



TALENT SCOUT

Assignment 2

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1. The description of the Talent Scout's application:

Talent Scout is a web application that allows music lovers to stream music, radio, and podcasts etc. and to be constantly updated about their favorite artists and music. We tried to create an exciting and engaging experiences for music fans that help them find and listen to different music genres and radio stations as easily and as effectively as possible. Talent Scout is not just a “music streaming website”; it is more like a way of connecting music lovers together along with their preference of music and artists. Users can easily browse through popular streaming music, radio, podcasts and other web-based music sources in “My Streams” page. “My Streams” provides recommendations based on users’ taste and what is trending around right now. Also, users can access and connect with their own existing playlists on other music sources like Google Music, iTunes and Spotify. “My Shouts” page allows the application users to share their music experience on their social media network (Facebook/ Twitter/ YouTube) as a shout out. Users can also tag their friends on talent Scout to follow their shouts. In addition, users can select their favourite artists and follow them on their social media profiles in order to be alerted about news, concerts, and any upcoming events or album releases from “My Artists” page. In our design we tried to follow a simple and consistent layout that uses less-confusing words and signs, which in return will reduce any un-required user effort especially for novice music lovers. We used one of the US Marine Scouts color palettes to add colors to our prototypes. In addition, we are making the user’s experience more tailored to them by considering their personal preferences in choosing favourite genres and artists.

2. Tools used:

In our design, we started with simple **hand sketches** on the whiteboard to visualize the requirements. After that, we mainly used **MockPlus** to create low fidelity wireframes for Talent Scouts' music streaming application. We then used **SquareSpace.com** to build the working responsive prototype of the application UI. However, due to the limitations of the free trial, we ended up using **HTML, CSS, JavaScript and Bootstrap template [1]** to create our prototype. Screenshots will be provided. In addition, we used **SurveyMonkey [2]** to create a survey for our users to give us anonymous feedback about our design.

3. The UX strategy of the application:

In our design we are following a simple and consistent layout strategy that uses less-confusing words and signs, which will reduce any un-required user effort especially for novice music lovers. By doing so, we are supporting the principles of discoverability and understanding and considering that some users are new to technology and others are new to music. We are targeting a responsive design that conveys the same good experience in different devices and presents the content clearly. Also, the design should provide adequate and immediate feedback to give the users the option to be in control in case of an error. In addition, we are making the user's experience more tailored to them by considering their personal preferences in choosing favourite genres and artists.

4. Competitive research:

We conducted a research on competitor music streaming web applications, and we chose two candidates for our critique. Screenshots are also provided to support our findings and to provide a visual illustration of each point in both critiques.

1. **iHeart radio website:** The iHeart radio is a web-based application for music streaming, radio stations, and podcasts. After interacting with this web

application for a while, we are in a position, as users, to mention some of our main frustrating aspects:

- a. When users first land on the homepage of the iHeart radio, the first impression about the website is a bit confusing. According to the iHeart Radio, the objective of their website is supposed to be “All your favorite music, radio and podcasts [3].” However, visual appeal and website navigation conveyed a slightly different first impression; that the website is mainly for online radio and podcasts. The navigation bar at the top of the homepage doesn’t show any music streaming tab; it is mainly for live radio, podcasts, and other radio-related tabs. For example, when users choose the “Genre” tab, they would assume this tab is for music streaming genres. However, it is again radio-related and sorting radio stations based on genre.
- b. When users navigate the iHeart radio website, they will find that this website is actually two websites at the same time. For example, if users are browsing the homepage and then they click on any tab starting from “News” tab till “Contests” tab, they will be directed to the second website opening in a new page. In addition, when users are on the second website’s homepage, if they click on one of the tabs between “For you” and “Artist radio” tabs, they will be redirected to the first website’s homepage, which again opens in a new page and so on. This behavior of moving back and forth between the two parts of the website and opening new tabs is confusing. Moreover, it is hard to for users to track or go back to previous pages because their browsing history will be either not available or broken due to the new tab functionality. **From now on and for the sake of this assignment, the name “homepage” will refer to the first homepage when a user first opens the iHeart radio website while name “second homepage” will refer to the second homepage when clicking tabs between “News” and “Contests” tabs.**
- c. Some UI components are placed in odd positions. For example, Share, advertise with us, and refresh in “Genre” page are built in awkward

places and not aligned. Another example is the mini navigation bar in the homepage that has three tabs only (Live radio, Podcasts, and News) is also placed in an odd and not aligned position under the promotional video and covering some of the bottom part of that video.

- d. Other issues include some hidden tabs that are not shown at all the time like when users click on News tab, a new “My stations”, “Videos”, “Features” tabs are shown in the second homepage. Some hidden functionality like “Save Station” option and “Delete” menu.

2. **AccuRadio website:** The AccuRadio is a web-based application built by music lovers and musicians for music streaming and radio stations [4]. After interacting with this web application for a while, we are in a position, as users, to mention some of our main frustrating aspects:

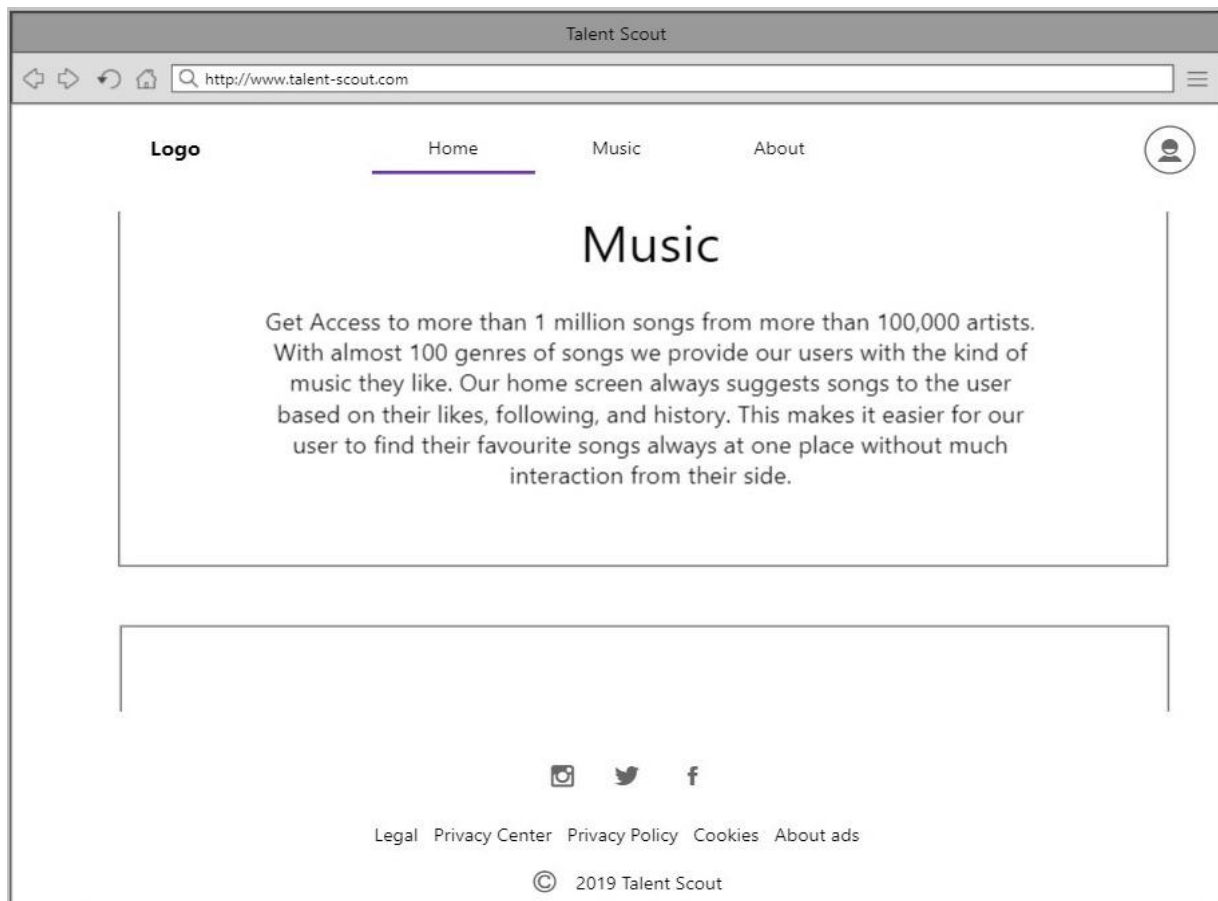
- a. The homepage design of this application is very cluttered and lacks proper navigation aids. for example, the homepage is only one page without any tabs for different sections like genres, artists, etc., In addition, this design makes the page layout look overwhelming and time consuming because users have to scroll all the way down to select genres at the bottom of the page, or to download the AccuRadio app using the link provided at the very bottom of the page. Moreover, there is a huge whitespace left between the top and the bottom of the homepage that doesn't serve any purpose.
- b. Searching for music or artists is not less awkward! when users try to search for an artist/song and once they place the mouse pointer inside the search bar, a big popup box is shown that shows the user how to search. This box is overfloating outside the search bar blocking some of that bar and making the whole search experience poor.
- c. Logging in into the application leads to a dashboard that again looks annoying with inconsistent design and misaligned components.
- d. In addition to the logout option in the dashboard, there is another logout button that users can click even if they are not logged in into an account. This button directs the user to the top of the page with a

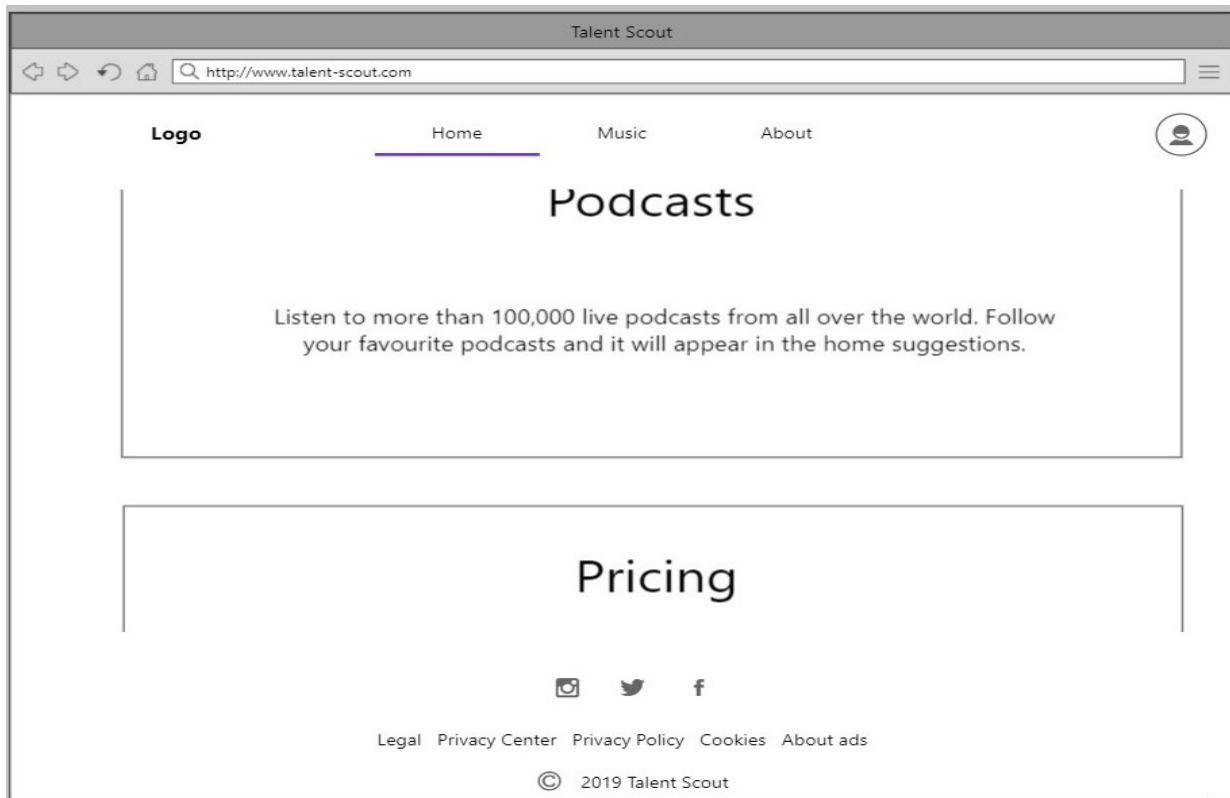
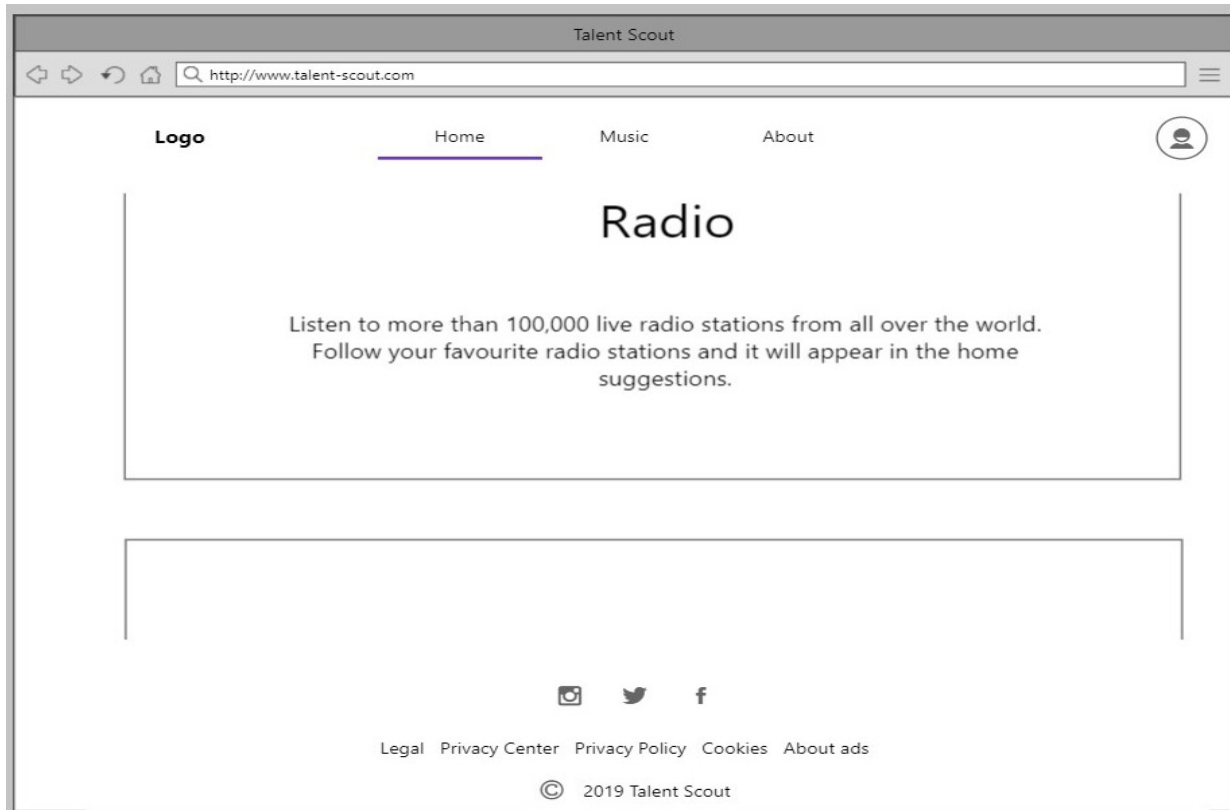
paragraph that promotes the AccuRadio's app and other ways to enjoy the application while away.

