search page | 53 |
| 18 | Now playing page | 54 |
| 19 | Activity page | 55 |
| 20 | History pages | 56 |
| 21 | Settings page | 57 |
| 22 | Prototype architecture alongside original proposed architecture | 58 |
| 23 | Inter-service communication using HTTP APIs | 59 |
| 24 | Inter-service communication using Redis | 60 |
| 25 | Inter-service communication using Waterway | 61 |
| 26 | Buffered audio streaming through the Choona audio pipeline | 61 |
| 27 | Auth0 user management | 63 |
| 28 | Choona authentication process | 64 |
| 29 | PhoneGap/Cordova build process ⁴ | 65 |
| 30 | Choona's application state/scope tree | 66 |
| 31 | Data lifecycle of the entire Choona ecosystem | 67 |

¹Glasgow City Council, *GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL LICENSING SECTION, CORPORATE SERVICES Licensing section, corporate services, Current Application Fees & Charges.*

²Barry Schwartz, *Free Font BonvenoCF by Barry Schwartz — Font Squirrel.*

³Google, *Google Fonts Lato.*

⁴Adobe Systems Inc, *PhoneGap build process.*

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

As part of this module, we were entered into an International IT Challenge run by *Atos*. Amos publicise this competition to many universities where students will attempt to create a solution to the requirements set by Atos. This year the challenge revolved around *Connected Living*. There are many definitions for connected living. Some definitions define it as something constrained to the home. Others describe it as a world where customers use different devices to experience connection anytime, anywhere. This definition covers connected homes, connected work and connected city. Atos believe that connected living involves bringing the home, workspace and city seamlessly together through smart devices providing connectivity anytime, anywhere. Consumers are always wanting to feel more connected to their workspace, their homes and their cities.

Originally, there were a few objectives set by Atos that they wished to be fulfilled:

- Easy Connection of Products
- Big Data Analytics
- Create an Audience
- Client Facing App

We tried to think outside the box for this project and decided not to create an app that would deal with the “connected home” but something that has never been created before and something we feel still meets the criteria laid out by Atos. As a team, we wanted to create something that would enhance peoples social lives and provide a service both to the customers and the businesses involved.

1.2 The Customer

From **Atos**, we are assigned a mentor who acts as a customer. We have been allocated **Mike Smith**; a Chief Technology Officer within Atos. Mike has extensive knowledge of all things technical and has recently written a paper about *Connected Train*. This makes him an ideal customer as he has a good knowledge of the *Connected World*. We aim to tap into this knowledge and gain advice and feedback in order to improve and enhance our idea from the beginning until the end of this module.

On another level, when we speak of customers thorough this project documentation, we will not only be referring to Mike, but also the thousands/millions of potential users for this system if and when it is launched.

1.3 The Team

We have decided to call our team **Hydra**. As all three of us our MCU (Marvel Cinematic Universe fans), we looked there for inspiration. At the heart of Marvel is an organisation

striving for world domination. We aim to do the same with our idea and therefore we have decided to call our team after the name of this organisation; Team **Hydra**. The team includes three Computer Science Masters students; Jay Vagharia, Oliver Woodings and Simon Kerr. Being computer scientists, we have a high interest in technology (with a small geek streak) and a passion for music. To combine both together would allow us to be involved in a project that we are all passionate about and will ensure we are completely motivated to succeed. We have all successfully completed industrial placements, with one team member already working for another company. The experience we have between the three of us should provide us with the necessary skills to tackle and complete this project.

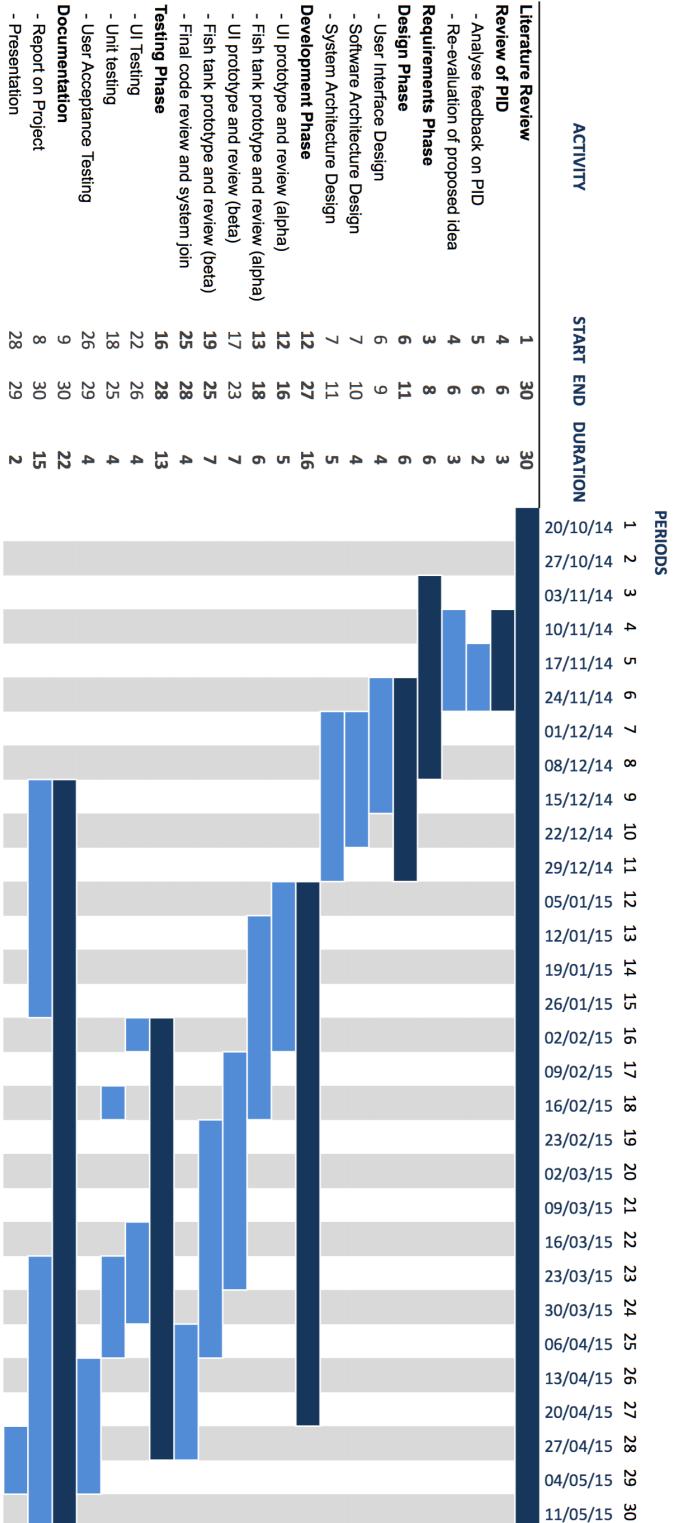
1.4 The Idea

In order to create something new, we steered away from the connected home. We wanted something different, something unique and that took us towards music. So we started off with trying to connect people with music. We want to provide the ability to connect to and control the music in your surroundings, anywhere. We want users to walk in to a coffee shop, library, bar, restaurant etc. and have the ability to suggest their favourite songs that are then played through the public audio media. **Choona** is an app focused around the ‘Connected Music’. Our research has shown there is no music sharing concept that allows people to collaboratively listen, interact and suggest music to people in your surrounding area, home or business through an intelligent, cloud-driven playlist system.

Choona is a public music player that lets you have a say in what you listen to in public, allowing you to suggest songs that you want to be played at your location. It provides you with the option to like/dislike songs suggested by others, where increased likes on a song will push that song further up the order allowing it to be played sooner. Furthermore, you can connect through your mobile device allowing you to listen to the music privately (via your headphones).

Choose provides many different features for the businesses involved. Advertisements can be added in two forms; visual or audio thus improving product/promotional awareness. Furthermore, gives the customer the opportunity of selecting what they want to hear thus keeping them happy.

2 Project Plan



2.1 Gantt Chart

The gantt chart we have provided illustrates how we will aim to complete this project on time. It includes a break up of all the tasks and the proposed start and finish times. We will use this gantt chart to track our progress throughout the project and there may be cases whenever we have had to adjust it due to time constraints and other activities outside the project.

2.2 Team Roles

We have tried to arrange the team according to our strengths and weaknesses. We have tried to consider the different tasks involved in the project and identify the roles that an individual is most likely suited to.

According to Belbin, there are 9 different team roles; three action roles, three people roles and three thought roles. Our team cover the majority of roles between them; we have shapers, implementers, completes, plants specialists, monitor and team-workers. Overall this provides us with problems solvers and passionate specialists that have a wealth of knowledge as well as individuals that have a motivation to complete this task on time and to a high standard. Below, we have defined our roles within the team to best suit our skills and to suit the type of role we are stronger at.

| Name | Role | Responsibilities |
|--------|---------------------------------|--|
| Jay | Project Secretary, App UI | Organising meetings and following the project timeline. Assisting with development where possible. |
| Oliver | Project Manager, Technical Lead | Leading the technical aspects of the projects forward. Managing cloud infrastructure for both documentation and code. |
| Simon | Business Development, App UI | Carrying the app forward according to the business model in terms of legal and technological factors. UI development |

2.3 Project Management

Responsibilities will be shared throughout the project as there are only three people in the team. The roles will change throughout the project as it may suit someone else to take on a responsibility at certain stages. There will also be times when experience will become a factor; we have considered this and tried to align our team roles to match. During different stages of the project, it may be that we have different activities going on outside of the project that may cause slight readjustments to the gantt chart but this will not effect the overall outcome. The stronger programmer(s) in the team will have a better understanding of what is involved at the development stage of the project therefore they will be more inclined to take responsibility and delegate tasks.

Every week, we will meet up to discuss any feedback we have based on our previous weeks work and if any decisions need to be taken based on this, these will be made clear and a decision taken before the meeting finishes. If a decision cannot be taken because of lack of information, we will go away and research the area further and bring the relevant issue(s) up at the next meeting. We will also use these meetings to determine whether or not we are currently on schedule with the project and to make proactive decisions based upon our current rate of progress. During each meeting, we will decide what each members tasks for the next week thus allowing us to allocate the right amount of time to complete them.

2.3.1 Team Communication

The main communication method for all team members will be through a “WhatsApp” group. All member currently use this as a social messaging service therefore we felt it was a good idea to use this as we always have access to it. The main idea of this is to send short messages to each other whether it be the whole group or just one individual. This keeps everyone in the loop. We can effectively use this to organise meetings and communicate our progress and problems. We also have gmail accounts that allow us to send communications to our customer (Mike).

Further to this, we all have access to “Google Drive”. We have used this to create a folder that each of us have access to. Here we can post any documents we want the other team members to view and they can instantly access them and make any changes they want; these changes will be globally updated for all users to see.

Initially a “Trello” discussion board was used to throw ideas around and discuss potential features of the app as well as a broad business model.

We will also be using GitHub. GitHub is a web based repository that offers Source Code Management (SCM). SCM is a necessity in a team orientated software development project. A Version Control System (VCS) allows the developers to make revisions to the code seamlessly and without overwriting someone else changes. It also allows you to revert to previous versions or examine them where need be; to help identify issues with newer version(s). This is a very useful tool to have especially when the project involves such a large code base and multiple developers.

2.4 Resources

In order to complete this project, there will be several different resources we will need to have access to. This can usually be split into three different categories; personnel, funds and non-personnel. However for this project, the only personnel we have are the three team members and this cannot be expanded on. Funds is also non-negotiable; standing at 0. We do have several non-personnel resources - these are resources that we need in order to produce the prototype and documentation. These are listed below with an explanation as to why these are needed.

- Raspberry Pi - There is the potential for some software to be developed and put on a hardware device in order to connect with the cloud and stream audio (music). For prototyping it is likely that pre-existing devices such as the Raspberry Pi will be used.
- Speakers - To enable us to listen to the output from the Raspberry Pi
- Laptops - these enable us to work as a team in any location at any time and for use in the presentation.
- Television - to present our idea and prototype at the end of the year.

Having the above items will make sure we can complete this project to a good standard and bale us t give a presentation at the end.

2.5 Software Development Approach

Software Development Approaches have existed since the 1970s. They range from rigid, long-term methods such as *Waterfall*, through to experimental and risky approaches like *Extreme Programming*. Factors such as team size, business goals and clients all contribute to choosing the correct approach.

To identify the correct software development process to use we must first decide on some attributes of the project of which we can compare across various approaches. The following have been derived from the project ideas and plan:

1. **Team Size** - Most of the development throughout this project will be done by one person. This removes the need for large-scale approaches such as *Waterfall* and *Spiral* and instead opens up the possibility of a faster, looser process such as *Agile*.
2. **Client Interaction** - If the project idea is accepted we will be allowed to work very closely with a representative from Atos. This means our development approach needs to incorporate this throughout the entire lifecycle, making methodologies such as *Waterfall* less relevant since they do not encourage client interaction during the development stage.

3. **Timeline** - The entire development and testing cycle for the project is only a few months, so whatever approach is chosen needs to be dynamic and allow for quick iterations without the need to go through the entire process again. This requirement makes approaches such as *Incremental Development* inappropriate because they add in repeated requirements analysis and architecture design steps that may not be necessary.
4. **Deliverable** - The client is expecting a working prototype to be delivered at the end of the project. The technology must be built to a satisfactory standard, but does not need to be production-ready nor be immaculately written. This allows for the testing, integration and implementation steps in the software development approach to be removed as a priority and opens up the possibility of using less formal approaches such as *Prototyping* and *Extreme Programming*.

These requirements narrow the scope down to three relevant approaches. The first one is **Agile**. Agile development promotes principles such as continuous improvement, early delivery, adaptive planning and evolutionary development. It breaks tasks down into small increments, with the goal of each increment being a new release. There is a big focus on quick communication and easy feedback, normally achieved by daily standup meetings and regular planning sessions. Whilst the communication principles would be useful for this project, the approach also tends to have a reliance on multiple teams tackling the project which is not relevant.

The second approach we could take would be **Prototyping**. Software prototyping is perfect for projects where a production-ready deliverable is not required. Each iteration of the project has no requirement to fully work or meet the users' requirements. Instead, the software goes through an iterative modification process until user acceptance is met or the prototype is discarded. The downfall of prototyping is that it is a very relaxed approach. Client interaction is suggested, not enforced, and often the developers may lose sight of the completed project by getting too involved in a limited prototype which ultimately is only a partial representation of the desired product.

Finally, we have **Rapid Application Development (RAD)**. RAD is used to describe alternatives to the *Waterfall* approach that focus on iterative development rather than formal, structured planning cycles. The most common definition of RAD, created by James Martin, involves an initial requirements planning stage followed by an iterative construction and user feedback stage.

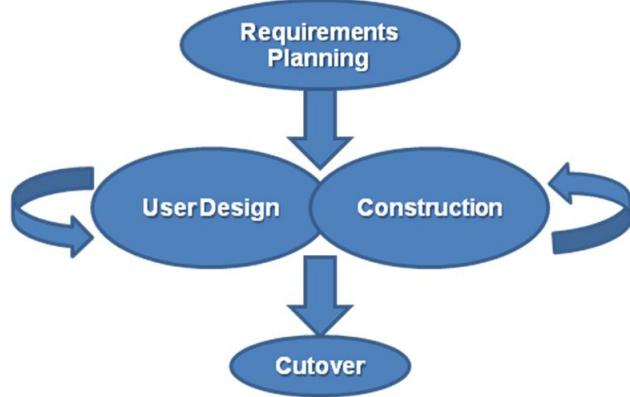


Figure 1: Phases in the James Martin approach to RAD

RAD fits in nicely with the four primary project attributes that we defined above. RAD has no mandatory definition for team size or interactions. It requires that development, client feedback and testing go hand in hand. For this type of project this is ideal. RAD does not stipulate a restriction on the length of the project thus allowing for the development cycle to be as long as possible before the deadline is reached without the need to stipulate iterations during the planning stages. Finally, there are no requirements for repetitive testing and quality control. This can be implemented independently from the software development approach, allowing for testing to be suited to the individual project.

