Uber, Reimagined.

Jesmin Ngo | Nov 10-13, 2015

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BRAINSTORM

I set out to do some preliminary user research: taking another Uber ride myself, talking to some friends about their experiences, watching YouTube reviews, reading online reviews, and writing notes from observing a first-time Uber user. These are the preliminary improvement areas I brainstormed that could drive a better user experience.

"I waste too much time trying to find the driver/rider."

➔ Both drivers and riders have the expectation of seamless pickup/drop-off. That makes it especially frustrating when it takes longer to walk/drive around to find each other than how long the actual trip takes.

➔ Opportunity: Have a picture of what the rider looks like? What clothes the rider is wearing? More accurate way to input or detect exact point of pick up (i.e. which side of the street) without endangering drivers who are on the road? Show the rider a picture of what car to look for? Mark Uber cars in a more obvious way for discoverability?

"I don't really use the History tab."

➔ Opportunity: Incorporate a level of gamification: show total miles traveled with Uber, number of trips made, which cities the trips were made in, the rider's personal rating. Have badges for loyal customers, frequent rider incentives and/or discounts. Coupons could also introduce context-aware ads, without making the app too cluttered.

"The ride is awkward."

➔ One of Uber's value propositions is evolving the way the world moves-- seamlessly connecting people to make everything more accessible through transportation. But sometimes there's a lot of uncomfortable silence or meaningless awkward small talk.

➔ Opportunity: Facilitating conversation could make drivers feel more valued, and give riders a more meaningful experience connecting with a stranger. The app could display hobbies as conversation starters? Or build relationships between carpooling passengers who make the same commute everyday?

  ◆ *However,* some of the app reviews and a humorous video[1] showed that at least some riders like Uber because they don't have the pressure to be social. It could be an edge over competitors like Lyft where the attitude is more conversational rather than professional.

"I can't easily get real-time fare estimates and compare prices."

➔ I found a few "supporting" apps in the Apple App Store that helped riders track how much the ride costs in real-time, view wait times and surge pricing rates, etc.

➔ *However*, we need to be careful not to take away from the minimalistic and "magical" experience of the app--one of Uber's main strengths is its simplicity. Riders aren't bombarded with too much information or given too many options for drivers--everything just happens seamlessly.

"I want to schedule a ride ahead of time."

➔ This could optimize wait time even further, and ease the anxiety of riders who want to plan ahead and make sure they are on time. I saw many reviews requesting this feature.
➔ However, media reports seem to say that Uber has no plans to enable this.

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[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch v 8FUQYPfL0Pg

"Some drivers are <u>bored and lonely.</u>"

- ➔ Many drivers appreciate "being their own boss" and working on a flexible schedule, but I also met many who were driving for Uber full-time (49% of drivers)[18]. What if they wanted a more structured schedule that told them where to be instead of having to pay attention to big events like baseball games, etc. and plan their business themselves?

- ➔ Opportunity: Something that allowed drivers to set up a work schedule so they don't procrastinate--maybe from riders in the area who want to schedule a ride ahead of time. Or something to incentivize them by showing how much they could earn that day.

"My driver seems <u>lost</u>...what should I do? Are they still coming?"

- ➔ Opportunity: Guide the user through this uncertainty by adding messaging that tells them the driver is coming, but is just stuck waiting for a train to pass. Or, tell the user when they need to take action and call the driver to guide them to their location.

"I want to have a <u>fancy ride</u>." (UberSelect or UberBLACK)

- ➔ A higher level of luxury could be achieved by having someone pick you up with a sign with your name on it.

"What's the point of Linking <u>Facebook</u> or Connecting <u>Spotify</u>? What's the difference between uberX, uberXL, Black Car, SUV, and Access?"

- ➔ Improve messaging for these functions.

"I can't easily give my driver a <u>tip</u> without having cash on me."

- ➔ This was a frequently seen complaint in the app store reviews.

"I don't think Uber is <u>safe.</u>"

- ➔ Make Uber more friendly to non-tech savvy users.

- ➔ Show more information about the driver, like ratings. Make it easier for the rider to choose between different drivers, if they choose to.

- ➔ More customizability could make the trip more comfortable for the passengers, such as preferences on gender of the driver, smoking/non-smoking (for those who are bothered by the lingering smell of cigarettes in the car), etc.

"Maximize Uber's power of providing fast transportation for GOOD!"

- ➔ I discovered an intriguing article[15] proposing the potential huge impact Uber could have on emergency transportation and saving lives.

<u>Improve accessibility</u> for disabled riders and drivers.

Improving experiences for <u>different cultures</u> in international user groups (i.e. China, India).

OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

I chose the top 3 groups of ideas from the brainstorm based on (1) potential impact (2) novelty or non-triviality and (3) feasibility of building a prototype based on the information and resources I currently have.