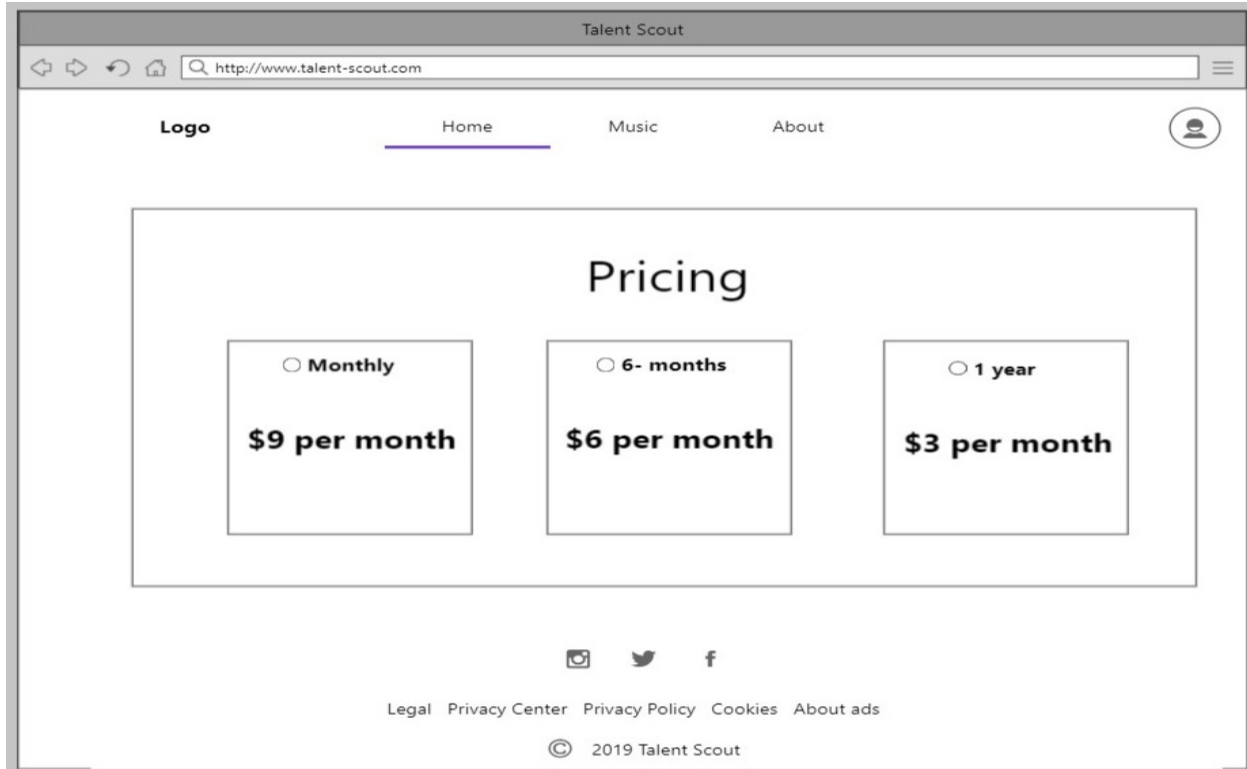
- e. Other notes worth mentioning are the footer that is aligned to the left of the page which adds more inconsistency. The reason behind this improper alignment might be to use the right side for pop-up advertisements which in turn make interacting with this application more challenging and stressful.

5. Wireframes:

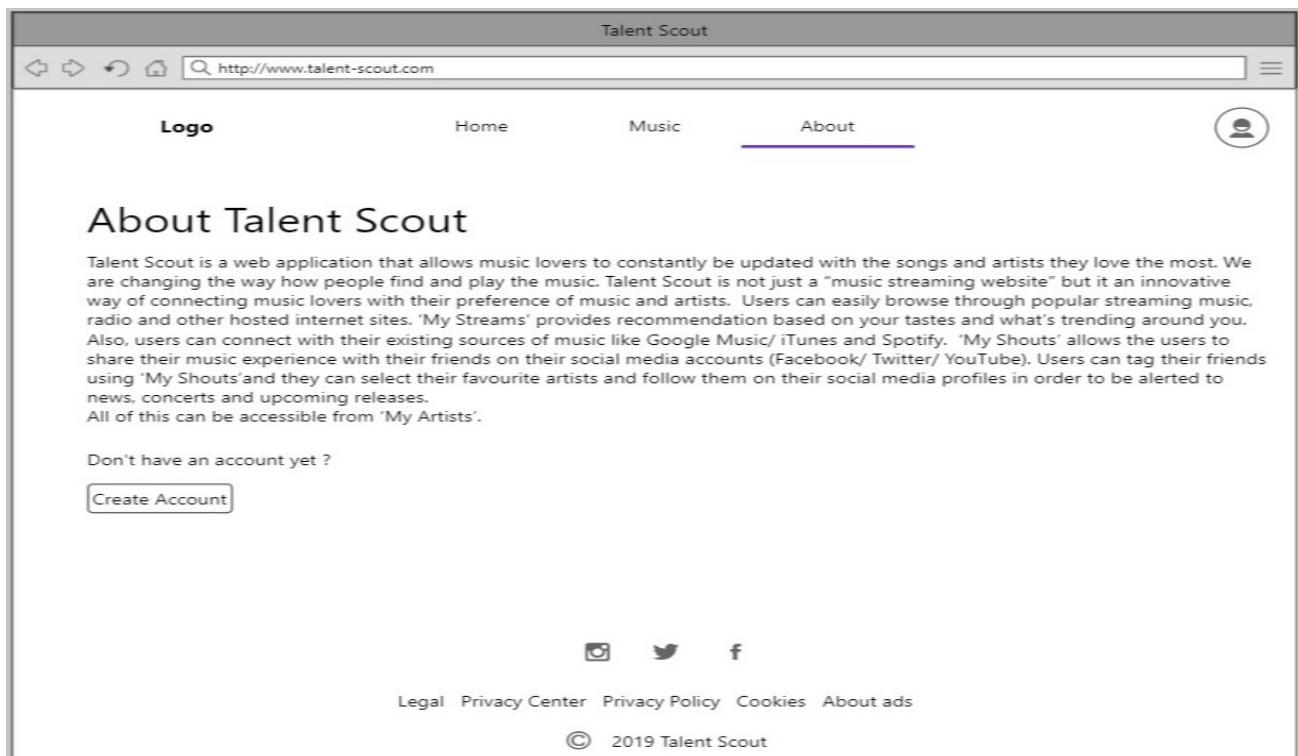
- Homepage before logging in (4 screenshots)



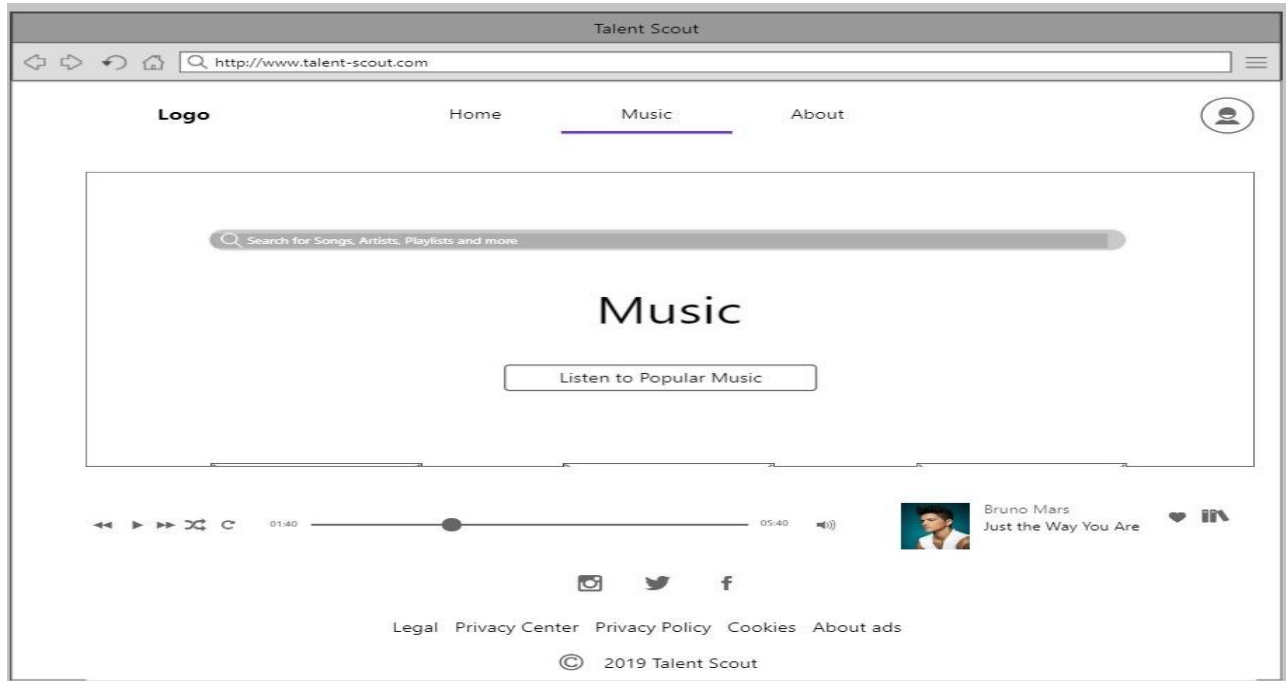




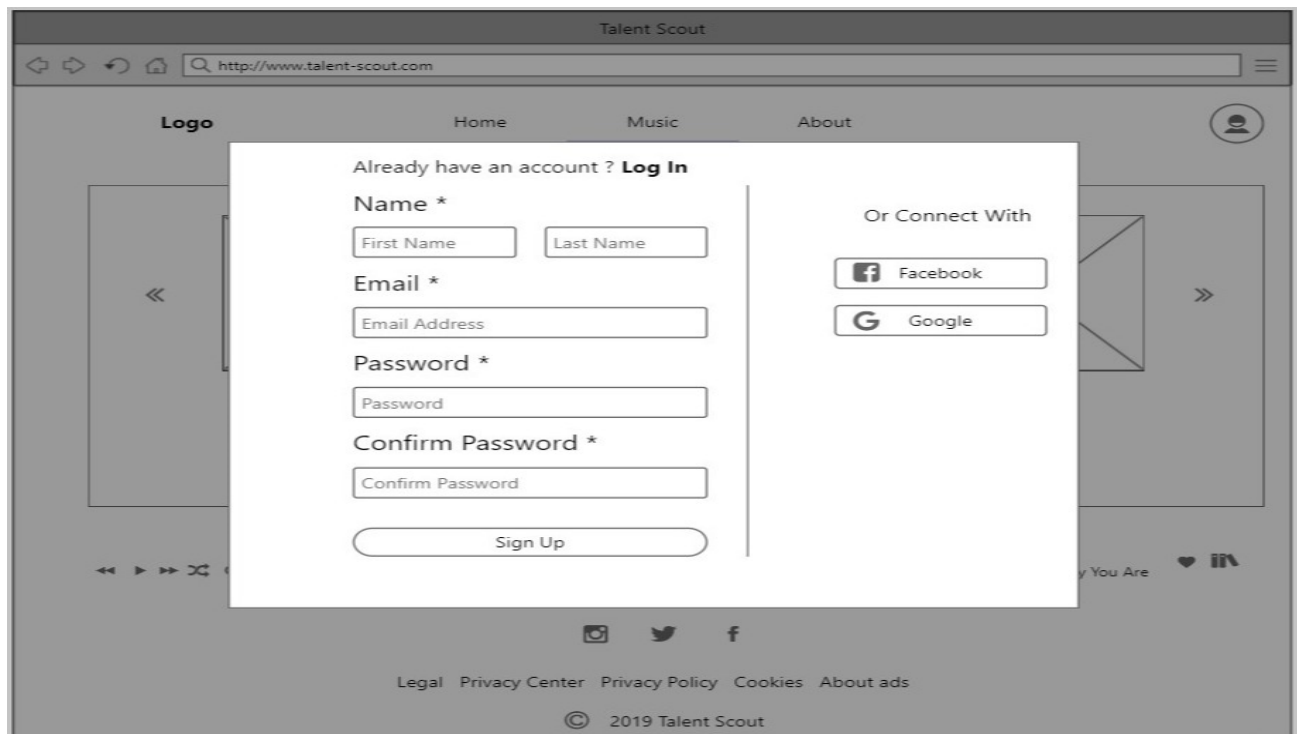
- About page:

