Contents
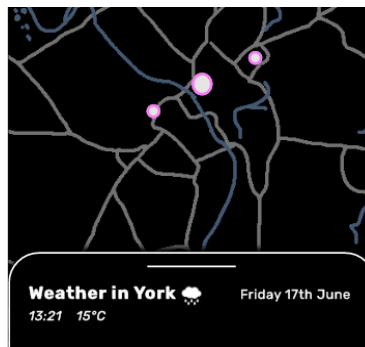
Executive Summary

My project is an application called M.I.A, short for My Introverted App and a play on the words Missing In Action, a modern slang term for someone who is nowhere to be found. In today's society, solving mental health issues is essential due to its increasing impact on the global population. While there are professional and effective treatment solutions in place for those with extreme cases, those who have mild symptoms and uncomfortable daily interactions are left with no choice but to bear with their condition. M.I.A has been designed specifically for those who define themselves as introverts to help lessen the impact of modern discomforts such as crowded areas, busy streets and large events.

## *The app has three main features:*

An anonymous social media profile in which individuals are defined by their hobbies and interests rather than their age, ethnicity and appearance.	A simple map that highlights areas with live data such as crowded streets and social events, with a menu to display this information to the user.	A live streaming and blog page which features the blogs of users following each other and also featured posts chosen by trained admins.
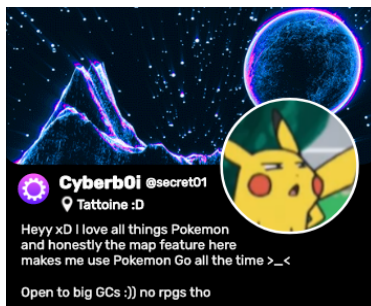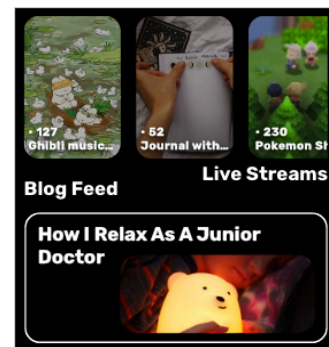
These three features would be able to help those with social anxiety and introvertism by acting as tools for public spaces. When there are large events occuring in the user's area, they can use M.I.A's map feature to check how this event has influenced crowding within the surrounding spaces. This enables the user to avoid these areas when commuting or travelling and therefore decrease the amount of discomfort that they otherwise might have experienced. Furthermore, this app has similarities to current forms of social media such as Discord and Twitter, but what sets it apart from those is the ensured anonymity of public digital space. By removing the pressure of 'fitting in' users can build a community of like-minded people to interact within a safe environment. Through this feature, users may connect with those on a deeper emotional level and seek companionship without borders which may be crucial to those who struggle with loneliness and introvertism.

Additional features of the app include customisation options such as the user being able to set their own profile photo, banner image, name options, biography options and being able to change the theme of the app from blue and purple to green and peach. By giving the user options such as these, they can become attached to their profile and community through an experience that is self-tailored. This adds to the enjoyability of the app and will encourage positive reception and feedback.

Prototype Report

Prototype Walkthrough
A step by step guide of how the user interacts with the app.

When the app is clicked from the user's home screen, the loading page appears in whichever theme was last selected.

The loading page features the app's logo in the centre, and only appears momentarily while the app loads previous data and interactions.

This is a warm introduction to the app and allows all app data to be loaded, ensuring smooth animation and animation for the user.
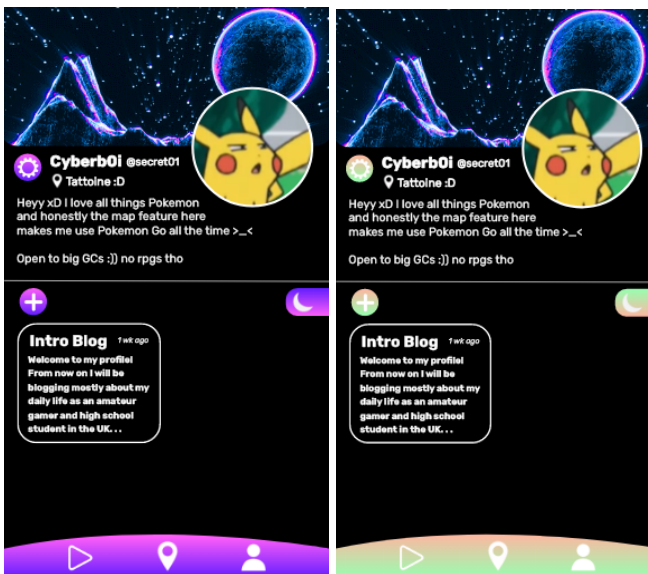
The page that is loaded first is the profile page, unique to the user, which contains their profile information and previous blogs that they have posted.