The analysis above clearly identifies **Rapid Application Development** as the most appropriate software development approach for this project.

2.6 Technical Considerations

The technical considerations for this project can be divided into two sections: mobile application and server-side systems.

2.6.1 Mobile Application

One of the basic top-level requirements for this project is that the end product is centered around a mobile application. Therefore it is important to ensure that all the technology used or idealised is compatible with as many mobile devices as possible. If the app starts to have a dependency on niche features, such as NFC and 4G, there is a risk of excluding large quantities of users.

For a mobile application, we must consider the platform. There are currently three major mobile platforms that support apps: Android, iOS and Windows Phone. Others like Blackberry and Firefox OS either do not have a thriving application community or have a very small user-base. This project should ideally support all three of the major platforms. The problem with this is that each one requires applications to be written in different languages. In order to come to a decision, we need to consider the following:

- *Native Applications* - A native application is one that is written to work directly with

the device's operating system. For example on Android this would mean that the application is written in the programming language Java and that it directly uses the device's native libraries. The advantage this approach is mainly performance, but there are also certain features that are only available for native applications. The disadvantage is that the application has to be written separately for each platform you want to support.

- *Framework Applications* - To solve the difficulties of supporting multiple platforms, frameworks such as Apache Cordova and Adobe Phonegap have been created. These allow developers to write their applications once and have it automatically work across all major platforms. The downside here is that the application normally exists inside a 'wrapper' which can have a negative impact on performance.

Phonegap allows users to develop hybrid mobile device application; an app that is neither a native mobile app (as layout rendering is done via web views instead of a platform native UI framework) nor a pure web-based app (because they are packaged as apps for distribution and have access to native device APIs). At this point, we then need to make another decision; how we are going to build the web app? There are two methods we can choose from; writing the whole app in pure JavaScript, HTML and CSS. This requires a lot of effort thus most people will opt to use a regular framework e.g. AngularJS, ReactJS or EmberJS but there is one small issue with these frameworks; they are not specifically designed for mobile app development ('mobile-first'). Ideally if we want to create an app, we want to use a framework that is specifically designed to create them i.e. a framework that makes use of another framework. One example is **Ionic**. Ionic (making use of AngularJS) is a suite of components and styles that are mobile friendly hence making it perfect for app development.

The **Technology** behind the mobile device is another area of consideration. Features such as NFC are starting to become prevalent in many high-end smartphones yet there are still devices that block the use of such technology (such as the iPhone range - the iPhone 6 does have NFC capability but this is only available for apple pay) and there are devices that don't have this capability purely because they are on the lower-end of the market.

2.6.2 Server-Side Systems

Many ideas and concepts in this project revolve around connected data and technology. There are likely to be many different services and systems required in order to complete the project. Designing and architecting will be an important part of ensuring the project is a success.

There are many different styles of **Software Architecture**. For this project we will be using the *Microservices Architecture*. This is centered around separating out the application into individual services, each one with its own unique responsibility. This fits in nicely with the chosen Software Development Approach - *Rapid Application Development* - since it allows for entire services to be completed in a single development cycle.

Advantages

- Easier debugging
- Better fault isolation
- Independent service development and deployment
- Removes commitment to a specific technology stack
- Avoids monolithic applications and systems

Disadvantages

- Requires inter-service communication
- Testing can be more complicated
- Multi-service deployment can be hard to orchestrate
- Multiple services means more memory usage

A solid **Infrastructure** is essential in order to adequately support the numerous software services and systems required for the project. There are several options available when it comes to selecting infrastructure components (servers, database management systems etc):

- **Cloud Computing** - Cloud-based systems such as *Amazon Web Services* (AWS) and *IBM SoftLayer* allow systems engineers to easily configure and deploy scalable services across the globe. They often support many different types of services (application servers, databases, data processors, queues etc) and can be configured quickly and easily through user interfaces, rather than having to manually set up each service. The downside to cloud-based infrastructure is usually the cost and also the added abstraction; the systems engineer is no longer in direct control of each moving part which can sometimes make fault finding a more laborious process.
- **Dedicated Servers** - Dedicated servers are the more traditional approach to supporting software systems. They give the systems engineer absolute control over the entire infrastructure, however this goes hand-in-hand with the additional responsibility involved in configuring everything by hand. Another concern is redundancy. In a cloud-based system it is very easy to spin up copies of a service in the event of failure, however with a dedicated system you normally need to have servers on standby all the time. Compared to cloud services, dedicated servers can often work out cheaper.

2.7 Risk Assessment

With any project, regardless of type or size there are risks involved. A risk assessment has been completed to identify what's involved, whose effected and what steps can be taken in order to minimise the risk. This has been completed before the project commenced in order to reduce the overall risk of the project. Furthermore if any highlighted risks actually occur, we will be able to manage and deal with them quickly and effectively. The following tables has been formulated to identify the risks associated with this project and how each risk can be reduced.

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Risk | Poor requirement capture |
| Probability | High |
| Impact | High |
| Effect | A solution not identifying and solving their needs is created due to lack of understanding. |
| Risk reduction actions | We read the specification multiple times and capture the requirements properly at the beginning of the project. It is important to highlight and dissolve any areas of uncertainty. |
| If it occurs | <i>Triggers:</i> If the initial feedback requests a lot of changes. <i>Actions:</i> Re-evaluate our proposal to make sure it aligns with the specification and capture the right requirements. |

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Risk | Specification/requirements change |
| Probability | Low |
| Impact | High |
| Effect | The solution will have to be modified to fit with the new specification/requirements. This slows progress through wasted time and resources. |
| Risk reduction actions | Identify requirements as early as possible and that the customer is consulted with these requirements thus allowing any changes to be made at the earliest possible stage make. |
| If it occurs | <i>Triggers:</i> If the initial requirements need multiple changes. <i>Actions:</i> Discuss the required changes and determine how it effects the other phases of the system. |

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Risk | Poor communication between the team members |
| Probability | Low |
| Impact | Medium |
| Effect | Duplication of tasks completed with team members unsure of their tasks and responsibilities. Time and resources are wasted. |
| Risk reduction actions | Plan out the different tasks and assign the tasks to different team members. |
| If it occurs | <i>Actions:</i> Assign members to specific tasks where these are formally recorded so no confusion occurs later within the project. On-going assessments will be carried out for the addition of new tasks and the allocation/reallocation of tasks. |

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Risk | Underestimate project length |
| Probability | Low |
| Impact | High |
| Effect | The system will not fully meet the specification/requirements. |
| Risk reduction actions | Tasks can be broken up evenly based on an estimated completion time and we can follow these deadlines to make sure we stay on track. |
| If it occurs | <i>Triggers:</i> run out of time. <i>Actions:</i> Define a gantt chart with task and time scale. |

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Risk | Poor relationship with Customer |
| Probability | Low |
| Impact | Medium |
| Effect | The system designed may not meet any of their criteria. |
| Risk reduction actions | Make sure the relationship remains positive and there is constant communication between both parties |
| If it occurs | <i>Triggers:</i> no communication. <i>Actions:</i> Remain in constant contact through email communications and face-to-face meetings. |

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Risk | Loss of Data |
| Probability | Low |
| Impact | High |
| Effect | Systems may crash resulting in the loss of data. |
| Risk reduction actions | Database redundancy can be used for back-up purposes. |
| If it occurs | <i>Triggers:</i> System failure. <i>Actions:</i> Ensure backups are regular and the database can provide this. |

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Risk | Using new/emerging technology |
| Probability | Low |
| Impact | Medium |
| Effect | Unknown capabilities could hold progress. |
| Risk reduction actions | Use technology that we are fully aware of. |
| If it occurs | <i>Triggers:</i> not enough documentation. <i>Actions:</i> Have researched around the technology with relation to how we want to use it. |

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Risk | Hardware failure |
| Probability | Low |
| Impact | High |
| Effect | Unusable product |
| Risk reduction actions | Server redundancy, automatic failover and load balancing can all be used to minimise the risk and help recover from infrastructure failures. |
| If it occurs | <i>Triggers:</i> Power failure, DoS attacks, network issues, software failures. <i>Actions:</i> Ensure backup infrastructure automatically takes over, if backup fails then manually bring up services to ensure system stability. |

3 Idea Analysis

In November, we put forward the idea of Choona in the PID. Over time, details have changed and in the section we want to analyse the original idea, the components that make it up and discuss whether or not they remain the same and if not, why have they changed.

3.1 The Idea

We briefly mentioned what Choona was in the introduction. Its important that we provide a more detailed explanation of the idea and the system behind it. In order to do this, we will break each section of the project down and briefly explain it.

Choona is the name of our crowd controlled juke box. It allows users with a mobile device to connect to a Choona location and decide what music they want to listen to. The name ‘Choona’ came about through word play; *Choone* is a slang term meaning “a song or any piece of music” and is related to the word *Tune*. *Tune* is quite similar to the word *Tuna* (fish) and a combination of the three words together brought about *Choona*. The association of the word tuna triggered the idea for the logo; the fish. Taking it one step further, we tried to integrate technology within the fish which resulted in a WiFi icon styled tail. This solidifies the idea of Choona; a WiFi icon identifies network connection and Choona will connect a network of people. In conclusion, a business logo is a method to identify the business and separate the business from its rivals and we believe our logo achieves both.

On initial use of the app, the user will be taken to an initial ‘Welcome’ screen. This will provide details to the user about the main purpose and functionality of the app; to help them understand how to use the app. Once the user has logged in once, they will never see this screen again and opening the app will take them straight to the login page.

Login - the user will be asked to sign into Choona. There will different options available to the user; they can log in via a username and password or they can login via a social media account (Facebook, Google+, Twitter etc.). In essence, this opens up the option for more users to connect quickly and easily with Choona and the opportunity to post on their social media account that they are using this app.

The main reason behind this app is to play the music you want. Therefore in order to do this, we need a playlist. This playlist will have several pieces of functionality. First of all, this will contain the list of songs that have been currently added to the playlist. The user will be able to scroll this page and look at the different songs. They can then **up-vote/down-vote them**. The idea of the up-vote/down-vote is to push songs further up the playlist so they are played quicker. Lets consider the example; there is a song that I really like and many other users within the facility also like that song. If we all decide to up-vote that song, then it will move further up the list because it will have received more votes than other songs on the playlist. The same is true for the other way; if we down-vote the song, it will move further down the playlist. This page will allow the user to add songs to the

playlist. There will be **search** functionality; this explores any connected music source(s) and looks for the song name, artist or album depending on the users input. Any results will be displayed and the user can add the song they want. As this is a public system, there will need to be considerations taken on the available music. There may be occasions when we do not want explicit versions of songs being played (especially when there is a risk of children being present - nightclubs may wish to allow for explicit versions as their customers will be over the age of 18). Depending on the business and their choice; this will be reflected in the search results and the songs played.

In order to stop abuse of the system, there will be a limit on the number of songs a user can add to a playlist at any one time. There are different options available for this but we are leaning towards a time-limited based approach. This would mean that a user can only add e.g. one song every fifteen minutes. It has been suggested that we add a points system to this facility that allows you to gain points through the number of up-votes any of your previously added songs receive. Once you get over a certain amount of points, the number of songs you can listen to is bumped up. There may be instances when no songs have been added to the playlist by users. If this is the case, there will be a **default playlist** available that kicks in when the user playlist becomes empty. This means that there won't be any stage when there is no music being played. This default playlist is created and maintained by the business through their Choona account. Now we have the playlist, how do we connect to it?

Different locations will have different playlists. In order to differentiate between these distinct locations, we will make use of **Geolocation**. There are two sides to this; the business will have to have to create a boundary - this would be their shop floor area. We call this a *Geofence* and it acts like a virtual barrier. When inside the barrier, the user will have access/connection but when they leave, the user loses their access/connection. The second part to this is the mobile device. Using the locations services available on mobile devices, we can then determine whether they are inside the geofence. This therefore means we can allow customers to connect to that locations playlist where they can then add their own song choices and up-vote/down-vote other song choices on the playlist. Using this functionality, we can also make sure the state of the playlist is ideal for the current users. If a user leaves the geofence; any song(s) they have added to the list can be removed if that song(s) has not received any up-votes from any other users.

As we mentioned earlier, Choona allows for social media login but we take this one step further. We want to use social media as a way of socialising with friend. We have decided to use a notification system where users can add posts from Choona onto their social media account. A post will contain location (through geolocation), the song currently being played and a timestamp; something like "Chris is listening to Happy by Pharrell Williams at Loughborough Students Union - 10 minutes ago". In the app itself, any notifications posted by friends that are Choona users will be displayed. This is a small simple but fun aspect to the app and has been introduced because teenagers and young adults in todays society are

heavy social media users with a large social influence.

Within the app, there will be a **history** page. Within this history page, there will be a list of different Choona locations that you have connected to. Behind each of these locations, there will be a list of songs that were played from when you entered that geofence to when you left the geofence. With this functionality, we are trying to provide the user with the ability to check back and find a song that they really liked but do not know the name of. It is a regular occurrence they we listen to a song but do not know what it is. With background music, it is hard to use an app like “Shazam” or “Soundhound” to identify the song for two reasons; the volume is too low or there is too much noise to identify the song. Therefore the history feature on Choona can allow the user to find out what that song is. Further to this, there will be functionality to **purchase or play** that song. Choona will look at the different music providers on the mobile device and then offer the option for the user to connect to that provider and play/buy the song e.g. if running Spotify, the app will offer the option to “Play in Spotify” thus allowing the user to add that song to their own private music collection.

There may be environments when you want to listen to the music but there is too much background noise. This can be common for customers in coffee shops who are there to work or for people in an office environment. Choona will enable the user to listen to the playlist privately; through the use of headphones. Very simple and could be very effective.

There would be two different types of Choona accounts; standard user and admin. The customer will sign up for the standard user account, providing them with the functionality described above. The admin account is the account provided to the business. This is used for the purposes of identifying the music sources. The admin account will link up with the different available music sources to that business. This is linked to the search functionality in the customer app so the search results that appear for the customer relate to the music available from the connected source. Furthermore, the admin account will deal with adverts. The Choona app allows for advertising in two forms. The first within the app; at the top of the playlist, there will be an accordion. Within this accordion, the admin can either have one single image; depicting the business or they could utilise it for the purposes of adverts. They can place multiple different images that scroll through with each one depicting whatever they want; a new product or a special offer. The second form of advertising comes in sound bites. These sound bites would be positioned between songs (this is handled automatically by the Choona system). The admin account will just have to add the sound bites they want to placed between the songs.

3.2 User Value Proposition

There are four small sections that curtail a value proposition. These have been outlined below:

- (1) Headline - one short sentence about the end-benefit we are offering
- (2) Small paragraph - explanation of what we offer, for whom and why its useful
- (3) Key benefits and features of the app
- (4) One visual - pictures paint a thousand words

Based on the criteria above, we have written the follow proposition.

(1) Choona is a music-sharing app allowing users to collaboratively listen, interact and suggest music in public areas, businesses or homes through an intelligent, cloud-driven system.

(2) This app is for anyone who wants a say in the music they listen to; users can access music playlists through geolocation and add the songs (from different sources) they want. Songs move further up the playlist the more “up-votes” they receive or further down the queue the more “down-votes” they receive. Choona offers social media interaction and provides a catalog of history to help find the song(s) that's name you can't remember.

