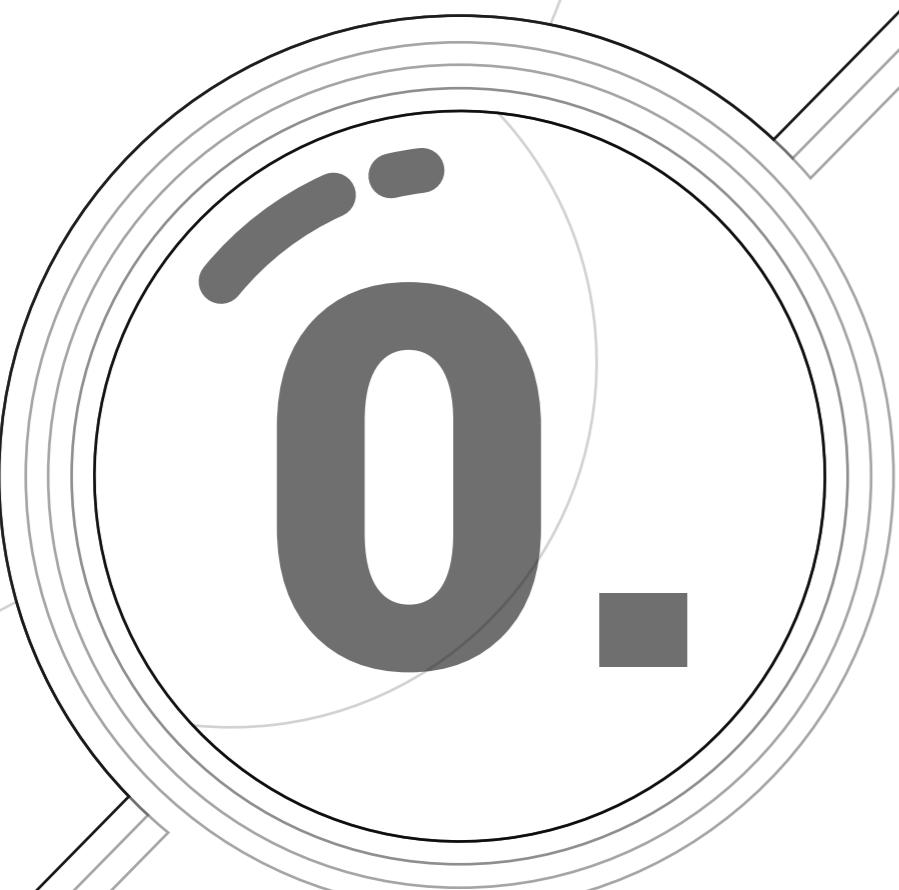




worldly

**EE2620 | Design for Mobile
1712540**



Content

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(invision link)

[**https://invis.io/TEQ0FKN3VJZ**](https://invis.io/TEQ0FKN3VJZ)

Research



Branding

Before researching the functionality of competitors, I decided it would be best to understand how they have marketed themselves towards their demographic (mostly millennial and generation Z).

The first thing that stands out, is the simplicity of their logos. With the exception of AJ+ (Fig.1), they all have very easy to understand typefaces. Although AJ+ is easy to read, it is not necessarily easy to understand. It is meant to be read as AJ+, but could be misunderstood as A+J which would deviate from the idea of "Al Jazeera +".

Secondly, with the exception of QUARTZ (Fig.3), they also have easy to recognise logos. The short comings of AJ+ do not remove from the fact that once you know the logo it is easy to recognise. BuzzFeed (Fig.2) and Vice (Fig.4) also have distinct visuals (i.e. Vice's font and BuzzFeed's logo). QUARTZ on the other hand is not recognisable, although the typeface is unique to them, it is not unique enough to stand out in a sea of similar branding. Many brands use Helvetica-esque typefaces (i.e. BuzzFeed), in order to stand out this way I believe they need something more (i.e. BuzzFeed's logo).

In conclusion, the logo must be simple, understandable but also unique and recognisable.

Fig.1



Fig.2



Fig.3



Fig.4



Functionality and Interface

The spine and vital organs of the application.

I did my research on 4 apps. AJ+ beta, BuzzFeed, QUARTZ, and Vice News to see how they try to market themselves to the demographic.

AJ+ beta

Possibly the weakest of the 4. Although it is worth mentioning the app is in beta and unfinished, it was also discontinued in April. However, the app is still on the PlayStore and a valuable resource on what not to do.

AJ+ beta comprises of one page (Fig.5) which lists the most popular articles. Most news apps list the articles with a photo and a headline. AJ+ do the same but they replace the image with a video. Most likely to appeal to the users need of quick information. This could have been a good idea, if AJ+ had provided customisation options that allow you to filter what you see so that you can consume information relevant to you and your interests. This forces you to scroll through everything before finding something that you are interested in, therefore, contradicting the idea of fast information.

I believe this was their downfall.

Although AJ+ is clearly a failed app (they don't add new articles anymore), it is very useful to understand why they failed in order to avoid the same mistakes.

BuzzFeed

BuzzFeed markets itself as more than just a news app. When the user opens the app, it displays a personalised feed of news articles, non-news articles, videos and games (i.e. quizzes). (Fig.6.1)

This is most likely to appeal to a wide audience. People who are interested in news and people who are not. Arguably, this model is what has led to their large user base and online following. Although this kind of app is not what I am trying to design, it is very useful to understand why they are so popular.

They keep their users on the app for as long as possible. Whether this is through videos involving celebrities/content creators (Fig.6.2) or interactive games such as quizzes (Fig.6.3). Extra activities and gamification is vital to keeping users engaged and coming back on a standard news day once they have read all the articles interesting to them.

This also provides the extra bonus of maintaining a user engaged even on days where there are no articles they are interested in.