The main buttons on this page include the 'settings' button which is situated next to the user's display name, the 'add post' button which is on the left-hand side of the screen above the user's posted blogs, and the 'aesthetic change' button which changes the colour scheme of the app for the user; identified by the moon button on the right side of the page.

Furthermore, the customisation of the user's profile will enable them to form and identity while still remaining anonymous. This will aid them in building a community or simply enabling them to have an aesthetic profile page.

The layout and aesthetics of the profile page is pleasing for the user to view, and the buttons are spaced out neatly so that the user does not become confused.

If the user clicks the settings button, the settings page opens and displays numerous options such as; edit profile, account settings, privacy and safety and notifications.

If one of these sub-categories are clicked, a separate page opens with the specific settings relating to that category for the user to edit and adjust to their personal preference.

The user can exit the settings by clicking the back arrow situated in the top right-hand corner of each page.

The settings page is very accessible to the user and will enable them to adjust aspects of the app. This tailored experience will increase the overall enjoyability of the app, as the user can adjust what notifications they receive and how their data is stored.
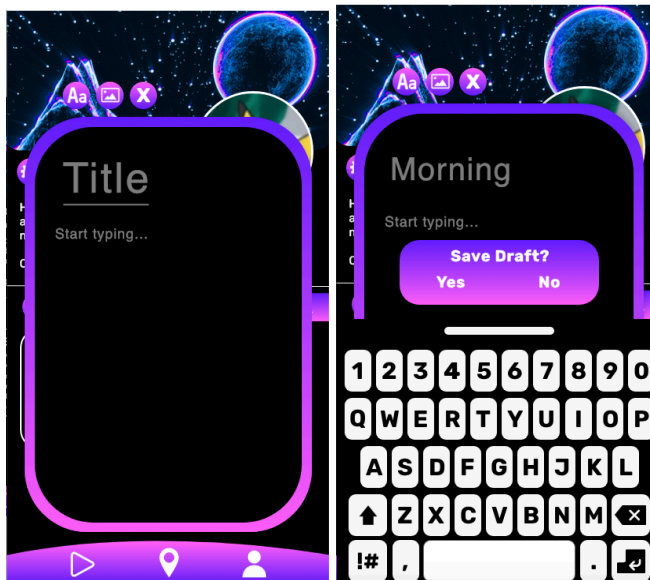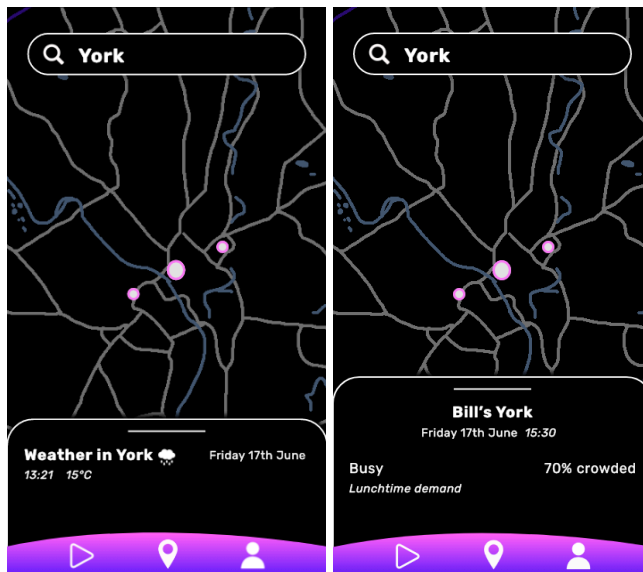

If the 'add post' button is clicked, a pop-up menu appears where the user can write and edit new blogs by tapping elements such as 'title' and the main body signposted with the 'start typing' text.

If these elements are clicked, the user's operating system keyboard will appear so they can start typing.