(3) There are several key benefits to Choona for the user:

- Listen to your preferred music - In too many situations, we are forced to listen to music that doesn't interest us. Though the majority of times the music is in the background, we somehow know it's there. If we enjoy that music or can relate to that music in any way, it has a positive effect on our attitude and what we see.
- You do not need to sign up; you can log in using a social media account.
- Adverts can help highlight a new range of products or identify any special offers that you may be interested in.
- Helps identify songs that you cannot remember the name of or the artist that sings it.

(4)



Figure 2: This is the playlist part of the app where users can add their favourite songs as well as up-vote and down-vote any songs within the playlist.

3.3 Business Value Proposition

We have carried out a value proposition for the business and this follows the same structure as the user value proposal.

(1) Choona is a music-sharing app that allows customers to collaboratively listen, interact and suggest music in your retail space or business premises through the cloud-driven system.

(2) Choona offers the business a way to enhance a customers experience. Allowing customers to listen to their favourite music is a sure way of making sure they stay longer and that they make more purchases. It is also a great way to advertise (via images and sound bites) new products and special offers that may otherwise go unnoticed.

(3) There are several key benefits to Choona for the business:

- Customers may stay longer thus increasing the number of purchases they make; this increases sales and profit.
- Advertisements will also gain increased product interest and increased sales revenue
- Data analytics - Choona will collect endless amounts of data that can then be analysed to find trends or relationships that help the business improve in any area it wants/needs.

- The business has an increased/new online presence through the social media activity feature.
- Businesses can tailor their default playlist to music that suits their target audience thus making sure they attract the right customers.

(4)

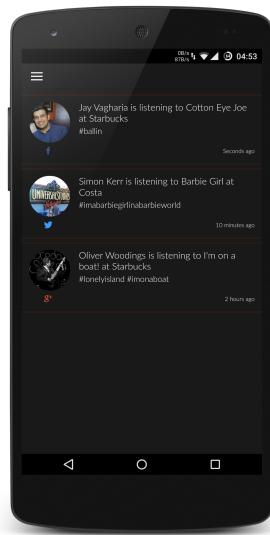


Figure 3: This is the activity page; this is where the online presence of the business starts to grow. Please refer to figure 2 for a look at the placement of image adverts.

3.4 Business Model

As part of the business plan, we created a lean canvas. This is shown below; and depicts how we aim to bring success with Choona.

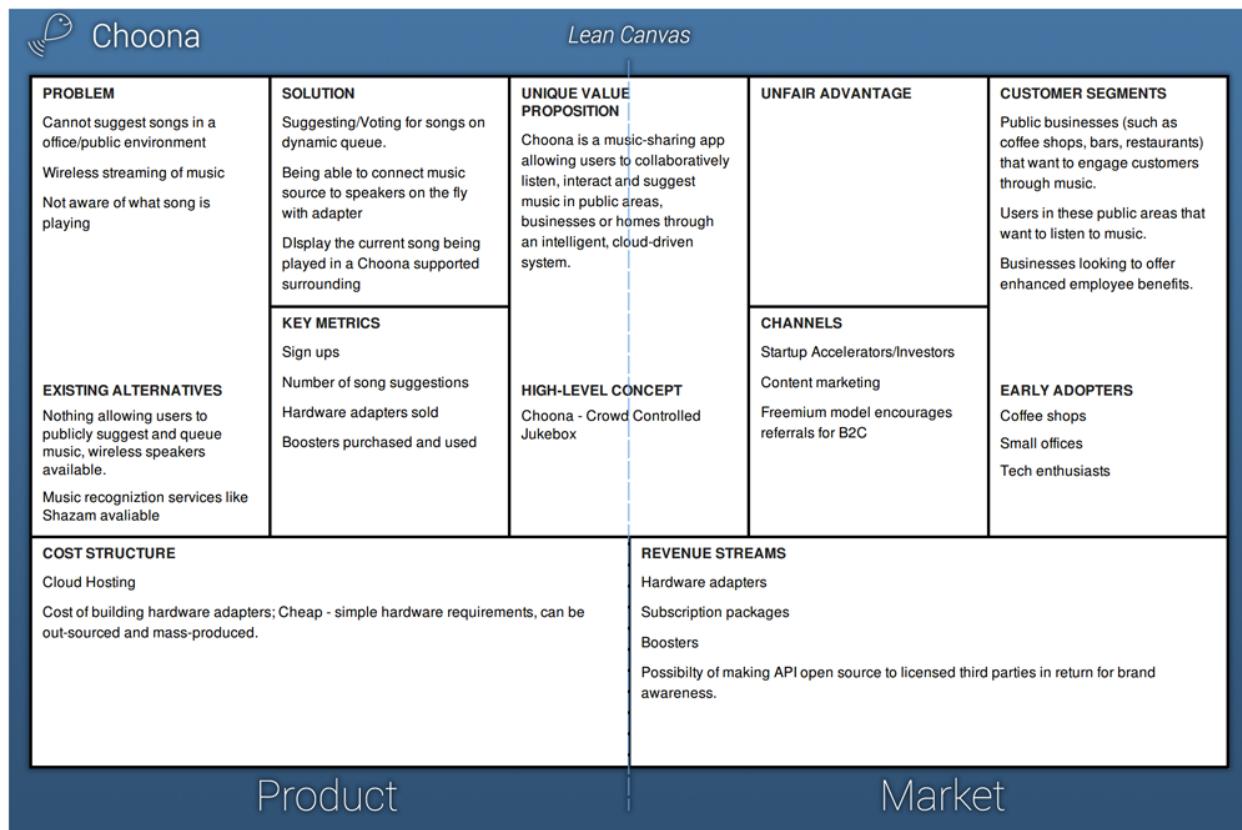


Figure 4: This lean canvas has taken inspiration from Peter Drucker and his theories on firms as well as aspects of Michael Porter's value chain maps.

3.4.1 The problem solved?

At the moment, there is no service that provides users with the ability to select the music they listen to in public areas and the office. Choona provides them with this ability through a simple mobile facing app that interacts with a system connected to the cloud.

3.4.2 B2B

The B2B model essentially means we are providing a product or service to a business. We are providing businesses with the ability to offer Choona to their customers. An administration account will be provided that finds their music source(s) and makes it available for customer access. This account will be allocated a certain number of user connections based upon the subscription package they purchase. The business will have access to define a default playlist; playing when no other songs have been added by customers. Businesses will also be able to advertise to customers, whether it be via images on the customer facing app or via sound bites that are inserted between songs.

There will be several different subscription packages available for the business to subscribe

to. The larger the business (whether that be across one location or multiple locations), the more connections they will want to have. A large organisation will have two levels of management; management across the overall Choona account and management for each different Choona location. Regardless of this, there will be a standard offering of packages and these are outlined in figure 5.

| Package Name | Number of Connections |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Standard package | 100 |
| Level 1 | 250 |
| Level 2 | 500 |
| Level 3 | 1000 |
| Level 4 | 5000 |
| Level 5 | 10000 |
| Provisional Expansion package | Custom |

Figure 5: Subscription packages

Unfortunately, we have not had enough time to carry out cost analysis and therefore we cannot put a price beside these packages. A detailed research analysis of the market will have to be carried out before we can make such estimations. We do however have a outline on what each package offers; number of connections. The standard package is a very small package and is aimed at small businesses. This will be a free package as we plan to adopt a freemium model. A freemium model is one where core functionality is given away for free but the premium product is sold for a price. The reason behind using this approach is that it should promote brand awareness and entice more businesses to offer Choona and entice more customers to use it.

In the B2B model, a small number of connections will be given away but in order for the business to allow more customers to use the service, they will have to pay for any additional connections (through upgrading their packages). The premium packages move from Level 1 to Level 5 and range from 250 connections to 10000 connections. These packages have been created based on several different sources and the information they have provided. Firstly, according to business insider, Starbucks have around 625 customers per day per store⁵ across 750 stores in the UK⁶. Therefore, across the UK per hour, they are server over 43000 customers. This is a huge number and therefore a large connection package would be needed to offer Choona to all customer. This is why we have created Level 5 package. Based upon the figures from JS Sainsburys⁷, they carry out around 119 transactions per hour per store. This is a significant number and with more than 1200 stores across the UK, they too need a large number of connections. We have also spoken to a member of the Loughborough Students

⁵Ashley Lutz, *How Many Customers Starbucks Will Have In The Future.*

⁶Simon Neville, *Starbucks: your tax questions answered.*

⁷N/A, *FAQ's.*

Union. On hearsay, they have estimated the average number of people on a night out to be around 4500. Over the course of a 6 hour night, this would fluctuate somewhat but at anyone time, the average number of customer would remain around 2000 people. This has resulted in package levels 3 and 4. Packages 1 and two have been created for the purposes of smaller businesses that have one, maybe two locations and for large businesses that would use Choona as an internal music application. Provisional expansion packages are for the one-off occasions where it is not necessary to have the package for a specific length of time. Concerts are a great example, they happen over a 1, 2 or 3 day period. Rather than miss out on the Choona experience, we can offer a package that matches the event in terms of duration and number of connections; its a win-win for both the business and for Choona. The second part to the premium side of the freemium model is the sale of a physical adaptor. This can be purchased as another method of connecting to the cloud and streaming music. Businesses may want to purchase such hardware whenever laptops and computers are not readily available.

3.4.3 B2C

B2C covers the private use of Choona within one location and for a non-commercial use. This covers private parties and normal day to day use between yourself and immediate family within the home. The B2C model is similar to the B2B model in that it will follow the freemium model. The user will have free access to the Choona app where they can use it in different Choona locations. Whenever they want to privatise and create their own Choona location, they have to subscribe for a standard package; this will be free. However this offers a very small number of connections (5). If they wish to increase their number of connections, they can upgrade to a higher package. At this moment in time, we have not been able to do any research towards this type of subscription and therefore we cannot outline package levels or number of connections within these packages.

3.4.4 Subscription Model

As we identified in both the B2B and B2C models, we will adopt *subscription commerce*. On a monthly/yearly basis, the businesses subscription will be renewed and a fee will be paid to Choona. There are numerous benefits for adopting such a model. For the business, they will never have to remember to reorder every month; which provides them with the piece of mind that they will receive exactly what they have signed up for. It is also good for Choona as this will provide us with a constant revenue stream. We won't need to be constantly bring them through a 'checkout' process. Secondly, subscription based services are generally a novel idea within their market. The novelty alone will create a good deal of publicity and drive sales without the need for large volumes of publicity.

It is important to consider the subscription length because a longer average will increase the Customer Lifetime Value. In doing so, Choona will maintain an increased profitability

rate due to the retention of customers and businesses. This will result in us being able to pay more (through advertising and personalised subscription packages) to sign up further businesses and customers.

4 Literature Review

4.1 User Interface Design

Having read different articles relating to Human Computer Interaction components, several factors have been identified that directly link to improving interfaces of mobile applications. Some of these are the use of graphics, colour, font and other effects.

Colour is one of the main attributes and it covers many different areas including background, text colour and visual effects. Lets first consider background and text colour. There is a lot of different opinions on this topic; a lot of people will lean towards a light background with dark text. Dark backgrounds (dark designs) are becoming very popular now and add a creative and elegant appeal to the app. This is not something that can be left to preference. There are situations when dark backgrounds suit the app and there are situations when a light background is preferred. An app with lots of reading is better off having a light background with dark text. A recent survey was taken on this area and 47% prefer light background because it aids with *readability*. Another 10% said they prefer dark backgrounds with 36% saying it just depends on the function of the app⁸. With our app in mind, we are not so hung up on readability but eye fatigue. We want the user to be able to use the app in any conditions whether it be during the day, night, in unilluminated rooms (bars and nightclubs) or illuminated rooms. With this criteria in mind, we need to consider something that has not too high-contrast. We do not want a full white on full black or vice versa. We can use dark grey with off white and this will prevent the eyes burning out. One final note to make; darker backgrounds tend to use less battery. A test was carried out on an AMOLED screen and the results showed that ‘mostly’ white background use 1/3 more battery than black backgrounds⁹. Another test was carried out on a Nokia Lumia 720 (with WVGA IPS screen) and this used 6.37% more battery having a white background compared to dark background¹⁰.

Now if we have the dark grey background, we need to consider other colours to use with the app. Blue is usually a popular colour of choice (the world’s favourite)¹¹. Blue is the colour of the intellect and the mind. However, blue can be difficult to see on certain backgrounds as it tends to blend in. This is actually to do with our eyes. There are fewer photoreceptors that react to blue compared to other colours and they are not in the centre of the retina because it is sometimes hard to distinguish.

Lets consider another colour; orange is included in Ubuntu’s colour palette as they believe it signifies a community feeling. There are many other descriptions of orange - it is classified as a warm colour, it radiates warmth and is often associated with energy, happiness, attraction, stimulation and comfort¹². We want our app to have a community like feeling. This is an app for the public where they can talk through the language of music. Two other interesting

⁸Kayla Knight, *The Do’s and Dont’s of Dark Web Design*.

⁹Ryan Whitwam, *How much power does a black interface really save on AMOLED displays?*

¹⁰Ciprian Adrian Rusen, *Do You Save Battery When Using a Dark Background in Windows Phone?*

¹¹Karen Haller, *Social Media giants – why they use blue as their primary branding colour*.

¹²Carly Page, *Apple’s UK market share climbs to 42.5 percent as Android dominance falters*.

words here are *attraction* and *stimulation*. Ultimately we want users to be attracted to our app, enjoy their experience and to keep using it. Although colour won't have too big an emphasis on this, a well designed app can and colour plays a part in this. Therefore orange seems to be a good colour choice. Colour can also used to convey information through visual recognition. A colour like green means on, safe, valid etc while red means off, danger, invalid etc. We can make use of these colours in our app to provide information to the user. Talking of colour, one of the most important thing to remember is to not use too many different colours. We want to keep the colour scheme minimal. A busy colour scheme will obscure the dark background as the contrast will be too sharp. Therefore we shall stick with 2 different colours and a background colour.

Font is another important consideration. It is important to make sure the selected font is clean, crisp and works well with colours we have chosen. There are several areas to consider here; the first being weights. If we want to try and create contract and a visual hierarchy within the app, we can consider different weights such as light, normal, italics, bold and extra bold. Legibility is also important due to the number of small screen devices there are currently on the market. If we use a font that is hard to read when it is smaller, then our app design has a serious flaw. Therefore it is important to use a *sans serif font*. This type of font does work well with a dark background. The trick, though, is to put only larger text in serif fonts, so that the extra white space floods around each character and makes the text very legible.

There are several other key considerations. Consistency; the app should be as consistent as possible with commands and menus containing the same content and format. If there are buttons or features designed on one part of the app that act in a certain way, then if this button/feature appears somewhere else, it should act the same way. The app must be navigable in the sense that we can manoeuvre between the different pages. Any messages that are displayed (toast notifications etc) should be descriptive and helpful. Simplicity is also very important and ensures the user will keep coming back to the app. Many useful apps have been created over the years yet people do not come back because they find it awkward to use or they find it complicated to use. An example of this is Bump. When this was first released, it had features to transfer music, photos, contact information other documents and recommended apps. But due to its complicated nature, it was slated and users abandoned it. When the creators re-developed the app with simpler page layouts, the app became easy to navigate and simple to understand. That is when its potential was realised and now has been downloaded millions of times.