Fig.5



Fig.6.2

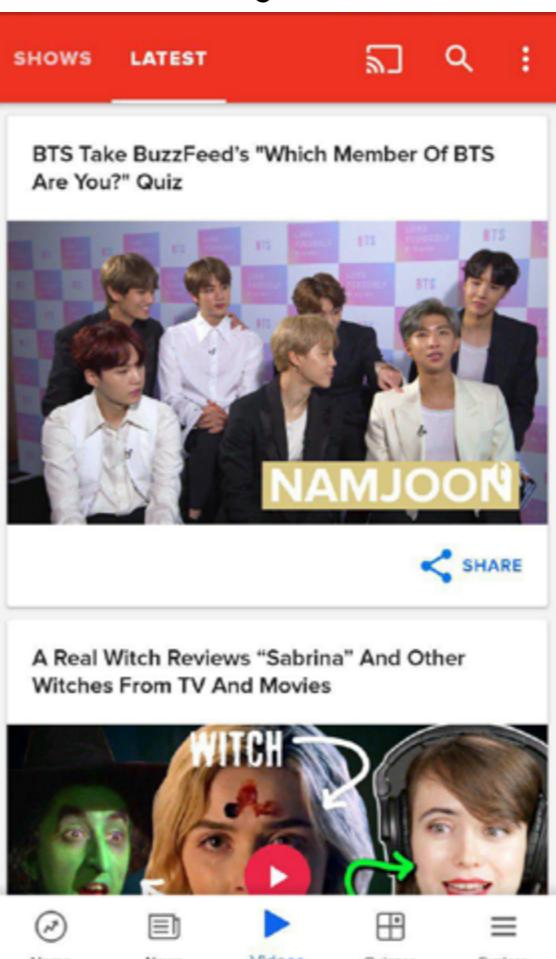


Fig.6.1

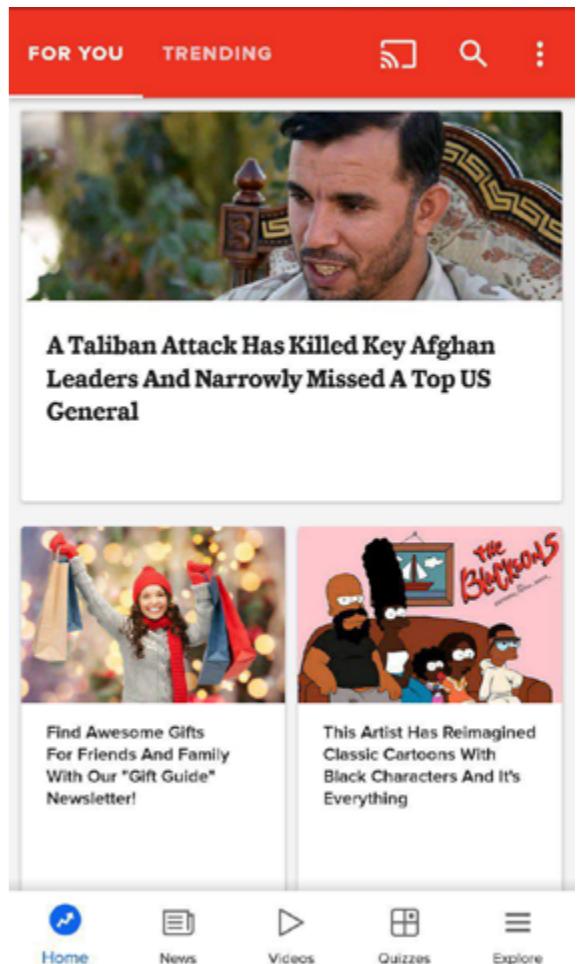
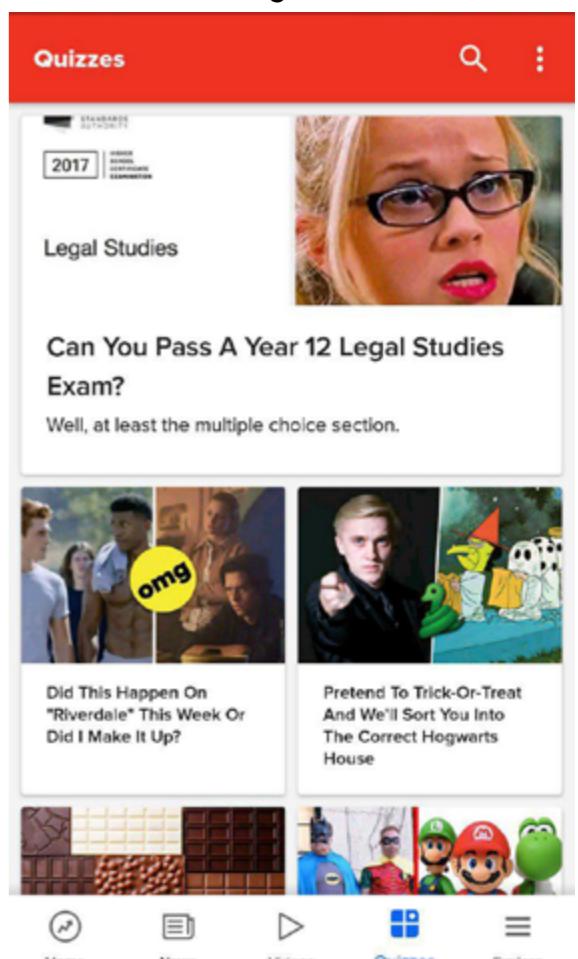


Fig.6.3



QUARTZ

Quartz have by far the most unique interface. However, I don't think that helps with engagement. They implement a "messaging" style interface (Fig.7.1) where articles are delivered as if you are talking to a friend.

The way that I researched these apps was that I used them myself for 1-2 days in order to see if I (as a member of the target market) would be able to stay engaged. I found that the Quartz interface made it difficult to get the articles I wanted because I couldn't choose what to see. Although they do provide customisation to filter out articles (Fig.7.2), I couldn't specifically ask for "Politics" or other topics. I believe this leads to lower engagement because the target market is not patient enough to sift through many articles before finding what they want (a similar problem to AJ+). In addition, the completely revamped UI creates a slight adjustment curve needed to be comfortable using the app.

This made me believe that I should design an app that allows you to easily filter out articles that you are not interested in. But most importantly, the UI must be within the normal format so that a user can install the app and immediately know the controls. As an app developer myself I understand that if a user cannot figure out how to navigate quickly, they will uninstall and go to another similar app.

Vice News

Vice news has the easiest to read interface, their brand colours are just black and white which provide very good contrast when choosing and reading articles.

In terms of functionality, the app is quite limited. It doesn't allow you to filter topics and has one page of popular articles (Fig.8.1) and another page of popular videos (Fig.8.2). Although the app itself is similar to more established news apps (BBC, Guardian, Sky News etc.) Vice appeal to millenials through the topics they discuss. Vice is known for fringe content such as very personal inside looks on African Warlords (often with interviews) and going to dangerous areas most news organisations would report from a distance.

Although this doesn't help with the functionality/UI of the app, it provides evidence to show that the app can be quite simple. It doesn't need to have the wide variety of content that apps such as BuzzFeed have in order to maintain engagement, (Vice is so popular they have their own TV channel now).