If the user wants to come back to their blog post later, they can click the 'X' button which is among the editing buttons at the top of the pop-up menu. This will enable the user to save the blog as a draft and return to the profile page.

While the 'add post' feature has all the necessary options for the user to create a unique blog, it is simple in design and allows the user to easily create and edit at their convenience.

This pop up is easy for the user to access and has an appeasing animation that adds to the user's cohesive experience of the app.

By using the main navigation bar at the bottom of the screen, the user can access the map page by clicking the 'location' button situated in the middle of the bar. The map page will display their current location automatically if the user's location preferences are enabled, or display a location that has been searched by the user through using the search bar at the top of the screen.

The map will display the area and depending on live data, small buttons will appear over locations that are busy or have an event.

This enables the user to see information about the surrounding area without checking external sources such as news outlets or friends and family. They can see first-hand for themselves the areas to avoid depending on personal preference and plan their activities around them.

The user can click on these small buttons which enables the slide-up menu to display live data for that chosen area. If no area is clicked, general data is displayed such as the weather and date.
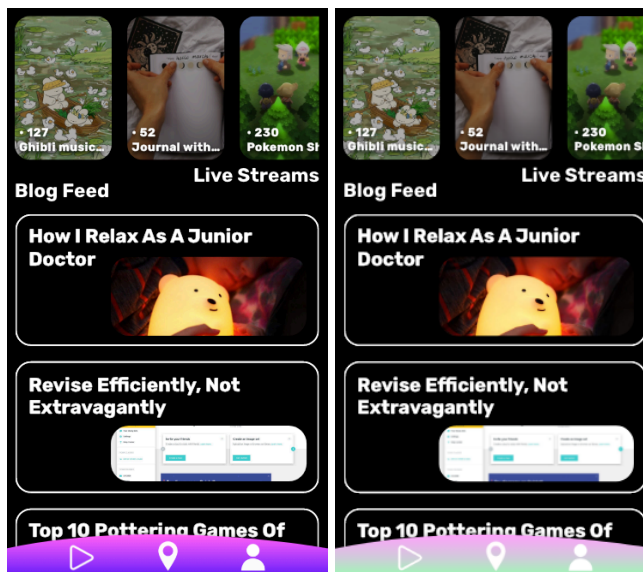
The user can access the 'stream' page by clicking the play button on the left of the navigation bar.

This page features the blogs of the user's friends, and featured blogs that have been chosen by admins. It has an infinite number of blogs on it, meaning the user can keep scrolling down to continue to receive featured and followed posts.

The live streams are featured on the top of the page, which can be scrolled from left to right depending on how many live streams are being featured at the time.

The user can click on the blogs and read them by clicking on the individual posts. They can then return to the main stream page by clicking the back arrow button in the top right. There is no limit on how many blogs are featured for the user and how many blogs a user can read.

To access live streams, the user can click on which livestream they want to watch from the scroll group at the top of the main stream page. This will take them to a viewer page in which they can press play and view the content being live-streamed.

The mainstream page refreshes its content daily so that the user has new articles and blogs to read frequently. This eliminates the chance of users becoming bored of the content.

This makes the content accessible for the user and the interface is easy to navigate which allows them to keep viewing content and not be deterred by exerting too much effort.

Prototype Report Evaluation

Overall, the app has navigation features that are extremely accessible to the user such as the main navigation bar that is situated at the bottom of every main page. This means the user can quickly change between pages at their convenience and not become overwhelmed by the navigation option or become bothered by the time it takes to access the content.

Development Report

Stage One: Developing An Idea

Initially, I decided to design an app in order to push the limits of my creativity. Before this project, I had no experience in user interface design so I thought to challenge myself and potentially grow as a designer through this project. Some ideas I had included a health app, a lifestyle app or a fitness app since it is an area that I am interested in researching further. However, once I started developing these ideas I realised that as a product, these ideas wouldn't stand out in a highly competitive market as they had no unique selling point. As I researched into other apps on the market within this genre, I realised that there were only a few that were regarded as successful: MyFitnessPal and Sweat primarily, along with add-ons such as Fitbit that pair with smart watches. Since fitness is a crowded market, I decided to explore lifestyle apps and found that there were a lot on the market, but none were particularly effective at what they were trying to achieve. I concluded that the reason for this is because they have a wide scope of use rather than a unique and specific goal, which then led me to think of unique ideas within the genre of lifestyle.