I. Changing the way drivers/riders find each other.

    A. Potential Impact: This is one of the most frustrating user experiences and inefficient parts of the app, especially since the convenience, speed, and reliability of Uber are some of its top value propositions. Small improvements like showing what the rider looks like, making the Uber car more obvious, or letting the rider qualify more precise location information (like what side of the building they are at) could reduce a lot of frustration for drivers wasting business time and riders wasting time they could be spending at their desired destination.

II. Adding more information to gamify the rider history tab.

    A. Potential Impact: Badges, rewards, or even showcasing "miles traveled with Uber" could make Uber riders a lot more loyal (as opposed to choosing the cheapest among competitors) and create more of a community. Things like badges would also create extend Uber's value as more than a convenient transportation tool, but something they could collect, make memories with, and show off.

III. Context-aware advertisements could be another huge source of revenue

    A. Potential Impact: This would benefit the company, the riders, and the drivers. The company earns more and forges more relevant business relationships, the riders get relevant, targeted content that is not too in-their-face, and drivers could earn more if the company took less of a cut after having this extra revenue.

TOP FEATURE

I chose to focus on ads because they could have a huge product and business impact, and also because I have not seen it mentioned anywhere else (and thus I get more of a challenge in exploring ideas).

Contextually-aware content using location and time makes traveling more meaningful than just getting from point A to point B–partygoers could find out what else is going on nearby, tourists can check out the local attractions using Uber-exclusive discounts, and businesspeople can simply ignore the feature. Ads must be done tastefully to not detract from the user experience. By only displaying this option at the end of the trip, users could easily explore more or simply ignore it. To keep the screen clean, a tabbed view with large visuals and scrollable sections encourages exploration. The "Saved Items" screen fosters customer loyalty, because they can save friends' locations nearby (imported from their contacts) to easily Uber to, or favorite local eats from the last time they were in the area. They might also save the Uber driver, in case they had an especially good conversation and would like to ride with them again. The Facebook and message icons make it easy for riders to share discovered coupons/events with friends and use Uber to pick them up along the way.

PROTOTYPE

IV. In order to most holistically represent the experience I had in mind, I decided to build a basic prototype using Pixate instead of making static wireframes, annotated screenshots, or mockups. I also chose Pixate over other prototyping options like Framer.js, Proto.io, Axure because of cost, options like Origami, Avocado, HTML/CSS/JavaScript in the interest of time, and over inVision or Keynote because of more customizability of the interactions.

See the finished prototype for iPhone 6 here (you will have to download the free Pixate mobile app, but don't have to make an account):
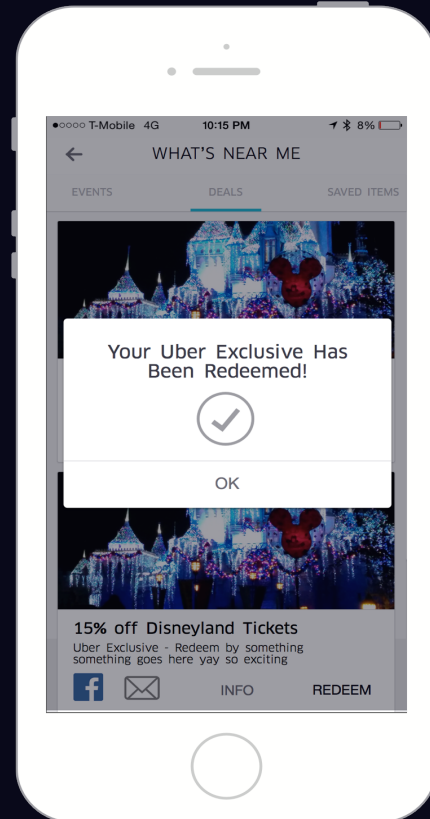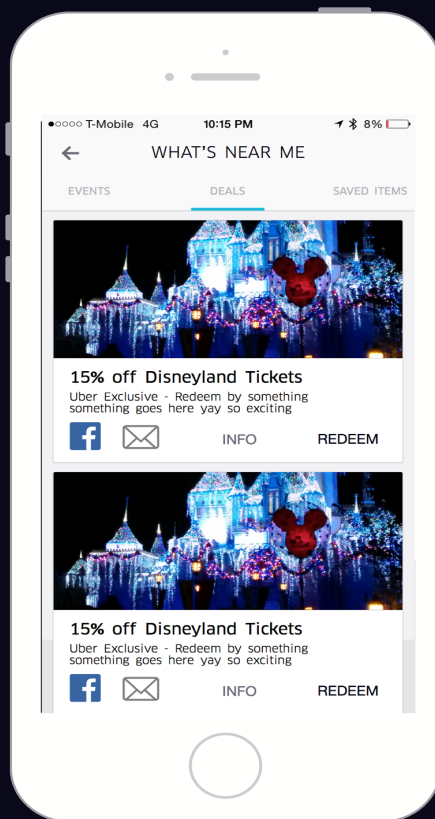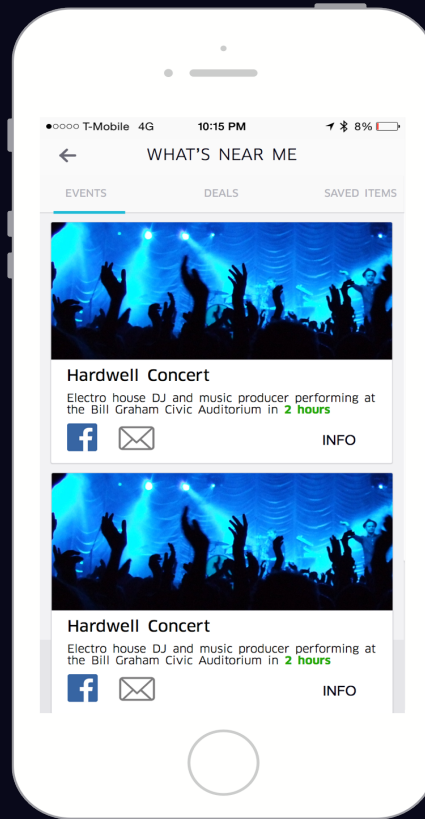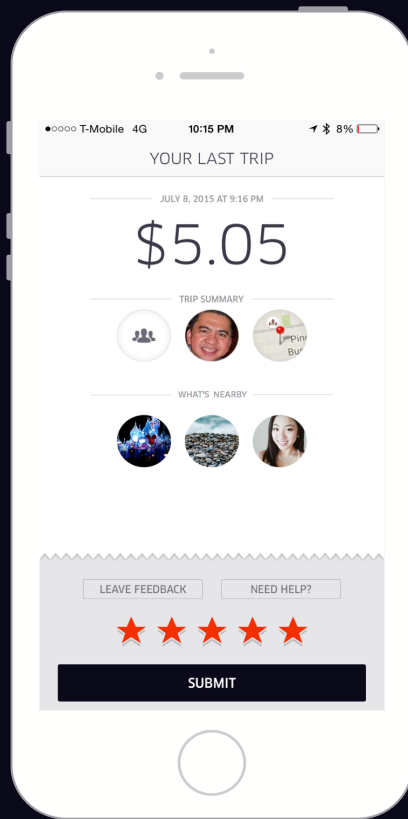
http://pixt.io/pab69f17a78cf