Fig.7.1

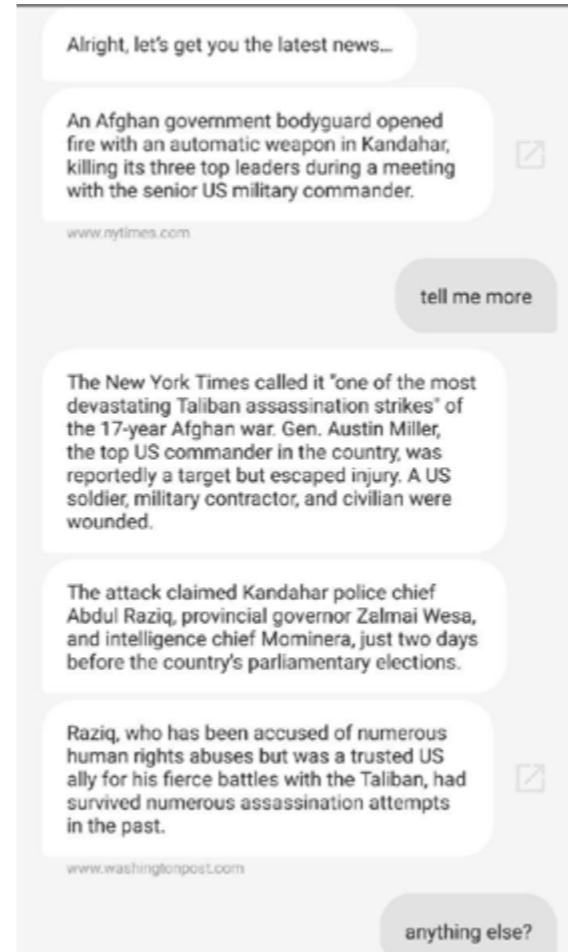


Fig.8.1



Fig.7.2

Customize your experience

Notifications

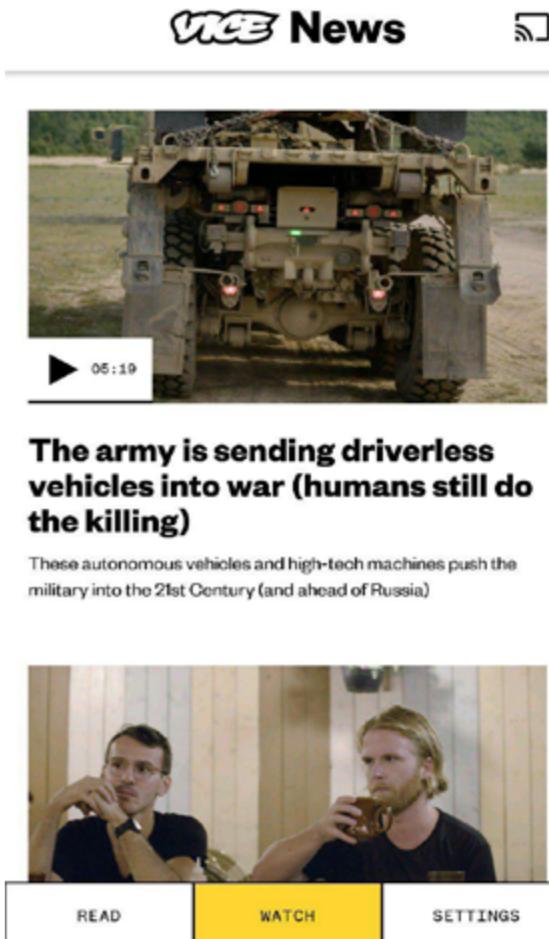
You can select what alerts you want to receive. We'll only buzz you when it's really important; otherwise, your phone will just light up quietly. Enjoy.

- Really, really big news
Rare. This is the only alert that will buzz your phone.
- Important and interesting
Once or twice a day. News we think deserves your notice.
- Markets haiku
At trading day's end / The bell rings, let's all go home / Hark! Here's a poem
- News updates
A few times daily when there's a bunch more stuff to read in the app.

Things to enjoy

- Quartz Daily Brief email
Sign up to receive the most important and interesting news from around the world in your inbox.

Fig.8.2



Functionality

Main Goals

- Provide the news
- Maximise user engagement on both breaking and standard news days

Problems

- 1 There is only so much a user can do on most news apps.
- 2 Once the relevant articles have been read, there is nothing to engage the user.
- 3 There is no incentive to share articles and therefore, expose more users to the app.

Solution

- Google Play integration to tailor articles to the user
- Points system: For every action you gain points
- A levelling system, each point milestone gives levels you up. You will be placed in a ranking list with your friends to promote competition.
- Social integration. You can speak with friends and the wider community about subjects in designated chat rooms (or private rooms if with friends)

My goal was to design an app that only provides the news on a breaking news day but engages the user on standard days where news is not as interesting.

By integrating the user's Google Play account (every android user must have one to download apps) we can give them the option to filter out certain topics that they are or are not interested in. This can help their experience because they do not need to sift through 10 articles they don't want to read in order to find the one they do.

The points system however, is the most different to any other news app I could find. For every action (e.g. sharing an article on social media) the user gains points (called Insight). After each milestone (e.g. every 1000 points) the user will level up. They will also be ranked against their friends on the level and the amount of insight they have to promote competition and therefore increase user engagement on a standard news day.

The social system not only allows them to share articles to each other within the app, but to discuss the topics with each other. This can also increase engagement by replacing other messaging apps such as Messenger, WhatsApp and Telegram where (in my experience) a lot of discussion of the news takes place. Users will be able to link their account to Facebook to integrate their friends list or if they do not want to link their Facebook there will also be a manual search to connect with users within the app.

Planning



Branding

I began by recapping my research in order to boil down the main factors of a successful logo:

- Simple
- Unique
- Recognisable
- Easy to recognise
- Easy to understand (if there is a message)

My initial idea, was to have a logo in a similar style to BuzzFeed, where there is a symbol cut out of a circle.

I had already decided that the font used would be Roboto. This is one of the free to use fonts offered by Google. This meant that no license would have to be bought for commercial use and free offered to download.

Roboto is also easy on the eyes and doesn't strain the reader's vision (this whole document uses Roboto).

As of writing this, all android devices use Roboto as their default typeface; the app's typeface would not clash with the rest of the system as long as the user did not manually change it.

In reference to the points system, the name would be InSight and a stylised letter S would be present in the logo (as seen right). However, I did not believe that the logo satisfied my criteria of being unique and recognisable. The S is also hard to identify without prior knowledge.

The colour scheme works for a logo, however I believe that red/orange is too strong to be used as the main colours for an entire app. I created a small mockup (Fig.9) that confirmed this theory.

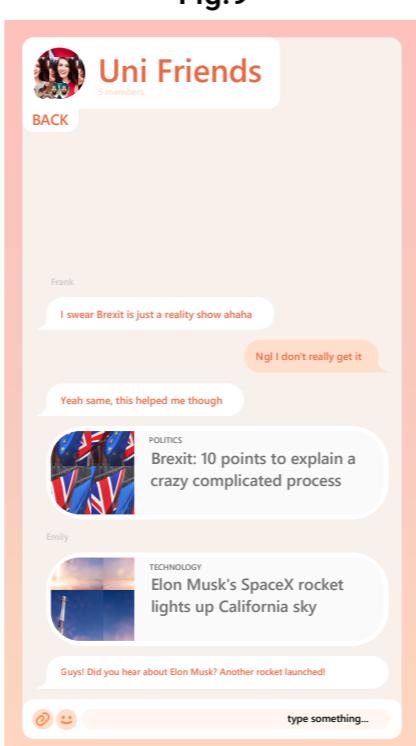


Fig.9

Roboto Light

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890.,;?!

#FF4E3E

Roboto Regular

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890.,;?!

#E86944

Roboto Medium

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890.,;?!

#FF8E4B



InSight



InSight

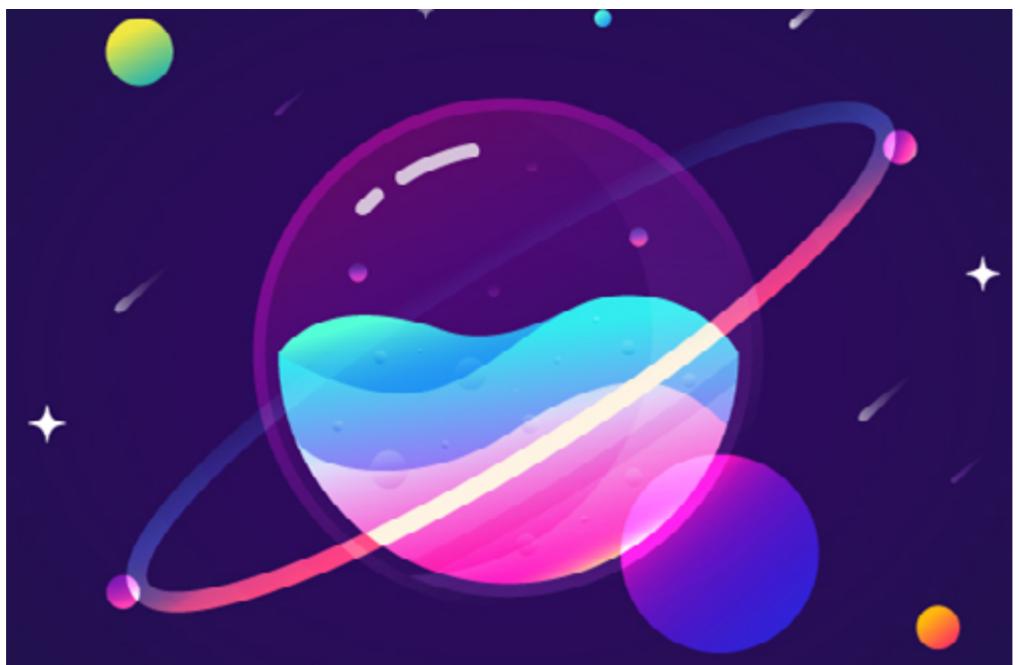


InSight



The art style of the second (and final) version was inspired by [Fantastic Planet 001 by Brentton](#) (Fig.10)

Fig.10



The typeface remains the same, but I chose to use the Baskerville Old Face font for the logo because the serif breaks up the letters and makes it clear that is the name of the app in contrast to the sans-serif Roboto.