I decided on making an app for introverted people because I realised as I was researching that there are no apps like it except for standard examples such as Google Maps or professional employ such as Better Help. There was no development for the market in between these two ideas; introverted people and those with social anxiety. Despite the lack of products, I believed there was a clear need for an application such as this because many people around me live with social discomforts.

Stage Two: Research And Development

Once I decided on this idea, I developed my understanding of the motivation behind it and created a list of stakeholders and requirements to discover what exactly would need to be included in the app as essential features. Once I had made an outline of what needed to be included, I researched further by exploring other apps on the market surrounding my idea such as headspace or BetterHelp and other examples relevant to further feature choices such as Twitter and Twitch. From this research I built a cohesive list of requirements along with research of the possible user demand and found this idea viable to continue with. This stage of development took around a month for me to complete as I wanted to research the topic area in depth before taking it to the design stage. Doing all of the research required at this stage was a good decision in retrospect because I didn't have to check any sources when designing as I had the information already written down in my logbook.

To branch the research with the start of interface design, I created several moodboards filled with web and app design themes to give me inspiration and knowledge about current trends within application design. I analysed these moodboards and evaluated which themes would be the best to pick depending on the user market and environmental factors such as time of use. This helped me to choose unique aesthetics, specifically a dark theme to help those that use the app in a setting of low light.

Stage Three: Initial Designs

The start of the design stage was quite slow, as I had to learn Adobe XD from scratch but the progress of creating wireframes and paper designs was smooth and taught me a lot about how wireframes are a necessity when designing and experimenting with UI. Below are some examples of the first wireframes I created, with user requirements and convenience in mind. These paper wireframes were created first in order to help me decide where each element should sit and what menus would need to be designed as additional factors.
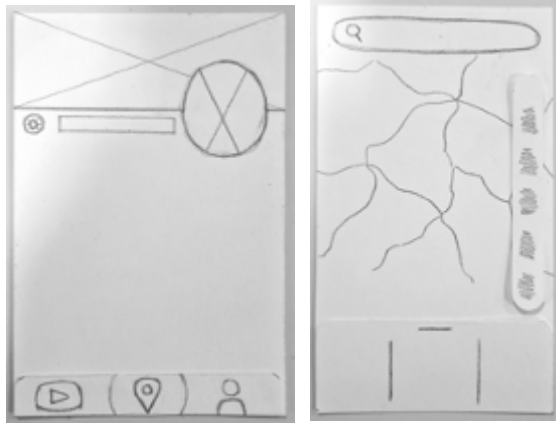

