

Team Solo

Project Idea: Spare-time Matchmaker

## **The Idea**

The project that I am planning to produce is a phone app that can be activated when the user has spare or free time but doesn't have any plans or doesn't want to spend that time alone. It would allow users to browse other people using the app who also have spare time, and the user can choose which of those people they might want to spend that time with. If two users both select each other as someone that they want to meet with, the app will display a map view with both user's locations displayed so that they can meet. The system is primarily focussed towards university students, who often find themselves with long breaks between classes, where it makes little sense to leave campus as they must come back later, but who find themselves bored during that break. The app is intended to be a mobile app, as it is assumed that most university students have one and the app would use the phones inbuilt GPS capabilities to allow the users to meet up if they match.

## **Stakeholders**

The stakeholders for this app generally overlap with the intended user population; students. They are both the target audience for the use the app, as well as the group who would benefit most from its use. The required system knowledge for this app is planned to be intentionally low. It should be easy to use, with only a few points of decision needing to be made in the basic usage flow. Existing knowledge of other matchmaking type apps, such as Tinder, will make using this app easier as the general thought process while using the app will be very similar. However, such a background is not required, as the design of the app should help new users learn to use it very quickly.

Other stakeholders for the app could be business owners near the university campus who provide services that could become popular ways for two people who match to spend time together. An example could be restaurant owners if meeting and getting lunch or a snack together becomes a popular way that people use the app. This however is more based on user choices than it is a direct intent by the app itself.

## **Research Methods**

The two IDEO research methods I decided to implement were Secondary Research and Surveys and Questionnaires. The former will allow me to find out which aspects of matchmaking apps are most in need to addressing when it comes to developing this project. Following this preliminary research with a survey will allow me to poll the target audience about which approaches they would prefer to see me implement. This way I can out the best solutions to each

of the problematic areas of matchmaking apps, so that my project can avoid falling into those same pitfalls.

## **Findings from Secondary Research**

The first user research method that I chose for this project is to apply Secondary Research. The concept of a matchmaker app isn't by itself a new idea and they have stayed a popular genre of software for years. I decided that the best way to learn about what works and what doesn't for my future design is going to be by examining the most popular of the matchmaking apps that already exist, Tinder. Therefore, I have decided to mainly focus my Secondary Research at examining the main issues that users seem to have with Tinder. The main sources of information that I used to find these issues and points of frustration were user reviews of the app themselves, easily available from the app stores where Tinder can be found, as well as from editorials and opinion-pieces on the internet. Since this project is going to focus primarily on the design and prototyping of the app, I decided that I was less interested in researching the technical issues that users had with the app and to instead learn what made the users feel unsatisfied with using it, so that I could hopefully avoid those same pitfalls in my design.

Overall, I found that the general problems that people have with Tinder fall into three different categories. The first is that people find that Tinder creates a general sense of shallowness. Because you are judging if you want to meet with someone based entirely on their appearance, it makes the first impression of the user's photo almost the only factor that matters. The snap judgements turn Tinder into a kind of game, completely dehumanizing the person behind the profile image. The second category of dissatisfaction is that it makes it very easy to make mistakes. If users accidentally swipe in the wrong direction, something that can happen often if the user is not paying full attention to the app, they can accidentally reject someone they meant to try and match with, with no way of correcting their choice. Since the average match rate on Tinder is only around seven percent, accidentally missing these opportunities carries a greater feeling of displeasure for the user. Finally, the third category that users find unsatisfying is the chat feature for matched users. For many, the conversations feel awkward, usually with one user or the other resorting to bad icebreakers or awkward one-liners, and often give the wrong impression about the user.

## **Findings from the Survey**

The second user research method that I chose was Surveys and Questionnaires. Now that the Secondary Research method made it clear what aspects of popular matchmaker apps the users find unsatisfying, I could better poll my target audience about how they value some of these features, and which ways they would prefer them to be altered to make them more satisfying. To this end, I came up with 10 questions to survey university students with to get a better understanding of what the direction my design of this app should take. In total I was able to get 31 individuals to answer these survey questions. From the responses to these questions that

I gathered, I found that in most cases, only the first photo of the potential match mattered when it came to choosing between swiping right or left on that person. I also found that all the survey participants accidentally rejected someone that they meant to match with by accident at least once in their most recent session of using the app. Finally, survey participants said that if possible they would prefer to skip having to message each other through the in-app messenger, and would prefer to make their first impressions in person.

## **Reflections**

Both the user research methods that I used yielded valuable data. However, this was not without its own share of drawbacks. The majority of the Secondary Research data was obtained by reading through user reviews of Tinder rated 1 or 2 stars. The main problem to this approach is that the vast majority of these reviews came a result of either bugs that the users became frustrated over, or other various technical problems that negatively impacted the users experience. These reviews were ultimately not helpful at all from a design perspective, as they relate to functionality and the actual code used to make the app. While there were reviews that did mention actual design frustrations that were useful to me, they were much harder to find. As a result, a lot of time was wasted trying to filter out the useful reviews from the unimportant ones.

The survey also had a few drawbacks. To try and best capture my target audience, I tried to propose the survey to students in Mac Hall who were sitting alone. While most were receptive to answering my survey questions, some didn't want to be disturbed. Additionally, not all of the people who answered my survey had used Tinder before, so I wasn't able to use their survey answers.

## **Tasks**

As a solo project effort, I have to balance the scope of my project, as a result there will be less a simpler design and thus fewer tasks that are possible. From a task centered approach, some expected tasks could be:

1. The user is alone and bored and want to meet someone new. The apps main function would easily allow this person to match with other people to spend his time.
2. The user just got a new haircut and wants other people to see his new look. The app can pull photos from the user's phone, so they can snap a quick selfie and update their profile photo
3. A user wants to get a game of basketball going, but they don't have enough people. They could use he app like an advertising platform, to match with people who have spare time and might be interested.

## Survey Questions

1. When was the last time you used Tinder?
2. How often would you say you look at profile photos beyond the first? (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always)
3. Would having only one profile photo affect your decision to swap right or left?
4. Has reading someone's bio changed your mind about which direction to swap? Right or Left (or both)?
5. How often do you accidentally swipe the wrong direction on someone at least once in a session? (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always)
6. If you had the option to go back and change the decision, would you?
7. Do you enjoy using the in-app messenger when you match with someone?
8. If the in-app messenger had automatic icebreakers, would you use them?
9. If you could set up a meeting with someone you matched with without having to use the in-app messenger, would you?
10. If you answered 'Yes' to Question 9, how often would you use it? (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always)