I believe the earth design also satisfies my criteria because there not many apps that use this imagery and it is very recognisable to almost anybody on the planet. The logo and name represents the world news that can be read on the app as well as giving off the idea of worldly knowledge.

“worldly”
/’wə:ldli/
adjective
1.
(of a person) experienced and sophisticated.

The colour scheme, while being true to the earth's colours is also easier on the eyes than the previous one. Blue and green analogous colour schemes are often found in nature therefore, providing a sense of familiarity and harmony.

This can be important to relax the user while they read long texts.

Baskerville Old Face

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890.,;?!#65B0D0

Roboto Regular

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890.,;?!#65C8D0

Roboto Medium

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890.,;?!#65B897



Social Media Integration

Most news app have one main section where the user can navigate popular articles, topics and read the articles.

However, there is no direct connect from the app to the user and the app becomes a data bank where, if they wish, the user can get information that they could easily get somewhere else (another app, website or newspaper).

By providing some extra screens where the user can interact with friends and the wider community in a competitive and conversational manner there is incentive to return to app on a standard news day or even once all news has been consumed.

Navigation System

Application Map

(Map available on next page spread)

Screen 1 - Splash

The loading screen shown at the start while the application loads the relevant assets. Depending on the speed of the user's device and internet they may only see this briefly (if at all).

Screen 2 - Login

The first page the user sees (assuming they are not logged in already), this page allows them to choose the method of log in they wish to use.

Screen 3 - Onboard

Integrated social media api that allows the user to log in through their social media accounts.

Screen 4 - Homepage

If the user decides to log in to the app, they start on the homepage and see a personalised news feed as well as some notifications of what their friends have been up to on the app.

Screen 5 - Profile

They can edit their details, see their insight points and how they rank against their friends and the rest of the community.

Screen 6 - Friends and Groups

A list of their friends and groups in descending order by contact date. A search bar is provided in case they need to find a specific friend quickly.

Screen 7 - Chatroom

A chatroom where they can speak to friends and groups depending if they came from screen 3 or screen 6.

Screen 8 - Frontpage

If the user does not log into the app, they start on the frontpage and see the trending articles of the day in a list.

Screen 9 - Topics

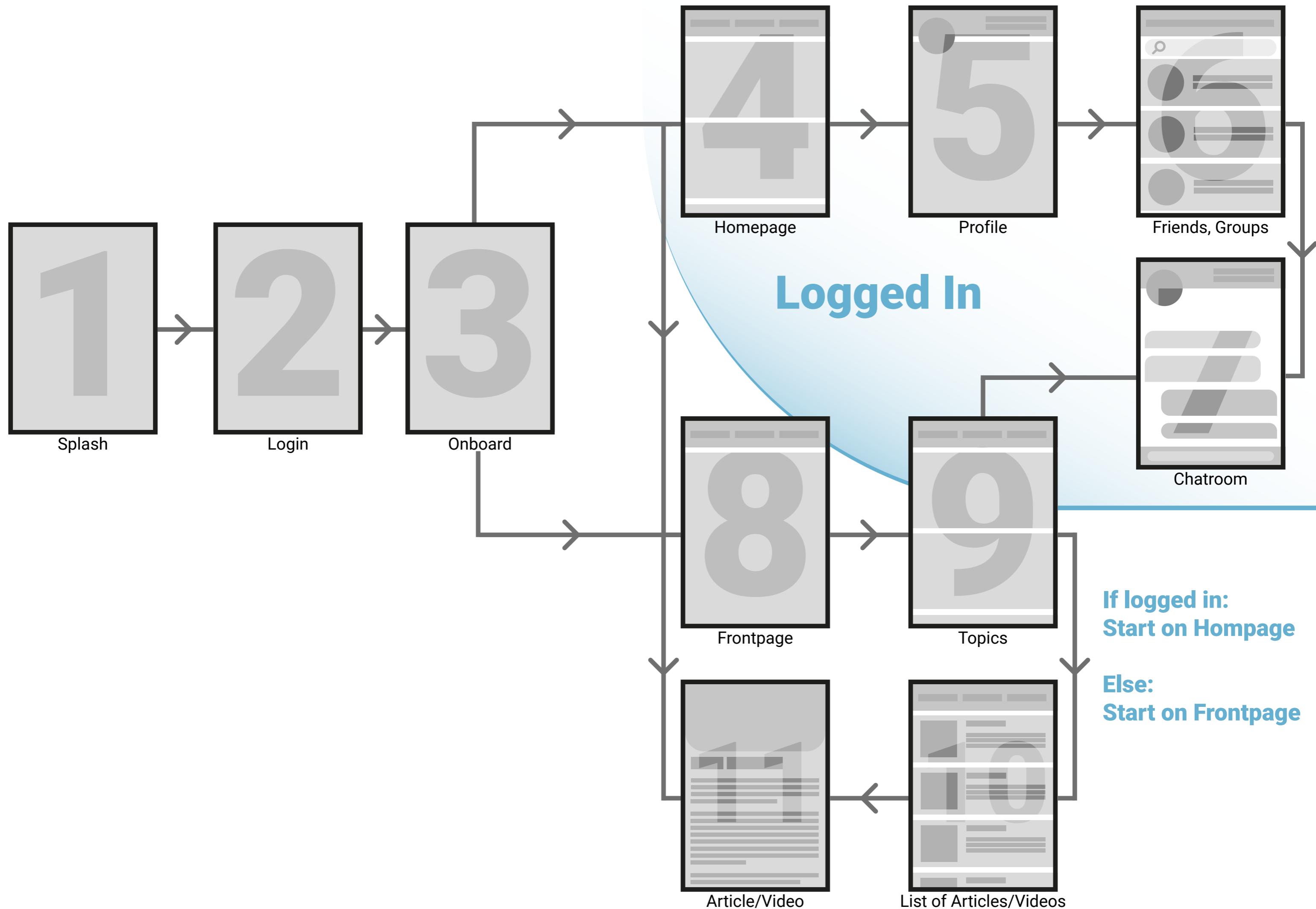
The different topics (UK politics, technology, health etc.) are listed, each with an image and small description. There is also an option to enter the chatroom for that topic where the user can interact with other members of the community.

Screen 10 - List of Articles and Videos

The list of trending articles and videos for the topic chosen.

Screen 11 - Article/Video

The article/video chosen by the user.