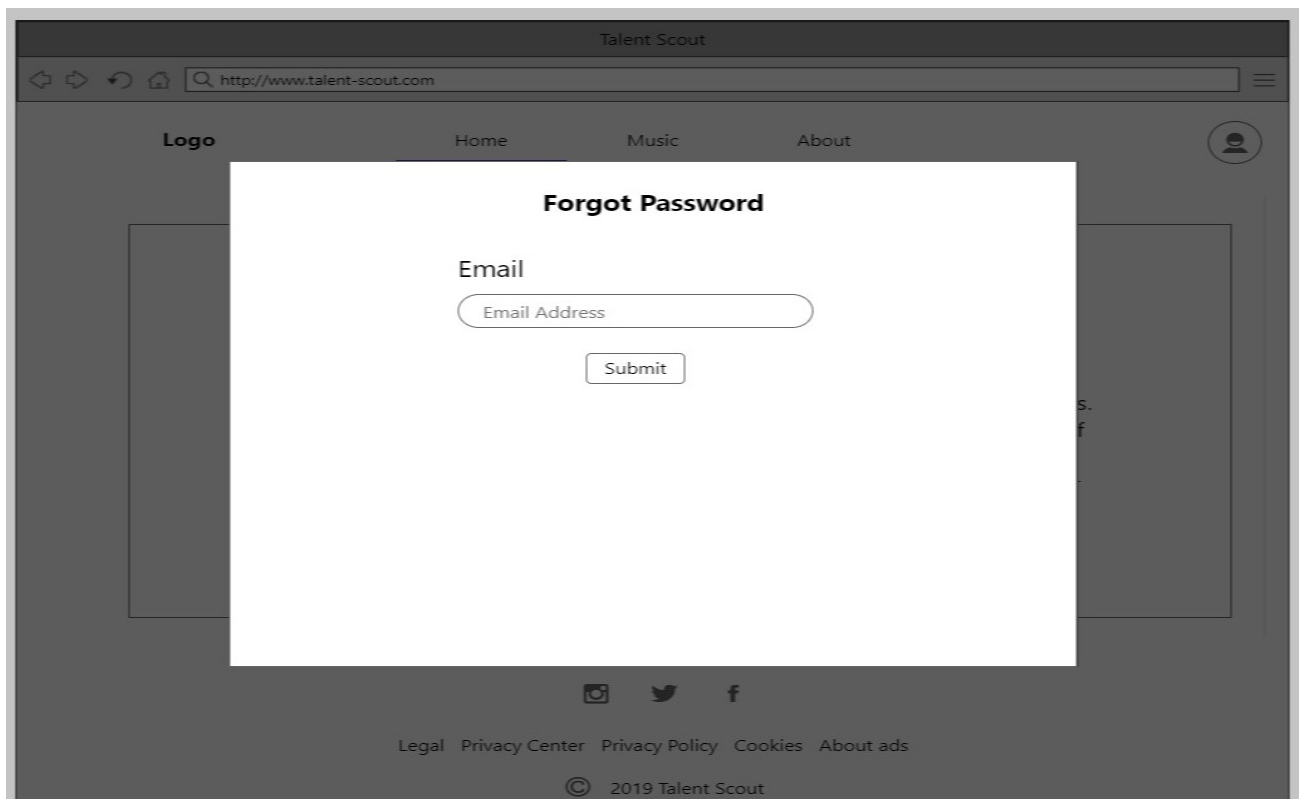
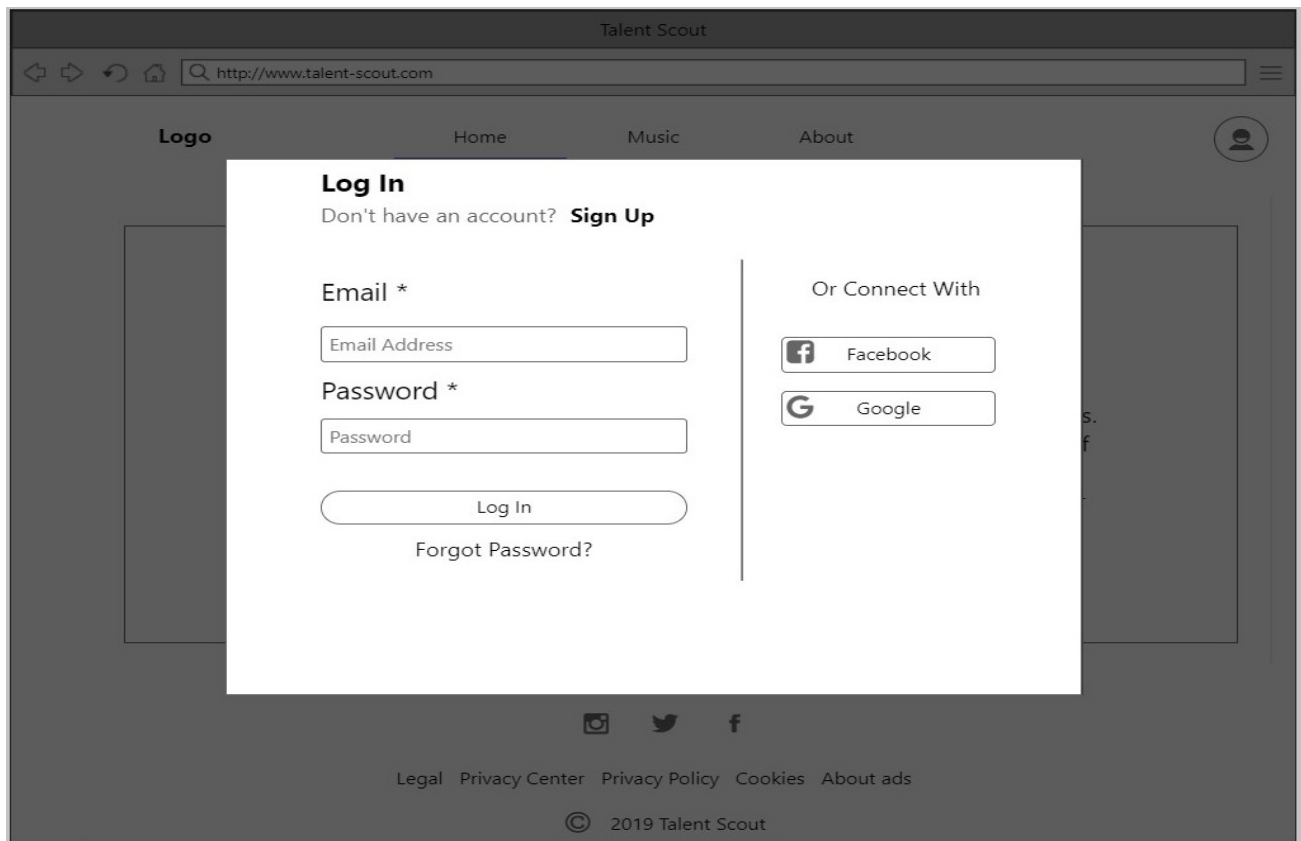


- Music streaming before logging in:

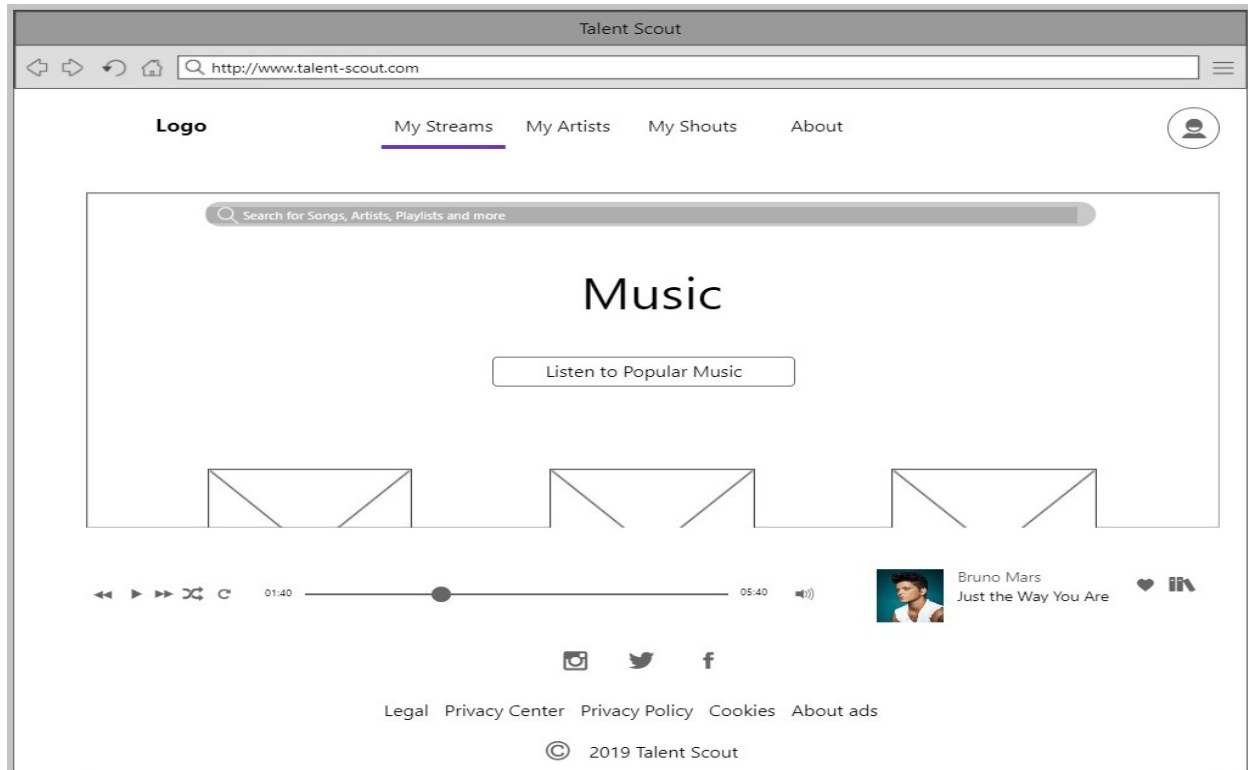


- Sign up/Sign In window (clicking on little person's icon, 3 screenshots):

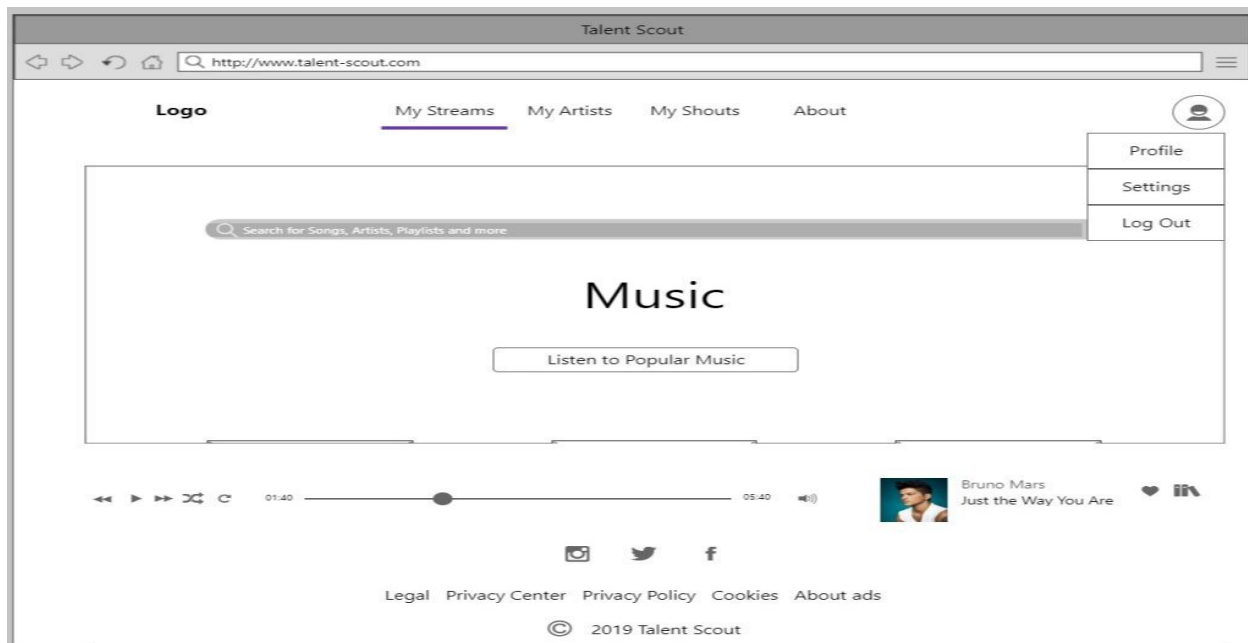




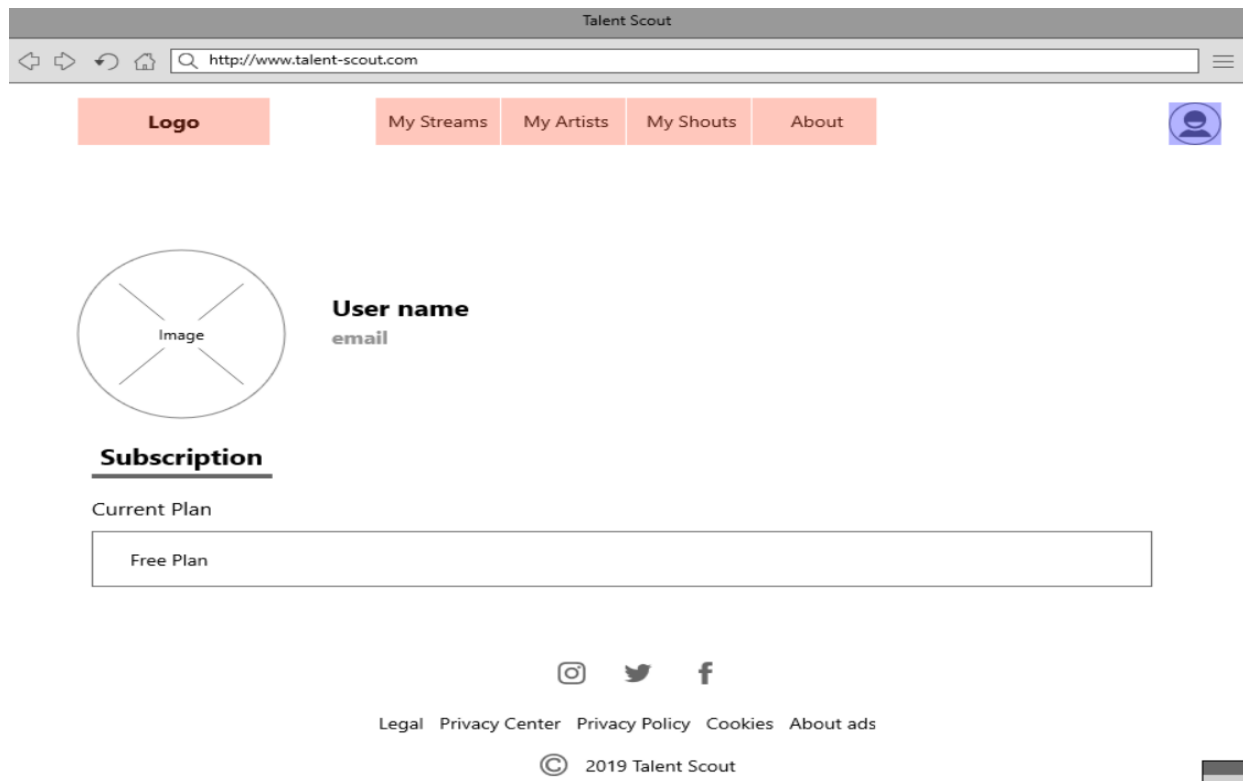
- Homepage “My Streams” after logging in:



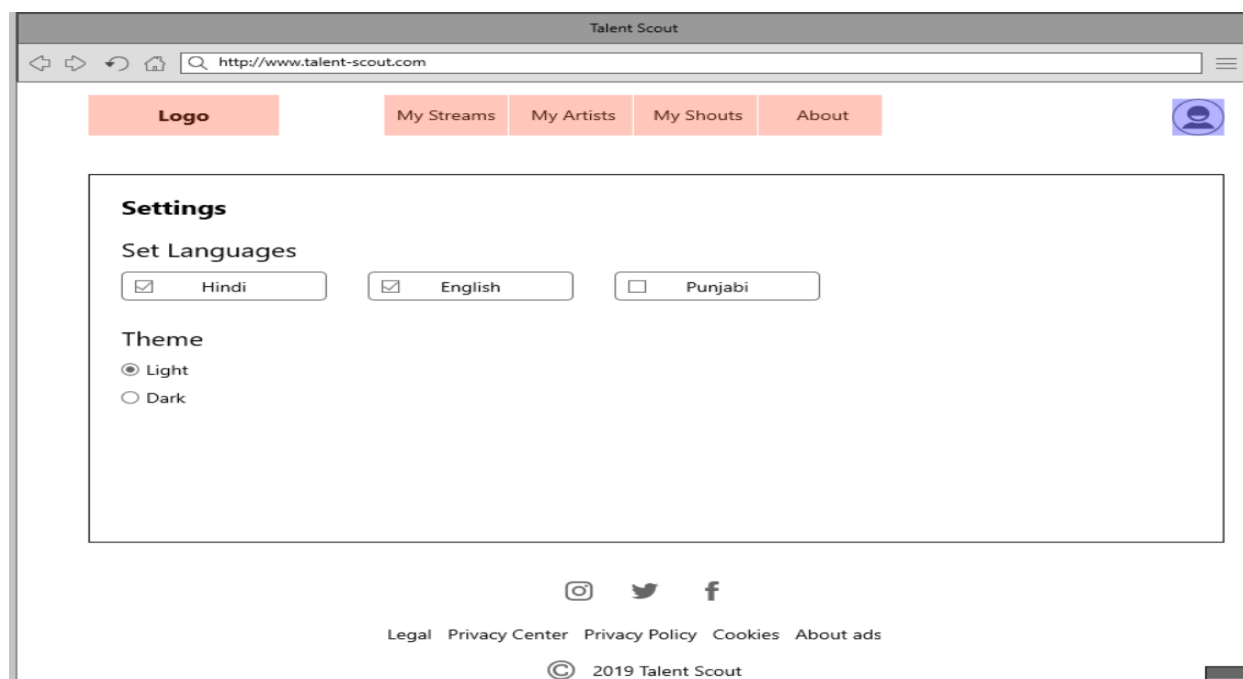
- User account icon:



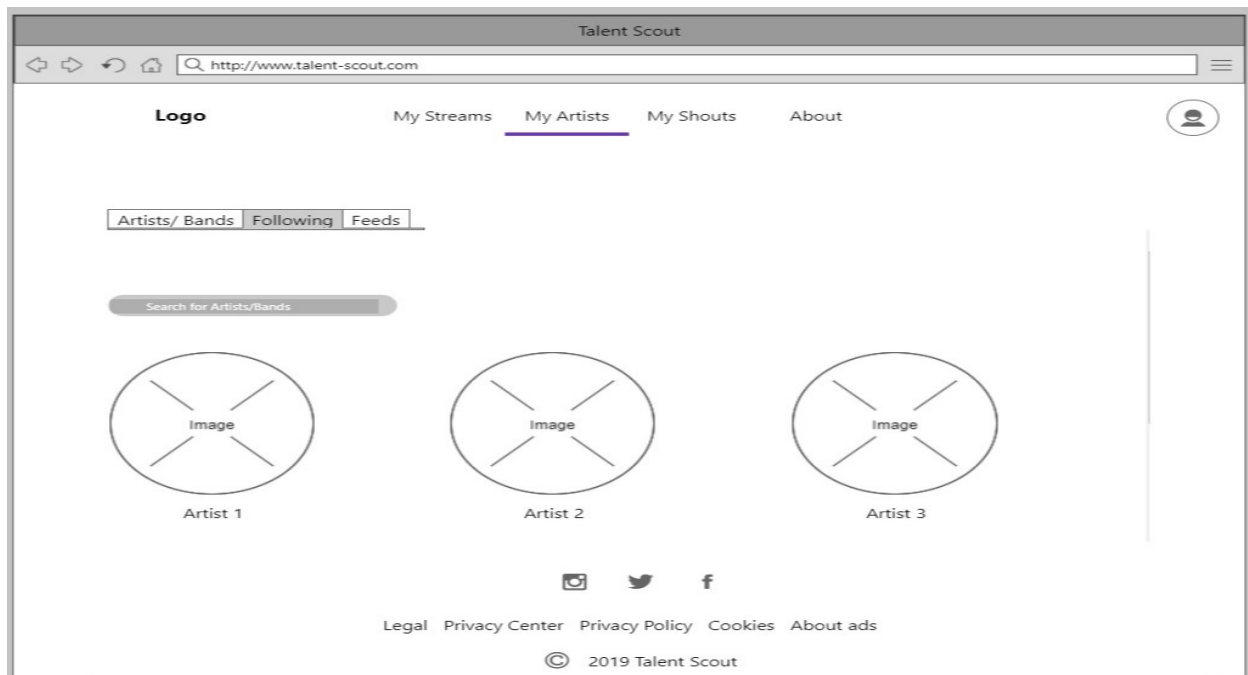
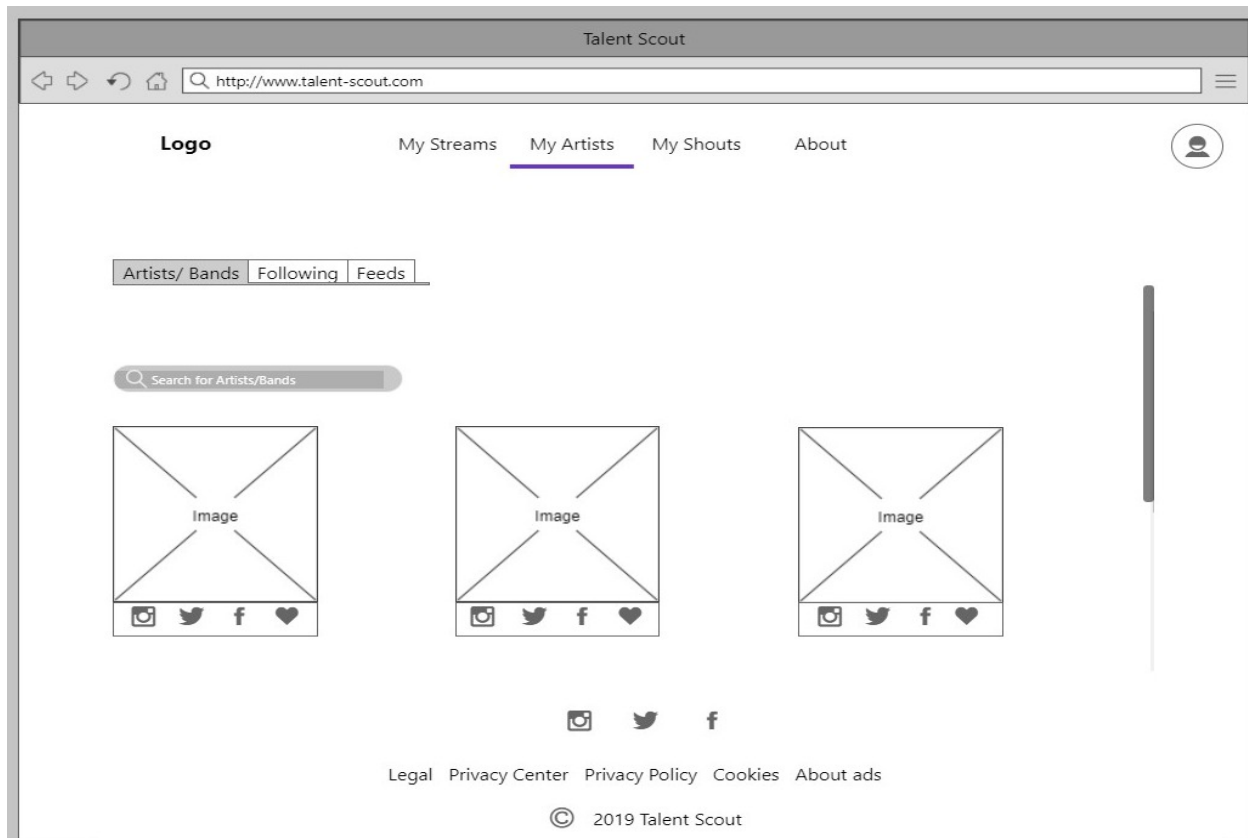
- Profile:

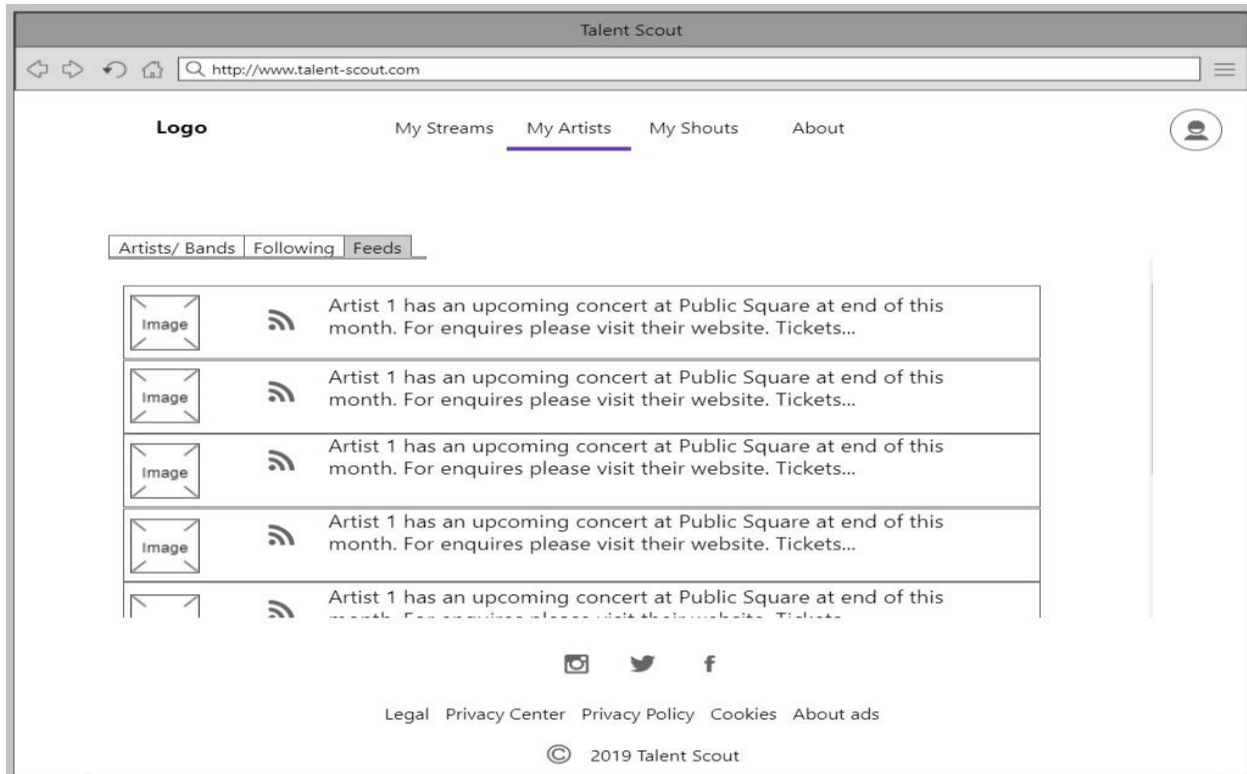


- Profile settings:

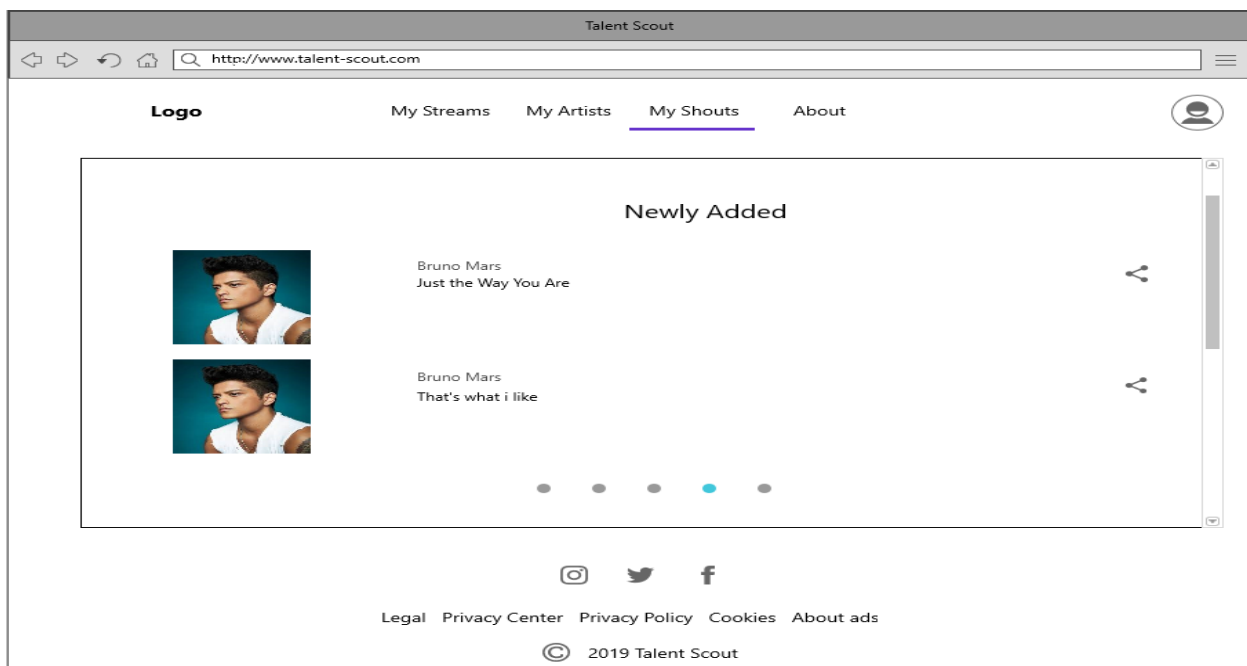


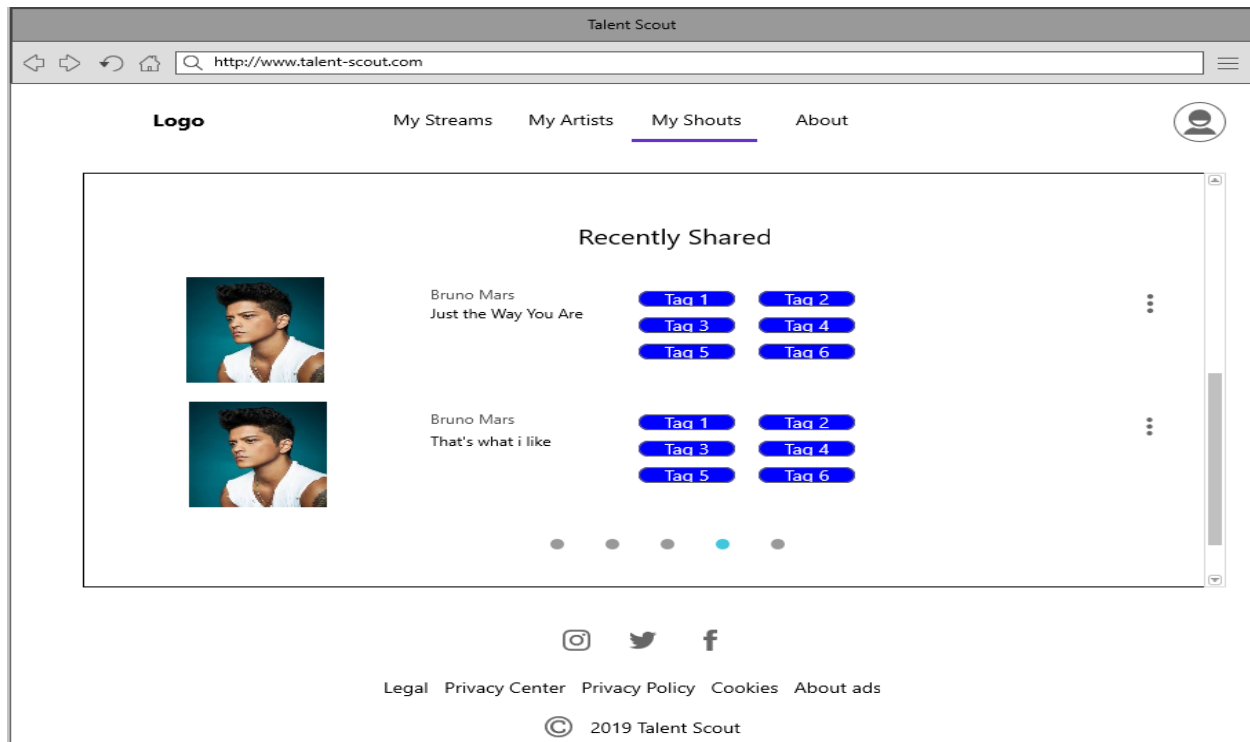
- My artists' page (3 Screenshots):





- My shouts page (2 screenshots):

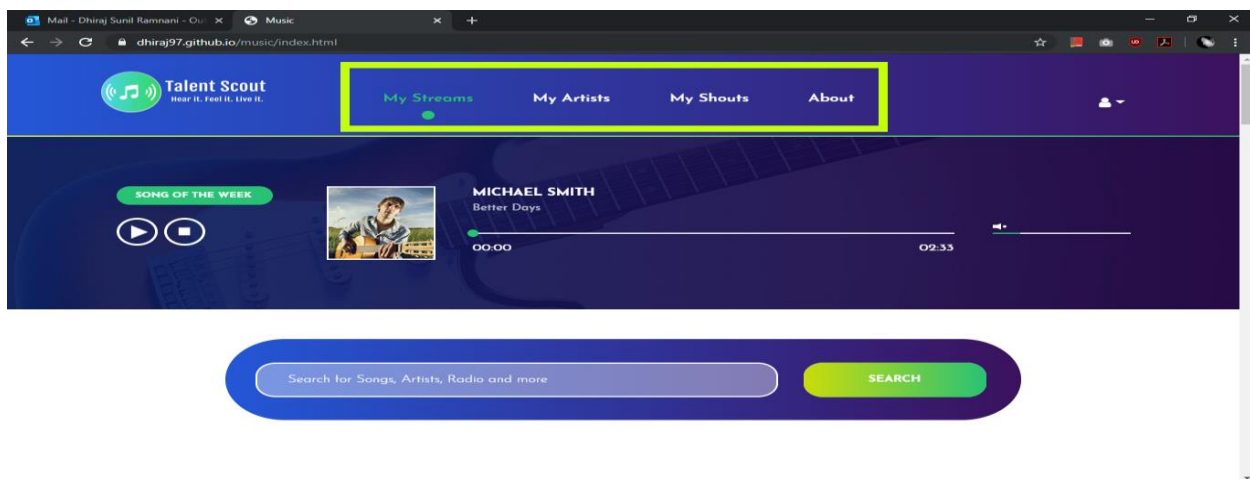




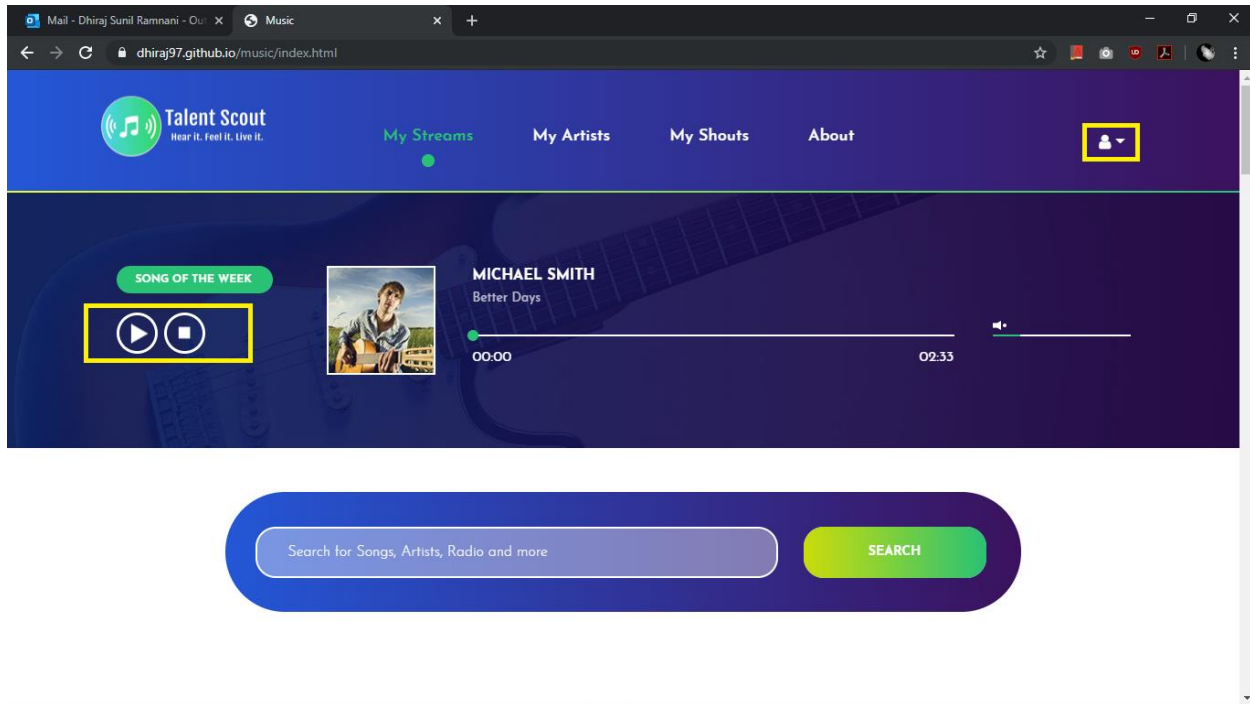
6. List of metaphors, design patterns, and usability principles implemented in our application:

- **Metaphors:**

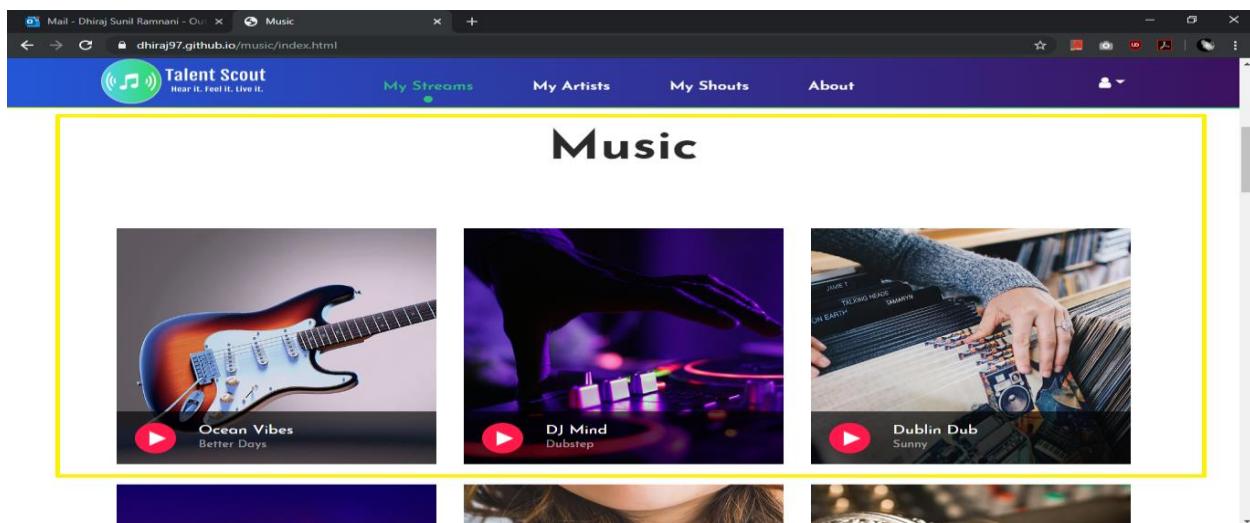
1. **Navigation Tabs:** tabs dividers are implemented at the top of the page to indicate that each tab is a different page or an arbitrary group.