To do this, I made interchangeable elements and layered them over each other, swapping the order and layout based on what would be the most convenient for the user to experience. This includes how far apart each element is spaced and where they are spaced relative to the user's handspan and finger movement across the screen to make the app ergonomically pleasing.
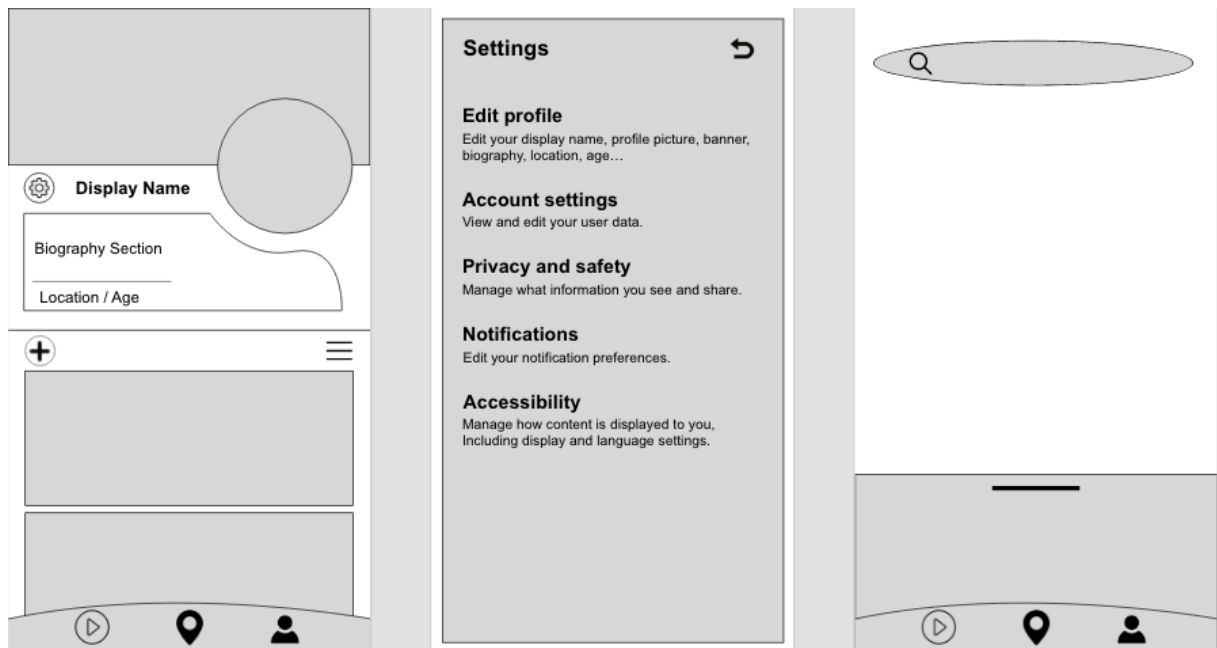
After developing design ideas with the low-fidelity paper prototypes, I moved onto using Adobe XD to create digital wireframes that reflect the same layout I had developed with the paper elements. Creating wireframes digitally meant that I could quickly change and edit the layout easily, and develop how each page would flow into each other. I could also use these wireframes to make quick mockups of a first prototype as all the necessary components are already in place. Making these low fidelity prototypes took me a few weeks, and after I had explored all combinations of how the app could fall together, I started to create a prototype from these wireframes.
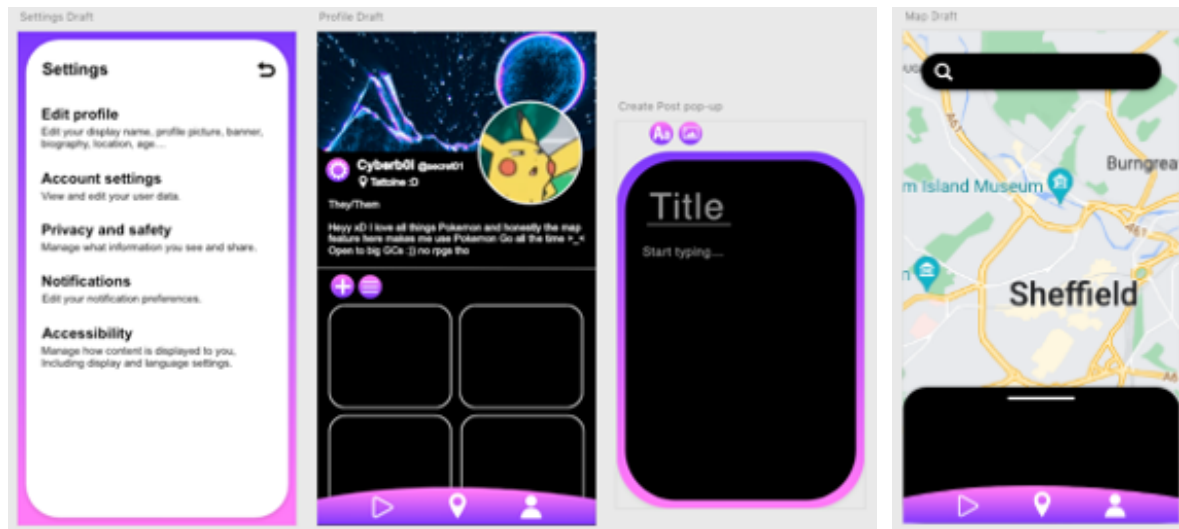
The images above depict the first prototypes that I created, using the wireframes as a guide and my previous research as inspiration. I chose a dark theme so that users would not strain their eyes when using the app, especially in a setting of low light. The main elements had some working buttons, but not all buttons were animated or had a destination. After creating these prototypes I analysed their effectiveness as a product and also their usability within my logbook, drawing conclusions about whether they would be acceptable to submit.

It was easy to conclude that this prototype was nowhere near to a finished product. This is because of several reasons; some of the buttons had no destination, some elements had no interactivity, some pages didn't function as they are required to and the stream page wasn't filled with any data and examples to showcase the app's use.