Design

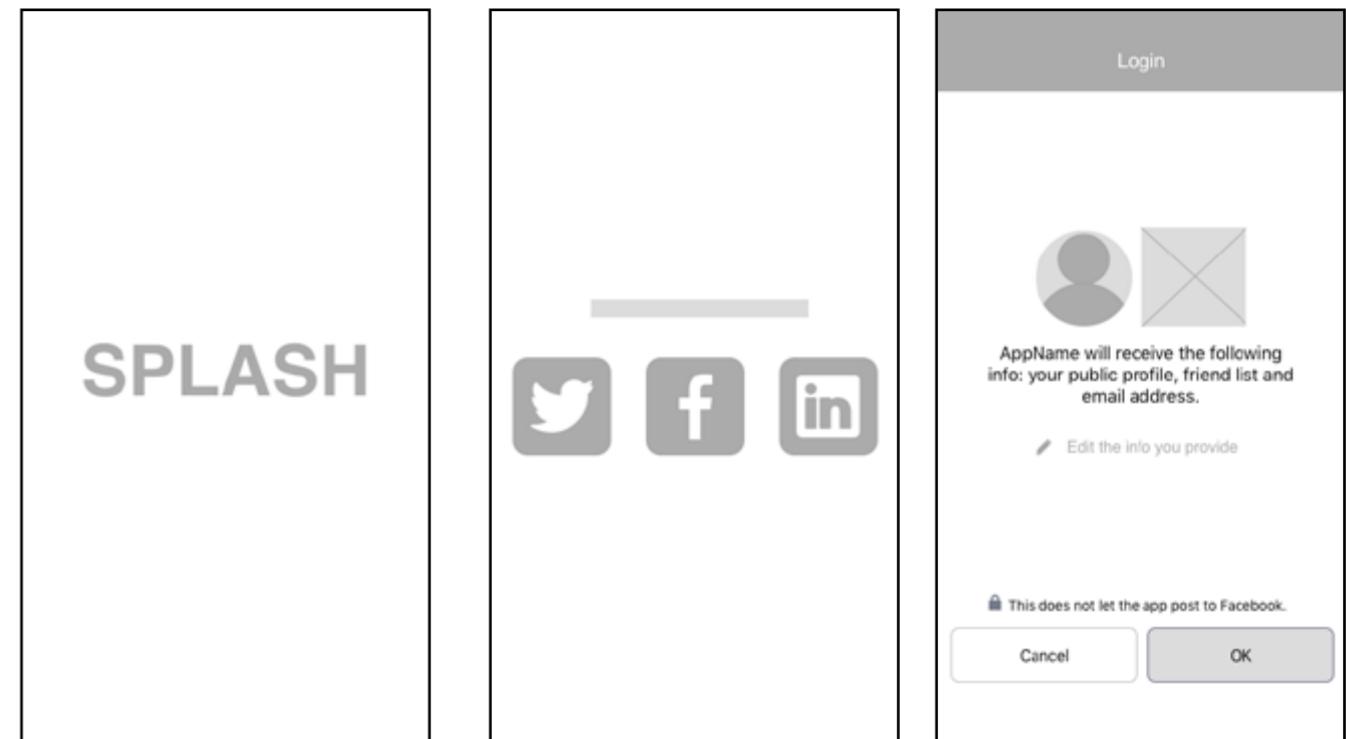


Wireframes

I used my initial wireframes as the base for both my (red and blue) design versions because I already had a good idea of the general layout of the pages.

All pages are designed to be as clutter free as possible while maximising content visible without the need to scroll. This is done to increase ease of visibility and therefore, usability.

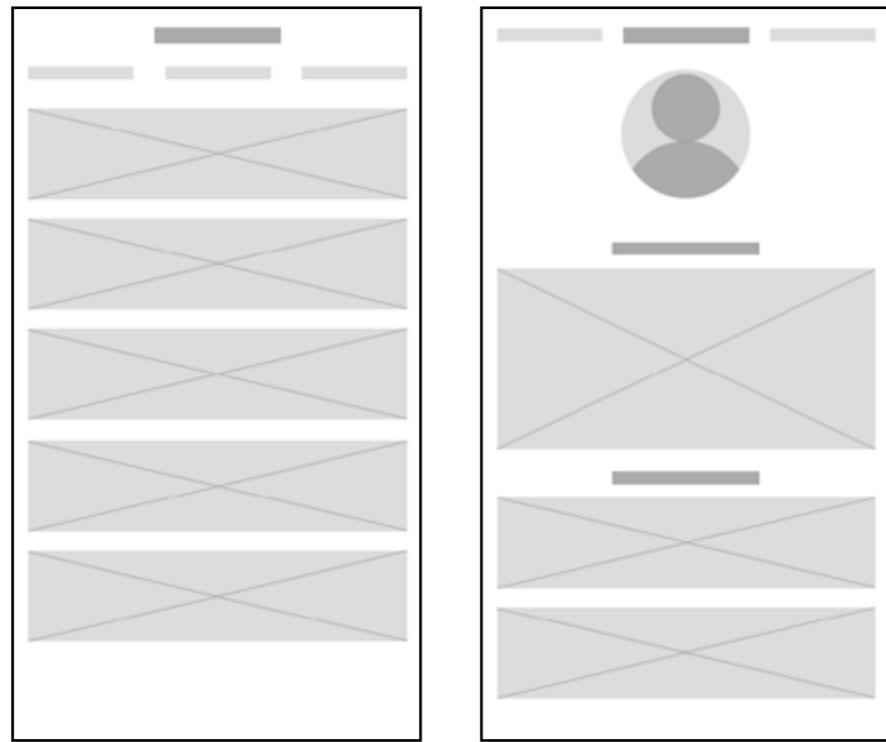
Splash and Onboard screens



The app integrates social interaction with news reading therefore, I found it suitable to include social media integration through a login API that all the large companies such as Facebook offer to developers.

This will allow the user to integrate their Facebook friends list with the app automatically, it also makes it much easier to share content to the respective social platforms.

Homepage and Frontpage



Frontpage

The frontpage (left) consists purely of a title "Frontpage", buttons that lead to specific topics such as UK, Politics, Tech etc. and a list of articles.

Each topic screen will be identical to the frontpage in order to maintain uniformity with the exception of the article list. Which will only contain the articles relevant to the topic chosen.

Homepage

The homepage (right) has a similar concept to the frontpage however, the top also contains links to the frontpage and profile section (next spread).

The articles this time are organised by two factors:

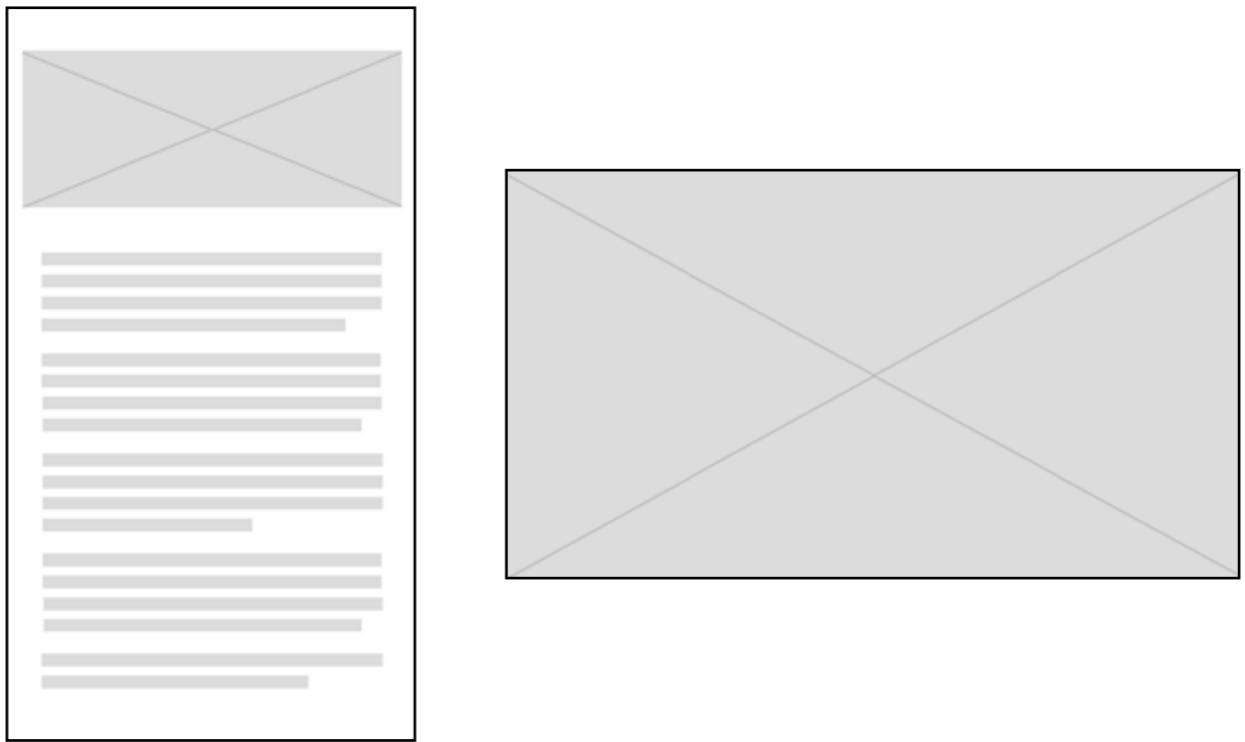
- Popular among friends
- Tailored to you

This allows the user to see articles that are popular with friends (in case they have similar tastes) and articles specifically tailored to the user's reading habits.

i.e. if a user reads mostly politics and tech related articles this section will be almost exclusively filled with relevant articles.