4.2 App Development

For the purposes of our prototype, it would be too time consuming to consider native app development therefore we need to consider using frameworks. Firstly, there is **PhoneGap**. PhoneGap works across multiple platforms (iOS, Android, Windows etc.). Currently, the UK operating system split is 49.7% android and 42.5% iOS with the remaining percentage

covering Windows, Blackberry and others¹³. The market is dominated equally by both android and iOS therefore choosing to create a native app on either one of these OS's rules out a large user base thus using Phonegap guarantees we have an app for both types of devices.

If we go one step further, we can look at **Ionic**. The creators of **Ionic** said they have focused on performance. In doing so, they have brought about simplicity - it keeps a flat, clean simple and powerful UI without unnecessary rendering of rounded corners etc. This fits in with our idea of the app; we want something simple and clean as this will result in a better user experience which will entice the user to use it again.

4.3 Effects of Music

Music comes in very different forms and covers many different genres. This leaves it very hard to play music that suits most or all kinds of customers. According to "Which", its not actually the music we like that grabs our attention but its the music we don't like that we notice most. Therefore, we don't want people to be listening to music they don't like for one main reason; it will annoy them and potentially make them leave the facility.

Music has a lot of power; it moves people of all cultures. Unfortunately, it is not understood as to why listening to music triggers such a rewarding experience but through brain scans, it seems songs trigger the same brain flooding (with dopamine) as food and sex. This reaction then causes the Nucleus Accumbens to communicate with the temporal gyrus¹⁴. This essentially causes us to register memories; we have a likeness to remember the fond memories with links of music and sounds. Having this knowledge, we can essentially use this to stimulate customers; happy customers drawing on happy memories will result in many different activities and these should be mainly positive ones for the shop, whether it be more purchases or decisive purchases.

How music is played also has an effect on our activities within a shop. There have been several different studies carried out over the years linked to how volume, speed and type of music effects our behaviour. For instance, the louder the music, the more likely it is that people will spend less time in that shop¹⁵. There are cases when this is a good thing; both for the customer and for the business. Lets consider a supermarket. Before we make our way to the supermarket, we have a fairly good idea of what we want. Therefore we are not actually going to spend any less money if we are fast and efficient compared with spending more time in the store. Its good for the customer because we will have more time to spend on other activities and its good for the business because their stores do not become bunged and they should in essence have a steadier stream of customers.

Slower music will result in customers spending more time in store and hopefully an increase

¹³Carly Page, *Apple's UK market share climbs to 42.5 percent as Android dominance falters*.

¹⁴Virginia Hughes, *Why does music feel so good*.

¹⁵Lisa Barber, *Which shops play the most annoying background music?*

in purchases¹⁶. This type of scenario is what businesses want when customers come for a look around e.g. cloths, furniture, jewellery and coffee shops etc. The customer may not have had the intention of making any purchases but the slow music changed their brain activity that resulted in a purchase they didn't intend to make. Even in coffee shops, it may result in the customer(s) grabbing another coffee before leaving.

Listening to the wrong type of music can make people believe they have been somewhere longer than they have. Something like this will force the customer to leave the store, maybe even before they have purchased anything. Therefore having the right type of music playing is essential to keep the customers in the store long enough to make sure they makes purchase. There is no better way of doing this than allowing the customer to have a say in the music they listen to.

4.4 Competitors

We have taken a look at other apps and services on the market and feel that nothing matches our idea. The closest service available is from **Sonos**. Sonos is a smart system of speakers and audio components that unite your digital music collection in one app and can then be controlled from any device. The rise of digital music has allowed for us to bring our music wherever we go, through media such as iPods, MP3 players etc. However, there hasn't been the same advancements in terms of systems that don't move around. 'Wireless' is the word that comes to mind when thinking of a solution. It is now possible to stream audio to a wireless device (speaker) and without compromising on the sound quality. Sonos provides the user with the ability to play music from a device wirelessly anywhere in the **home**. However, there are two issues with this; it is only available for the **home** and the consumer needs to purchase expensive **hardware**. The cheapest speaker available for purchase is £169. If you are a music-orientated person, you may wish to purchase their high-end hardware which can cost up to £1200. Unfortunately, Sonos do not support other wireless speakers. An adaptor can be purchased to allow these to be connected to their system, the *Connect* device, but this costs £279.

Pure have also moved into this market where they provide wireless speakers and hardware for *wireless music in the home*. They also allow you to purchase hardware to link your current speakers with their system at £69. This is much cheaper than Sonos but is still quite expensive. It allows the consumer to wirelessly play their music from any music app or streaming service they want. **Bose** also provide a very similar service to Pure, but the hardware costs are more expensive.

From this, we can see that there are no services available for the wireless sharing of music outside the home. Our app would unite music into anybody's daily routine, whether this is at the office, coffee shop, restaurant as well as the home. We also want to make sure that no expensive costs are applied. Competitors can appear at anytime during the development of a project, so it is important that we keep looking for emerging competitors and that we can identify how our product is unique to theirs.

¹⁶Lisa Barber, *Which shops play the most annoying background music?*

4.5 Music Sources

In today's market, there are many music sources available to an individual. We have virtual music from services such as 'Spotify', 'Google Music' and 'iTunes' as well as physical music on 'iPods', 'MP3 players' and other hardware devices.

Spotify is a music streaming service that offers access to a library of over 20 million music tracks with over 40 million active users. It is available across 58 markets including the UK, USA, France, Germany, Hong Kong and Argentina. It is available on iOS, Android, Windows phone as well as PC and Mac. One chain that is affiliated with Spotify is Costa. Costa have their own playlist that people can access from their device.

Google Music is another streaming service and offers the same service as Spotify. Again, they have a large library of songs (around 18 million) and the service is available in over 57 countries on all Android devices as well as web browsers.

Auracle Music is a custom streaming service that delivers the best background music through the internet. This allows you to tailor the music you have playing to suit your needs. At the moment, this system contains over 30 different licensed music channels with a whole host of music making it compatible with this project. The top advantage of this is actually the fact that it is for commercial use. This therefore means we can use it alongside Choona and not require any further licenses.

A year ago, Apple's **iTunes** accounted for 75% of the digital music market and with a huge 575 million active users. Although this may have decreased slightly in the last year, that is still a large user base. As well as general users, Starbucks is affiliated with iTunes and use this service to hand-pick and play music throughout their stores. The idea of allowing customers to put forward their music preference may be of interest to a chain like Starbucks amongst others. The issue with iTunes is that all the music has to be purchased before it can be listened to. There is no monthly subscription fee where you can listen to as much or as little music as possible. Apple are however bringing out their own music streaming service; called **Beats Music**. The above figures suggest that the music streaming industry is vast and that music is a part of many people's lives. Coffee shops have integrated these sources and music into their environment, but without the customer interaction. Choona would provide this interaction. Over the course of this project, we shall identify more sources because having more sources creates a larger user base as well as a better music library. We shall look at how the different sources work to try and make sure we have adaptors in place that can cover the wide variety of sources available.

4.6 Legal Issues

With this type of app, there are certain laws and legislation in place that have to be adhered to in order to play music in public.

4.6.1 Public Performance License

Music playing for customers or staff through media such as radio, MP3, TV etc. is considered a *public performance*. The *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* means that an agreement is needed from the copyright owner before the material can be played in public. A music license (PPL) will grant this agreement. In most cases, a license is required but there are a few instances when one is not required. One example of this is where PRS artists have waived their rights. PRS for Music represents the rights of over 100,000 artists in the UK. It provides licensing to organisations to allow the playing, performing and availability of copyright music on behalf of the artists and overseas societies. The royalties are distributed fairly and efficiently. Another example is a hotel, guest house or B&B that has fewer than 25 rooms with no areas open to non-residents. Any business such as a coffee shop, bar or gym that plays recorded music in public will legally require a PPL. The likelihood of our service being used in places that don't have a PPL and require one is small. Most coffee shops, restaurants, gyms etc. will already have the license in place. It will be work places deciding to implement our service that will have to go about retrieving a PPL.

The costs vary depending on the facility and how the music is used. Cafe's, restaurants, pubs and bars are charged based on the area size, so the smaller the area, the smaller the fee. This is an annual fee and ranges from between around 130 to 325 per year¹⁷. The reason the fee is not too large is because the music is just background noise and therefore it is not the main attraction. In some establishments, they may not play background music and so if they wanted Choona, they will have to apply for the license. Ultimately, it will be their decision as to whether they decide to take on this extra annual fee; maybe Choona can promote them enough to gain extra sales thus warranting its purchase.

Retail shops too have to pay a fee and again this is based upon the area size of the store. These range anywhere from around 130 to 220. A lot of retailer space does not have music in the background and so they will need to judge whether or not they want to take on Choona and the required licenses they would need. It is all about whether or not Choona as a service will provide enough benefits over the costs needed. If the store already has a license in agreement, then the integration of Choona should be simple.

Nightclubs have a different payment scheme; they have a standard fee to pay and on top of that, they pay an additional cost (for each night of entertainment) that is calculated depending on the number of customers (population size) and the number of hours the music will be played¹⁸. Therefore fees can escalate enormously over a year long period. This though however would not make any difference for them; they will have to pay these fees regardless of whether Choona is integrated or not therefore integration should be simple and straightforward. There are tables highlighting these costs for the different premises and these are available in the Appendix.

¹⁷PPL, *Pubs, bars and restaurants*.

¹⁸PPL, *Pubs, bars and restaurants*.

4.6.2 Entertainment Licensing

Introduced on 6 April 2015, this licence may need to be acquired by businesses, organisations and even individuals who want to provide entertainment. This entertainment can cover more than music but for this project, we only want to consider the instances when the entertainment revolves around the playing of music or the performance of music. This license will apply to places such as night clubs, live music venues (concerts) and large indoor arena's.

Below are the set of conditions where if any are met, a license is required:

- Entertainment is provided between 11pm and 8am
- Amplified live/recording music performed to an audience greater than 500 people
- Recorded music played to an audience on premises where the sale of alcohol is not licensed.

Essentially this covers bars, nightclubs, concerts and other different use cases for Choona. The fees have been laid out in figure 6.

| License | Temporary | 1 year | 2 Years | 3 years |
|--|-----------|--------|---------|---------|
| Commercial operation with capacity < 5000 people | £597 | £597 | £1194 | £1792 |
| Commercial operation with capacity > 5000 but < 10000 people | £3810 | £1238 | £2484 | £3810 |
| Commercial operation with capacity > 10000 people | £7520 | £2513 | £5007 | £7520 |
| Commercial event held in designated stadium | £597 | £597 | £1194 | £1792 |
| Other commercial events (including festivals) | £248 | £248 | £447 | £597 |

Figure 6: The pricing scheme^a

^aGlasgow City Council, *GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL LICENSING SECTION, CORPORATE SERVICES Licensing section, corporate services, Current Application Fees & Charges.*

The prices vary somewhat and for the larger events and locations, these prices may not be too much of a concern. However, when it comes to smaller venues, they may be reluctant to pay the fee. The process itself in order to get a license, an application is to be submitted. The application can be considered for a period of 6 months before a decision needs to be made. This is not a short process and therefore if Choona is to be implemented in certain establishments, the appropriate amount of notice needs to be given so the license can be granted.

4.6.3 Music

At this current moment in time, Spotify is for personal use only. Therefore we cannot make use of Spotify as a commercial source with it stating in their terms and conditions thats “Anywhere you need a license to play music, you are not allowed to use Spotify”. Obviously this is a big issue and something that has to be considered deeply. There are some small services out there that do allow for commercial use of music streaming (something like Auricle Music) but these are not on the same level as Spotify, Google Music etc.

Beats Music is also for personal/private use only. There is slight leeway here because unlike Spotify, there allow for commercial use if the user is a curator. In there case, a curator is someone who has a customised profile page that contains authentic postings and curated playlists. This will have to be verified with Beats Music. This could actually allow Choona to create this type of profile and eventually make use of this streaming service as the source.

4.7 Geolocation

Geolocation is a technology solution used to identify the real-world geographic location of an object. Geolocation makes it possible, from a device connected to the Internet, to obtain various types of information in real time and locate it on the map with high accuracy at a given point in time. Many different methods can be used to collect this data but for the purposes of this app, it will be through mobile phones (users device containing the app) and IP addresses (for the Choona service end).

The idea behind geolocation within this project would be to connect the user to the Choona system within their location automatically or show the different Choona locations within their geofence so they can choose which one they want to connect to. In doing so, we are highlighting Choona locations that are within range only thus limiting the search area and making life simpler for the user. There are several advantages to Geolocation. First of all, we can have **targeted adverts**. For both the customer and the business running Choona, more locally-targeted adverts can create a better app experience. Customers will get adverts related to their location and not just any old adverts thus the experience will feel less spammy. For the businesses, they can use this space to advertise new products, special offers in order to improve sales and custom.

Secondly, Geolocation can help improve user profiles. We can understand exactly where a user is in terms of activity and thus we use this to promote new app features or create different features based on user preferences. Things to consider here would be algorithms that automatically indicate songs you can play based on previous songs you have added to playlists. We can also use this to send push notifications; the sending of messages that could be linked with Choona in general or a specific Choona location. It is reasonably simple to implement the basic functionality of Geolocation on the app side with use HTML and JavaScript needed but to get it working with the backend will require considerable work and time to make it effective and consistent.

4.8 NFC

Near-Field Communication (NFC) is a form of short range wireless communication (4cm or less to launch a connection) allowing for radio communication and the passing of data packets between two devices, or smart tags that work with NFC. NFC is an advancement to RFID systems because it allows for two-way communication. This two-way communication can then be used for authentication purposes or data exchange.

At the moment, not all devices support NFC and it is suggested around 20% of phones worldwide will have NFC capability by the end of 2014. This figure is set to increase dramatically over the next five years meaning more devices will have the capability and more users will be familiar with the technology. This widespread reach of NFC phones could mean one day that NFC tags become as common as bar codes, so it makes sense to make use of this technology.

Using NFC tags with a mobile device, a user could access the playlist at their current location without the need to search for it. The idea is very durable as NFC tags are small and cheap enough to integrate anywhere. They do not need a power source but instead draw power from the device that reads them.

4.8.1 Viability

With NFC, it is unfortunate that apple devices cannot use it. Some do have NFC functionality but this is just for the purpose of ‘Apple Pay’ and nothing else. Almost all android devices currently have NFC functionality that can be used by the apps themselves. NFC tags or stickers are extremely cheap; around 1 per tag. In bulk purchases, this will decrease dramatically. They are extremely easy to encode through a NFC enabled device and allows for protection to stop it being changed by unauthorised user. If we were to adapt the use of NFC, the business themselves should be able to encode the tags themselves. It may be an idea to have a tutorial available where the business just needs to follow the small number of steps involved.

