

Is Hybrid Mobile App Development a Feasible Alternative to Native App Development? An Exploration through building a Music Social Network App

Final Report for CS39440 Major Project

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By including my name below, I hereby agree to this dissertation being made available to other students and academic staff of the Aberystwyth Computer Science Department.

Name: Sean Anderson

Date

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I am grateful to my parents for there constant help and support (along with the rest of my family), Josie and all the Jordans for always making me laugh.

Thanks to Lauren for keeping me sane at points during my final year.

Abstract

The issue of the best way to develop mobile applications is a complex one. There are three different techniques for developing apps: native development, web based app development and hybrid apps. Hybrid apps combine techniques from both native and web based app development.

Through developing a social media app I have examined hybrid mobile app development whilst pondering whether they actually are plausible to developing apps in a native manner.

I found that hybrid apps are feasible alternatives to developing apps in a native manner for things rather trivial such as data input and output and storage, however from the research I carried out it appears that developing advanced graphics and games in hybrid apps is not currently a viable thing to do.

CONTENTS

1	Background & Objectives	1
1.1	Background	1
1.2	Analysis	2
1.3	Process	2
1.3.1	Initial Requirements	4
1.3.2	Stories	5
1.3.3	Framework	5
2	Design and Experimental Methods	7
2.1	Design	7
2.1.1	Overall Architecture	7
2.1.2	Some detailed design	8
2.1.3	User Interface	9
2.2	Experimental Methods	10
2.2.1	User Testing	10
3	Implementation	12
3.1	The Registration system	12
3.1.1	Back End	12
3.1.2	Front end	14
3.1.3	Validation	15
3.2	Posting to a feed	16
3.3	Creation of Events	17
3.3.1	Adding a Venue	17
3.3.2	Adding an Event	18
3.4	Users profile	19
3.4.1	Camera and FileTransfer plugins	19
3.5	Styling	21
3.6	Porting over to iOS	22
3.7	PHP files	22
3.8	Technical challenges	22
3.9	Actual implementation vs plan	22
4	Testing and experimenting	23
4.1	Overall Approach to Testing and Experiments	23
4.2	Acceptance Testing	23
4.3	Unit tests	25
4.4	User Interface testing	25
4.5	User testing	28
4.6	Resource Usage	28
5	Evaluation	29
5.1	Are hybrid apps feasible	29
5.1.1	Advantages	29
5.1.2	Disadvantages	29
5.1.3	Users Thoughts	29

5.1.4	Conclusion	30
5.2	Future Work	30
5.3	Evaluation of app development itself	30
5.3.1	Requirements correctly identified	30
5.3.2	Design Decisions	30
5.3.3	Project aims achieved	31
5.3.4	What would do differently	31
Appendices		32
A Third-Party Code and Libraries		33
B Ethics Submission Assessment		34
2.1	Ethics Submission Assessment reference number: 6663	35
C Code Examples		36
3.1	Registration AngularJS Controller (register.js)	36
3.2	Registration API (register.php)	40
3.3	Unit Tests for Login and Register	41
Annotated Bibliography		43

LIST OF FIGURES

1.1	The Sprint planning template	3
1.2	The Sprint review template	4
2.1	UML Diagram which illustrates the view	8
2.2	UML Diagram for the model in relation to events.	9
2.3	User interface mock up	10
3.1	Postman testing register.php	13
3.2	User added to the database	13
3.3	AngularJS code for posting to register account	14
3.4	Screenshots of registration system.	15
3.5	Validation Screenshots	16
3.6	Validation Screenshots	17
3.7	Front End for adding a venue	18
3.8	Message which displays if the user has no venue.	18
3.9	Creating an event	19
3.10	Screen shot of camera functionality.	20
3.11	AngularJS Photo Code.	21
3.12	Camera Plugin Options.	21
4.1	Images showing Facebook and Dynamic CPU.	28

LIST OF TABLES

1.1	Table Comparison of Hybrid Frameworks	6
4.1	User Acceptance Testing Table	25

Chapter 1

Background & Objectives

The purpose of this project is to establish whether hybrid mobile applications are a feasible alternative to native development. This will involve exploring, examining and developing a mobile application in a hybrid manner. For this project, a music social media app will be developed. The app will have various features e.g. looking up events which take place in venues. A hybrid mobile application framework will be selected which will form the front end of this project. The back end of this project which will be in PHP.

1.1 Background

There are three different types of mobile applications: native apps, web apps and hybrid apps [12] [9] [22]. A native app is an app which is developed in a platform specific language and is usually downloaded from a device's app store e.g. Google Play Store for Android and the App Store for iOS devices. As native apps are developed in a platform specific language e.g. Android apps are developed in Java [8] and iOS apps are developed in Swift (formerly Objective C) [3] this means that code has to be written in multiple languages to develop the app for different platforms. Native apps allow for platform specific Application Programming Interface (APIs) to be used and therefore the developer has access to resources such as the device's camera or contact book [15] [6].

Web apps are essentially just web pages which are mobile responsive and therefore display well on mobile devices. They are accessed via a device's browser where the user either inputs the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) or clicks a link which takes them to the web app. Web apps do not (easily) have access to the platforms' APIs therefore it is very challenging for a developer to use native resources such as a device's camera [15] [12].

Hybrid apps are apps which are written in web technologies (usually HTML5, CSS and JS.) They are usually downloaded through an app store and a piece of middleware enables hybrid apps to have access to native APIs, allowing hybrid apps to access resources such as a device's camera. Unlike native apps, hybrid apps only require one code base for multiple platforms [15] [10].

1.2 Analysis

It is important to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the different types of mobile app development as this will allow for a reasonable judgement to be made as to whether hybrid apps are feasible alternatives to native apps.

As hybrid mobile apps use one code base across multiple different platforms the development cost is cheaper as companies do not need to hire multiple different programmers to work across different platforms. If a business decided they wanted to release an app on both Android and iOS, if they took a native approach they would have to write the code for the app both in Java and Swift (possibly Objective C instead of Swift). However, if they were to develop the app in a hybrid manner then they would only have to write the app in the web technology framework which has been chosen.

Hybrid mobile apps can access native APIs. This means that the middleware technology has to be set up to do so. As a result of this the developer needs to be very careful in choosing the correct framework for developing hybrid apps. They would need to ensure that the framework they want to use has access to all the native features they require. Most frameworks use plugins to access native features.

It is commonly thought that the performance of hybrid apps' is poor and that they are slow. Whilst this does appear to be a slight exaggeration, hybrid apps are generally slower than native apps and therefore the performance is generally poorer as a user may have to wait longer for an app to load.

1.3 Process

There is a common debate within software engineering about whether to use a plan driven methodology or an agile methodology. Plan driven methodologies rely on the requirements for the project not changing whereas agile methodologies try and embrace changing requirements [11].

As this project is an investigation, the requirements of the app may change it may be worth spending more time than initially planned building specific features as building those features will help make a judgement as to whether hybrid apps are feasible alternatives to native apps. This is why an agile approach was used for this project.

There are multiple agile approaches to software development. Some of these approaches include: eXtreme Programming, Kanban and Scrum. Scrum was the agile methodology I felt was most appropriate for this project this is because Scrum doesn't require planning of how the software will be developed as opposed to other methodologies such as eXtreme programming which actually informs the programmer that they should be using test driven development and pair programming. Whilst Scrum was the methodology chosen the project is really used an adaptation of scrum. This is because Scrum involves multiple roles in a team and this was a single person project. [5]

Scrum (as with most other agile methodologies) splits the requirements for the app into multiple stories. These stories then form the basis of each sprint (a work iteration) [14]. One of the most important things with using Scrum is to ensure that each sprint is planned and reviewed as this will help reduce errors when developing the app. The creation of templates seemed like a

good idea as this meant that less time would have to be spent formatting sprint planning and sprint review documents. Figures 1.1 and 1.2 show the templates.



Figure 1.1: The Sprint planning template

Sprint Review Week: N

Sean Anderson

1 Title of Sprint

- Sprint requirements

2 What was achieved

- This was achieved.

3 What was missed

- I missed this functionality this week.

4 Overall Review and Future Planning

- As a result of missing X functionality in the next sprint I must do.

Figure 1.2: The Sprint review template

1.3.1 Initial Requirements

Before splitting the different tasks into stories, it is important to consider the overall requirements of the system. Anybody must be able to register for an account; there will be three different types of account (a general music lover, an artist and a venue owner.) The general music lover should be able to follow artists and view events which are relevant to them. An artist should have the same functionality of a music lover however they will appear in a different section of the app. This is so it makes it easier for people to know who they are following. Both artists and music lovers should be able to post and people who follow them will see this post.

Venue owners need to be able to create events and add artists to these events. Music lovers should then be able to see all of the appropriate information about these events. In terms of suggesting to the user who they should follow and what events they should attend, there will be some machine learning code placed on the back end of the system. As well as this the app will need to be styled.

1.3.2 Stories

As Scrum is an agile methodology the project was split into multiple different stories. These include:

- A register system so that all user types can create an account.
- A profile system which will allow for music lovers and artists to write a bio and upload a picture.
- A follow system so that users can follow other users.
- A post system so that when a user posts, all people who follow them can see that post.
- A create events system which can only be used by venue owners.
- Styling of the app.
- Machine learning code on the back end of the system which will mean users will get appropriate suggestions.