This is to increase ease of use with the user, because they most likely do not want to sift through tens of articles in order to find something interesting to them.

Article and Video



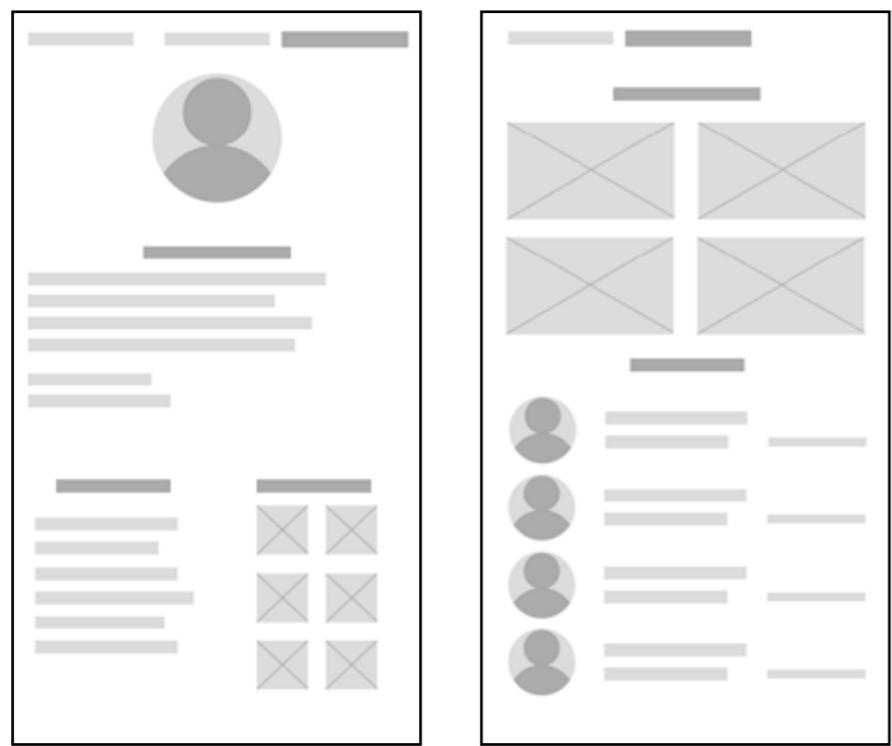
Article

The article screen (left) is very simple and consists of a header image and the article body. There are also social media buttons that the user can click on if they choose to share the article on Facebook, Twitter or the social platform of their choice.

Video

The video screen (right) is simply a video player and a back button which takes them to the page they were on before.

Profile and Friendslist



Profile Page

The profile page (left) complies with GDPR and displays all the information the app keeps on the user and also allows them to change their password, email and username if they wish.

It also displays their insight points, level and a ranking list of where they stand within their friend's group. This is done in the hopes to generate competition with their friends in order to gain more points, achieve a higher ranking and thus increase engagement and daily app use.

In case they do not use the insight system, there are also integrated trophies or achievements that they can earn by doing various tasks on the app (such as share an article to Facebook).

Friendslist

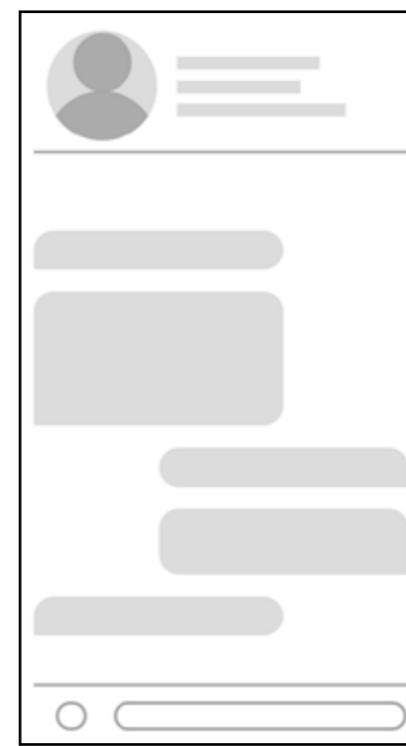
The friendslist (right) has two main sections.

- Public chatrooms for specific topics
- Private chatrooms for friends and groups

This increases user engagement because if the user is not currently using the app it is likely that one of their friends is and sends them a message (whether it's news related or not). This incentivises the user to return to app daily even on a non-breaking news day.

The public chatrooms operate in a similar capacity however, are open to everyone.

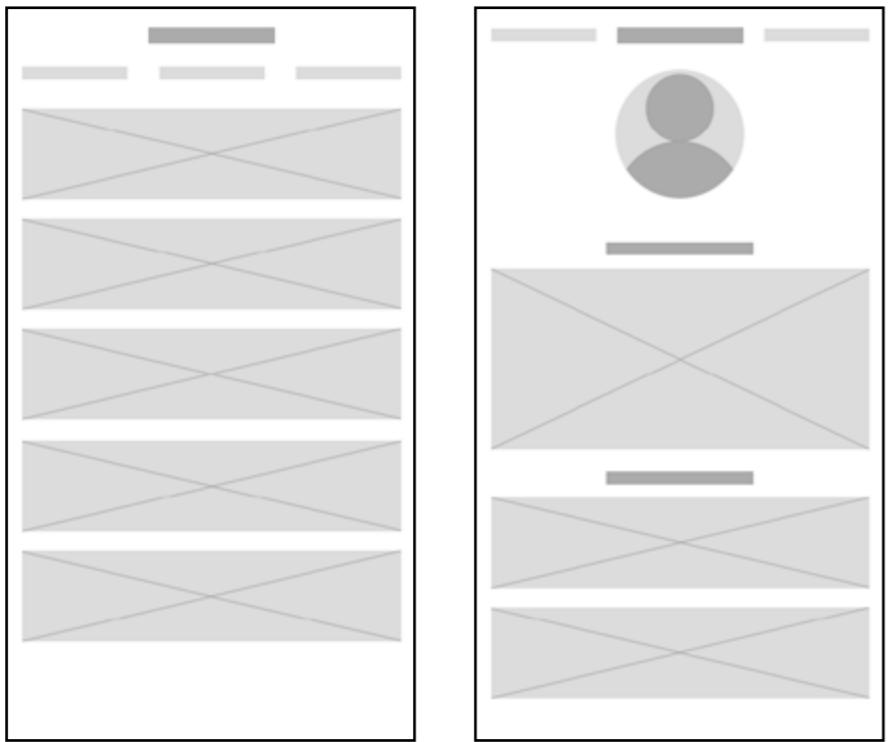
Messenger/Chatroom



The chatrooms are like other chatrooms, where messages are displayed vertically the most recent at the bottom.

The friend/group/topic information is displayed at the top so that the user knows who they are talking to.