In my logbook, from the conclusions I drew about how effective the first prototype was, I created a list of improvements to make for the next prototype. This included adjustments to the problems listed earlier, along with other features to change such as the 'post layout' button on the profile page.

Evaluating this prototype enabled me to think deeply about what changes need to be made in order to ensure user satisfaction and enjoyment while using the app. This is a more effective way to develop the product compared to making one output and then making minor adjustments, as I could objectively criticise the product from the point of view as a user and therefore make a more cohesive prototype as a final product.
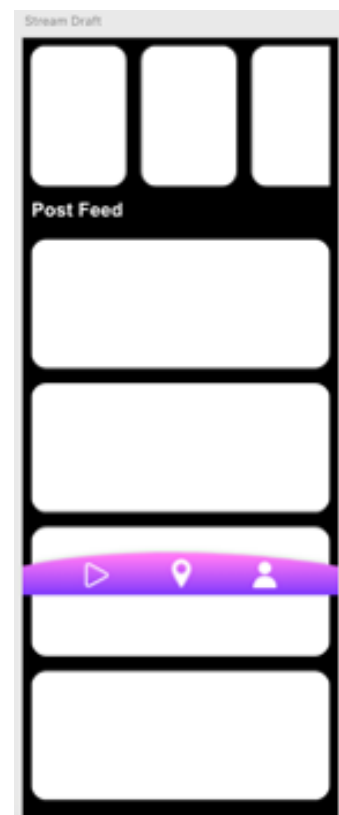
The final prototype that was created fixed all of the areas in which the first prototype was lacking, as most of the UI had been updated without losing the original aesthetic and theme. I developed the final product over a period of a month, changing small areas of the prototype as I thought about how the user would interact with it over time rather than in one instance. Features such as the stream page were heavily influenced by how the user would keep returning to the app and how the user would be engaged to the content. This led to features such as how the stream page would be refreshed every day in order to keep interest high, and how live data could be inputted by the user as well as local media reports. Below are some of the additions and changes that were made to the prototype to form the final version of the product.
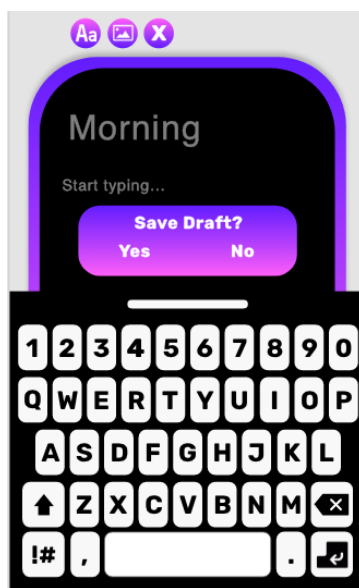
One aspect of the first prototype that was developed further was the 'create post' pop-up. The enhanced features include; a keyboard to type with and a drafting option for the user to save their work with. These features are common within current social media apps such as Twitter and Instagram, which means the user will feel they have an adequate range of tools to use when creating posts. This adds to the enjoyability of the app.
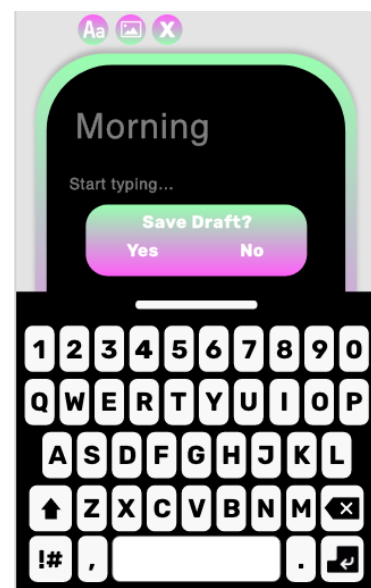

Another feature that was added in the final prototype is the loading screen for when the user first clicks on the app from their homescreen. The appearance is different depending on what theme was last selected upon closing the app. While the loading screen only appears momentarily, it adds to the brand of the app and keeps a continuous design pattern that adds to the app's cohesivity.

