

Assignment: UX Extension (add-on) on Sketches and Patterns

Introduction

User experience is an instrumental aspect when it comes to developing software on mobile devices. In the designing phase, numerous problems are met, which require the developers to come up with certain patterns that can tackle those problems. In this report, we will analyze 3 existing patterns, and annotate them through screenshots, as well as their pros and cons in certain contexts.

Search Bar Navigation

The search bar exists in most of the available apps from the App Store and Play Store, ranging from social media apps to banking and note apps. The search bar is usually located on the top of the screen, with some occasions of it being located at the bottom of the screen.

The pros of the search bar are that it helps users not only find keywords and related content but also find features that new users may find difficult to navigate in the app. This can be a particular privacy setting or certain navigation filters.

The cons of the search bar are that it can sometimes take up the screen properties, making the interface cluttered and not suit the purpose of the app. For example, games and apps that are designed to be used horizontally will normally not have a search bar due to screen clutter and other reasons related to styling.

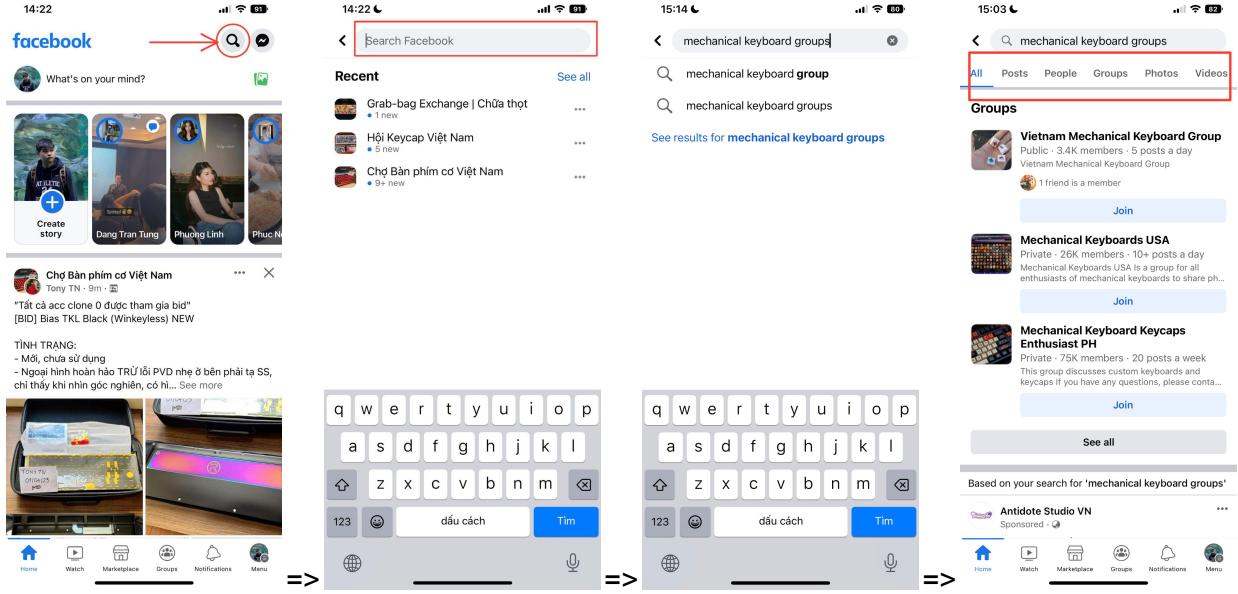


Figure 1: Search bar on Facebook

The search bar on Facebook is located at the top of the screen and can be used to search for personal accounts, groups, pages, and events. For example, you can type in “Mechanical Keyboard groups”, and press Enter on the soft keyboard and Facebook will give you results sorted by their relation to the keyword. You can also add filters to your search result, indicating that you only want to search for groups or pages for example.