1.3.3 Framework

There are multiple different frameworks for developing apps using hybrid technologies. These frameworks all use web technologies however it differs from framework to framework as to what specific web technology is used. For example, apps made using the JQuery Mobile Framework are wrote in JQuery and apps made using the ionic framework are written in AngularJS.

As well as considering the language of the framework it was also important to consider other factors before deciding which framework would be most appropriate. These factors include things such as page change speed, access to native APIs and external documentation and community available for support.

Table 1.1 summarises information which was gathered from multiple resources and summarises different hybrid app frameworks [13] [1] [18] [20] [19] [4].

Framework Name	Summary	Advantages	Disadvantages
JQueryMobile	Framework uses HTML, CSS and JavaScript	Simple to learn.	Limited plugins. Page transitions are slow. Awkward to style No longer a large community so lack of support.
Phone Gap	Framework uses HTML, CSS and JavaScript Built on top of JQuery Mobile	Easy to learn - most developers have experience with necessary languages. Many Plugins available for access to platform's native APIs	Can be awkward to style. Page transitions can be slow.
Ionic	Framework uses HTML, CSS (Sass if developer prefers) and AngularJS.	Simple to style. Large community support. Lots of plugins. Considered fast.	Steep learning curve requires developer to understand AngularJs.
Framework 7	Framework uses HTML, CSS and JavaScript.	Easy to lean. Nice native like styles built in Can use in combination with other frameworks.	Not a very large community so a lack of support. Not many plugins easily accessible by default.

Table 1.1: Table Comparison of Hybrid Frameworks

Despite Ionic having a steep learning curve due to it using AngularJS as opposed to JQuery it seemed like the most appropriate framework to use. This is because not only does Ionic have a fairly substantial amount of middleware plugins which will allow for platform specific APIs to be accessed but it is also considered one of the fastest frameworks, so this will aid the project aim of discovering whether hybrid apps are feasible alternatives to native apps.

Chapter 2

Design and Experimental Methods

2.1 Design

The ionic framework for developing mobile hybrid applications encourages the use of the Model View Controller (MVC) compound design pattern. MVC is something which is generally considered good practice within the software engineering industry and therefore the app was designed keeping that in mind.

The model of the app would be the database which is stored on the backend of the system. The view is the html files and the controllers are both the Angular JS controllers and the RESTful PHP API which I created.

2.1.1 Overall Architecture

Figure X shows the architecture as whole. Whilst figures X separates the model, view and controller.

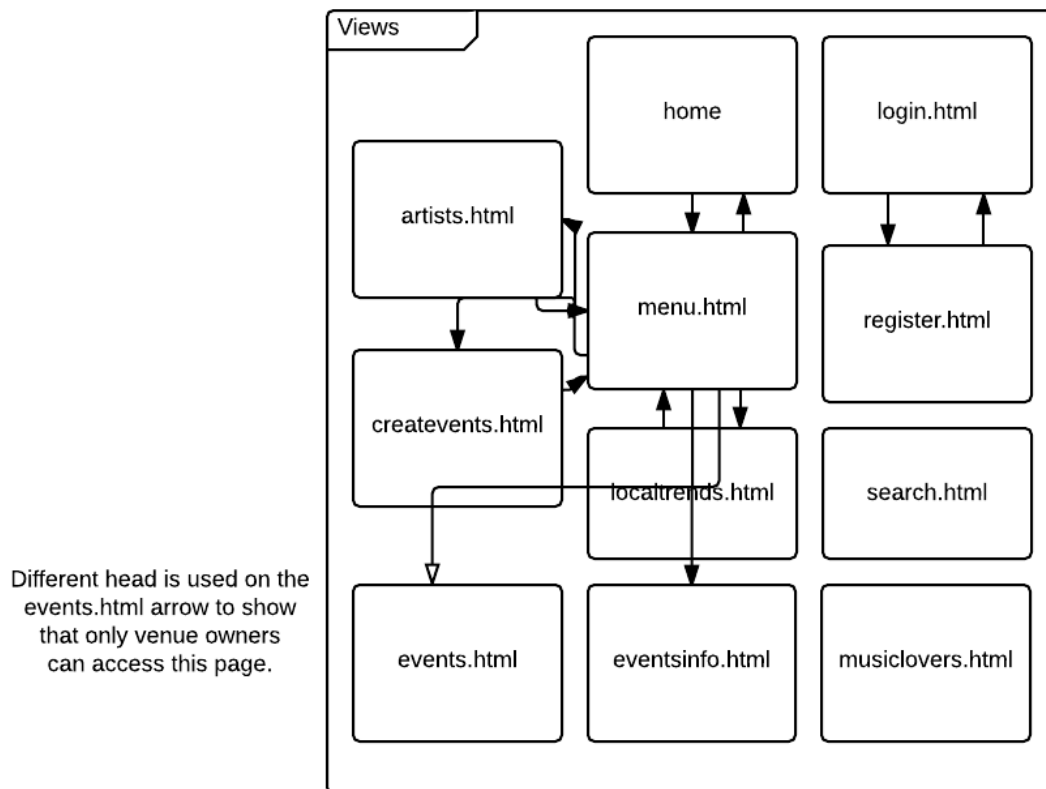


Figure 2.1: UML Diagram which illustrates the view

Figure X (created using <https://www.lucidchart.com/>) illustrates that once a user has logged in they can access multiple different pages through the menu bar (menu.html). The only page which is restricted is the events.html page as only venue owners can access this page to create events. The register.html page can only be accessed through the login page as it is accessed when a user needs to create a new account to login.

2.1.2 Some detailed design

The following figure highlights the different relationships between the tables (model) for events.

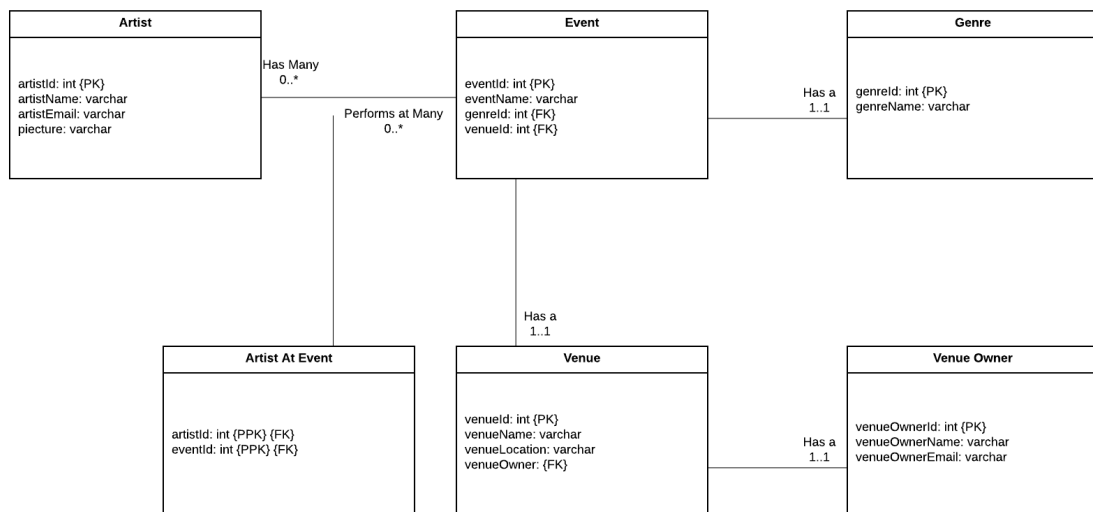


Figure 2.2: UML Diagram for the model in relation to events.

Figure 2.2 is a UML diagram (created using [Created using https://www.lucidchart.com/](https://www.lucidchart.com/)) which shows the appropriate relationships between the different tables in the database in relation to an event.

2.1.2.1 Even more detail

2.1.3 User Interface

In considering the music social network app it was decided that the name of the app would be Dynamic. Research into different social media sites was carried out and it was decided that blue would be the main colour used for the app, this is because blue is considered a relaxing colour and in terms of accessibility it is one of the most important colours.

2.1.3.1 Schniderman Principles

Figure X (created using <https://www.fluidui.com>) shows some UI mockups which were created.