5 Requirements

Global

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Requirement: | REQ.1 |
| Type: | Functional |
| Description: | The user must be able to connect to the geolocation configured by the client. |
| Rationale: | When the system is initially set up, the client (coffee shop, office etc) will set up a geolocation and geofence for their customers using choona. The user will then be able to connect to this geo-area via their phone and then be able to suggest songs for the public in that geofence. This must be paired with REQ.2 for the user to get full access to the app. |
| Dependencies: | REQ.2 |
| MoSCoW Rating: | Must |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Requirement: | REQ.2 |
| Type: | Functional |
| Description: | The user must be able to log on using social networks/by email. |
| Rationale: | An account is required for the user to suggest songs. This must be paired with REQ.1 for the user to get full access to the app. |
| Dependencies: | REQ.1 |
| MoSCoW Rating: | Must |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Requirement: | REQ.3 |
| Type: | Functional |
| Description: | The client must be able to configure their choona configuration for their customers through a management system. |
| Rationale: | <p>The client must be able to configure different music options for their business and their geofence. This would include things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subscription options. • Genre restrictions. • Be able to configure any ad services for the location; including sound bytes and carousel images. • Default playlists if no songs are suggested. • Geofence/Geolocation options. • Override the queue if needed. |
| Dependencies: | REQ.1 |
| MoSCoW Rating: | Must |

Playlist Page

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Requirement: | REQ.4 |
| Type: | Functional |
| Description: | The user must be able to suggest a song using search. |
| Rationale: | For the dynamic playlist to work, the user must be able suggest a song they want to be played in public. This song will then be added to the dynamic playlist ordered by the number of votes. If the song already belongs on the playlist then it will not be added again. |
| Dependencies: | REQ.1, REQ.2 |
| MoSCoW Rating: | Must |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Requirement: | REQ.5 |
| Type: | Functional |
| Description: | The user must be able to see all the songs suggested by others ordered by a intelligent algorithm for the geolocation they are connected to. |
| Rationale: | The user should be able to see what songs are suggests so they can vote for songs if they wish, these songs must be sorted by an intelligent algorithm where the amount of votes will be a big factor with elements to make the order of songs fairer (eliminating up voting too much, down voting too much, ghost voting). |
| Dependencies: | REQ.1, REQ.2 |
| MoSCoW Rating: | Must |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Requirement: | REQ.6 |
| Type: | Functional |
| Description: | The user must be able to vote on the songs suggested by others for the geolocation they are connected to. |
| Rationale: | Songs that are already on the playlist can be upvoted/downvoted by the user. The dynamic playlist is dependent upon this where song are ordered by a amount of votes. |
| Dependencies: | REQ.1, REQ.2 |
| MoSCoW Rating: | Must |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Requirement: | REQ.7 |
| Type: | Functional |
| Description: | For each song, the user must be able to see the album cover, song title and album title. |
| Rationale: | This is needed for the user to identify the song, the album cover adds a visual factor to all the songs. |
| Dependencies: | REQ.1, REQ.2 |
| MoSCoW Rating: | Must |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Requirement: | REQ.8 |
| Type: | Functional |
| Description: | The user must be able to see what song is currently playing in the geolocation they are connected to. |
| Rationale: | This is to inform the user what is being played currently. Information such as album art, song title, album title and time elapsed will be shown. |
| Dependencies: | REQ.1, REQ.2 |
| MoSCoW Rating: | Must |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Requirement: | REQ.9 |
| Type: | Functional |
| Description: | The user should be able to share the song currently playing. |
| Rationale: | To add a social side to the application, the user should be able to share what song they are listening to and where on various social networks. Their friends will be able to see this shared information not only on the social networks itself but also on their activity page. They should also be able to add a message to their activity. |
| Dependencies: | REQ.1, REQ.2, REQ.8 |
| MoSCoW Rating: | Should |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Requirement: | REQ.10 |
| Type: | Functional |
| Description: | The user should be able to hear the currently playing song through their headphones in the geolocation they are connected to. |
| Rationale: | This is for the convenience to the user, they should be able to listen to the music privately if they wish. In some use cases this would be ideal such as in an office environment. |
| Dependencies: | REQ.1, REQ.2 |
| MoSCoW Rating: | Should |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Requirement: | REQ.11 |
| Type: | Functional |
| Description: | The user should have the option to buy the currently playing song. |
| Rationale: | If the user likes the song, they should have the option to buy it through various services such as google play, itunes etc. This would also be another technique to monetize the app by promoting the artist and their song. |
| Dependencies: | REQ.1, REQ.2, REQ.8 |
| MoSCoW Rating: | Should |

Activity Page

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Requirement: | REQ.12 |
| Type: | Functional |
| Description: | The user should be able to see a list of shared songs. |
| Rationale: | To add a social side to the application, the user should be able to share what song they are listening to and where on various social networks. Their friends will be able to see this shared information not only on the social networks itself but also on their activity page. |
| Dependencies: | REQ.1, REQ.2, REQ.9 |
| MoSCoW Rating: | Must |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Requirement: | REQ.13 |
| Type: | Functional |
| Description: | For each activity the user should be able to see the name of person, the song name and the location the person is listening at together with any additional message and a time stamp. |
| Rationale: | This information is required for the user to identify each activity and so they can differentiate between their friends. |
| Dependencies: | REQ.1, REQ.2, REQ.9 |
| MoSCoW Rating: | Must |

History Page

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Requirement: | REQ.14 |
| Type: | Functional |
| Description: | The user should be able to see the places they visited and the songs that were playing in the timeframe they were there. |
| Rationale: | In the likelihood of the user wondering what song was playing at a certain place they visited and not being able to remember the name, they can use the history page to look up that song. |
| Dependencies: | REQ.1, REQ.2, REQ.16 |
| MoSCoW Rating: | Must |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Requirement: | REQ.15 |
| Type: | Non-Functional |
| Description: | The user should only be able to see history for the last week. |
| Rationale: | To minimize the data overload on storing all history information for all users. The app will only display history in the last week. |
| Dependencies: | REQ.1, REQ.2, REQ.16 |
| MoSCoW Rating: | Must |

Settings Page

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Requirement: | REQ.16 |
| Type: | Functional |
| Description: | The user must be able to toggle whether their history will be logged or not. |
| Rationale: | If the user wishes not to log all the songs played at the places they visited, they should be able to turn this feature off. This would be in the settings page. |
| Dependencies: | REQ.1, REQ.2 |
| MoSCoW Rating: | Must |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Requirement: | REQ.17 |
| Type: | Functional |
| Description: | The user must be able to log out from their choona account. |
| Rationale: | There should be a button for the user to log out of their choona account if they wish to maybe log in with an alternative account. |
| Dependencies: | REQ.1, REQ.2 |
| MoSCoW Rating: | Must |

6 Design

6.1 System Architecture

As discussed during the planning stages, Choona will be built using the microservices architecture. Figure 7 shows the proposed system design of the Choona, split into four layers.

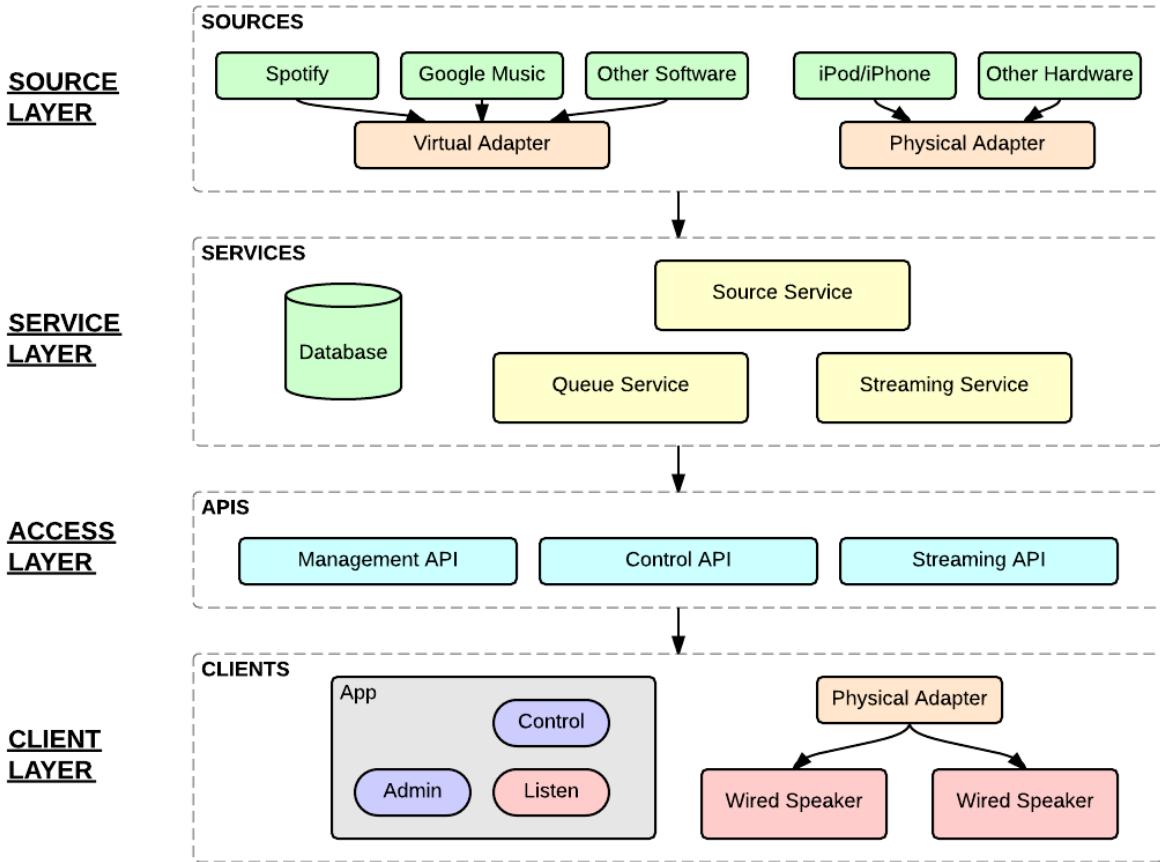


Figure 7: Proposed Choona system architecture

- **Source Layer**

Sources, such as Spotify and Google Music, all have their own unique APIs. For them to be consumed by Choona they need to present a common interface otherwise other services will need to know how to interact directly with each individual API. Therefore each source will be exposed through either a virtual or physical adapter. Each adapter understands the same set of commands and outputs data in the same format. This means that other services in Choona only need to implement the standard adapter interface in order to communicate with any type of audio source. For the first version of Choona the sources will only need to understand a basic set of instructions:

- `search [searchString]` - search the source's track database using the supplied search string
- `get [trackId]` - retrieve track information from the source's database for the specified track ID
- `play [trackId]` - stream the audio for the specified track ID

- **Service Layer**

The service layer contains the majority of the *business logic* of the Choona server-side infrastructure. There will be three main services at this layer. The queue service is responsible for maintaining the running playlist of tracks for a particular Choona location. The source service acts as an interface to all the different types of audio sources (instructions documented above). The streaming service takes tracks from the queue service, retrieves the audio via source service and sequences it into a single stream that the APIs can then send to clients. This layer has a more extensive set of instructions:

- `queue join [locationId] [clientId]` - make a client join a particular location
- `queue add [locationId] [trackId]` - add a song to the queue of a particular location
- `queue upvote [locationId] [trackId]` - upvote a song at a particular location
- `queue downvote [locationId] [trackId]` - upvote a song at a particular location
- `stream add [locationId] [trackId]` - instruct the streaming service to play a particular track next at a certain location
- `stream play [locationId]` - broadcast the stream to all listening clients of a location

- **Access Layer**

The access layer contains APIs that clients can use to interact with the Choona infrastructure. These APIs act as proxies, taking requests from clients and passing them through to the right services in the service layer. The only special instruction the access layer makes available is user authentication verification.

- **Client Layer**

The client layer contains all the consumers of Choona, such as the mobile app and speaker adapter. Clients use the access layer to authenticate and interact with the rest of the Choona infrastructure; they do not need to know about all the individual services, instead they only need to understand the access APIs.

6.2 UI Design

Global Styling

Colour schemes

There are a number of different colour schemes that can be used for the app, these must be discussed to make sure the most appropriate colour scheme is picked which lines up to the most common use of the app as well satisfies our target market needs.

To quickly review, as discussed in the literature review a dark user interface is more appropriate for choona because:

- Is quite popular, adds a certain elegance to the app.
- Is more convenient because the app will be used in illuminated and unilluminated environments (such as nightclubs and concerts). White background here might be too bright to look at and may strain the eyes.
- Conserves battery life on the users phone.

However on the other hand there are some advantages to a light user interface too:

- Better readability; even though this is not strictly a text-heavy application, the text involved will be easier to read on a lighter background with a contrasting text colour

Furthermore, we also learnt that:

- Not to use a scheme which is too high contrast; White text on a black background and vice versa should be avoided.
- Keep the colour scheme minimal; busy colour scheme will dim the background and sharpen the contrast.

Taking all this into account we can start playing with a couple of different colour schemes that is friendly with our research. Each colour scheme will consist of 3 colours; background colour, text colour and highlight colour.

The first colour scheme is to try to give the app a light user interface. The colours trialed here are a light grey (#DDDDDD) with black (#000) for text and light blue (#009cff) for highlighting elements. This does bring optimal readability to the table for choona however it can be argued that its not a text-heavy application so maybe readability is a high priority.

The second colour scheme sways more towards a dark UI. The background would be a dark grey (#191919) with white (#FFF) for text and orange (#FE6718) to highlight elements. This would fit into the dark UI scheme as talked about earlier but also because the orange signifies a community feeling. This is perfect for the concept of choona as one of its aims is to bring people together with the power of music.

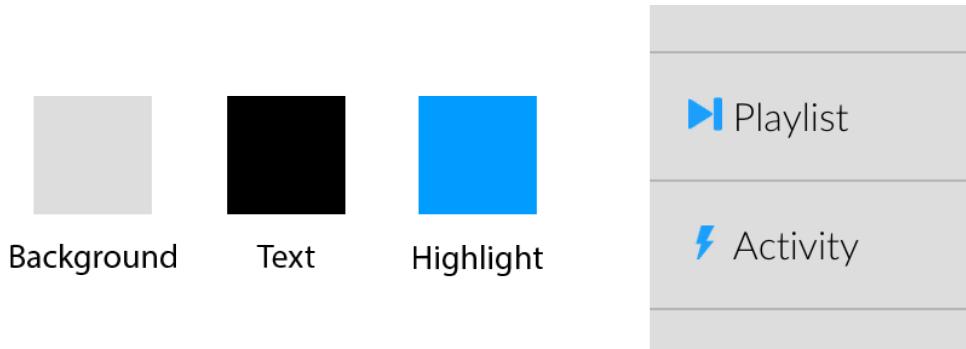


Figure 8: Light grey, black and light blue

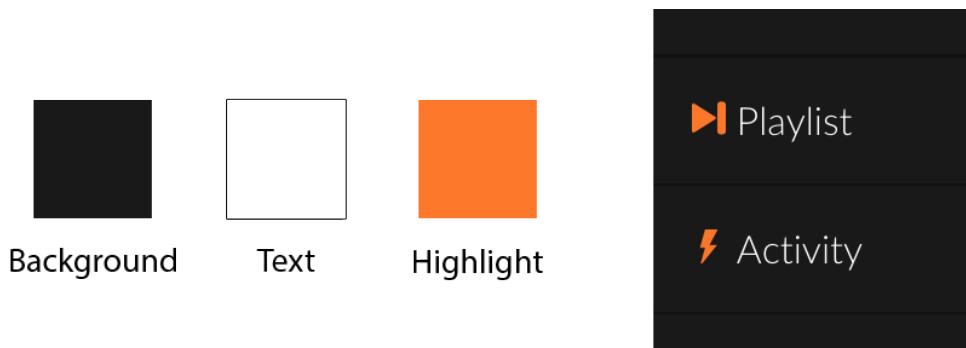


Figure 9: Dark grey, white and orange

The orange fits in better as a highlighting colour as it is quite a bright colour. Bright colours should not be overly used because then it would become a distraction and cause problems in terms of readability.

Choona Logo

The logo for any business is used as a method to not only identify the business but also set it apart from others. The name ‘Choona’ is a play on the word ‘Choon’ which is slang to describe a song or a ‘Tune’, it also sounds like ‘Tuna’ thus we thought the logo should be a fish. As the look and feel of the app is quite minimal, the logo should be quite minimal too. However we did not want our logo to just be a fish, looking at how a usual Wi-Fi signal logo is designed, we thought that would be the perfect tail for the fish as Wi-Fi represents a network of people much like Choona does. After a very simple fish being drawn, a Wi-Fi tail was added and the image was rotated to look up, then the image was coloured to better go with the global colour scheme picked for the app. The tail will be animated in the app. This is shown in figure 10.