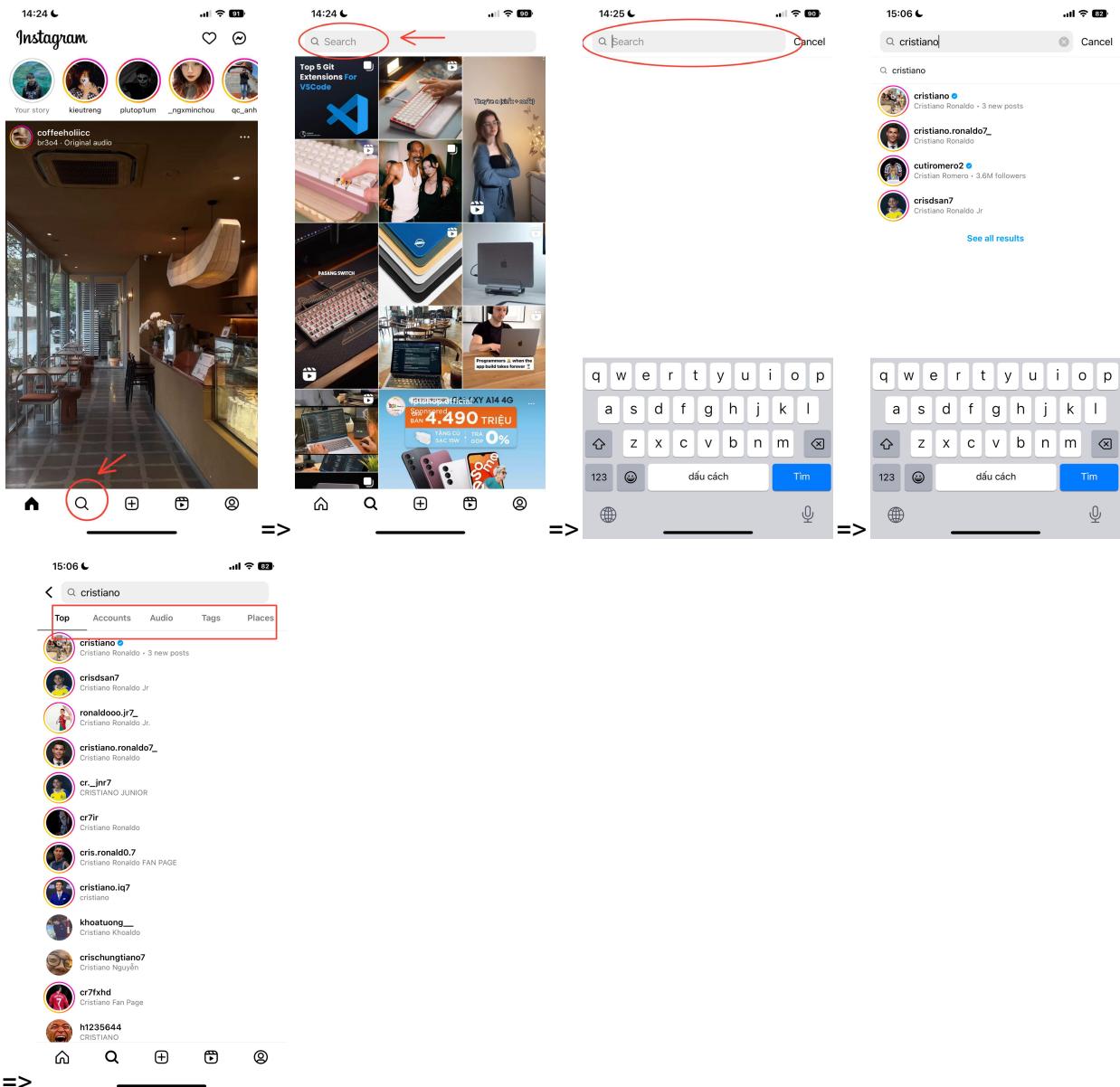


Figure 2: Search bar on Instagram

The search bar in Instagram is a rare occasion when it is located at the bottom of the screen, as an element in the navigation menu (The navigation menu will be mentioned in the next part of this report). The downside of the navigation bar is that it takes an extra click to get to the search part which includes an input text field and the soft keyboard. Once you type in your keyword, the app will give you the top result search, and you can also use the filter to search for accounts or tags only.