The map feature was developed the most along with the stream page, as the stand-in screenshot was replaced with a uniquely curated map interface. The search bar now has location data and the slide up menu has live data continuously, even in different states. Furthermore, small toggles were added to the map that vary in size depending on how crowded the area is. These toggles can be clicked to display live crowd data on the slide up menu for the user to quickly read and check on the go.
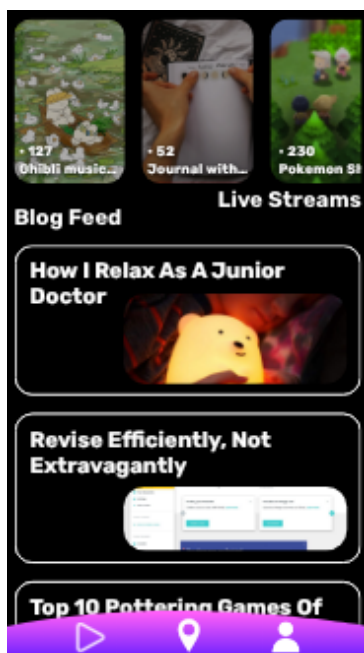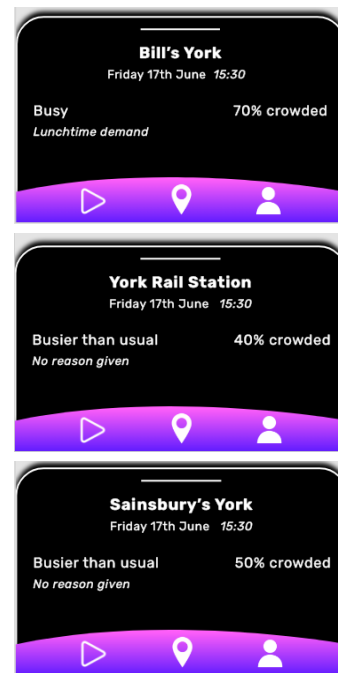
Lastly, the stream page was developed from a blank canvas in the first prototype to a fully functional scroll page. The blogs are scrolled vertically in a long list compiled from the users followers and featured posts, while the live streams are scrolled horizontally and only display live statistics and content.

The user is able to easily switch between the two content interfaces as the live-streams are fixed to the top of the page also, which ensures that they can quickly navigate each feature.

Reflection

Personally, I believe that my prototype showcases the concept and idea in a very effective way. It has all the main components that are in the requirements and executes them in a curated way that was developed from an abundance of research and experimentation. Additionally, the design wasn't only created from a viewpoint of how I would want an app to look, but also from how potential users would want to app to look and function. Throughout the process I had to put myself in the shoes of someone who would need and be using this app, which helped me to think of and adjust features which wouldn't have come to light if I thought through only my own perspective. For the first user interface I have ever designed, I think I did a good job of matching how industry standard designers are thinking and what themes are currently trending within the app market.

Objectively, I believe that my project went quite smoothly from start to finish in terms of timing and being able to work with ideas and software that I have not used before. At the start of the project I time-planned using a calendar with goals I wanted to achieve in terms of product development in stints. This meant that I could work at a specific area of development at one time before moving on to another, rather than completing tasks side by side; personally, this works the best for me as I can put all of my energy into one area and explore a full range of ideas.

The only drawback that I had throughout the process was stopping project development during the easter holidays, creating a large gap in time between working on the project. This meant I had to revisit past work and read through my logbook in order to remember key concepts and design ideas that I had. Otherwise, there was no fault in the process of development that would have caused me to not bring the best out of the prototype I have submitted.

The elements of this project that I am most proud of would have to be the design and aesthetic of the final prototype, along with how I managed to consistently use my logbook as a source of research and development. I am content with the product I have created but still believe that with more skill development on a personal level, I would be able to elevate this design further to be more sleek and detail-orientated. I believe that if the project was given a longer time-period for submission, I would be able to adjust the design of the prototype slightly so that there would be more menu options and a sleeker design of the stream page.

What I learnt from this project is that challenging myself to create and design products that I haven't before is quite valuable in the sense that I now have more knowledge of technology design than I did before. This experience will help me in deciding how I want to design in the future also, and what areas of design I want to go into as professional employment. While I enjoyed designing a user interface, it was challenging at times due to having to learn Adobe XD as a new software, however, this experience has pushed me to research more into how applications are developed, and how one can create and code their own app.

This project has opened new interests for me and I enjoyed learning about UI design as well as applying my own knowledge about product development. I believe that my prototype accurately and effectively showcases my concept and with time, could be developed further into an app for the digital market.