Font

There are a number of different fonts that can be considered for the application. There was a section already covered in the literature review regarding fonts. The font to be used should be clean and work well with the background and the theme of the application. Text needs

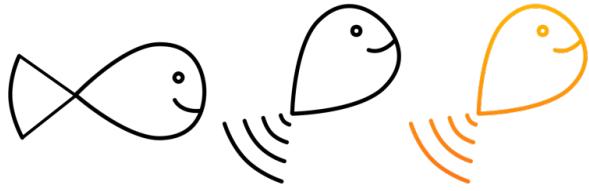


Figure 10: Thoughts behind the Choona logo

to be sized appropriately so its not too big to take screen real estate but big enough for the users to read.

The first consideration is a font called BONVENOCF shown in figure 11. This font consists of a clean font face ideal for minimal design. It's not the conventional type of font, there are some characters which possess a more rounded feel than the usual fonts. Its uniqueness will be fitting for the app; a unique looking font for a unique app.

```
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
0123456789 (!@#$%^&.,?:;)
```

Figure 11: Bonvenocf font¹⁹

Next, Google's Lato font is another option shown in figure 12. This font is used widely used globally with Google serving over 3 billion serves every week through their font API²⁰. This shows that users are very familiar to this font and just by looking at the statistics its wide usage indicates the easy readability of the font.

```
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890-=+_<>?/.,:"
```

Figure 12: Lato font²¹

Out of the two fonts, we believe Lato is the better fit for the application, with its clean minimal approach fitting in perfectly into the choona ecosystem, also the statistics speak for themselves; there is a clear reason this font is widely used.

²⁰Google, *Google Fonts Lato*.

UI Mockups

Here different pages of the app will be taken a look at closely, discussing different elements of the page in question and the reasoning behind any design decisions taken. This section will also make clear of the general overall aesthetics that choona has employed to make the user's life much easier while maintaining a sleek clean look.

Welcome pages

The welcome pages will be shown to the user when they first install the app so they can quickly familiarise themselves with what it is about. Here information should be very clear and very simple as this is the first thing the user will see, they do not want to be overloaded with information.

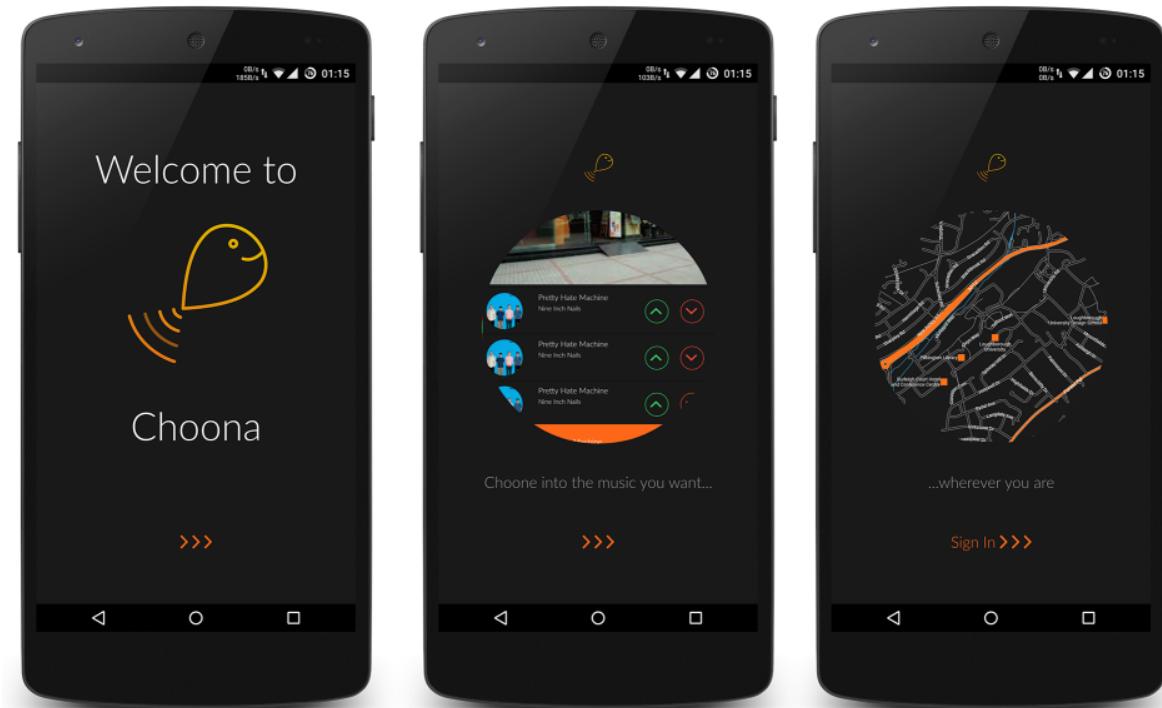


Figure 13: Welcome screens

Here the idea is to use multiple ‘slides’ that the user can swipe through to progress the welcome screens. As shown in figure 13 the users are first greeted with the Choona logo and a welcome message, then moving onto two screens that simply describe what choona does in one phrase; ‘Choon into the music you want....wherever you are’. These screens are split as this gives the chance to display the playlist page and a page with a map presented, showing that Choona can be used anywhere. The user can then slide to the next page where they are asked to sign in.

The concept clearly follows the rules here with each slide having minimal information but still making it clear on what the application is about. The use of a multistep welcome screen here not only gives a dimension of interactivity to the user when starting the app but it also lets the app know that the information on the page swiped has been acknowledged by the user.

Login page

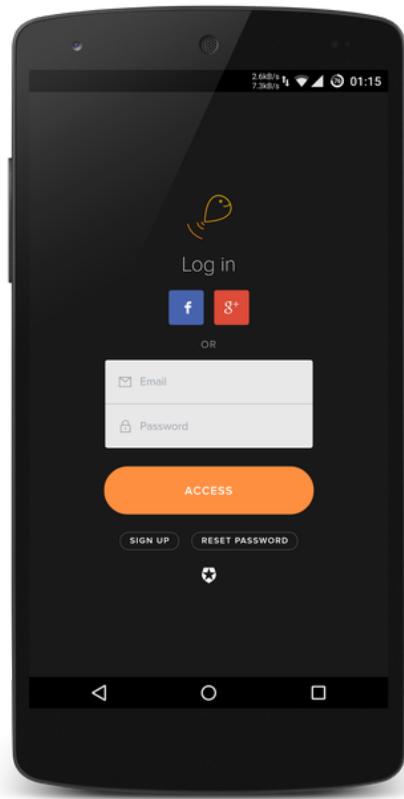


Figure 14: Login screen

For the login page as the app will be using auth0 authentication, there is already a template provided by auth0 to implement into the app in question. This template can be changed if needed, or themed to the developers liking but here it has been kept very simple just the background needs to be changed and the logo will need to be added to the template provided.

This screen already takes care of a clean look that Choona is aiming for, the form is laid out very well with all the buttons arranged so that the user is not confused. A clear distinction is made between logging on via a social network or by an email address which is something the login screen needs to encompass. The sign in button is clear and well placed will seize the Choona orange which ties up our theme.

Side menu page

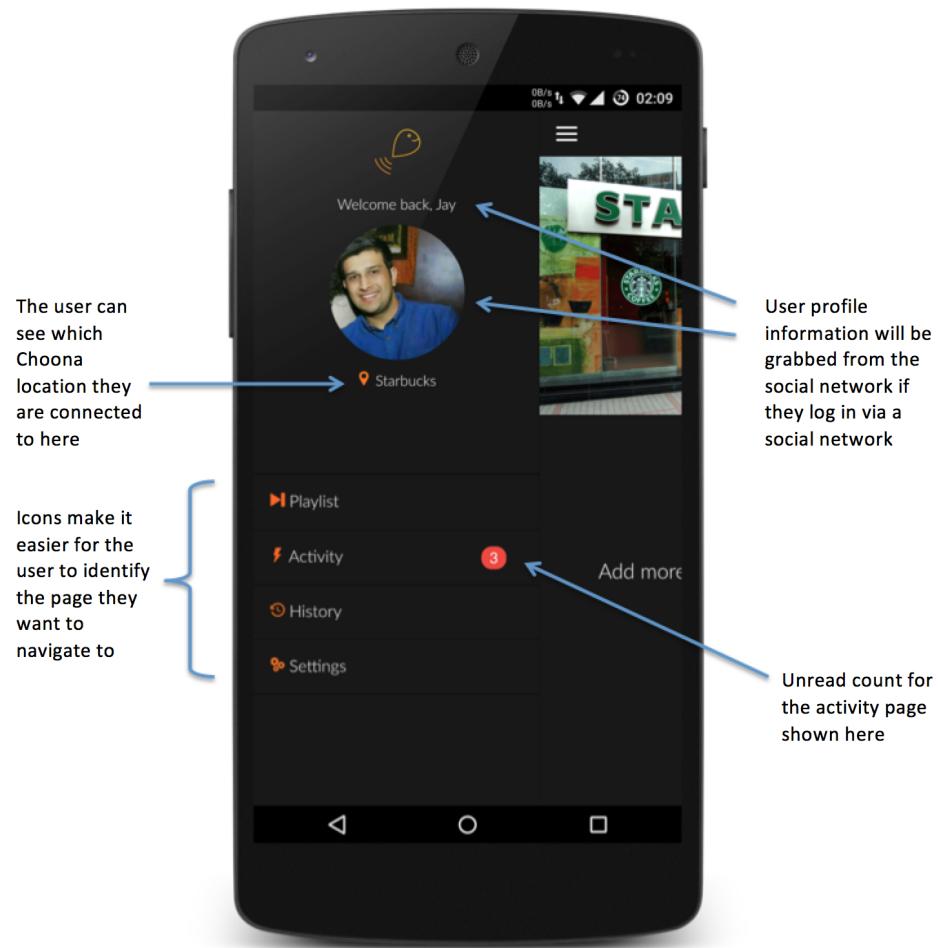


Figure 15: Side menu page

The side menu page will be used by the user to navigate the app. It's important that this page is simple and straight forward or the user will not be able to find what they need or do what they want. The profile section at the top assures the user that they are logged in and welcomes them to Choona, just below the name of the Choona location they are currently connected to will be shown. Moving down the screen, all the different pages are listed. Each page has a icon, this makes it visually easy for the user to move to different pages and also to identify the pages. Additionally on the activity page, a unread count is shown in the side menu so the user can know if there are any new unread activities that they have not seen yet.

Playlist page

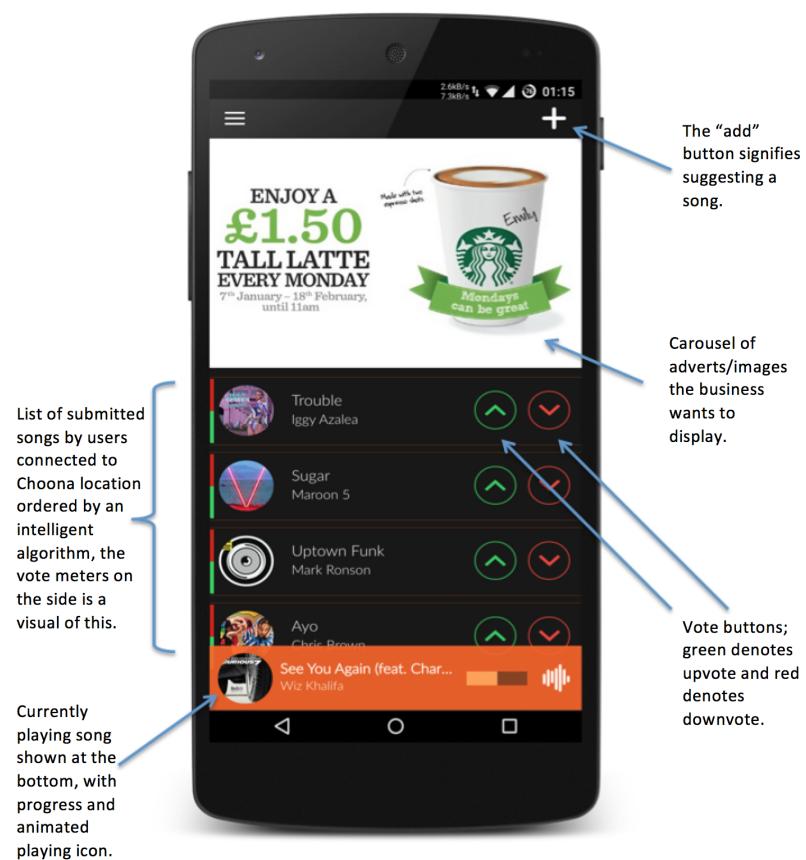


Figure 16: Playlist page

This is one of the most important pages in the application, here the user will be able to vote on the songs suggested and also have access to the search page where they will be able to add a song. From the top, the user will see a carousel of images which the business will set up beforehand, this could be adverts by the business. Below there will be the list of suggested songs by others. These are in a list all having separate upvote and downvote buttons, everything being spaced evenly so the user can scroll and vote with ease. They are also presented with a live vote-meter on the left of every song item in the list. This adds another dimension to the app where they can visually see how well that track is doing (more votes = higher up the list), this is denoted by appropriate green and red bars in the votemeter. Finally at the bottom, the now playing bar shows the current song being played. This bar can be tapped on to access the now playing page; this is conventional in most music applications, such as Google play music.

Search page

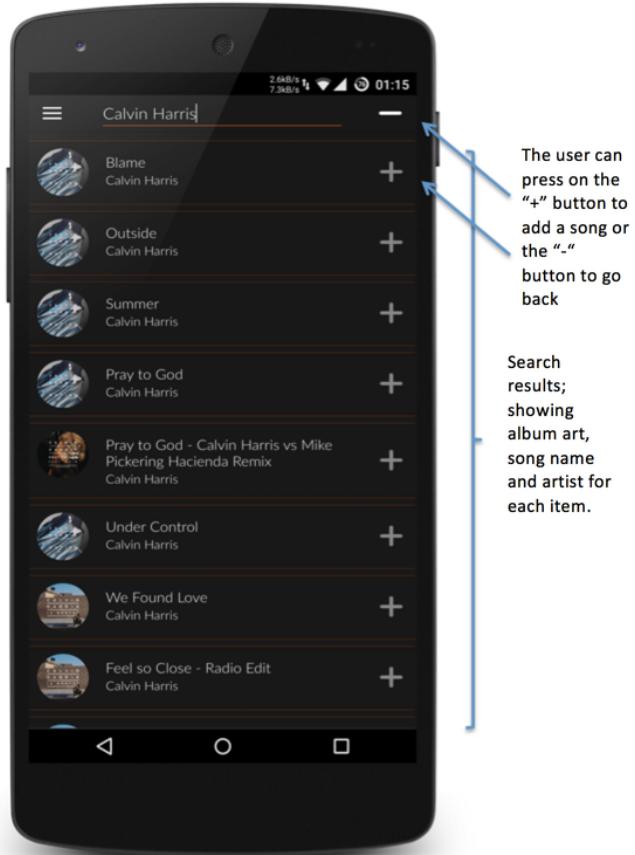


Figure 17: Search page

Through this page, the user will add a song, thus it is important that this screen is easy to follow. When the user starts typing all the results will be shown as shown in figure 17. Each song the user will see a ‘+’ sign, similar to the one on the playlist page signifying they want to add that song to the playlist. The ‘-’ button can be used to go back and cancel the search.