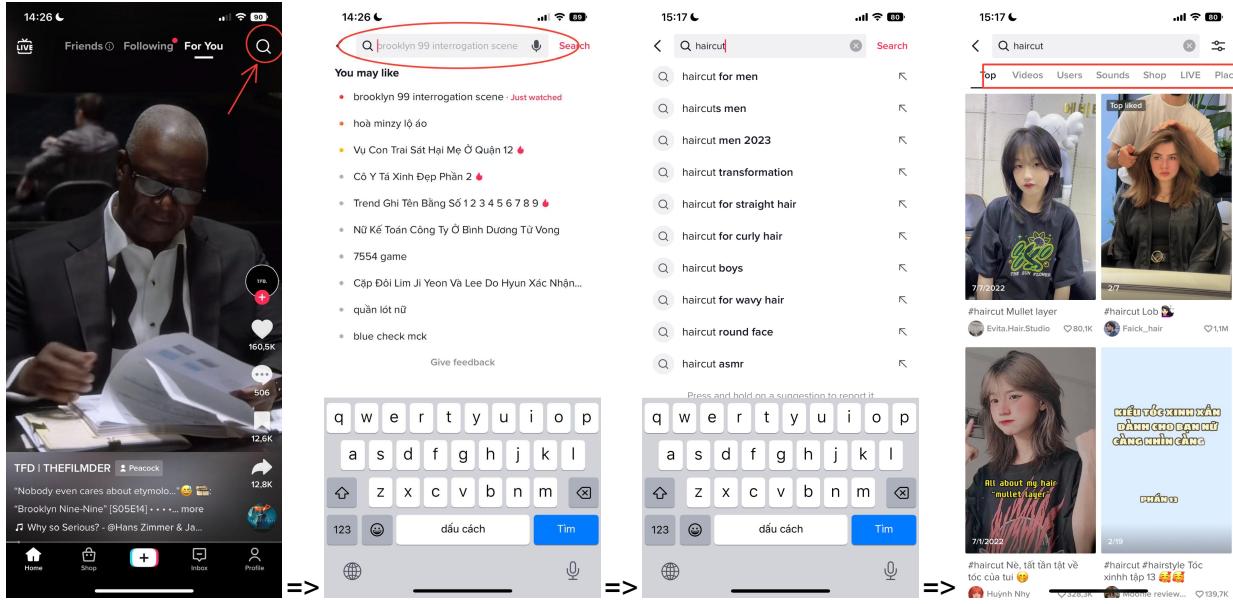


Figure 3: Search bar in TikTok

The search bar in TikTok is similar to Facebook and Instagram, the only difference is the keyword filters since TikTok content is mostly short videos instead of posts and pictures like the 2 previous apps.

Menu Bar Navigation

The menu bar is another necessary component in any well-designed mobile app. Normally, developers would want their app to be divided into small sections instead of fitting everything together in a single activity. Therefore, an app should have many screens to serve different purposes. To navigate between those screens, we will need a menu bar. The menu bar is usually located at the bottom of the screen, with icons and/or words to describe the screen corresponding to it upon the user's click.

The menu bar serves the purpose of app navigation, as it tells the user what activity we are currently in and how we can locate other activities.

The cons for the menu bar are that it can make the screen feel cluttered, reduce the space for other components and content display, as well as adjustments that need to be made so that it can be integrated into larger screens.

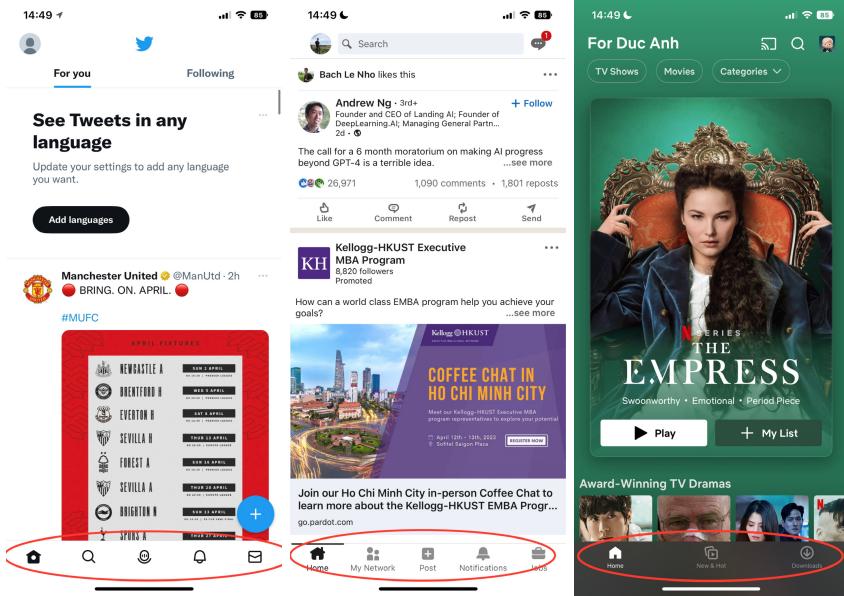


Figure 4: Menu bar on Twitter, LinkedIn, and Netflix

The menu bars screenshots above shared some similarities. The starting page is typically the home page, while the menu bars usually contain pages that are related to notifications, user accounts, or a post button.

Drag down to refresh

The final pattern that will be mentioned in this report is dragging down to refresh. Apps that involve social activities and dynamically generated content are usually involved with this pattern. Some of the apps that we could mention are Gmail, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc. The pattern works by the user dragging down the screen for a short second and releasing it. This compared to waiting for the content to automatically refresh is much more time-efficient.

This pattern can be easily learnt as it mimics the action of pulling down a curtain to reveal new posts and content. The feedback is usually a loading animation or a progress bar.