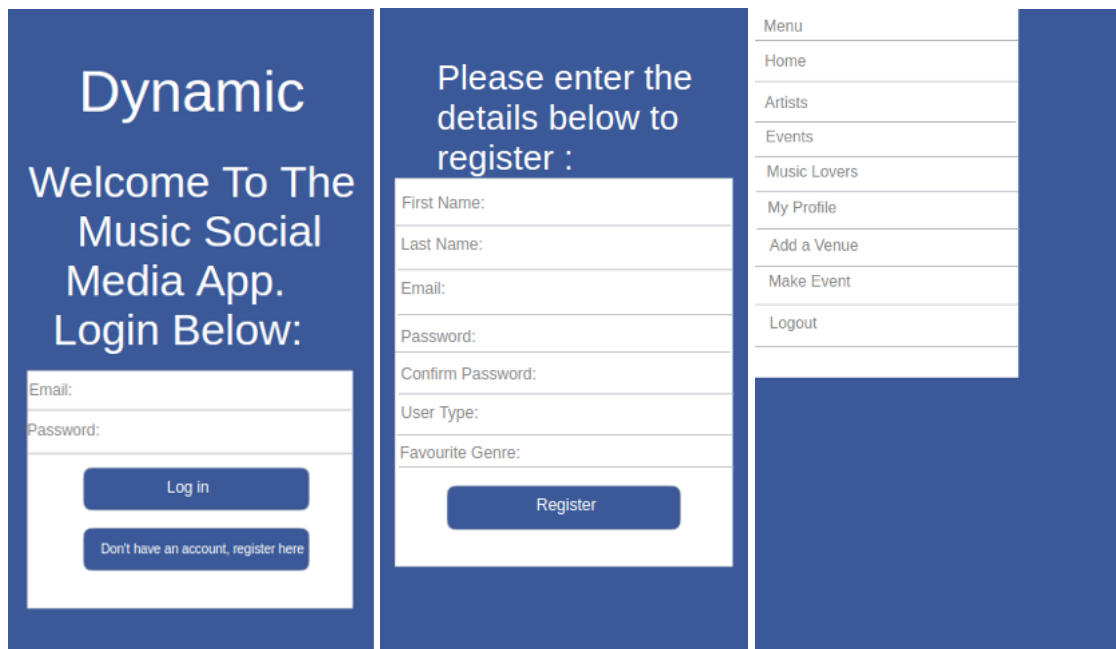


Figure 2.3: User interface mock up

2.2 Experimental Methods

As the purpose of the project was to determine whether hybrid apps are feasible alternatives to native apps tests had to be derived. User testing is key to this as it allows for general users (people who use apps on a regular basis) to give feedback about whether they think the hybrid app is as good as a native app, if not why not etc. Another key aspect to answering the question is comparing the resource usage on the device of the hybrid app to a standard app, this will include comparing things such as amount of RAM being used.

Finally ,during each story in the development process, it was considered whether using hybrid app technology was as challenging, more challenging or less challenging than developing using native app technologies.

2.2.1 User Testing

In establishing whether hybrid apps are feasible alternatives to native apps it was important to get general users thoughts about the app which had been produced. Within the development community there is a bit of a stigma associated towards hybrid mobile applications therefore in an attempt to remove bias the majority of people who fill in the questionnaires associated with the app will be lay people.

Whilst clearly it would be great to get a large amount of people to participate by filling in a questionnaire realistically only around 10 people were chosen. Before asking each individual questions, the project was explained to them.

The following questions were asked to each individual (a blank copy of the questions is in the appendix.)

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being slowest and 10 being very fast in your opinion how quick is the app at processing the registration form?

2. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being significantly slower than a native app 5 being about the same time as a native app and 10 being significantly faster than a native app. In your opinion how quick is the app at processing the registration form?
3. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being slowest and 10 being fast in your opinion how long does the process of uploading a profile picture take?
4. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being significantly slower than a native app, 5 being about the same and 10 being very fast, faster than a native app. In your opinion how long does the process of uploading a new profile picture take?
5. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being slowest and 10 being fast in your opinion how long does the process of viewing events and sorting them by using nearest events (GPS) take?
6. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being significantly slower than a native app, 5 being about the same as a native app and 10 being very fast, faster than a native app in your opinion how long does the viewing events and sorting them by using nearest events (GPS) take?

These questions were decided upon as they ensured that all of the stories which were relevant in terms of testing different elements of hybrid technologies can be tested.

Chapter 3

Implementation

This section discusses the implementation of the music social network it is split into the multiple stories which have previously been listed. Not all of the stories are discussed here are some stories were very similar to others.

3.1 The Registration system

3.1.1 Back End

Work began on the registration system by creating the appropriate tables on the back end. These tables were `user_types`, `users`, `genres` and `user_genres`. The `user_types` table contained the three different types of account which a user could have: Music Lover, Artist and Venue Owner. The user type was done as a separate table to the `users` table itself for extensibility purposes as if additional user types needed to be added they could just simply be added to the table. The `users` table just contained all of the users' details including name, display name, email, password (discussed in more depth during the security section) and a url link to their picture. The `genres` table was simply a table which contained different genres of music and an appropriate id for each genre and as `genres` to `users` is a many to many relationship a `users_genres` table was stored a `user_id` and a `genre_id`.

After the tables had been created the php files (hosted at seananderson.co.uk/api) were created. These php files essentially formed the RESTful API which would allow for the front end to connect to the database for the system. The first file which was created was `register.php` this file takes variables which the user passes in (through POST data) and adds them to the database via my sql commands which are ran from within the php. Some validation was done in the php file to check that things such as the email given are valid emails however I wanted to do most of the validation actually on the front end as this would allow for error messages to get out to the user quicker.

As at this stage in time there was no front end it was not possible to test that sending post data from an app would work. So, a piece of software called postman (which is a Google Chrome extension) was used as this software allows for post data to be pushed to a website as illustrated in figure X. As well as relying on the PHP file telling me 'A new user was added successfully' which is the message what is printed when the sql commands all run correctly the database was also checked to ensure that the new user had been added correctly as shown in figure X.

Having completed this stage I did notice a significant weakness in using hybrid technology, the act

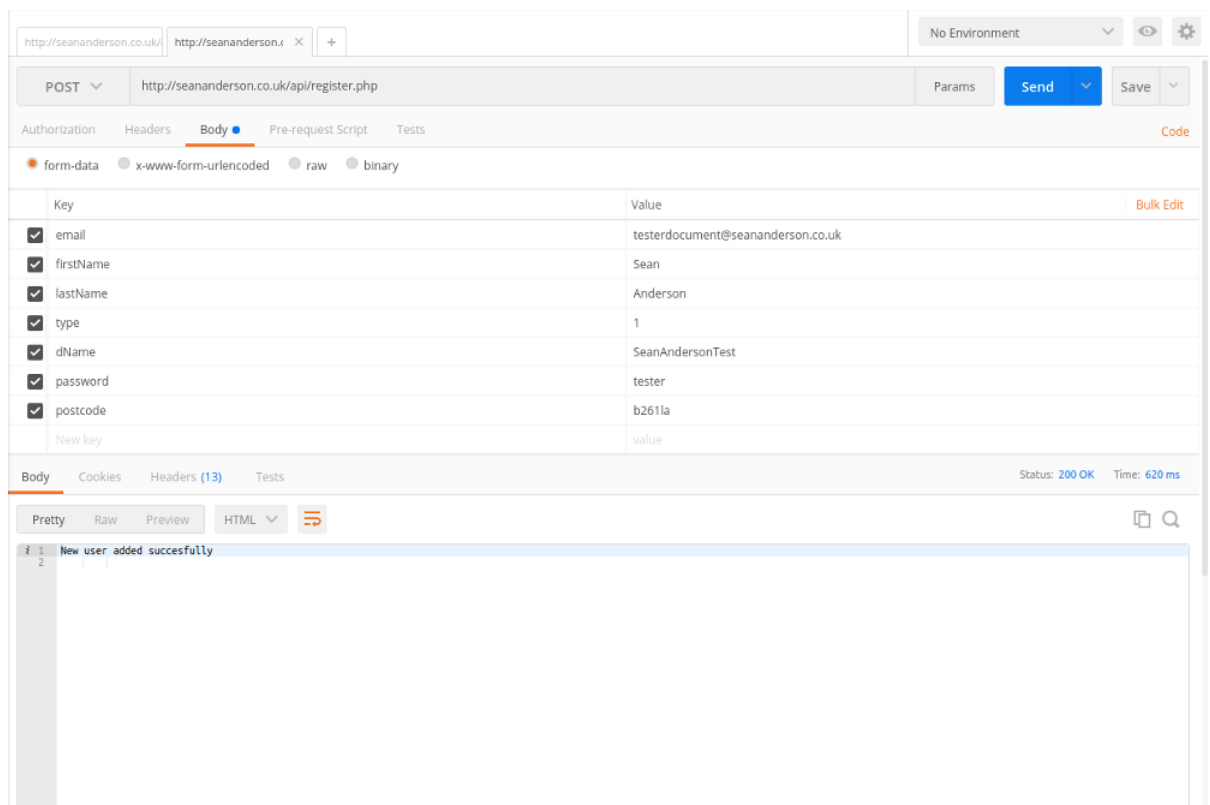


Figure 3.1: Postman testing register.php

				id	firstname	lastname	email	type	displayname	postcode	password
			101	Sean	Anderson	testerdocument@seananderson.co.uk	1	SeanAndersonTest	b261la	\$2y\$10\$eCPj6FWjO/bI0kJtiUte6W99ze.kDtdLafU.Y7FWL...	

Figure 3.2: User added to the database

For setting up registering different users' genres the system was implemented in the exact same way as the registration system only that there was far fewer variables. The login API simply checks that the user provides an email and password and that they match and if they do match returns the user details and if they don't match returns a message saying that the password is not correct.