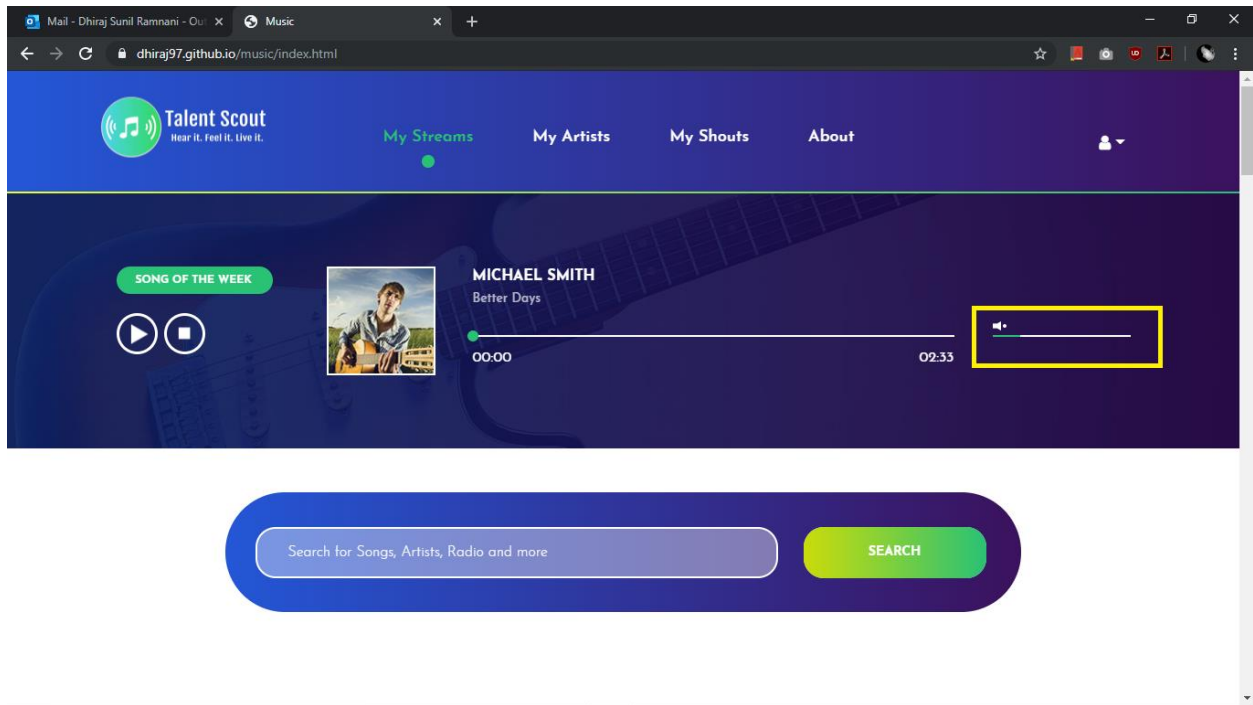
2. **Icons:** icons like the little person and heart icons are mapping real-world objects to connect the users' actual experience with their experience interacting with the app.



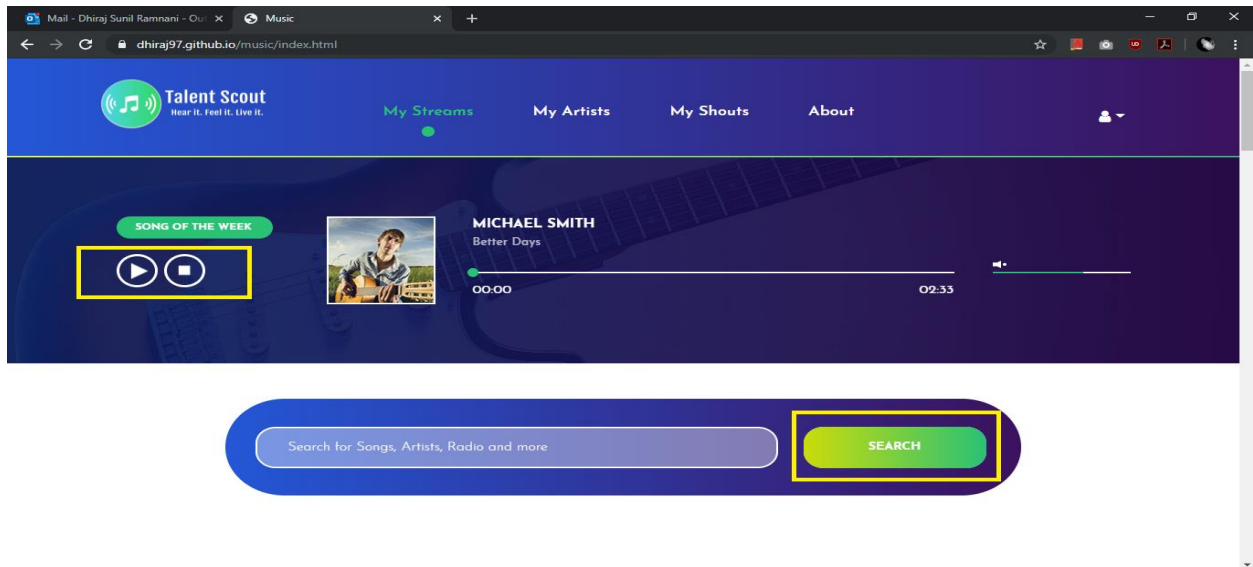
3. **Music Library as an Art Gallery:** music library content is displayed as an art gallery with rows of content and each block of content has a caption on the bottom.



4. **Volume Slider Control:** horizontal sliders indicate the increase in volume to the right and decrease to the left.

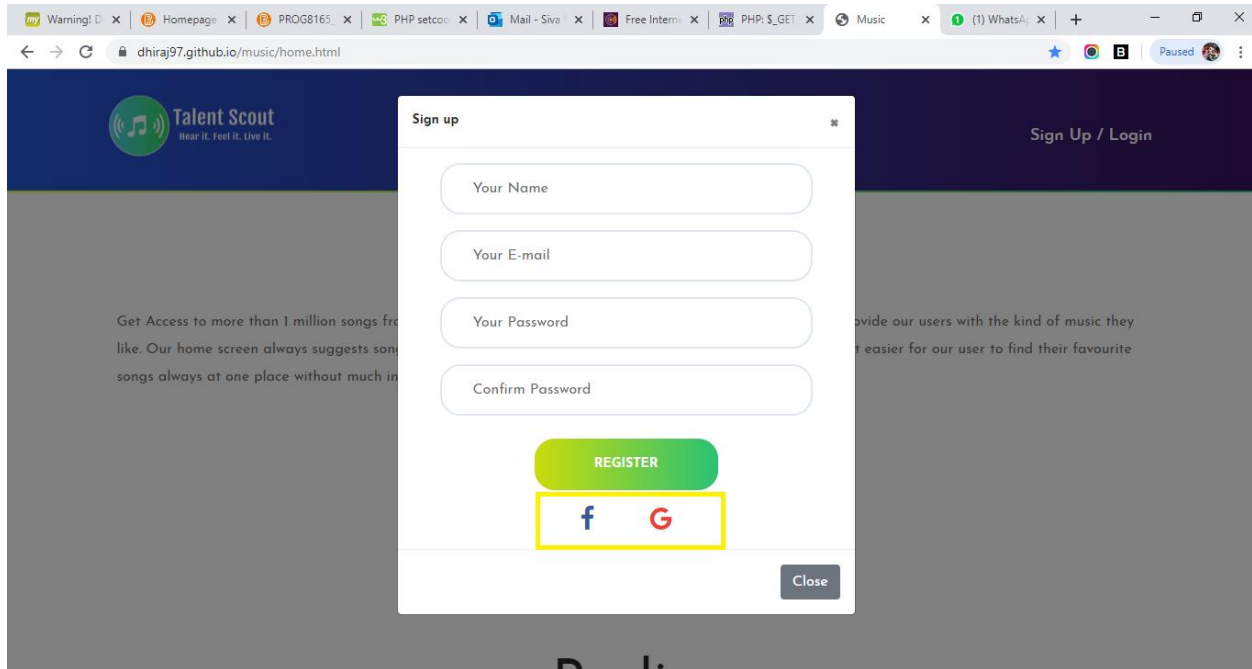


5. **Buttons:** buttons like the search, play, stop buttons indicate a point of interaction as they are in real life.

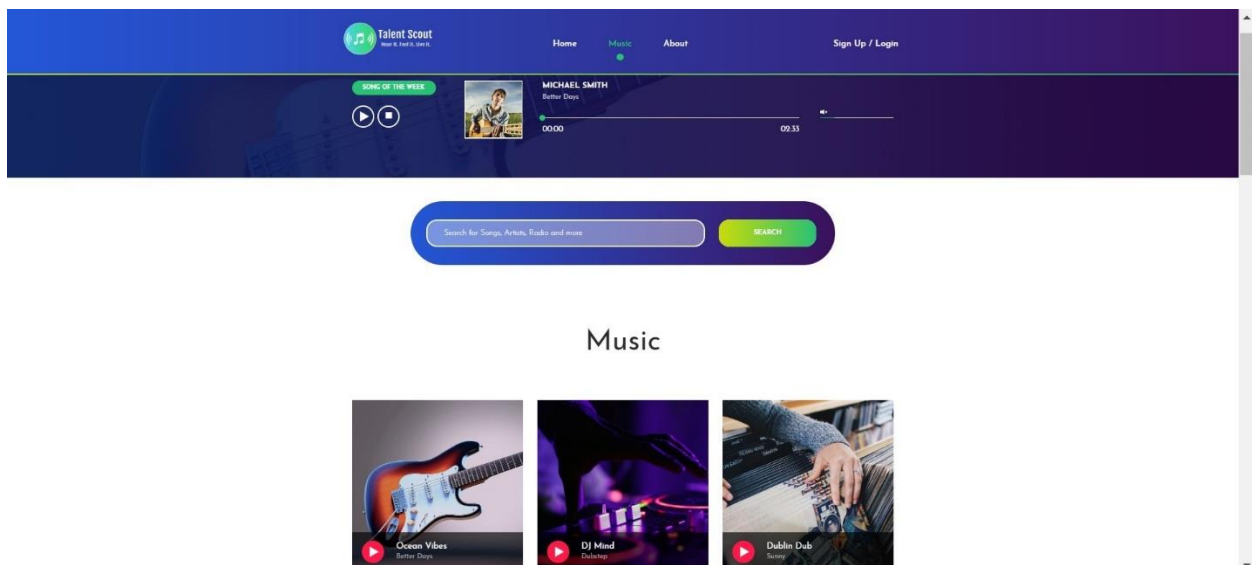


- **Design Patterns [5]:**

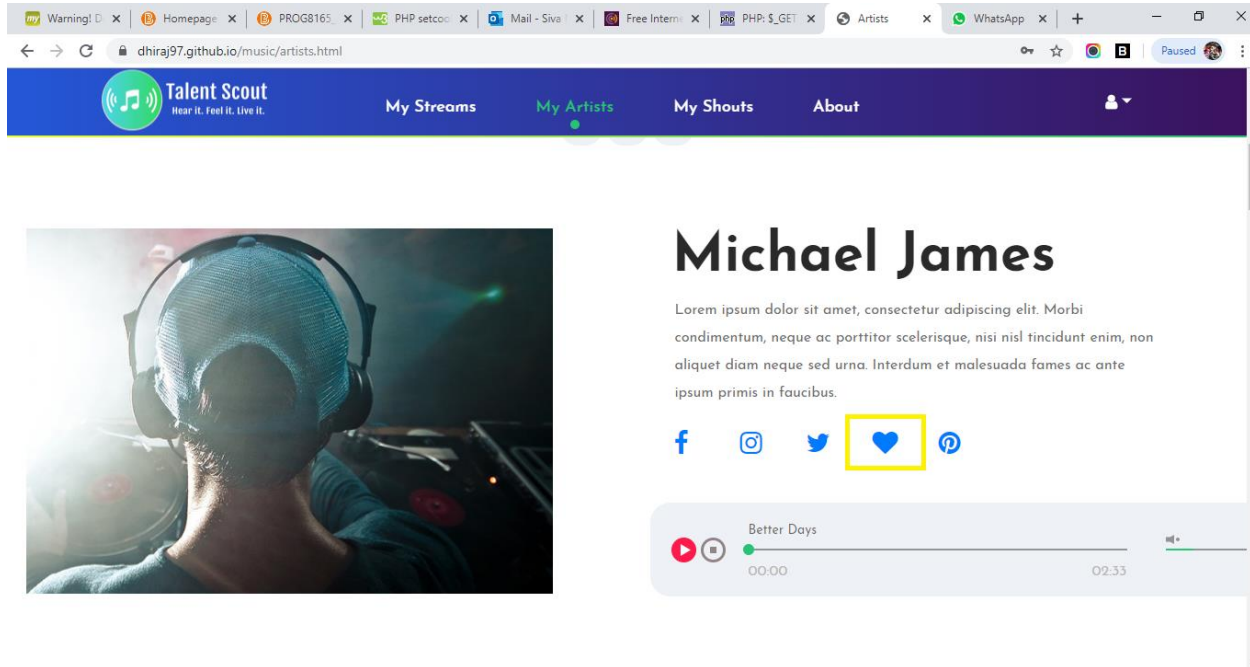
1. **Social sign in/sign up:** signing up/in using social media accounts makes creating a new account or logging in into an existing account easier for users. (implemented in sign up/sign in page).



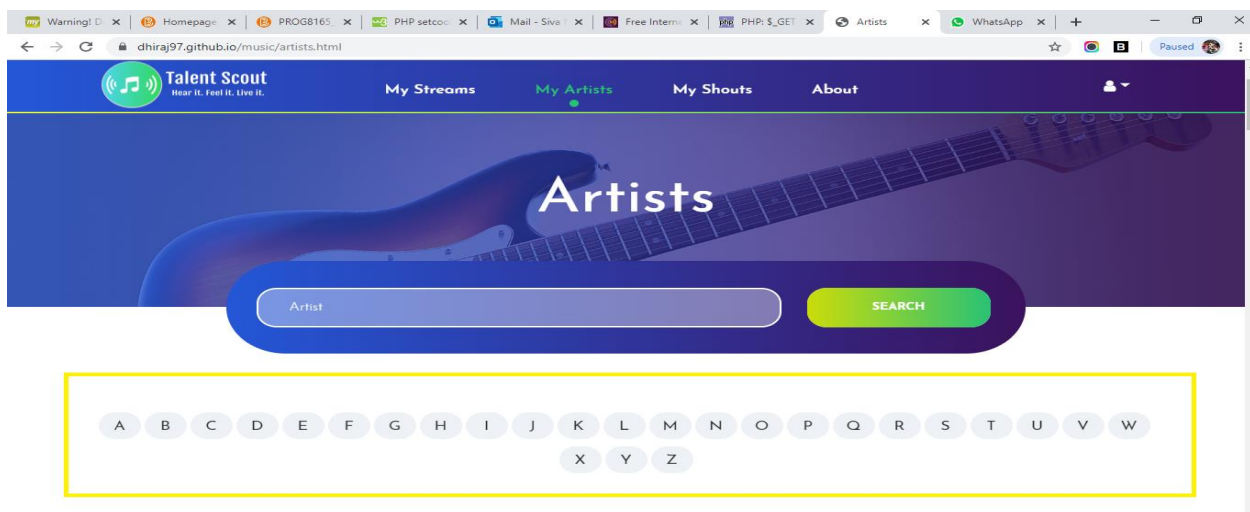
2. **Lazy sign up:** users, who don't want to register, can still use the application and stream its content. Their work will be available as long as the session is active on the app. (implemented in music page before signing in).



