

CA357 DESIGN EXERSIZE 2: Re-Design The Text Chatting UI

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1: Introduction

1.1

* The numbers beside pieces of information are indicative of where I have sourced them from / what evidence supports them, which can be located in the 'references / sources' section of this report.

1.2

Chosen text-chatting UI:

Snapchat

1.3

Reason for choosing:

It is my most frequently used messaging app, so I feel I am very well able to use my personal experience to determine what I like and don't like about it.

2: Drafts

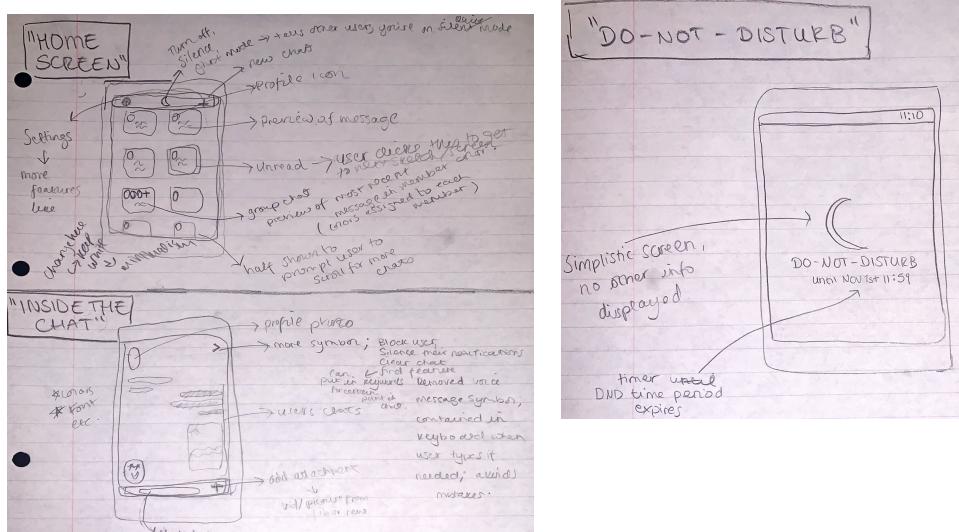
2.1

Initial ideas:

My initial idea was to go for something as simplistic as possible, eliminating all unnecessary elements I make no use of and changing what I found most annoying. Starting out the first few things that came to mind were the placement of the voice message button inside the chat screen, the overcrowding of the homescreen and the message alignment.

2.2

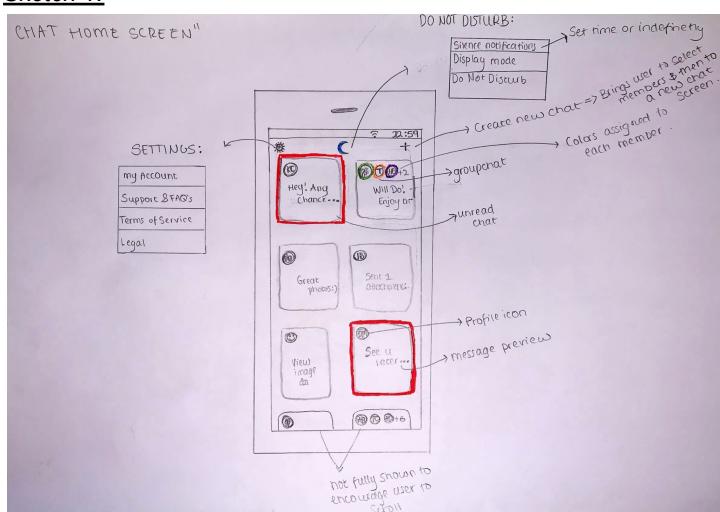
Draft sketches:



3

3.1

Sketch 1:



3.2

Rationale:

'Home Screen'

As seen in the sketch, the chat home screen layout has been completely re-structured. Instead of the ladder-resembling placement that Snapchat inhabits, I have opted for a grid-like layout. This supports the idea that large objects draw attention [1]. The larger grid squares contain more whitespace and are cleaner looking, reducing the users anxiety as they are less afraid of clicking into the wrong chat or clicking a wrong button (something that I find happens a lot in the Snapchat version). The most recently accessed chats appear at the top, descending in order of when the user last accessed each chat. Visual hierarchy was my reasoning for this [1]; this is typically the same for all chat UI's including Snapchat, so the user will already be accustomed to it. A circular space on the top left of each chat box represents the user's profile photo, or if they choose not to have one, their initials on a background color or a cartoon version they can create if they wish (mimicking iMessage's Memoji feature). These are simple, clean and tidy indications of who is included in that particular chat, as opposed to Snapchat's usernames and Bitmoji's. I removed the username / nickname feature as I feel it's not necessary and would not be missed; it's just another clutter-creator, but kept the interactive changeable personalization of each user as it's aesthetically pleasing for user's rather than having a 'no photo' or blank grey space where their photo would be. These features accommodate everyone. Unread chats, whether group or non-group i.e. one-on-one chats are surrounded by a red line, with the preview of the most recent message appearing in bold. This will appear to the user as important, incomplete etc and remind them that the chat at hand requires attention, as well as the fact that the color red is associated with urgency [2]. I decided to include the preview of the message as from personal experience, the context of the chat I have been sent will often indicate whether I will reply straight away or wait and think about my response [4]. I have removed the series of alternate buttons as included in Snapchats chat homepage and instead only included 3 simple ones up the top; a settings button which brings the user to settings about their account, a support / query and feedback section and information such as privacy policies, terms of service and other legal elements of the application and the user. Also, a moon symbol, which provides the user with a few different options to reduce the activity of the app for certain periods of time. I felt this was an important feature having learned in lectures of the negative effects of social media and smartphones on our cognitive abilities. I also think this is a positive feature as it promotes wellbeing and can encourage the user to get into a habit of practicing social media breaks regularly if the button is visible every time they are in the homescreen.