The downside to this pattern can be that it can be hard to discover for new users, or those who are more familiar with a desktop interface will not see this pattern as it is not apparent like the 2 aforementioned search bar and menu bar.

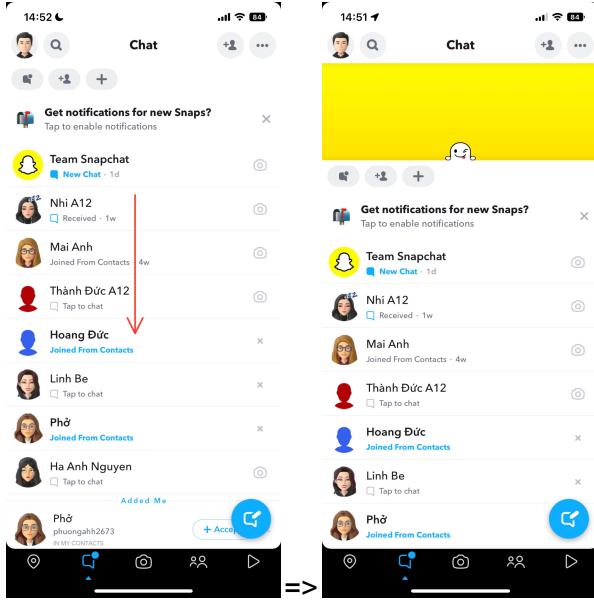


Figure 5: Drag down to refresh on Snapchat

In the inbox screen of Snapchat, we can drag it down to refresh the chats and see a fun animation. This indicates that the conversations have been refreshed just then.

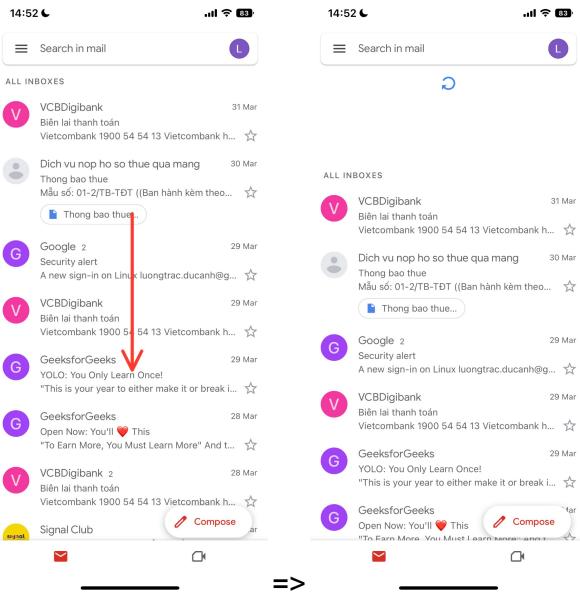


Figure 6: Drag down to refresh in Gmail

In Gmail, after checking all the inboxes, we call to pull down to refresh and check if any new mail entries have appeared while we were using the app.

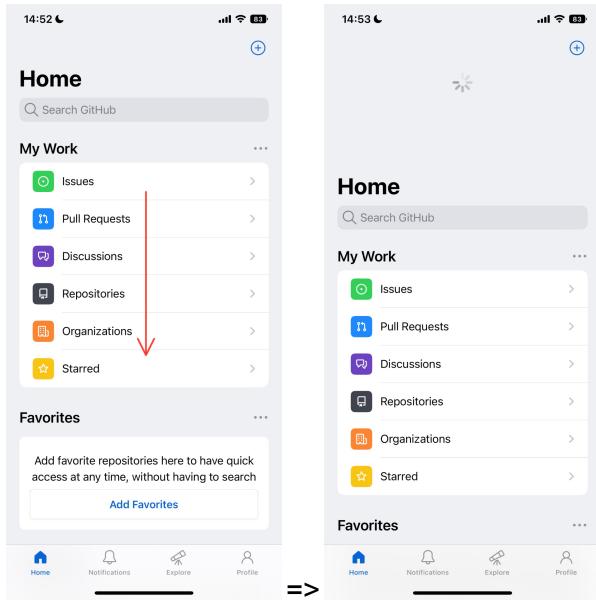


Figure 7: Drag down to refresh on GitHub mobile

In GitHub mobile, we can drag down to check if any issues, pull requests, or commits have been newly made.

Conclusion

In conclusion, UX patterns are essential elements when it comes to mobile software designs, as they give us constraints and rules to follow, helping the developers to save time and enhance the user's experience while using the app. However, these patterns have certain drawbacks that need to be considered and tailored according to the app's requirements.

References

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