This is a very simple approach to the search page and by only showing the vital information, the user does not get overloaded with information. An alternative solution here would be to display fuller album covers but this would mean more space will be taken per item which would make it harder for users to scroll through all the search results. Thus this solution would be friendlier to smaller screen song.

Now playing page

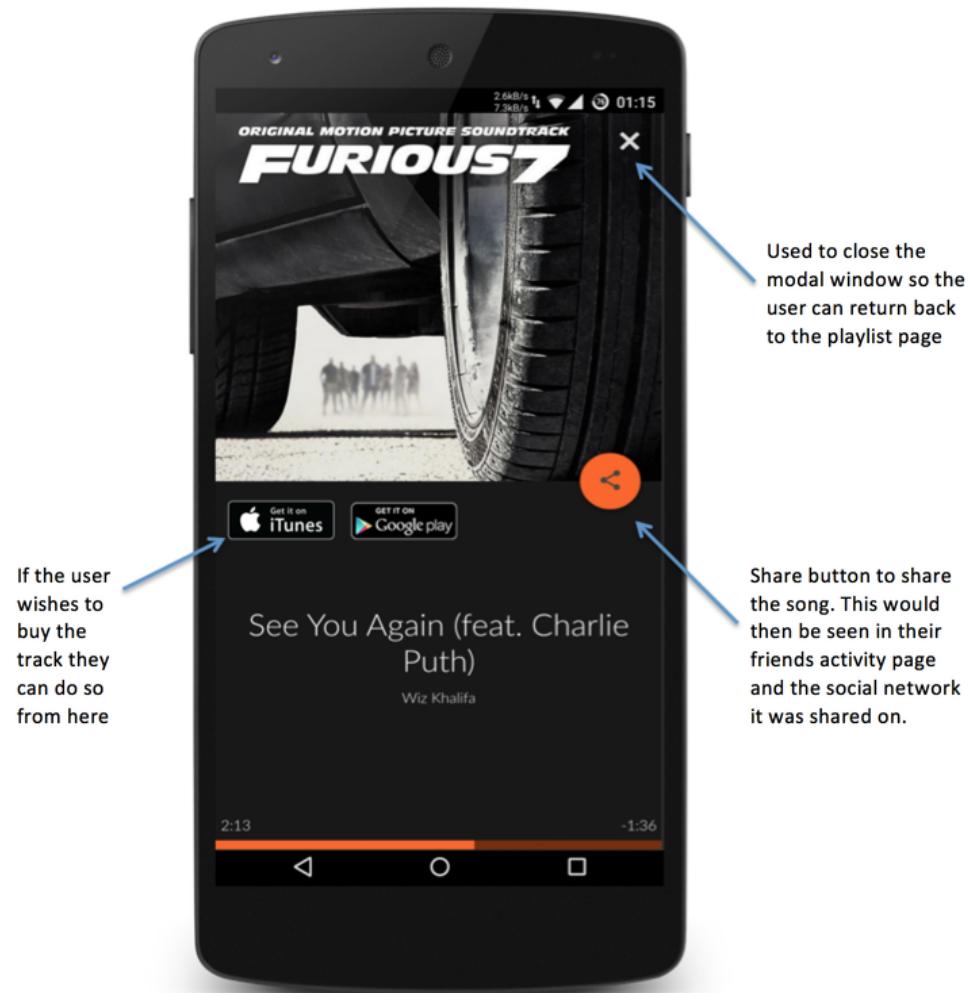


Figure 18: Now playing page

The aim of this page is to show clear artwork and song information to the user. Furthermore there will be links to buy the song (one of the revenue streams for Choona) and also to share what they are listening to and where. The share button will be placed as a floating button much like the android lollipop ecosystem. Taking all this mind, a very minimal approach for the screen is taken here, spreading the information across the page and making use of the screen real estate. There is also a track scrubber at the bottom of the page, not responsive to the users touch as the business is in control of the music, it is only there to let the user know how far the song has progressed.

Activity page



Figure 19: Activity page

Here is all the Choona activity of the users friends will be shown. This is represented as a clear feed of items containing information to identify their friend the song and their location. An activity item will be placed on this page when the user's friend decides to use the share button on the now playing page which will fire the event. The activity will also be shared on the social network the user sent it to; letting the businesses promote themselves.

The page follows the global colour scheme and also lays out all the information similar to the list of songs on the playlist page, the use of social badges makes it easy for the user to identify the social network their friends activity was shared on.

History page

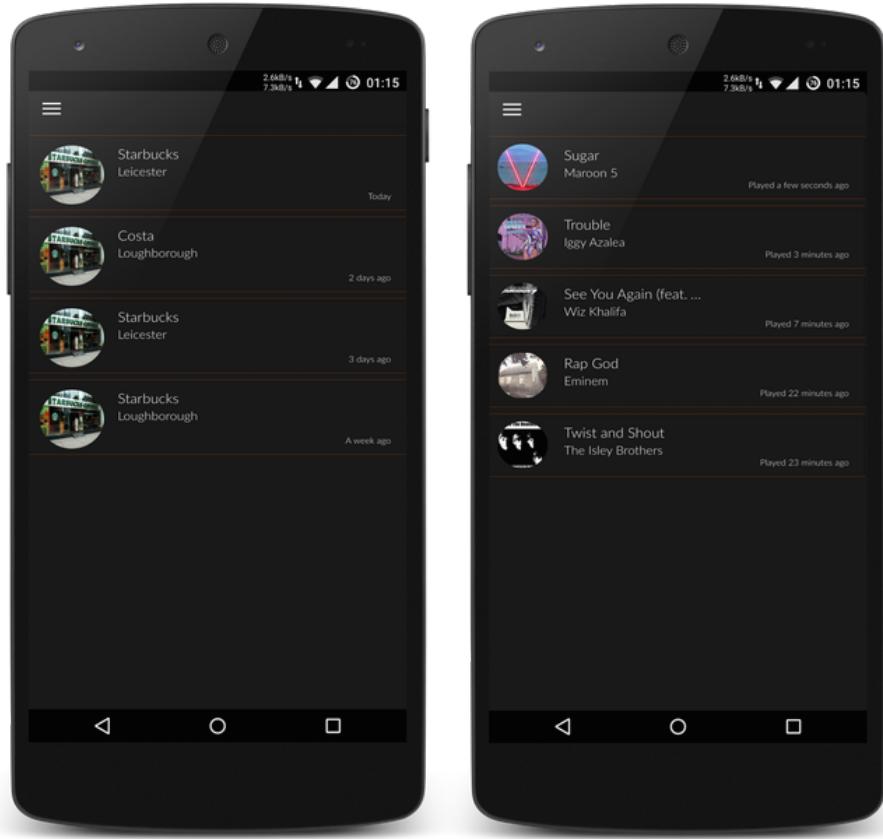


Figure 20: History pages

This page lets the user easily access any songs that were played in places they visited in the last week. First they will be shown a list of places (Left on figure 20) and then they can tap on a certain place to see the songs played in the time they were there (right on figure 20). Simple lists were used here taking the minimal approach with only showing data that the user is interested in. The styling is consistent with the other pages that employ lists in their containers.

An alternative design here would be an accordion approach where each root item would be a location and when expanded, would show all the songs played for that location for the duration that the user was there. Even though this method means that the user does not have to visit another page, it could be very bad for scrolling through a long list of items. This would be unpopular with smaller screen phones as they will have to scroll through a lot more to find what they want.

Settings page

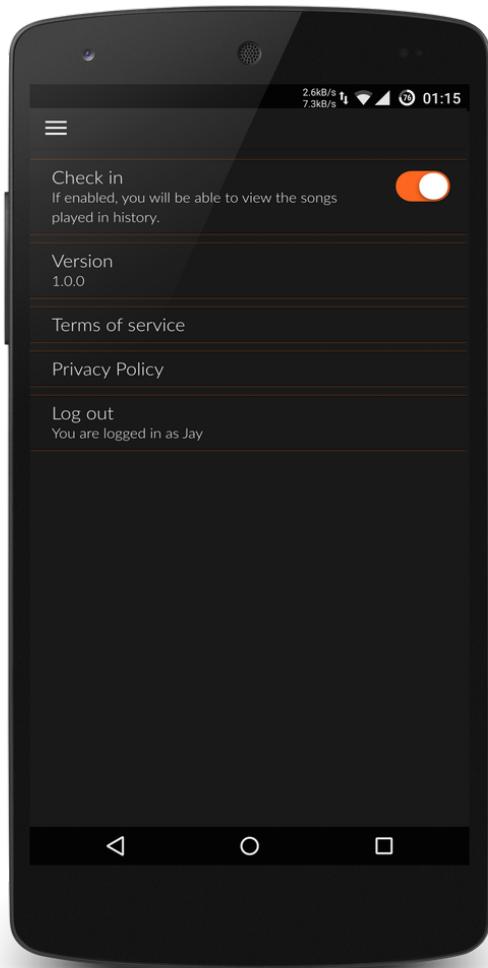


Figure 21: Settings page

This is where the user will be able to configure the app and any options around it. At this point there are minimal things to configure on the app. One option is to toggle auto logging of history which is on by default but the user can turn it off if they wish. This is a slider button familiar to both android and iOS devices for toggling something. The log out button will also belong here in the case they want to log in with another account.

This is another simple screen on the phone, so a minimal approach has been taken to design it. Other than the options talked about above, important information such as Choona's terms of service and privacy policy are also included in this screen.

7 Implementation

The system architecture proposed during the design stages has been divided into three distinct sections for development; services, API and UI. Figure 22 shows how the original architecture has been adapted for the development of the prototype.

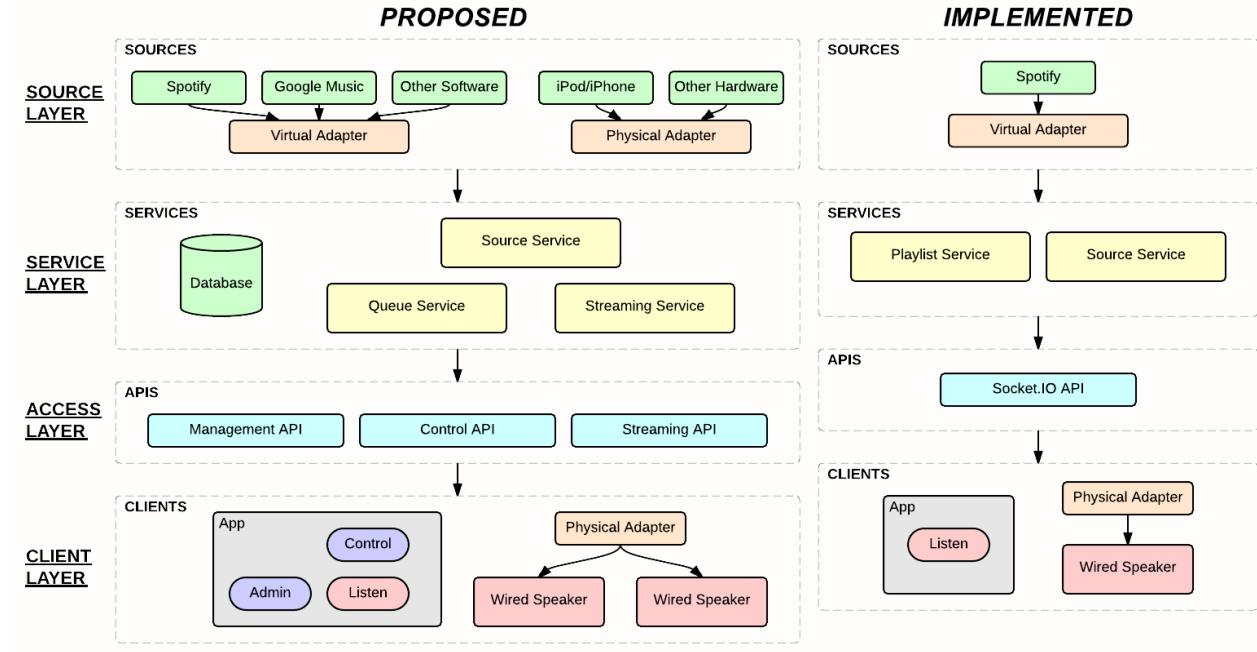


Figure 22: Prototype architecture alongside original proposed architecture

Spotify has been chosen for use as the first type of audio source due to it's well documented and accessible API, along with it's popularity as a personal music service. No physical audio sources, such as iPods, will be available in the prototype due to the added complexity of interfacing with a physical device.

The queue and streaming services have been joined together to create a single playlist service. This is because the contexts of the two services are very similar and can be regarded as tightly-coupled in functionality; the micro-services architecture specifies²² that services should be de-coupled in order to promote scaling and flexibility.

All three types of APIs have been implemented as one singular Socket.IO API for the purposes of the prototype in an effort to make authentication simpler.

Finally, the management and control part of the mobile app has not been implemented due to time constraints; users will only be able to add songs, upvote/downvote tracks and listen to audio.

²²Chris Richardson, *Microservice architecture patterns and best practices*.

7.1 Inter-Service Communication

As discussed during the design stages, the micro services architecture offers many advantages over traditional monolithic software. By having everything in the system running as a service it is possible to scale the application in every direction with relative ease. It does, however, introduce the complex problem of inter-service communication. Early implementations of the architecture made use of HTTP APIs²³ which work well in simple applications. Relying on HTTP, however, can be seen as a restriction since it is a one-to-one client-to-server connection. In large scale applications it is often necessary to have one-to-many messaging between many different services. HTTP also requires each service to know how to connect to all other services it wants to communicate with, as shown in figure 23.

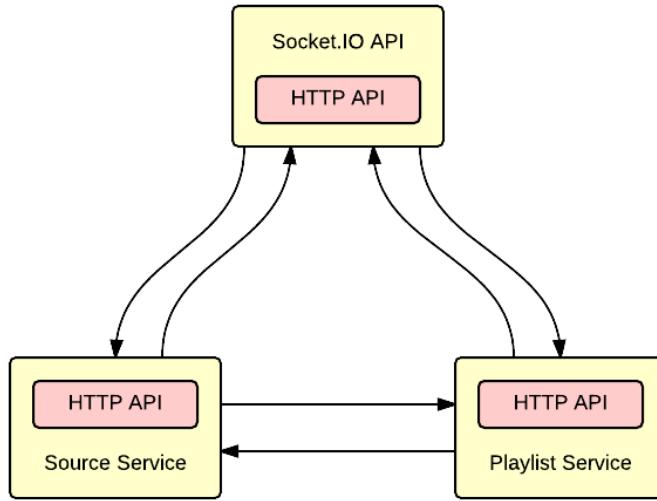


Figure 23: Inter-service communication using HTTP APIs

The most popular alternative to HTTP APIs for inter-service communication is a message broker, such as RabbitMQ²⁴ or Redis²⁵. In this kind of system, all nodes connect a central broker that is responsible for distributing messages. This has the advantage of a node only needing to know the location of the broker, rather than all other nodes. It also means that messages can be distributed to multiple nodes, removing the one-to-one restriction found in an HTTP-based communication system. Figure 24 shows how a redis-based communication system can be composed.

Messaging systems solve the problem of distributed inter-service communication, however they do introduce their own restrictions. Messages are very low-level; they are simply a single piece of data being transferred between two points. They are entirely stateless and do not

²³John Mueller, *Deliving Into the Microservices Architecture*.

²⁴Dejan Glozic, *Micro-Service Fun – Node.js + Messaging + Clustering Combo*.

²⁵Erin Swenson-Healey, *Micromessaging: Connecting Heroku Microservices w/Redis and RabbitMQ*.