3.1.1.1 Security within the registration system

It is important that users are not allowed to enter dangerous characters into the database, as a result of this all strings which will be imputed for the user (for all backend files for the music social media) are escaped using the `mysqli_escape` function which is a default php function which ensures that any characters which could potentially do damage to the database are escaped and therefore not ran in the `mysqli` statements.

As the registration and login system used a password it was important to ensure that if somebody was to get access to the database that they wouldn't get access to the password. There are multiple different methods of encryption which could have been used for this. PHP has its own built in function called `password_hash` which takes in two parameters the password itself as a string and the encryption type. For this project `password_default` which is a predefined php hashing method was used. Password default was used as it was a simplistic and relatively secure way of turning a password into a hash. The `password_verify` function in PHP is used to check that a plain text password matches the hashed password.

```

$http.post(api, data).then(function(res) {
  apiReturns = JSON.stringify(res);
  if (apiReturns.includes('New user added succesfully')>=0) {
    localStorage.setItem('email', $scope.register.email);
    localStorage.setItem('dName', $scope.register.dName);
    if ($scope.registerGenre!=undefined) {
      $scope.registerGenre();
    }
    $state.go('app.profile');
    popUp('Welcome', 'Welcome to Dynamic please fill in
    your profile page and then follow some users');
  }
})

```

Figure 3.3: AngularJS code for posting to register account

3.1.2 Front end

After the back end for the registration of the app was created development then started on the front end of the app. The default ionic menu bar template was used as this would allow for a menu bar to appear on multiple pages (like in my design) easily.

The views for both the login and registration system were created using html (as are all views in ionic) and the controllers for those views were created in AngularJS and were simply js files. Both the register and login view files contained a form which gathered appropriate information from the user and then passed that information onto the controllers when submitted. The controllers then passed that information onto the API's by using \$http.post which is an AngularJS method used for calling post api's. Figure X shows how the AngularJS controller passes the appropriate data to the API. The full code for the registration system is shown in Apendix 3.

In passing the information from the controller to the API I encountered a problem. AngularJS sends post data in a different way to most other languages. As a result of this the following lines of code had to be added to the PHP files. (This code was taken from <http://corpus.hubwiz.com/2/angularjs/15485354.html>)

```

if ($_SERVER['REQUEST_METHOD'] == 'POST' && empty($_POST)) {
  $_POST = json_decode(file_get_contents('php://input'), true);
}

```

Figure 3.3 shows what the front end for the login and registration screens look like on the front end on the system (from the perspective of a One Plus Two device.)

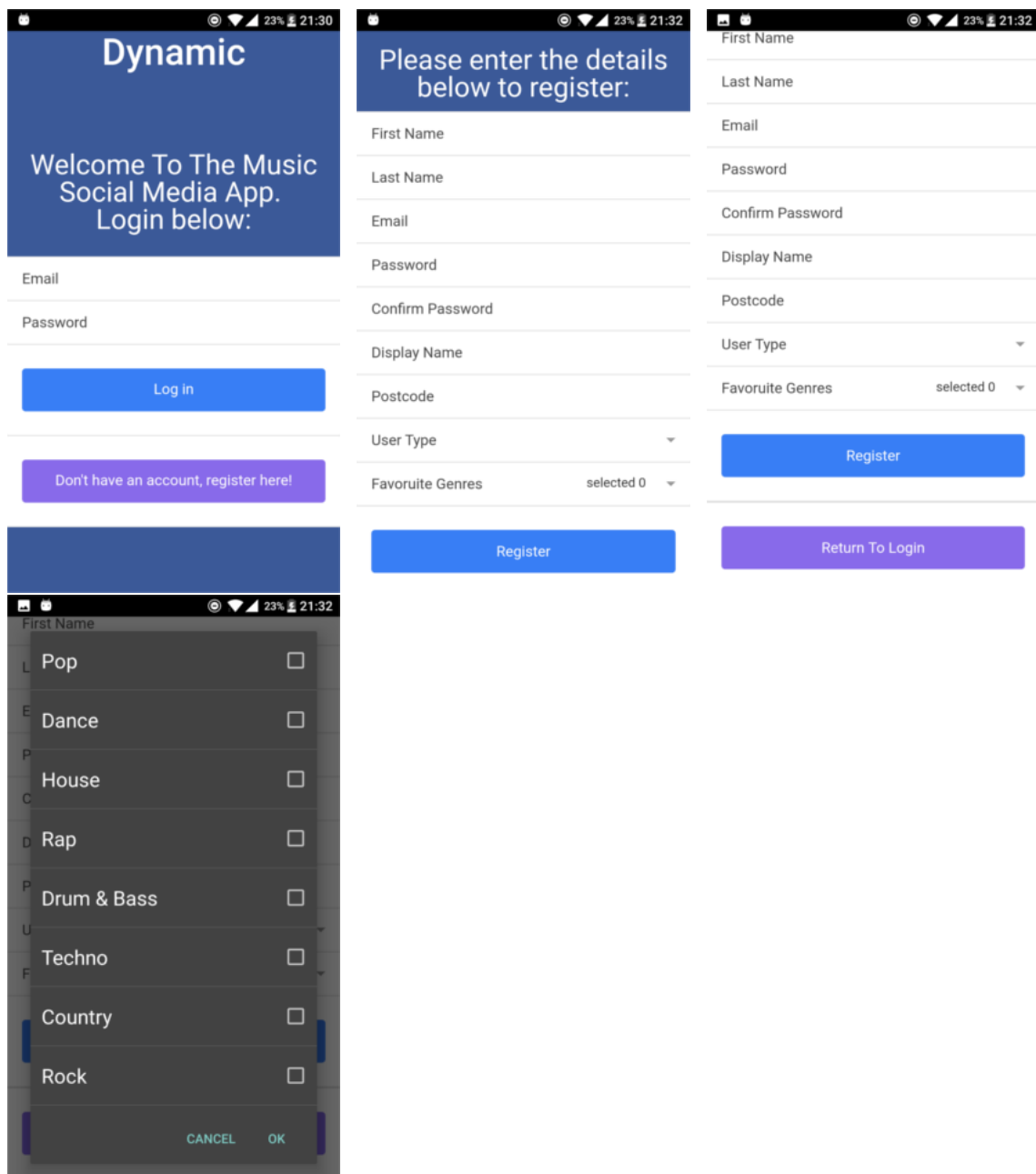


Figure 3.4: Screenshots of registration system.

3.1.3 Validation

Having successfully got the front end interacting with the back end it was important to ensure that all of the data being sent over was valid. I decided first of all to validate the data on the front end so I ensured that the user had filled in all of the appropriate boxes and used a regex to ensure that the email address they entered was correct.

It was then necessary to create some more API files as each user had to have a unique email and display name files called checkemail.php and displayname.php were created these files run SQL queries to ensure that the email address and display name which the user entered are unique.

Figure 3.4 displays an example of what happens when a user tries to register an account with an email address which has already been used and when a password is not long enough.

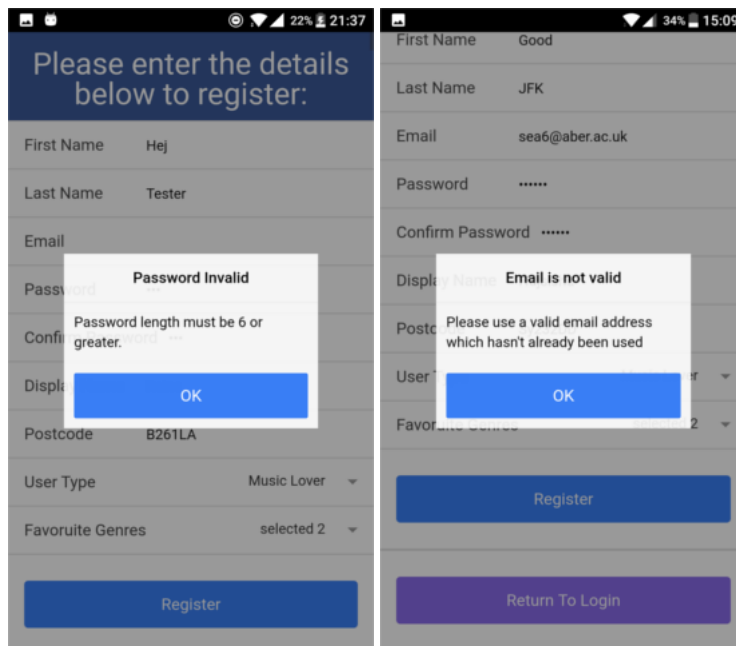


Figure 3.5: Validation Screenshots

3.2 Posting to a feed

There were multiple ways in which a user posting to a feed could be carried out. It was decided that a users posts would be stored in the database and would be retrieved from the database at appropriate times. As the relationship between a user and a post is many to many a new table was created in the database called feed.

A API file called feed.php was created this file takes in two post variables a users email and a users post (the string the user would like to add to their feed.) This file then uses the users email and runs a sql command to get the users id. This id is then placed into the feed table along with the users post variable.

The front end of the system worked in a way which was very similar to the registration system. The view of the front end was simply a text input field and a button (as shown in Figure 3.5) which when clicked would call an action in the controller.