I also created a short video documenting my workflow at 2000% speed:

https://youtu.be/oJJUq5XbvOs

Alternatively, you can see a short gif I recorded of the interactions on my portfolio website:

http://jesmin-n.github.io/redesigns.html

And here are some selected mockups:

LAUNCH PLANS/ANALYSIS

I strongly believe in the strengths of both qualitative research to uncover unspoken consumer insights, and quantitative research to generate concrete data to validate decisions and communicate convincing results.

This is how I would create metrics to measure success of the launch:

Metrics	Success Criteria
How many users explore the events/deals versus ignoring the page?	Usefulness of the feature--At least 50% are interested and try it
Revenue generated from companies advertising	The average # of daily trips is 1 million[18], so at least advertising money worth that many users. Or, paying a certain amount based on ads interacted with by users
# of event/coupon shares	Relevance of the location and time-based chosen advertisements
User research	Participants feel Uber is helping them be more connected with their cities

IF I HAD MORE TIME…

I would like to have more Uber-specific, data-backed resources on adequately and accurately assessing the impact potential features would have on the product/business, rather than the estimates I made. I would also spend more time making the mockup and prototype more beautiful and consistent with Uber's design guidelines.

Other intriguing features that have potential for improvement, but I don't have enough information about because of limited release to the public: UberEVENTS, UberEATS, UberRUSH, UberDRIVE, UberCOMMUTE, Uber for Business, UberKITTENS, UberIceCream.

I would also want to look more into the driver app. I try to talk to the drivers every time I take Uber (if they seem like they are in a conversational mood) because I like to see where people are coming from in all walks of life. There seems to be a lot of room for improvement for the driver experience as well (and some were documented in my brainstorm), but I decided not to focus on it because it would need more research.

RESOURCES USED

1. https://brand.uber.com/
2. https://uxmag.com/articles/five-ux-insights-about-uber-and-the-ridesharing-economy
3. https://medium.com/uber-design/field-research-at-uber-297a46892843
4. http://www.wired.com/2015/10/uberredesign/
5. https://rush.uber.com/how-it-works
6. https://hanno.co/work/uber/
7. https://dribbble.com/DesigningUber
8. http://www.touchytalk.com/ux-review-how-to-make-uber-even-better/
9. https://newsroom.uber.com/
10. http://www.forbes.com/sites/mzhang/2015/06/12/uberdrive/2/
11. https://newsroom.uber.com/2015/05/app-updates-for-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing-partners/
12. http://www.wired.com/2015/10/uberredesign/
13. https://www.quora.com/What-could-be-done-to-make-Uber-better
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15. https://medium.com/invisible-balloons/uber-911-5d28d7428de6
16. https://medium.com/@ricburton/moving-with-uber-2582918fc105
17. http://www.govugo.com/rideshare-passenger-demographics/
18. http //expandedramblings.com/index.php/uber-statistics/2/