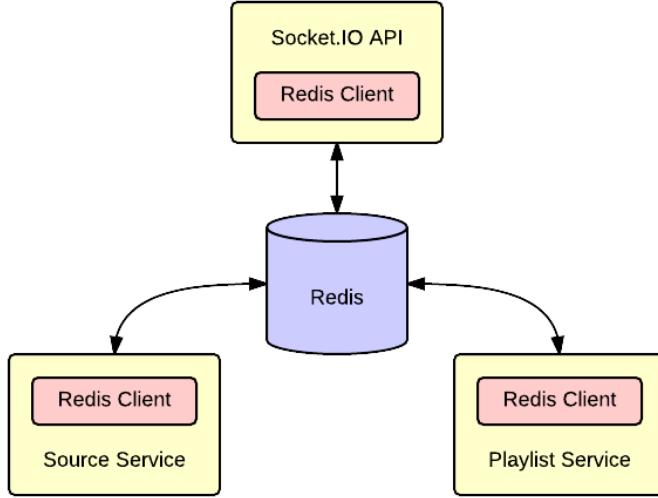


Figure 24: Inter-service communication using Redis

support any kind of meta data. It is therefore necessary to treat a service like Redis as a transport and implement a higher-level protocol on top.

This has been achieved in Choona by creating a new communication library called Waterway²⁶, built on top of Redis. The roles for both Waterway and Redis can be defined as follows:

Waterway:

- Expose an API for three types of high-level messages:
 - Streams: a continuous flow of individual messages (such as audio data)
 - Requests: a single message with a guaranteed response (synonymous to an HTTP request)
 - Events: a single message with no response (such as a status report)
- Translate between high-level messages and low-level redis messages, identified with keys

Redis:

- Provide an open transport for any type of data to be sent as a message
- Distribute messages to nodes by pattern matching the message keys

As shown by figure 25, Waterway replaces the role of the standard Redis client in a service. This is where the translation between high-level Waterway messages and low-level Redis messages occurs.

²⁶Team Hydra, *A Node.js microservice communication platform*.

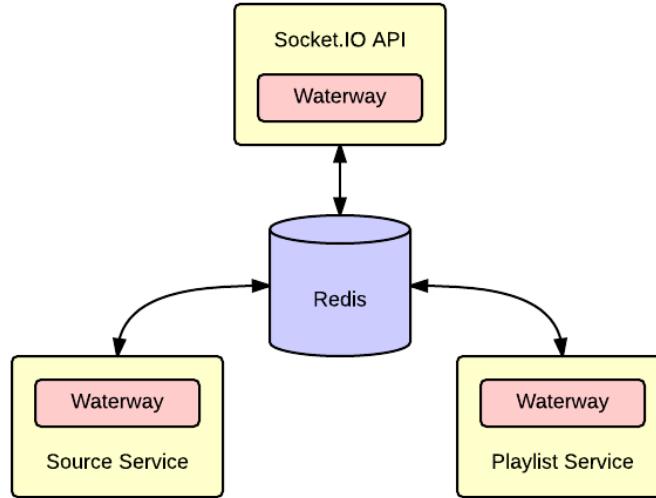


Figure 25: Inter-service communication using Waterway

7.2 Audio Streaming

Choona allows multiple clients to connect and listen to the same audio stream. This means that each client needs to be listening to the same audio at the same time, otherwise the whole system will become out of sync. The easiest way to achieve this is to always ensure the audio is being broadcast live, with a very small buffer window (in the same way that when watching television you always see what everyone else does). Waterway makes this process relatively simple due to its support of streams. As soon as the audio data is received from an audio source such as Spotify it is buffered and streamed out to other services at the exact bitrate of the song. This ensures that all services in Choona see the exact same audio data and the exact same time. It also has the added advantage of allowing the playlist service to know precisely when a track starts and stops; it can just wait for the buffered audio stream to end. Choona's streaming pipeline is described in figure 26.

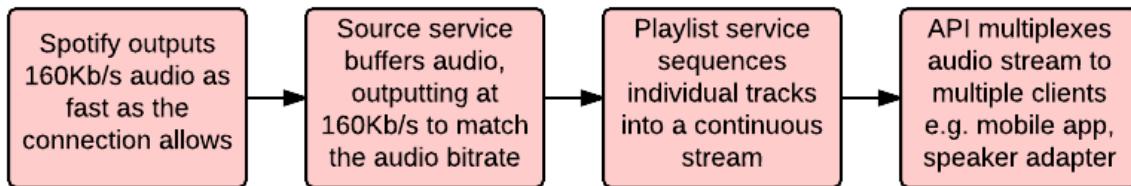


Figure 26: Buffered audio streaming through the Choona audio pipeline

Clients can then choose to handle the audio in whatever method they prefer; for example,

in a browser-based environment the MP3 stream can be converted into raw PCM audio data and played out of the device using the HTML5 Audio API.

7.3 API

Socket.IO is a realtime bi-directional communication protocol and library, designed to replace standard HTTP-based web communication. For Choona, Socket.IO offers the following benefits:

- **Bi-directional communication:** HTTP is a client -*i* server model, where only the client can initiate requests. This is fine for regular websites, however it does not work for scenarios where the server needs to send requests without the client initiating them, such as a realtime application like Choona. To counter this there are now several different strategies and protocols for handling bi-directional communication on the web, many of which are supported by Socket.IO such as WebSockets and long polling.
- **Device support:** Socket.IO will select the best available bi-directional protocol supported by both the client and server when setting up connections, resulting in almost all devices being supported.
- **Binary data support:** As specified in the requirements, the Choona app will need to be able to play audio out of the phone speakers/headphones. This means the audio data will need to be streamed into the app. Socket.IO has built-in support for correctly transferring binary data which means the audio can be streamed using the same communication and authentication methods as the rest of the app.

Choona's Socket.IO API acts as a simple gateway between clients (such as the mobile app) and the many services that make up the backend infrastructure. It has three main objectives:

- authenticate users
- ensure requests are authorised
- proxy requests to other services in the system

The API can almost be interpreted as a firewall; it protects the internal services from being unauthorised access and ensures users are authenticated. It also means that clients do not and cannot know about the internal structure of Choona's architecture which adds an element of security by secrecy.

7.4 Authentication

Choona's user authentication is managed by the SaaS platform Auth0. It is now commonplace for applications to allow users to authenticate with many different third parties such as Facebook and Twitter. Developing and maintaining support for even one type of authentication can often prove to be fairly involved, let alone 3 or 4. Auth0 helps developers with this problem by abstracting all the different authentication providers into a single API, giving many advantages²⁷:

- Only need to implement one authentication system
- Quickly build embedded login forms using the Auth0 libraries
- Manage all users from a central management interface (Figure 27)
- Easily maintain a single, common view of the user's data
- Integrate with existing user databases

The screenshot shows the 'Users' page in the Auth0 management console. At the top, there is a search bar labeled 'search for users', a dropdown menu set to 'ALL', and a refresh button. A prominent orange button on the right says '+ NEW USER'. Below the header, a message reads 'See who is logging in and when to all your applications. Log in as any user for troubleshooting.' The main area displays a table of user data:

| Name | Email | Latest Login | # of Logins | Connection |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------------|
| Oliver Woodings | (empty) | 2 days ago | 37 | facebook |
| Simon Kerr | (empty) | 4 days ago | 3 | facebook |
| oliver.woodings@gmail... | oliver.woodings@gmail... | 4 days ago | 128 | Username-Pass... |
| Jay Vagharia | jay.vagharia@gmail.com | 5 days ago | 2 | google-oauth2 |
| Jay Vagharia | (empty) | 6 days ago | 1 | facebook |
| jay.vagharia@gmail.com | jay.vagharia@gmail.com | 12 days ago | 18 | Username-Pass... |

Figure 27: Auth0 user management

Auth0 handles the entire login and authentication process without needing any changes to an application's server-side systems. This is achieved by using JSON Web Tokens; a unified way of structuring and encoding authentication data into a JSON object. This object is then encrypted using a private key, allowing its integrity to be easily validated by third parties using the corresponding public key. JSON Web Tokens are used by the Choona API to ensure a user is authenticated and also to extract information about them for use in other services. This process is shown in figure 28.

²⁷Auth0, *Auth0 - Identity made simple.*

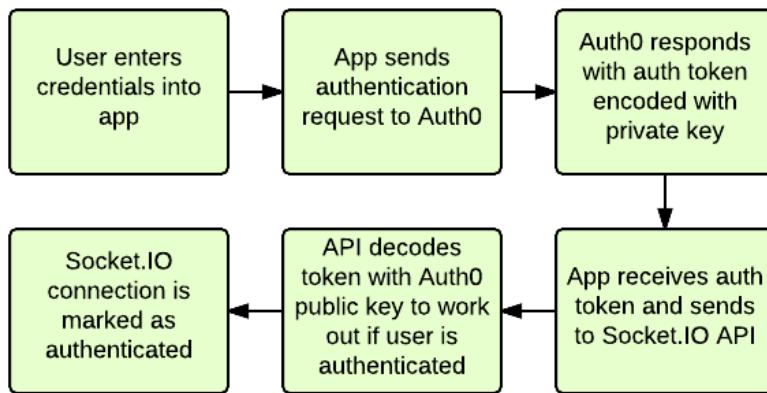


Figure 28: Choona authentication process

7.5 Speaker Adapter

As part of this first iteration of development a prototype of a Choona speaker adapter has been made. The hardware used is a Raspberry Pi 2 Model B running the Raspbian operating system. The software itself is designed to be as autonomous as possible; once the device has an internet connection it will automatically connect to the Choona API, authenticate and start streaming to music from the pre-configured playlist. This is then outputted from the jack socket of the Raspberry Pi into whatever speakers or headphones are connected.

7.6 UI

The Choona mobile app is made using the Ionic framework, which itself is built on top of AngularJS. As discussed in the design stages, building a mobile app using web-based technology allows it to easily be deployed to any platform. Ionic makes this even easier by making available a set of mobile-friendly UI components²⁸. Figure 29 shows how PhoneGap/Cordova is used to take the Choona sourcecode and compile it into ready-to-deploy applications for each mobile platform.

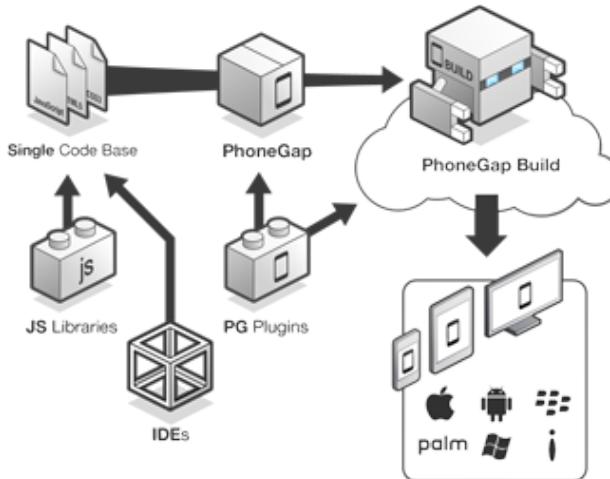


Figure 29: PhoneGap/Cordova build process²⁹

The app itself is structured like a typical AngularJS application, using factories, states, controllers, scopes and views:

- **Factory:** a constructor that instantiates or prepares an object for use in the rest of the app
- **State:** a component of the routing state machine used to navigate around the application and render different views³⁰
- **Controller:** responsible for interfacing between views and the rest of the app
- **Scope:** each controller/state has its own scope for containing variables and methods, which is inherited and extended from parent scopes
- **View:** HTML mixed in with Angular's data binding syntax

Figure 30 shows Choona's application state/scope tree. Children inherit the scopes of their parents, which makes it possible to pass properties and methods from the root scope

²⁸Drifty Co, *Ionic: Advanced HTML5 Hybrid Mobile App Framework*.

³⁰Angular UI, *The de-facto solution to flexible routing with nested views in AngularJS*.

all the way down to nodes at the bottom of the tree. This inheritance also makes it simple to implement authentication restrictions; by applying the restriction in the App state the application will also inherently prevent access to all the child states.

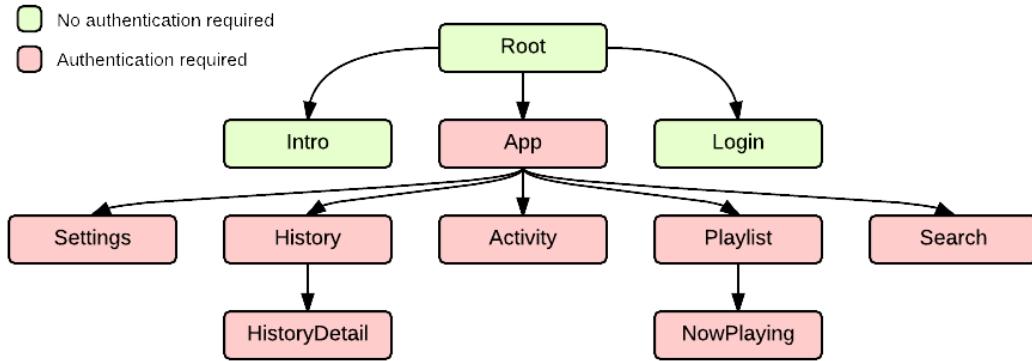


Figure 30: Choona's application state/scope tree

Scope inheritance is used in Choona to share data between controllers and views, creating a *single source of truth*. This is achieved by storing application-wide data on the highest possible node in the tree; in this case it is the App state. For example, the current playlist information is stored on the App scope since it is required by both the Playlist and History states. If the data was stored on each node individually it would create two different sources of truth that would both need to be maintained separately. All data received from the Socket.IO API is stored at the application level in order to preserve this single source of truth. When data needs to be sent back to the Socket.IO API it is the responsibility of the closest controller/scope to the source of the action. For example if a user upvotes a song on the playlist, it is the role of the playlist controller to inform the API about the change. This whole process is the *data lifecycle* of Choona, and is visualised in figure 31.

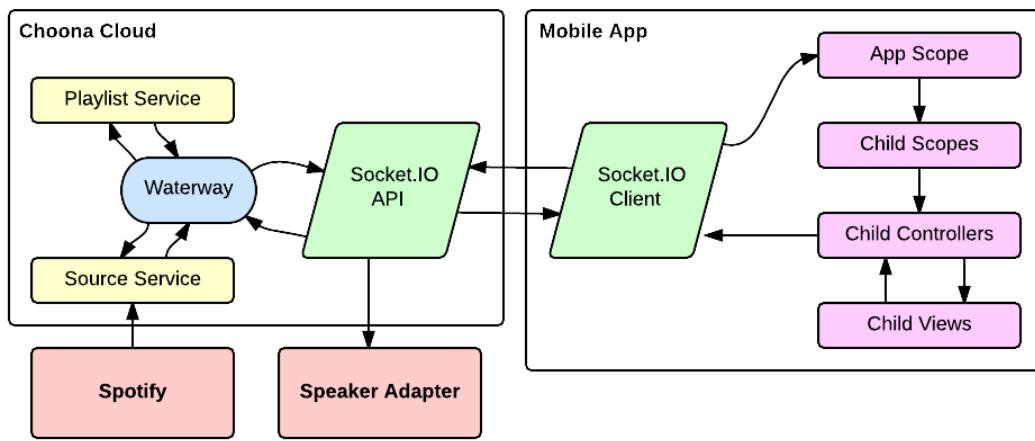


Figure 31: Data lifecycle of the entire Choona ecosystem

8 Evaluation

- User testing
- Client feedback

9 Conclusion

- Learn stuff
- Market readiness

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