This controller would then pass the appropriate variables to the API, using \$http.post in the same way the registration system worked. Finally a message would display to the user to let them know they have posted, this is shown in Figure 3.5.

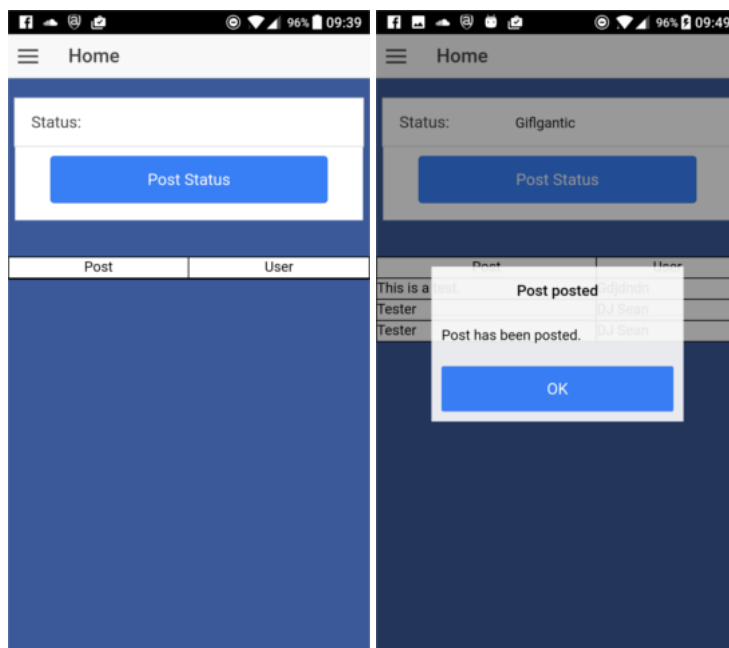


Figure 3.6: Validation Screenshots

3.3 Creation of Events

An important component of the mobile application was that users with the type venue owner could create events. Creating events is split into two different parts, actually adding the venue where events will take place to the app and then the actual creation of an event.

3.3.1 Adding a Venue

The purpose of adding a venue to the app is so that a venue owner can quickly create multiple events at the same venue and they don't have to enter the venue's details every time. The system for adding a venue was designed in a way that should be simple for the venue owner to add a new venue. They simply had to navigate to the 'Add a venue' page and enter the appropriate details as shown in Figure X.

The system worked in the same way as the registration system in how it passes the data to the backend.

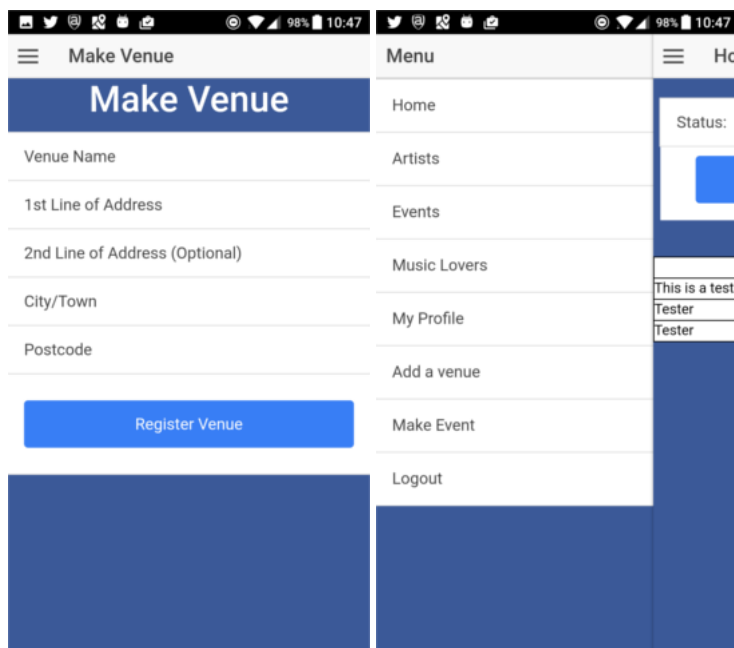


Figure 3.7: Front End for adding a venue

3.3.2 Adding an Event

Adding an event requires the user to already have a venue associated with them, consequently a message is displayed telling the user to add a venue if they don't already have one as shown in Figure X.

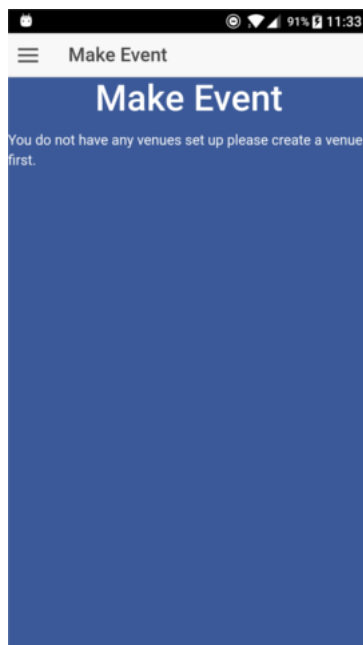


Figure 3.8: Message which displays if the user has no venue.

Then once the user has created a venue they can create an event. The user simply fills in the

appropriate details to create an event. The three drop down options on the page event venue, closest genre of event and artists performing are populated through API's. In terms of the event venue an API is called which gives all of the venues associated with the user logged in. The closest genre of the event is simply all of the genres which are in the database and the artists performing at event is made up of all artists who have an account on the app as shown in Figure X

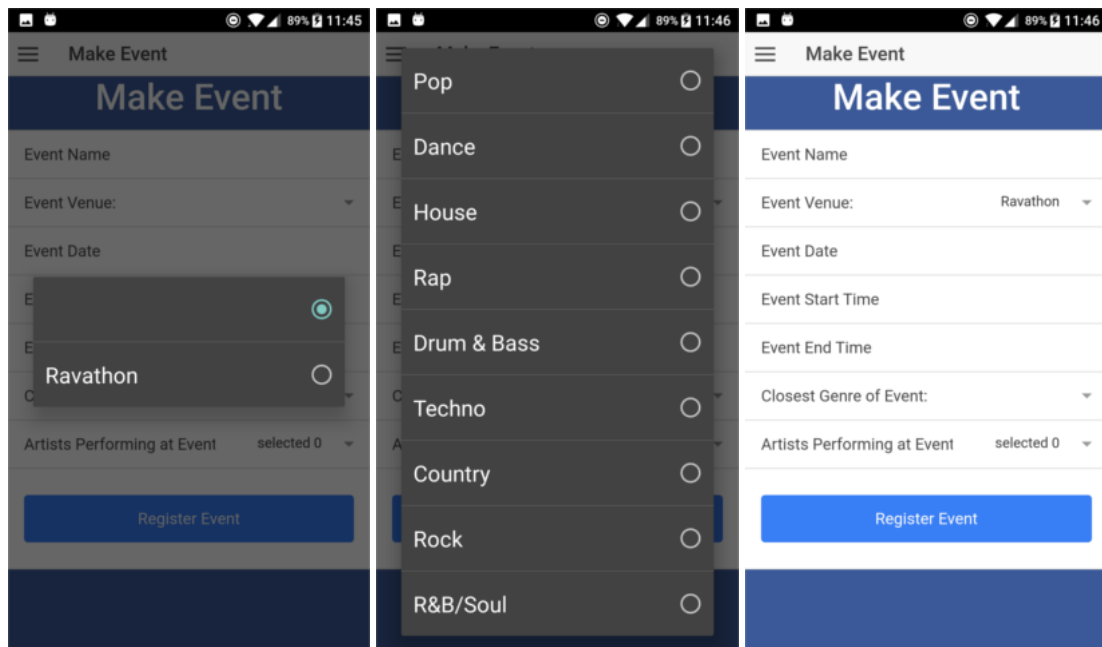


Figure 3.9: Creating an event

3.4 Users profile

Having created the registration and login system the next story to tackle was allowing the user to add a bio and to upload a picture. This picture would act as the users profile picture. Having previously completed the registration system allowing the user to add a bio was rather straightforward. It was just simply a matter of creating a front end which passes a variable to a php file (called update bio.php), the php file then takes the post variable and turns it into a php variable. Finally the php file runs a sql command which updates the users table to have the correct information for the bio.

3.4.1 Camera and FileTransfer plugins

The task of allowing a user to upload a profile picture can be broken down into two separate tasks. The task of actually allowing the user to take the photo or pick a photo from their devices library, and the task of transferring that photo to the backend.

Installing the cordova camera plugin [17] was necessary to allow the user to take a photo or select a photo from their devices library. The actual installation of the plugin was simple, following the documentation for the plugin was straightforward and the app was programmed so that if the user clicked a button saying upload a picture or choose a picture from my gallery then the Cordova Camera plugin was called with the correct options configured.

Figure 3.6 highlights the two different buttons and what happens when they are clicked.