Homepage and Frontpage



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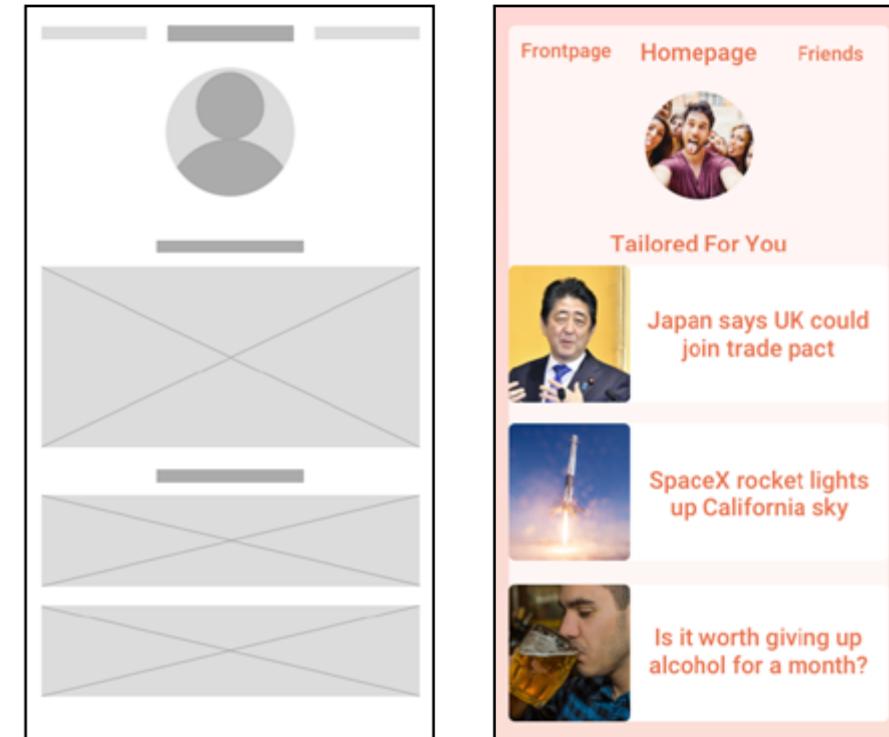
This allows the user to see articles that are popular with friends (in case they have similar tastes) and articles specifically tailored to the user's reading habits.

i.e. if a user reads mostly politics and tech related articles this section will be almost exclusively filled with relevant articles.

This is to increase ease of use with the user, because they most likely do not want to sift through tens of articles in order to find something interesting to them.

Version 1

For the first version (using the colour scheme laid out on page 13) I made only a few screens because I quickly realised that the colour scheme was too harsh and aggressive for a news app.



Although the colour scheme looked harmonious when I chose it, as soon as I began creating the mockup I realised that the colour scheme was too harsh and did not translate well into text.

Although I tried to make the articles readable by employing black text on white the mockup did not flow well.

This caused me to scrap everything that I had before and redesign the logo and colour scheme as mentioned on pages 13-15.

Development

Version 2

The second and final version came after a fresh re-branding of the app logo and colour scheme in order to make it more harmonious and calming to the reader.

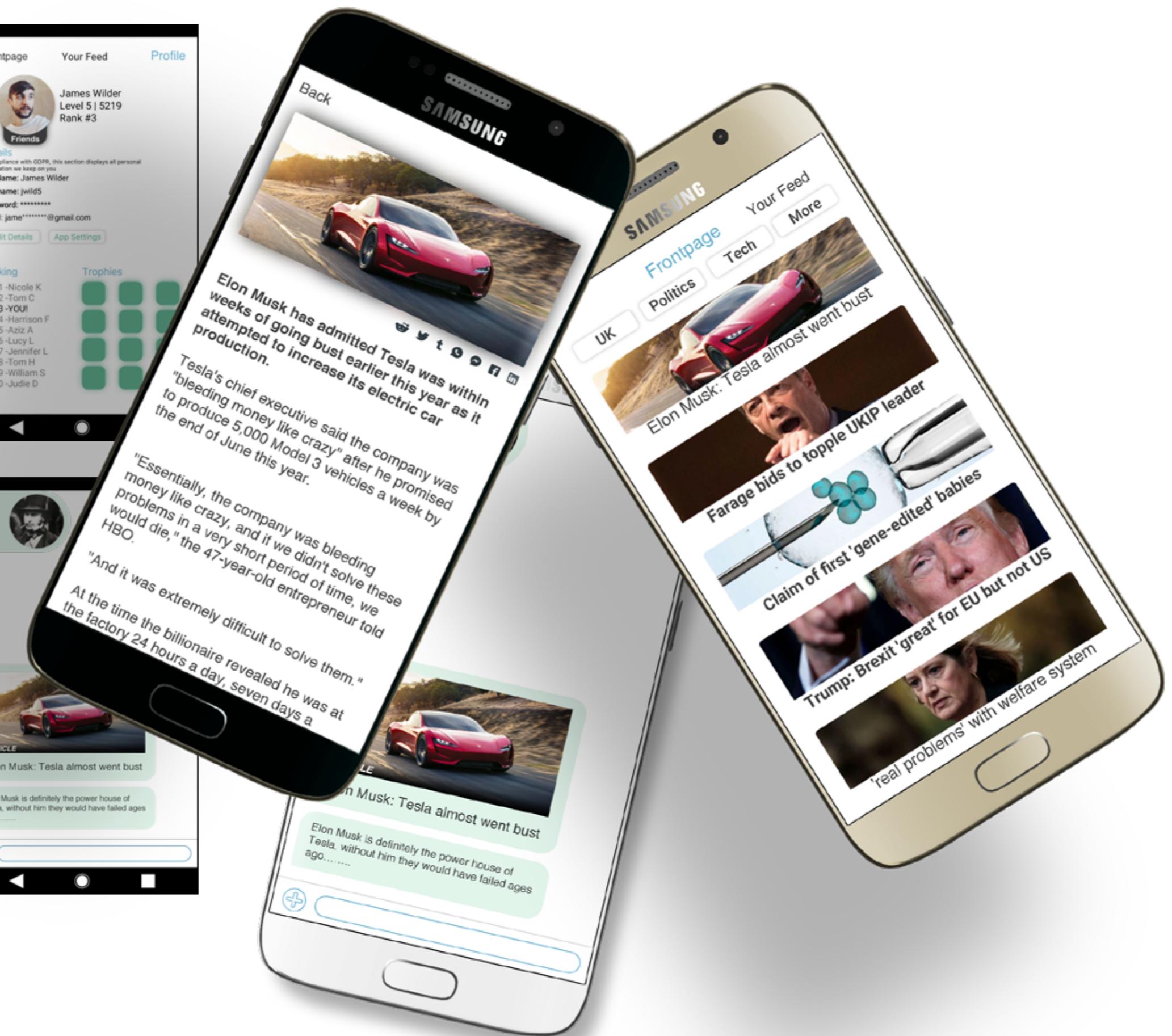
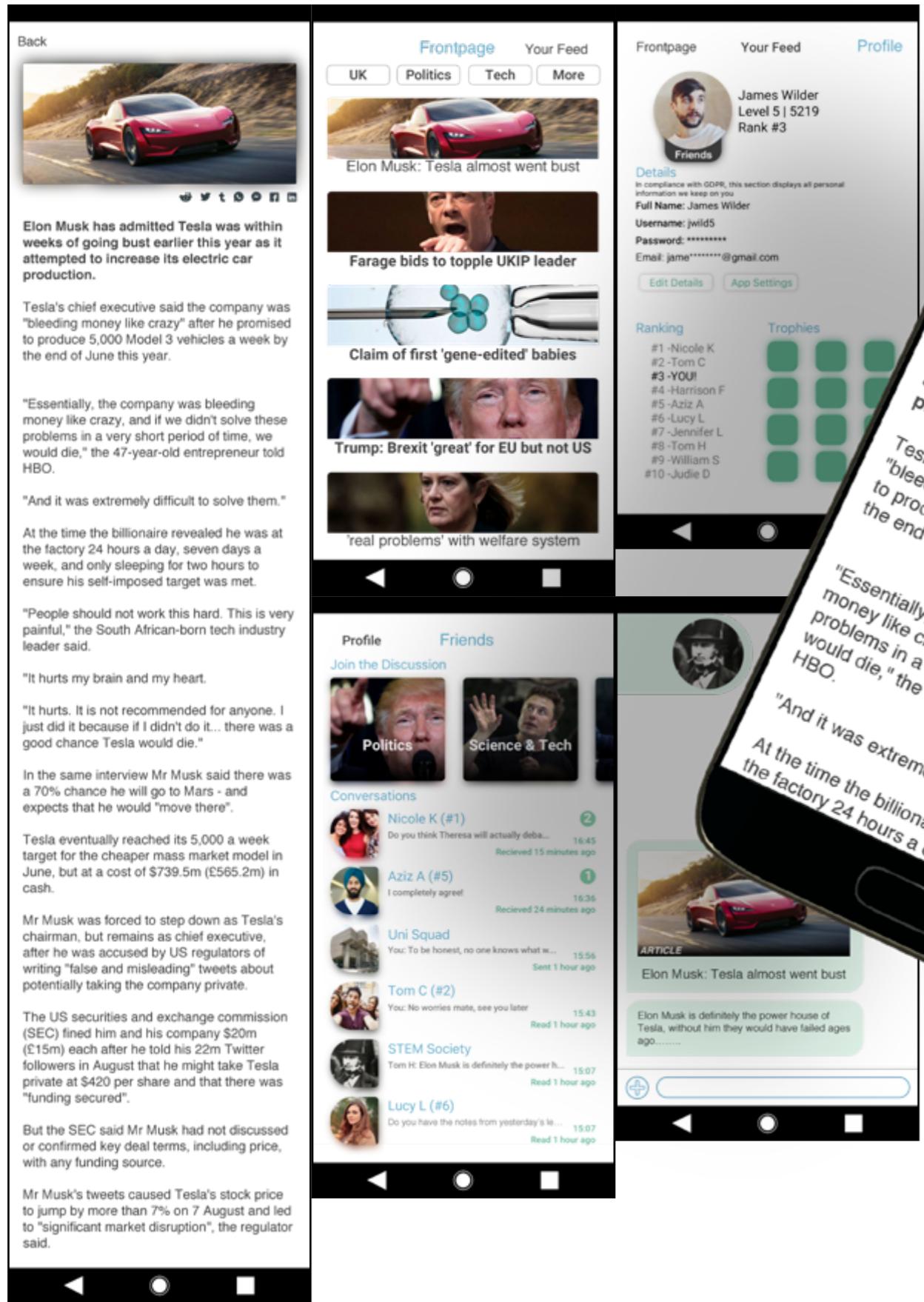
Instead of using a strong coloured background for everything I decided to use a minimalistic approach and use white as my main colour, supplementing the highlights with the colour scheme laid out in page 15.