4

4.1

Sketch 2:



4.2

Rationale:

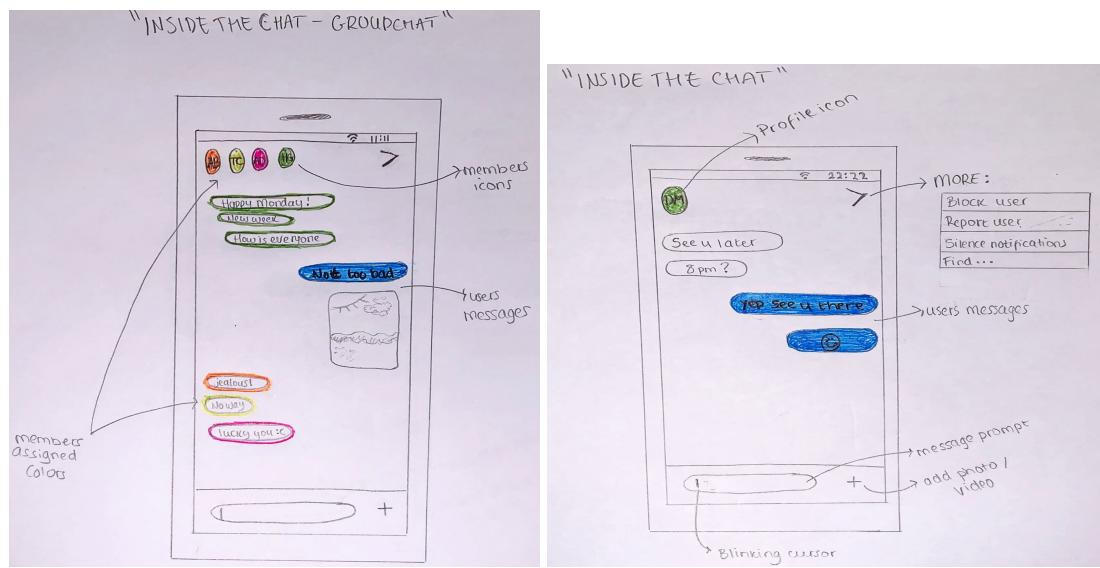
'Do not disturb'

When the user clicks and holds this button, they can choose from a multitude of options. They can silence their notifications from the app indefinitely (until they manually turn them back on) or for a period of time ranging from fifteen minutes to a full day. They can also choose to tell other users they are in silenced mode should they attempt to send them a message. They can also put the app into do-not-disturb mode which will essentially lock all app interactivity and display a blank screen until they turn this setting off or for a period of time (as above). I chose a deep blue color for this screen as it is associated with reducing stress, calming and sleep [6].

5

5.1

Sketch 3:



5.2

Rationale:

'Inside the chat'

When the user clicks on a chat (read or unread), this screen will be displayed. (I have also included a sketch of the groupchat version of this scenario.) Color is a common theme in the design of this screen, as it appeals to the visual appeal and organization. The user's own messages are set in blue chat bubbles. Their subject's messages will be in white boxes with a green outline. I chose these colors because of their general associations [3] and felt they complemented each other when considering communication. In group chats, each member will have a color. I have kept the profile image / indicator at the top right of the chat box to indicate member(s) included in the chat, and on the top right of the screen the 'more' button can be found. When pressed, this will bring up hidden options for the user that are not displayed outright on the chat interface, with options such as block user, silence notifications from this chat, clear chat history and a finder feature; this is a feature I would personally love to see implemented in text messaging UI's. If the user is looking for a particular point in a past conversation, say to find a photo or some information, this feature will act in the same manner as 'command f' for example on a Mac. They can search a keyword and the finder will bring them to each instance relating to their search in that chat [4].

Down the bottom of the screen, I have included the typing box for the user to type their message accompanied by a blinking cursor to keep the user engaged and one other button only. In the Snapchat UI, the voice message button is right beside the typing prompt. It works by the user pressing and holding on it until they are finished speaking and when they let go the voice message is sent. There is no review option available to the user before sending the message. I have changed this in my version so that the voice message option is located within the other button. My reasoning for this is personally I have found the voice message button placement on Snapchat inconvenient and it has made me make more mistakes by clicking on it accidentally and it sending before I can correct my mistake. Another alteration I have made is the placement of the messages. In Snapchat, all messages are aligned to the left. I have chosen to align the users messages only to the right and all others to the left. I did this because left alignment is the most popular used alignment as it supports the direction our eyes read in, but I felt separating the user's own messages was important for readability and repetition, as it is commonly used in messaging platforms, meaning the user will already be used to it [5]. The 'plus' button located right of the message box leads the user to several options; from here they can click on the voice message button to send a voice message, send a photo or video from their library or take a photo or video to send.

References / Sources:

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