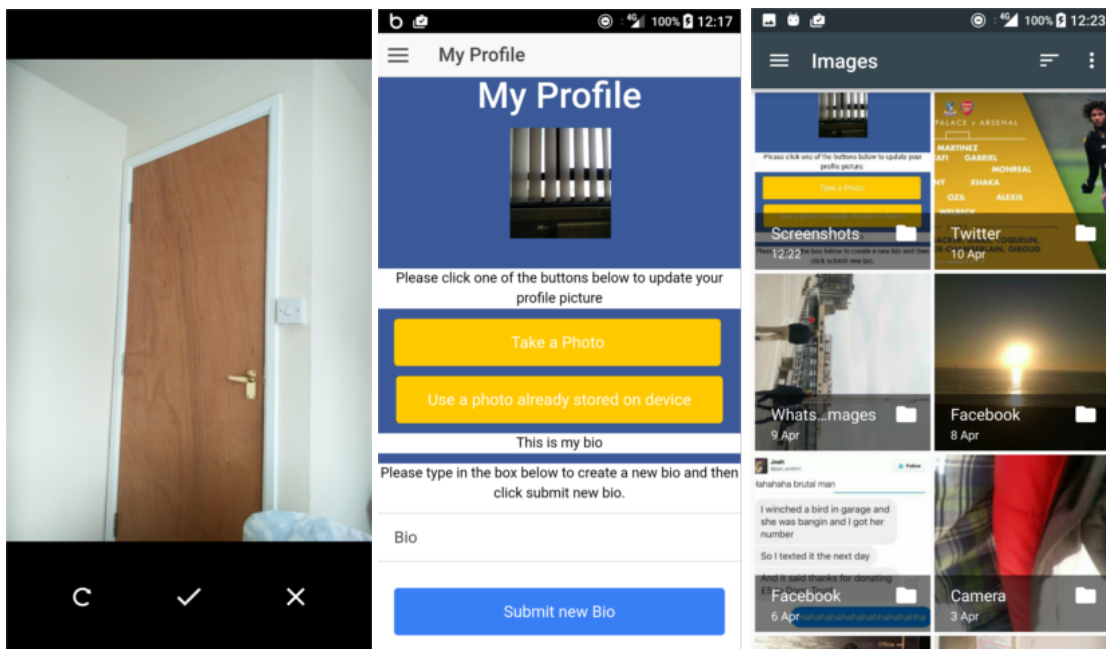


Figure 3.10: Screen shot of camera functionality.

After the user confirms (by pressing the tick) that they want to use the photo as their profile picture the photo is then uploaded to the server. The first step in getting the the photo to upload was to create a API file, this file was entitled `imageupload.php` and is hosted at `seananderson.co.uk/api/imageupload.php`. This file contains some fairly trivial code which just gets the data of the image which has been uploaded and places it in an appropriate folder (`seananderson.co.uk/api/uploads`). After creating the php file the next step was to pass the photo from the device to the server. This was done by using the Cordova File Transfer plugin [?]. This plugin simply takes a file (which in this case was the image) and uploads the file to the specified URL. After implementing the camera plugin one clear disadvantage of hybrid apps became apparent. The time taken for the device to take a picture and then process that picture was significantly longer than it takes when using a native app. This will be discussed in more depth during the testing section of this report.

3.4.1.1 Caching issue

At this stage of the development of the app it became apparent that there was an issue with caching. The issue was noticed as when the picture loaded on the users profile page after the user uploaded a new picture the picture would not be updated.

A variety of different ways was used to try and tackle the issue. Ionic allows for the apps cache to be cleared using `$ionicHistory.clearCache()`; however this unfortunately didn't resolve this issue. As clearing the apps cache wasn't getting rid of the issue it was clear that the problem lied within the browser (which is how the app is ran.)

It turned out that the Chrome browser was caching the results of the API which displayed the picture, as the same API was being called on the page refresh, which was ran once the photo was uploaded. Despite not being the most elegant solution a random number was added to the end of the pictures url.

This meant that the browser would load the new image uploaded into the app as it would have a different url from the old image. The caching issue is clearly a negative to hybrid app development,

```
$http.post(api, data, { cache: false }).then(function(res){
  //Below line is a hack, justified in report.
  var image = (res['data']['picture']) + '?random=' + Math.random();
  var photoDiv = angular.element(document.querySelector('#profile-photo'));
  photoDiv.html('<div id = "profile-photo"></div>');
});
```

Figure 3.11: AngularJS Photo Code.

```
var options = {
  quality:80,
  targetWidth:500,
  targetHeight:750,
  sourceType : Camera.PictureSourceType.CAMERA,
  encodingType: Camera.EncodingType.PNG,
  correctOrientation: true
};
```

Figure 3.12: Camera Plugin Options.

if the app was developed in a native manner then it would allow for

3.4.1.2 Problem with Different Devices

The image camera plugin worked fine on a One Plus Two mobile phone, however when the functionality was tested using a Samsung Galaxy A there was a problem, the orientation of the image was wrong. The Samsung Tablet would take the photo fine but when it actually came to uploading it, it would rotate the image.

One of the options when using the camera plugin is photo orientation. Unfortunately enabling that to be true still didn't solve the problem. Despite there not being any official sources suggesting why the correct orientation doesn't always work the feeling within the Ionic Community is that Samsung devices actually ignore the

3.5 Styling

As ionic uses HTML for its views the styling is done in CSS, SASS can be used as an alternative to CSS if the developer wants. The majority of the app was styled whilst working on each story however it was important to spend some time to ensure that the styling of the app was consistent. This did actually bring up some issues with hybrid app development. Whilst a key feature of hybrid app development is the ability to deploy an app to multiple different code bases; iOS and Android interpret CSS differently. Therefore time had to be spent tweaking the CSS of the iOS version. (Add this if possible Figure X shows a particular part of the app running on iOS and Android however it is clearly inconsistent.)

3.6 Porting over to iOS

iOS mobile applications can only be released and launched through using xCode which is only available on Macs. Clearly this requires some effort however it requires significantly less effort than if the apps were developed in a native manner. If the apps were developed in a native manner then the code would have to be completely rewritten for launch on iOS devices where as when using a hybrid technology it is simply a matter of installing any plugins on the Mac which were installed when developing the Android version and potentially some slight tweaks to the styling as Android and iOS browsers interpret CSS slightly differently.

3.7 PHP files

The backend of the app had over 30 PHP files, this had clearly taken a lot of time to develop. There is a lot of overlap in the files and a lot of them are very similar they just perform slightly different functions. When the system was initially thought off it wasn't expected that there would be so many PHP files and that is why all of the files were wrote manually, rather than using a framework.

This is where using an agile approach for the project had a negative impact, as if a plan driven approach had been used then it would have been realised much earlier on in the project the sheer amount of PHP files which would have to be created and so an appropriate framework would have been selected.

3.8 Technical challenges

There was multiple technical challenges which were faced when developing the app. The first of which was actually learning AngularJS, this was simply a case of trying different things until they worked and looking at multiple different sources online.

The caching issue was a rather interesting technical challenge, despite it not taking a long time to resolve it clearly highlighted an issue with hybrid mobile apps. The photo orientation with the multiple different devices was also an issue as it meant that more lines of php had to be added to the API to ensure that the photo was uploaded in right orientation, therefore a developer would have to spend more time working on the photo upload using hybrid technologies than if they were to use the native app development.

3.9 Actual implementation vs plan

Chapter 4

Testing and experimenting

Detailed descriptions of every test case are definitely not what is required here. What is important is to show that you adopted a sensible strategy that was, in principle, capable of testing the system adequately even if you did not have the time to test the system fully.

Have you tested your system on “real users”? For example, if your system is supposed to solve a problem for a business, then it would be appropriate to present your approach to involve the users in the testing process and to record the results that you obtained. Depending on the level of detail, it is likely that you would put any detailed results in an appendix.

The following sections indicate some areas you might include. Other sections may be more appropriate to your project.

4.1 Overall Approach to Testing and Experiments

4.2 Acceptance Testing

A table was derived which broke down all of the stories into multiple different features. These features were then tested, and a comment was left if the test did not pass.

Story	Feature Name	Pass/Fail	Comment
Registration and Login	Register User Details	Fail	Users postcode does not get added properly
Registration and Login	Login with previously created account	Pass	Works as expected
Registration and Login	Logout	Fail	System appears to logout okay however it loads previous users feed.
Profile Page	Upload picture from library	Pass	Works as expected
Profile Page	Take picture using device's camera and upload.	Pass	Works as expected
Profile Page	Update bio	Pass	Works as expected
Post System	User Posts	Pass	User posts get added to feed table as expected.
Follow System	User can follow other users	Pass	adds data to the correct table and shows as followed on the app
Follow system	User can unfollow other users	Pass	Can successfully unfollow other users
Post System and Follow System	Correct posts display on users home page	Pass	The correct posts display
Create Events System	Create a Venue	Pass	All necessary details are stored in the back end appropriately
Create Events System	Create Events Themselves	Pass	Events are properly created and have a correct link to the appropriate venue id.
Search	User can search for nearby events	Pass	Uses device's GPS correctly and compares with events location
Search	User can search for nearby music lovers and artists	Pass	Uses device's GPS correctly and compares with events location
Search	User can search for events which are happening soon	Pass	Correctly sorts events by dates

Table 4.1: User Acceptance Testing Table

It is clear from Table 4.1 that in terms of acceptance testing some of the code contained bugs for example the logout system was not working properly. Once all of the issues in Table X had been addressed another table; Table Y was created, this goes through the tests which failed in Table X and evaluates whether they now pass.