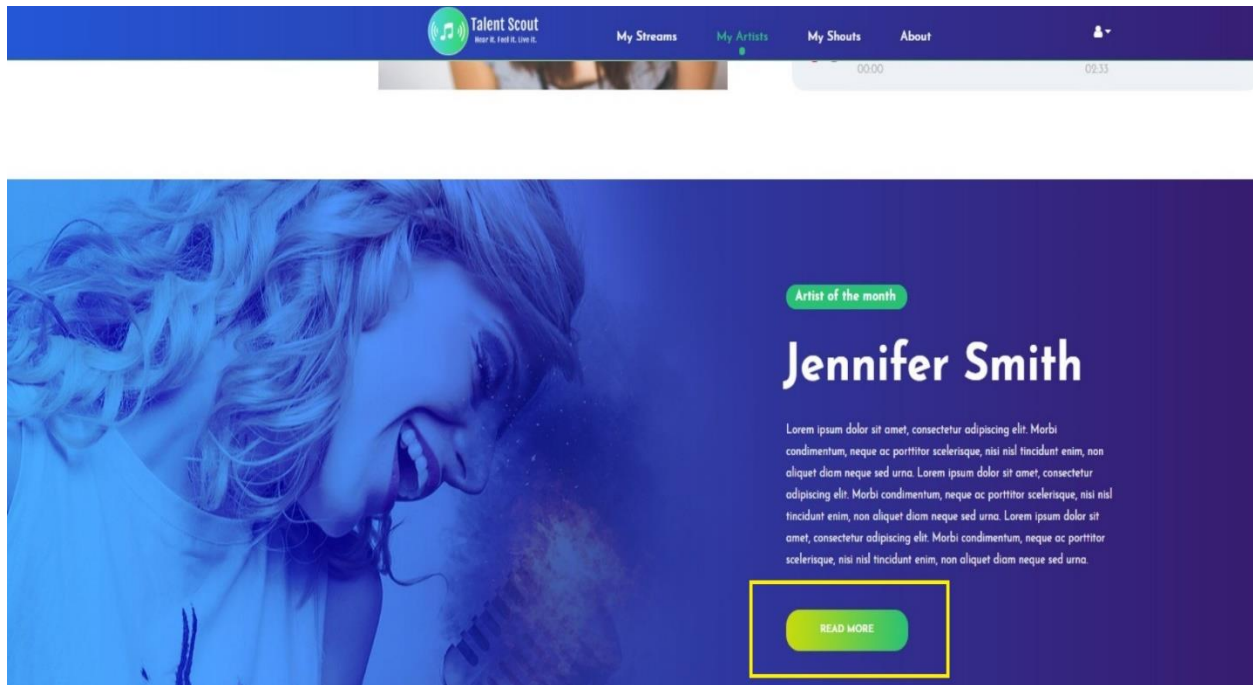
3. **Favourite content:** users can save their favourite music or artist for later use or share. (implemented in my shouts/artists pages).



4. **Data segmenting:** presenting data in segments instead of scrolling all the way down and up to make finding desired content faster and effective. (implemented in My artists' page using an alphabetical order to sort artists' names).

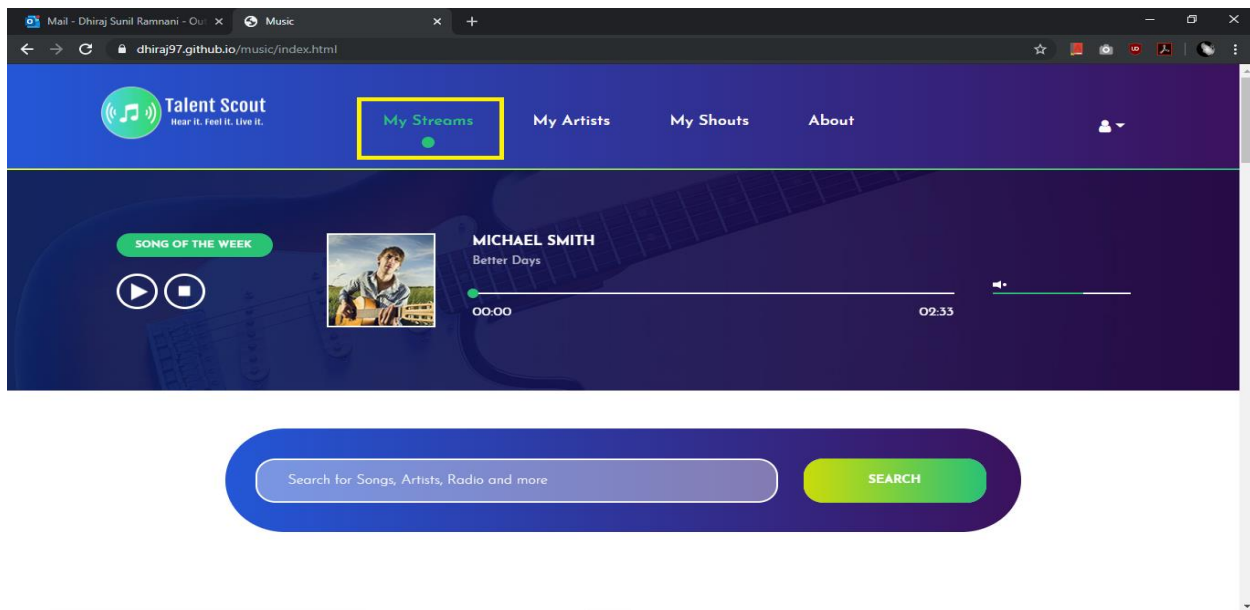


5. **Continuous scrolling:** users want to have most of the content in one place to avoid moving back and forth between multiple pages. Extra content can be shown by scrolling or by clicking the Read More button (implemented in My Streams and My Artists pages).

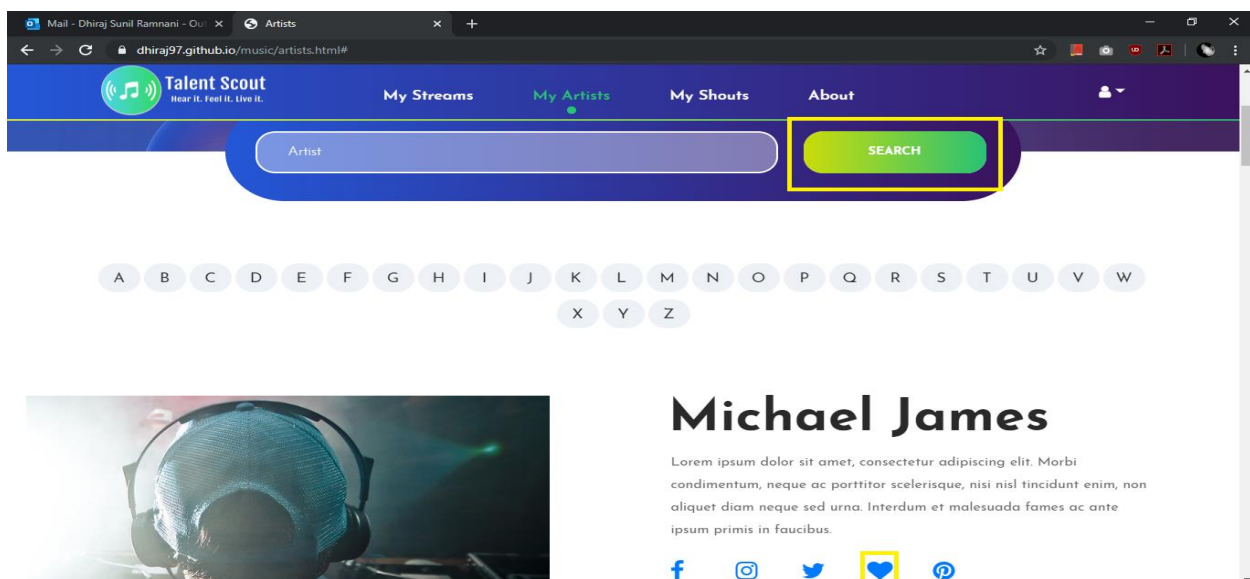


- **Usability Principles [6]:**

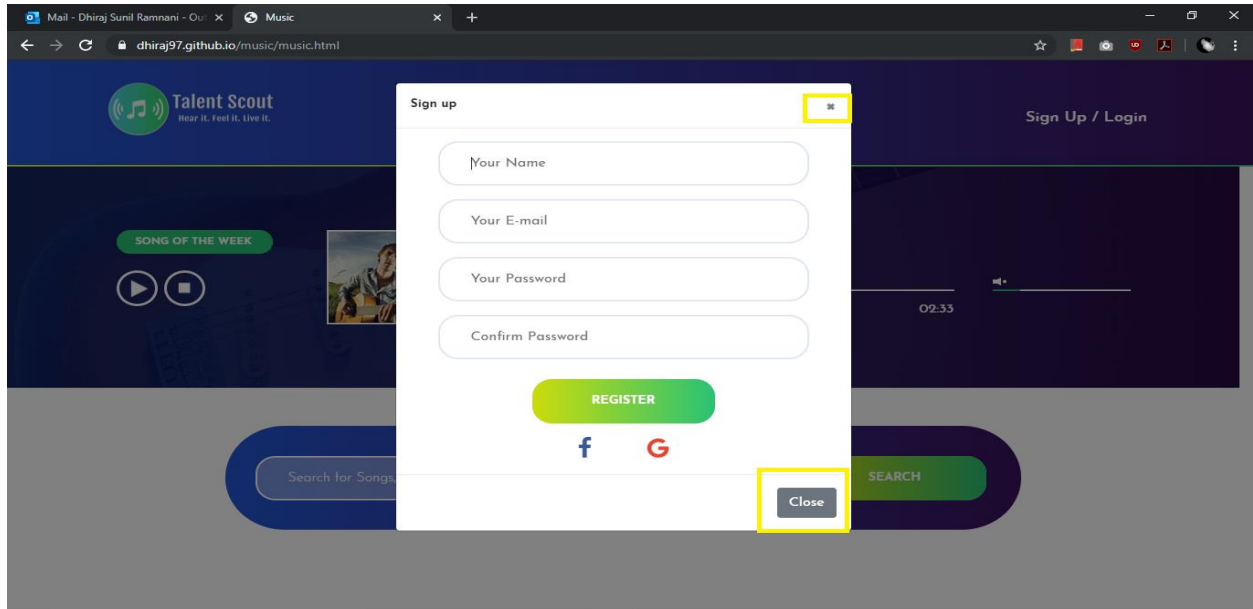
1. **Visibility of system status:** informing users about the current state and what is going on. For example, users are informed about their current page by looking at the navigation bars. Current page is highlighted in green with a green solid circle underneath.



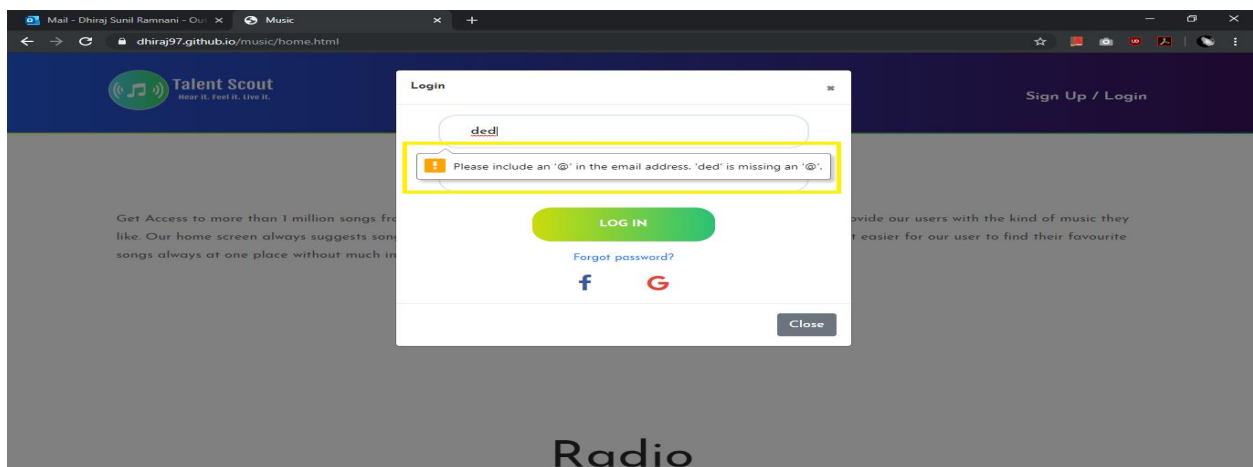
2. **Match between system and the real world:** using common language and real-world concepts like “Search” to find content and heart icon to express loving a specific content.