This produced much less cluttered and more professional looking screens.

The final design was quite similar to the wireframe with the exception of the addition of text next to the user profile to give more information and notifications.

Under the "What's New?" section, the user can horizontally swipe to carousel through the latest articles, however the "Popular With Friends" section only contains two articles to reduce clutter. However, in the user testing phase I realised that most people do like the vertical scroll function because it allows them to see more content on one screen. This was an example of where ease of visibility did not correlate with ease of usability.

In hindsight, it would have been more productive to implement a form of agile project management where I would periodically use test groups in order to understand that user experience flaws as I designed the screens and continuously improve as I went along.



https://zippypixels.com/product/mockups/devices/free-android-app-mockup/?utm_source=behance.net&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=behance_sharing

Testing



When it came to user testing, I wanted to get a good representation of not only users within the demographic (18-25 year olds) but people who would soon enter the demographic, because while they may not have use for the app in the current stage of their lives, it must still be accessible to them so that once they start showing interest there is less likely hood of them using a competing app.

The age range that I employed was 15-23 and I gave it 6 different family members and friends.

The approach that I used was to give them my phone (or an InVision link) and watch them as they interacted with the app. This way I could judge how quickly it took them to understand how to navigate and if there were any flaws in the user interaction that I hadn't thought of. Once they finished exploring the prototype I asked for some feedback.

Aggregated by demographic:

15 and 16 year olds (My brother and his friend)

Pros:

- Facebook would make it easy to log in without having to remember log in details
- Points and trophies make you want to beat your friends (therefore, keep using the app)

Cons:

- No ability to send articles via Snapchat
- Facebook Messenger, Snapchat and similar apps are already extremely popular messaging services that people might prefer to use
- No games or quizzes to play when you are bored

19 (x2), 21 and 23 year olds (Friends from Guildford, older cousin and uni friend respectively)

Pros:

- Facebook makes it quick to log in
- Messaging service is good if you like discussing news but want to separate it from social discussion that could be done on Snapchat or Instagram.
- Easy to navigate and understand what is where

Cons:

- Implement more social media login options (because not everyone uses or likes Facebook)
- Vertical scroll on the homepage so that more articles tailored to you are available because 2 is low if you want to read the news in the bus or tube
- Button to go to friend's screen could be in a easier to find location



Critical Evaluation

Overall, I believe my design implemented all the features laid out in the brief and implements the features that I planned to include in a non-obstructive way to the main function of the app.

I.e. the main function of the app is to serve news to the user and the social aspects complement the app in order to foster discussion between people and engages the user on a standard news day.

In terms of workflow, had I the chance to restart my assignment from the beginning, I believe I would adopt an agile project management style (implemented by most major UX consultancy groups) because it would have allowed me to constantly review and test the most recent version of my prototype and add user tested improvements.

Although this management style is better suited to team work where individuals contribute to a larger project, I believe it also benefits individual work because continuous external testing helps highlight problems that the designer/developer might not find because they have intricate knowledge of the app's functionalities (whereas a fresh look would highlight new problems).

This was evident to me in the user testing phase because some features that seemed complete (such as Facebook integration) were not suitable for certain people because they either did not like to connect through Facebook or did not use it outright.

Although my design greatly improved from version 1 to version 2 in terms of colour scheme and user experience, I believe that a third version, taking feedback into consideration would have been beneficial to the overall quality of the final product. As it stands, the feedback given by the test groups has not been implemented.

The logo and branding helps distance the app from SkyNews in order to appeal to the demographic of 19-25 year olds by using a cartoon (yet professional) design style. However, it still fits within the SkyNews umbrella of design should it ever be shown alongside their other logos.

The downside however, is that the Worldly text would not fit in an icon and still be visible, it is not shown anywhere on the app and therefore goes unused.

In conclusion, I believe I followed the brief and came up with original solutions to the common problems that many news apps face.

References



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AJ+ App - https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=net.ajplus.android.pbb&hl=en_US
- BuzzFeed - <https://www.buzzfeed.com/>
BuzzFeed App - https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.buzzfeed.android&hl=en_GB
- Quartz - <https://qz.com/>
Quartz App - https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.qz.android&hl=en_GB
- Vice News - https://news.vice.com/en_us
Vice News App - <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.vice.news&hl=en>
- Mockup Template - https://zippypixels.com/product/mockups/devices/free-android-app-mockup/?utm_source=behance.net&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=behance_sharing