4.3 Unit tests

It is important to unit test each of the functions within the controllers to make sure that the user of the app wont encounter any weird behaviour. The Jasmine and Karma frameworks were used for unit testing the app.

4.4 User Interface testing

For a mobile app user interface testing is very important. As the user interface is essentially how the user natvigates around the front end and how they submit data to the back end. Whilst there is no simple automatic way to test the UI on a ionic application, a table was derived which shows all of the different buttons and navigation options to ensure that the UI worked as expected.

Location	Button/Navigation	Pass/Fail	Comment
Login Screen	Register Button	Pass	Takes to registration screen as expected.
Login Screen	Login Button	Pass	Logs the user in if credentials are correct if not it displays an error message.
Registration Screen	Return to Login Button	Pass	App returns to login screen on button click.
Registration Screen	Register Button	Pass	Creates an account if user has entered correct information or displays an error if invalid info entered.
Menu (Shared across multiple pages once user is logged in.)	'Home' link	Pass	Take user to the home page.
Menu (Shared across multiple pages once user is logged in.)	'Artists' link	Pass	Takes user to artists page.
Menu (Shared across multiple pages once user is logged in.)	'Events' link	Pass	Takes user to events page.
Menu (Shared across multiple pages once user is logged in.)	'Music Lovers' link	Pass	Takes user to music lovers page.
Menu (Shared across multiple pages once user is logged in.)	'My Profile' link	Pass	Takes user to my profile page.
Menu (Shared across multiple pages once user is logged in.)	'Logout' link	Pass	Logs user out and returns them to login page.
Menu (extras only for venue owners.)	'Add a venue' link	Pass	Takes venue owner to add a venue page.
Menu (extras only for venue owners.)	'Make event' link	Pass	Takes venue owner to add an event page.
Home Page	Submit post button	Pass	Button posts the data as expected.

Location	Button/Navigation	Pass/Fail	Comment
Artists	Sort by 'Recommended Music Lovers'	Pass	Displays correct results
Artists	Sort by 'Nearby Music Lovers'	Pass	Displays correct results
Artists	Sort by 'Newly Joined Music Lovers'	Pass	Displays correct results
Artists	Click 'more info' link on a artist.	Pass	Correctly navigates to the individual artists page.
Artist Individual Page	'Follow' button	Pass	Correctly follows artist.
Artist Individual Page	'Un Follow' button	Pass	Correctly unfollows artist.
Events	Sort by 'Recommended Events' selected and sort button clicked.	Pass	Correctly sorts the events
Events	Sort by 'Nearby Events' selected and sort button clicked.	Pass	Correctly sorts the events
Events	Sort by 'Near Your Home' selected and sort button clicked.	Pass	Correctly sorts the events
Events	Sort by 'Date of Events' selected and sort button clicked.	Pass	Correctly sorts the events
Events	More info pressed on event.	Pass	Correctly navigates to the individual event.
Individual Event	'Add event to favourites' clicked on event.	Pass	Correctly adds event to user favourites.
Individual Event	'Remove event from favourites' clicked on event.	Pass	Correctly removes event from favourites.
Add a venue	Register venue button pressed	Pass	Creates venue on button click or displays error message if fields are missing.
Add an Event	Register event button pressed	Pass	Creates event on button click or displays error message if fields are missing.

Location	Button/Navigation	Pass/Fail	Comment
General	User swipes screen left	Pass	Shows menu as expected.
General	User swipes screen right when menu open	Pass	Closes menu as expected.

4.5 User testing

In terms of user testing the actual questions which were discussed in the experimental methods section (see Appendix X), all of the questions were measure on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 meaning that the user found the hybrid app fast and 1 meaning it was slow. table X shows the results.

Participant	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
2	9	6	8	4	9	9
3	10	9	9	4	8	4

Figure X gives a graphical representation of the results.

4.6 Resource Usage

When considering if hybrid mobile application it is also important to consider how much of the devices resources the app is using. For comparison the resource usage of Facebook has also been listed.

One of the main resources which was compared was the amount of CPU, as shown in Figure X when Facebook was looking for events it used 6% where as when the hybrid app which was developed was also 6%. It does need to be considered that Facebook is significantly larger than the hybrid app which was created consequently the hybrid app uses more CPU for less data than Facebook.

```

User 12%, System 8%, IOW 1%, IRQ 0%
User 211 + Nice 20 + Sys 156 + Idle 1424 + IOW 27 + IRQ 9 + SIRQ 4 = 1851

  PID PR  CPU% S   #THR   VSS   RSS PCY UID      Name
 21640 3    6% S    76 2488912K 167100K fg u0_a163 com.ionicframework.dynamic806889
 1106 2    3% S   160 2965292K 475076K fg system system_server
 5294 0    2% S    65 1809560K 117296K fg u0_a10 com.google.android.gms.persistent
   399 1    1% S    15 151780K 17284K fg system /system/bin/surfaceflinger
 18730 0    1% S   161 1910192K 149128K sm u0_a76 com.facebook.orca
   437 0    0% S    24 286652K 36108K fg media /system/bin/mediaserver
 4692 2    0% S    58 1964768K 151408K fg u0_a49 com.google.android.inputmethod.latin
 12620 2    0% S    71 1607338K 51112K fg u0_a146 com.badoo.mobile

User 10%, System 6%, IOW 0%, IRQ 1%
User 194 + Nice 4 + Sys 118 + Idle 1476 + IOW 11 + IRQ 17 + SIRQ 4 = 1824

  PID PR  CPU% S   #THR   VSS   RSS PCY UID      Name
 18995 1    6% S   174 1920372K 157012K fg u0_a136 com.facebook.katana
   399 2    4% S    15 153264K 17352K fg system /system/bin/surfaceflinger
 18730 3    1% S   180 1937696K 160336K sm u0_a76 com.facebook.orca
 22350 0    1% D    1    0K    0K fg root mdss_fb0
 4692 0    0% S    57 1963800K 153616K fg u0_a49 com.google.android.inputmethod.latin
 23334 4    0% R    1   6532K 1428K fg shell top
 5138 0    0% S   35 1746532K 140864K bg u0_a128 net.oneplus.launcher
   437 2    0% S   24 286652K 36108K fg media /system/bin/mediaserver
    8 0    0% S    1    0K    0K fg root rcu_preempt
   157 1    0% D    1    0K    0K fg root mdss_dsi_event

```

Figure 4.1: Images showing Facebook and Dynamic CPU.

Chapter 5

Evaluation

5.1 Are hybrid apps feasible

In determining whether hybrid apps are feasible alternatives to native apps it was important to consider both the advantages and disadvantages not of the actual hybrid app technologies but of the actual development.

5.1.1 Advantages

- Plugins allow for simple access to platform native APIs.
- Porting to multiple platforms is relatively simple.
- More developers are familiar with web technologies and languages than platform specific languages.
- As with native apps, they can be on platform stores such as Google Play Store and App Store.

5.1.2 Disadvantages

- Plugins do not give full control, such as issues with orientation.
- Developer does not have full control over apps resource usage such as memory.
- Caching issues caused by the browser (which is displaying the app) caching even when developer tells app to not cache.
- Apps do generally seem slower for navigating around different pages as opposed to native apps.

5.1.3 Users Thoughts

As shown in the testing section the general thoughts on the mobile app by general users were positive, the majority of users felt that the hybrid app which was created was as fast as a native app. Having said that from the mind set of a developer there is

5.1.4 Conclusion

As the testing stage shown it would be fair to state that hybrid apps are feasible alternative apps for the majority of applications. There are clear times where hybrid apps would not be feasible such as for games or graphic heavy applications. Even though hybrid apps are feasible there are negatives in that native features do not always work properly and the speed does appear to be slower.

5.2 Future Work

For the mobile app to be released commercially there is some more work which would have to be carried out. This work would include:

- Improving the server - If the app was released commercially then the server would have to be able to handle multiple requests at once and large data, this means stress testing would have to be performed.
- Push Notifications - Would add push notifications to tell users when upcoming events are happening.
- Promotion - Appropriate flyers, web blogs, publications etc. would be produced to promote the app.
- Email System - An email system would be set up, this would mean that a user would have to verify an account after creating it to ensure the email they provided was genuine.
- Password Reset System - A system which would allow for users to reset there password if they have forgotten them.

5.3 Evaluation of app development itself

The app development itself went rather smoothly once the basics of AngularJS had been learned. There were some problems which were encountered such as issues with caching and issues with converting postcodes to lat, long locations. These technical challenges were resolved mainly through research and looking at various online.

5.3.1 Requirements correctly identified

As this project was an investigation as well as the development of the app. It was important that the development was carried out to aid the investigation. In this case it certainly appears that the requirements were indeed correctly identified as the development of the app enabled a judgement about whether hybrid apps are feasible alternatives to native apps to be made.

There was more requirements which could have been added which would have allowed for a more solid judgement to be made. These requirements would have involved using more platform native api's so features such as push notifications along with access to a device's email could have been added to aid the judgement.