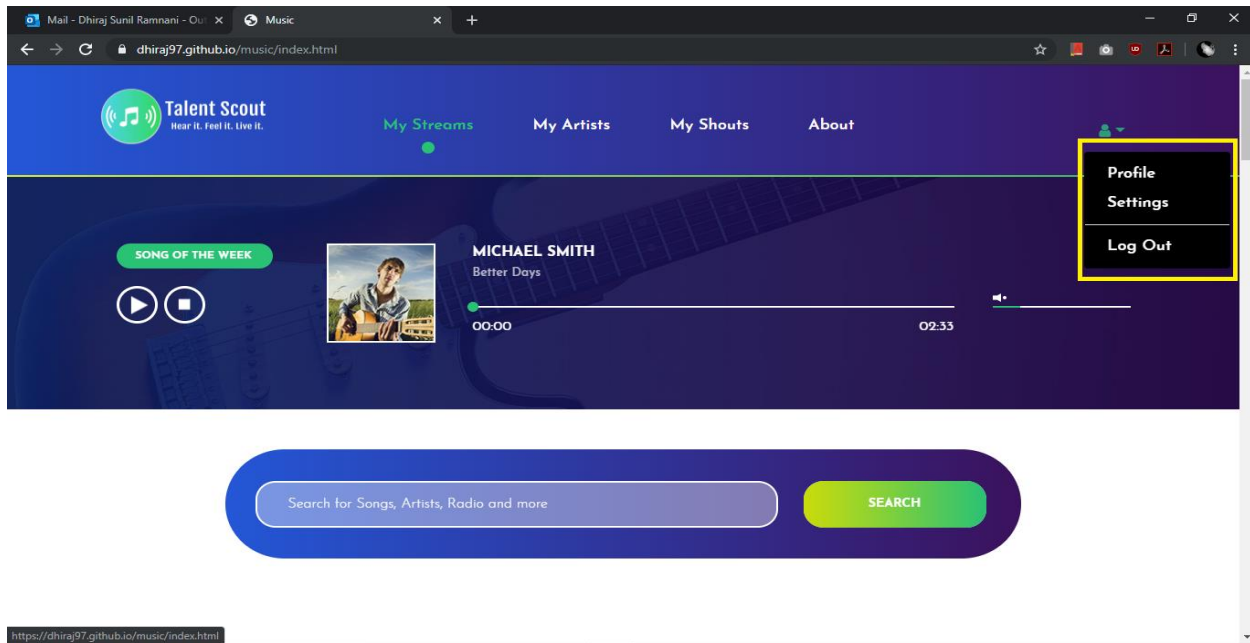
3. **User control and freedom:** supporting undo/redo any action. If users select sign in instead of sign up, they can still undo this accidental action by clicking the close button and leave the current unwanted state.



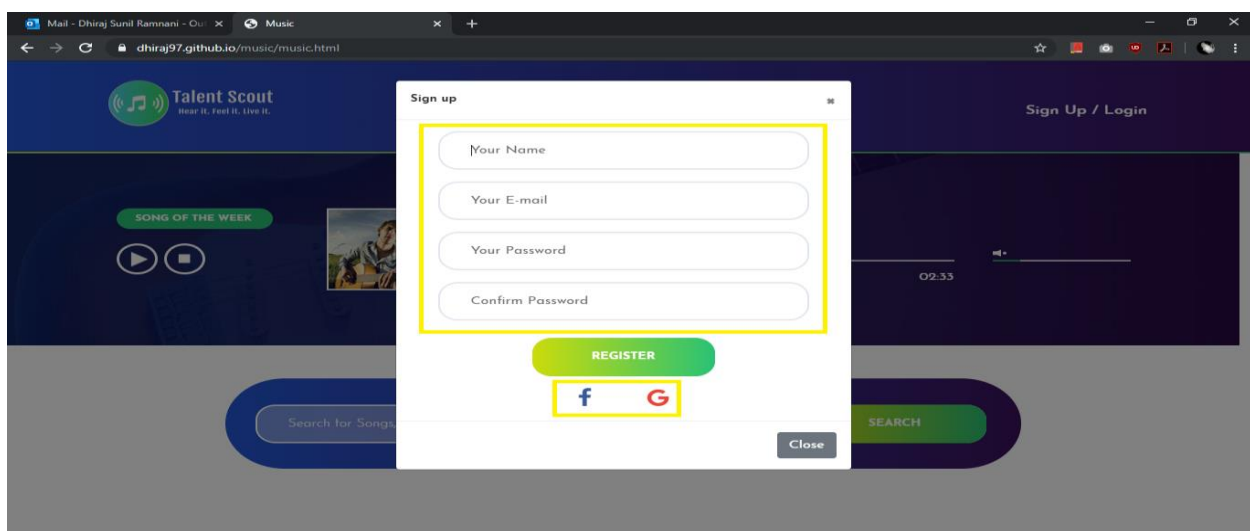
4. **Consistency and standards:** consistent colors and appearance. (for better look refer to prototype/link provided instead of screenshots).
5. **Error prevention:** for example, we added validation rules to the sign-up form as a constraint to force users to enter valid data and prevent errors.



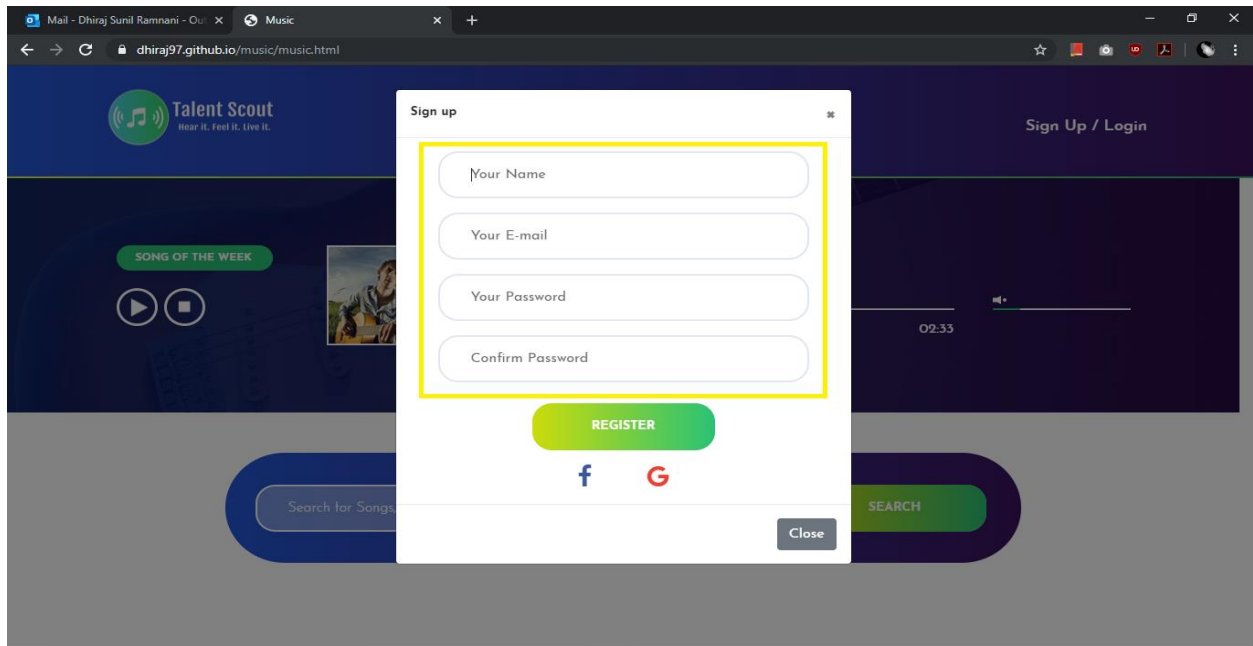
6. **Recognition rather than recall:** the dropdown menu under user account icon is an example of recognition. Users are not recalling any information from their memory; instead, they are shown a list of possible options and they can choose the one they want to use.



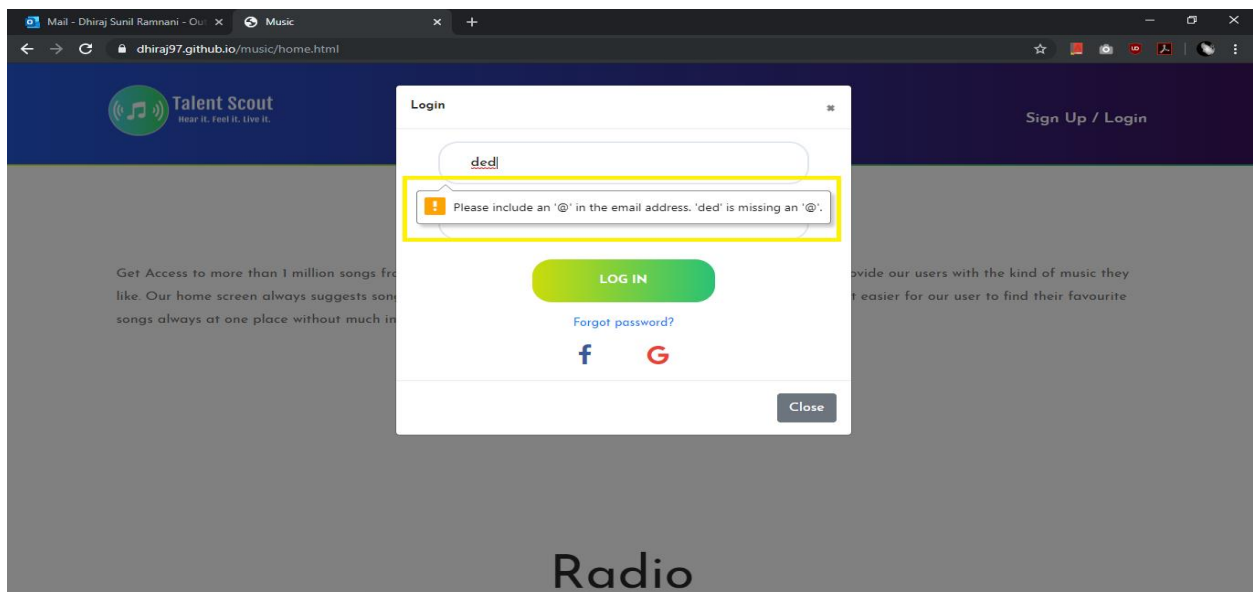
7. **Flexibility and efficiency of use:** sign up dialogue accommodates novice and experienced web users. The dialogue speeds up the process for the experienced users by offering social sign up while still having a sign up by email for novice users.



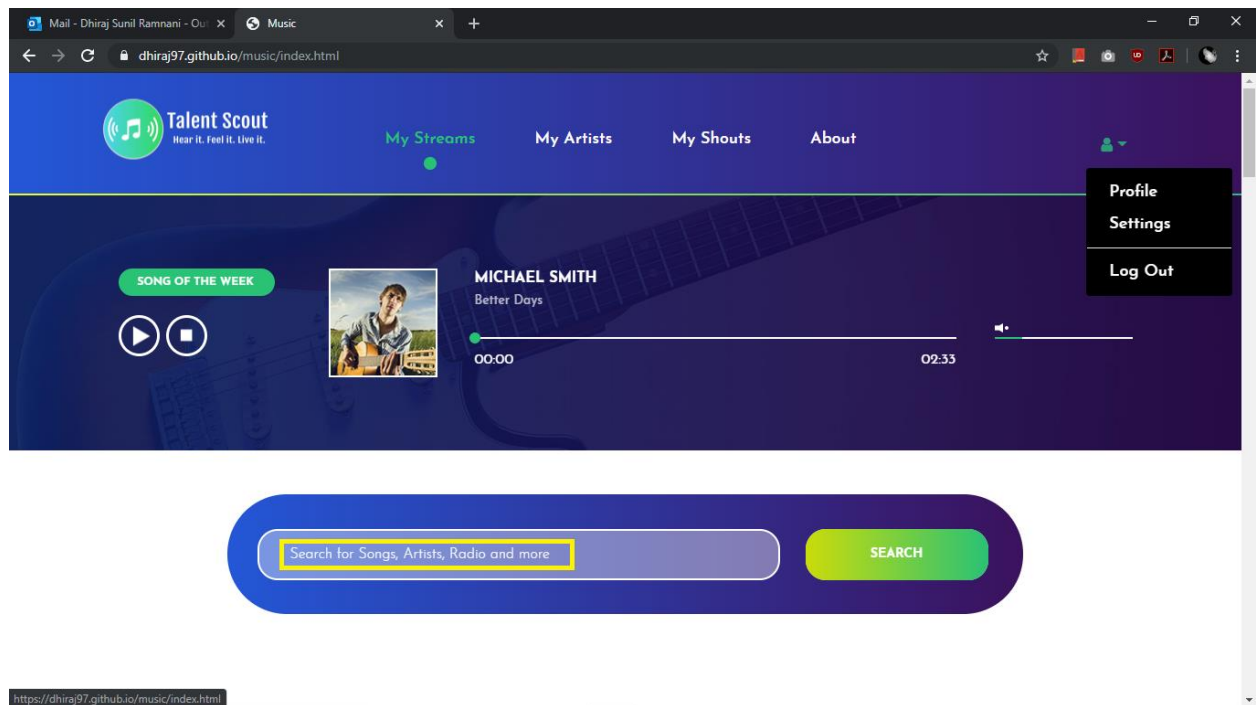
8. **Aesthetic and minimalist design:** for example, sign up form is concise and only includes relative information.



9. **Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors:** when users leave a required field empty in any of the forms, an adequate error message will be shown to help the user recognize and fix the error.



10. **Help and documentation:** For example, in search bars we used a place holder text to give users a hint of what they can search for.



7. Mapping between wireframes and prototypes:

Moving from basic low fidelity wireframes to more detailed interactive prototypes was not straight forward at all times due to the type of tools we have used in this assignment. Free trial versions of design tools don't provide access for all features especially important and critical ones. For our wireframes, we used MockPlus pro after contacting their support team, changing our accounts to free students' plan, and extending our MockPlus subscription expiry to 30 days with access to more features compared to the initial free version we used at the start. Students' accounts on MockPlus provided us with more features and wider range of UI components and Controls.

On the other hand, transferring wireframes to prototypes was not very smooth because we have tried many free tools and due to their limitations, we ended up using HTML, CSS, JavaScript and Bootstrap template to create a responsive interactive design. Using free prototyping tools was faster and a more professional look layout, but they provide limited functionality and a small range

of components to be used. We matched almost every aspect in our wireframes, but some elements might look slightly different in prototypes because creating everything via code is time consuming and requiring advanced skills. For example, the content/media player is a JavaScript library (jplayer) is appended at the bottom in wireframes, but in our prototypes the media player shows at the top because adding it at the bottom was not feasible. Despite of this, it was an excellent application to what we are learning in our web design course.

Reference List

1. www.colorlib.com/wp/template/music-2
2. www.surveymonkey.com
3. iHeart Radio website. Retrieved from <https://www.iheart.com/> on Oct 21st, 2019.
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