5.3.2 Design Decisions

There were some good decisions made in relation to the design of the app. Using ionic was certainly a good idea as it encourages the MVC framework and therefore means that the code created was easy to read and easy to understand.

5.3.3 Project aims achieved

The projects aims were achieved as I established that hybrid apps are feasible alternatives to native applications for the majority of purposes. The aims were achieved by correctly identifying requirements which enabled a sound judgement to be made.

5.3.4 What would do differently

Appendices

Appendix A

Third-Party Code and Libraries

The project was created using the menu ionic template, this was created by running the ionic start dynamic sidemenu from a terminal. [21]

As well as this an external API was used for converting postcodes into lat, long. [2]

Code was taken from [7] to check the distance between two events.

Appendix B

Ethics Submission Assessment

2.1 Ethics Submission Assessment reference number: 6663

AU Status

Undergraduate or PG Taught

Your aber.ac.uk email address

sea6@aber.ac.uk

Full Name

Sean Anderson

Please enter the name of the person responsible for reviewing your assessment.

Reyer Zwiggelaar

Please enter the aber.ac.uk email address of the person responsible for reviewing your assessment

rrz@aber.ac.uk

Supervisor or Institute Director of Research Department

cs

Module code (Only enter if you have been asked to do so)**Proposed Study Title**

Are hybrid apps a feasible alternative to native apps?

Proposed Start Date

1/2/17

Proposed Completion Date

8/5/17

Are you conducting a quantitative or qualitative research project?

Mixed Methods

Does your research require external ethical approval under the Health Research Authority?

No

Does your research involve animals?

No

Does your research involve human participants?

Yes

Are you completing this form for your own research?

Yes

Does your research involve human participants?

Yes

Institute

IMPACS

Please provide a brief summary of your project (150 word max)

My app will be exploring whether using hybrid development are feasible alternatives to native development. I will be using human participants to review and judge the app.

I can confirm that the study does not involve vulnerable participants including participants under the age of 18, those with learning/communication or associated difficulties or those that are otherwise unable to provide informed consent?

Appendix C

Code Examples

3.1 Registration AngularJS Controller (register.js)

```
angular.module('register.controllers', [])
.controller('RegisterCtrl', function($scope, $ionicModal,
$http, $state, $ionicPopup) {
  var apiReturns;
  var api = "http://seananderson.co.uk/api/listgenre.php";
  $http.get(api).then(function(res) {
    var length = (res['data']).length;
    var select = angular.element(document.querySelector('#genre'));
    for (i=0;i<length;i++) {
      select.append('<option>' + res['data'][i] + '</option>');
    }
  })

  // Form data for the login modal
  $scope.register = {};

  //Generic popup as there may need to be
  //multiple popups for this page. Code is based of
  //ionic documentation for popup.
  popUp = function(title, message) {
    var alertPopup = $ionicPopup.alert({
      title: title,
      template: message
    });
    alertPopup.then(function(res) {
    });
  }

  //Return to login page i.e user has decided they dont need to register.
  $scope.returnToLogin = function() {
    $state.go('login');
  }
}
```

```
//Function which checks to make sure all fields
//on the form have been filled in.
$scope.checkFields = function() {
    if ($scope.register.fName==undefined){
        popUp("Field Missing", "First Name Field Was Not Entered");
        return false;
    }

    if ($scope.register.lName==undefined) {
        popUp("Field Missing", "Last Name Field Was Not Entered.");
        return false;
    }

    if ($scope.register.email==undefined) {
        popUp("Field Missing", "Email address was not entered.");
        return false;
    }

    if ($scope.register.password==undefined) {
        popUp("Field Missing", "Password was not entered");
        return false
    }

    if ($scope.register.cPassword==undefined) {
        popUp("Field Missing", "Confirmation password was not entered");
        return false;
    }

    if ($scope.register.pCode==undefined) {
        popUp("Field Missing", "Postcode was not entered");
        return false;
    }

    if ($scope.register.dName==undefined) {
        popUp("Field Missing", "Display Name was not entered");
        return false;
    }

    if ($scope.register.userType==undefined) {
        popUp("Field Missing", "User Type was not selected.");
        return false;
    }

    if ($scope.register.genre===undefined) {
        popUp("Field Missing", "You haven't selected your
        favoruite genre of music.");
        return false;
    }
}
```

```
    }
    else {
        return true;
    }
}

//Function for registering genre of music which user likes.
$scope.registerGenre = function() {
    var api = "http://seananderson.co.uk/api/registergenre.php";
    $scope.register.genre.forEach(function(genre) {
        var data = {
            email: $scope.register.email,
            genre: genre
        }
        $http.post(api, data).then(function(res) {
            console.log(res);
        })
    })
}

//Function which validates that the users postcode they have entered is correct.
$scope.checkPostcode = function() {
    var postcode = $scope.register.pCode;
    $scope.register.pCode = postcode.replace(/\s/g, '');
    if ($scope.register.pCode.length!=6) {
        if ($scope.register.pCode.length!=7) {
            if ($scope.register.pCode.length!=8) {
                popUp("Postcode is incorrect length must be 6,7 or 8 characters.");
                return false;
            }
        }
    }
    return true;
}

$scope.checkPassword = function() {
    if ($scope.register.password.length<6) {
        popUp("Password Invalid", "Password length must be 6 or greater.");
        return false;
    }
    return true;
}

//Function for when the user clicks the validation button.
$scope.doRegistration = function() {
    //Checks all necessary fields have values.
    if ($scope.checkFields()==false){
```

```
        return;
    }
    if($scope.checkPostcode()==false) {
        return;
    }

    if ($scope.checkPassword()==false) {
        return;
    }

    //Validates email address is a new email.
    var api= "http://seananderson.co.uk/api/checkemail.php";
    var data = {
        email: $scope.register.email
    }
    $http.post(api,data).then(function(res) {
        var apiResponse = JSON.stringify(res);
        var correct = "This email is fine"
        if (apiResponse.includes(correct)) {
            if ($scope.register.password==$scope.register.cPassword) {
                if($scope.register.userType=="Music Lover") {
                    var type = 1;
                }
                else if ($scope.register.userType=="Artist") {
                    var type = 2;
                }
                else if ($scope.register.userType=="Venue Owner") {
                    var type = 3;
                }
                else {
                    popUp('No User Type', 'No user type has been selected.' );
                }
                var api = "http://seananderson.co.uk/api/displayname.php";
                var data = {
                    dName: $scope.register.dName
                }

                //Checks Display Name isn't already being used.
                $http.post(api, data).then(function(res) {
                    apiReturns = JSON.stringify(res);
                    var incorrect = "This user name has already been used";
                    if (apiReturns.includes(incorrect)) {
                        popUp('This display name has already been
                        used please choose another
                        display name.');
```

```

var data = {
  firstName: $scope.register.fName,
  lastName: $scope.register.lName,
  email: $scope.register.email,
  type: type,
  password: $scope.register.password,
  postcode: $scope.register.pCode,
  dName: $scope.register.dName
}
$http.post(api, data).then(function(res){
  apiReturns = JSON.stringify(res);
  if (apiReturns.includes('New user added succesfully')>=0) {
    localStorage.setItem('email', $scope.register.email);
    localStorage.setItem('dName', $scope.register.dName);
    if ($scope.registerGenre!=undefined) {
      $scope.registerGenre();
    }
    $state.go('app.profile');
    popUp('Welcome', 'Welcome to Dynamic please
    fill in your profile page and then
    follow some users');
  }
})
}
})
else {
  popUp('Passwords do not match', 'The confirmation
  password is not the same as the initial
  password you entered');
}
}
else {
  popUp("Email is not valid", "Please use a valid
  email address which hasn't
  already been used");
}
})
}
})

```

3.2 Registration API (register.php)

```

<?php
header('Access-Control-Allow-Origin: *');
header("Access-Control-Allow-Headers: Origin,
X-Requested-With, Content-Type, Accept");

```



```

header('Access-Control-Allow-Methods: GET, POST, PUT');

include "config.php";
$connection = new mysqli($server, $dbuser, $dbpass, $dbname);

if ($connection->connect_error) {
    die ("Connection to the database failed."
        . $connection->connect_error);
}

if ($_SERVER['REQUEST_METHOD'] == 'POST' && empty($_POST))
    $_POST = json_decode(file_get_contents('php://input'), true);

$firstName = mysqli_real_escape_string($connection, $_POST['firstName']);
$lastName = mysqli_real_escape_string($connection, $_POST['lastName']);
$email = mysqli_real_escape_string($connection, $_POST['email']);
$type = mysqli_real_escape_string($connection, $_POST['type']);
$dName = mysqli_real_escape_string($connection, $_POST['dName']);
$password = mysqli_real_escape_string($connection, $_POST['password']);
$password = password_hash($password, PASSWORD_DEFAULT);
$postcode = mysqli_real_escape_string($connection, $_POST['postcode']);

if (filter_var($email, FILTER_VALIDATE_EMAIL)) {
    $sql = "INSERT into users (firstname, lastname, email, type,
        displayname, password, postcode)
        VALUES ('$firstName', '$lastName', '$email',
            $type, '$dName', '$password', '$postcode')";

    if ($connection->query($sql) === TRUE) {
        echo "New user added succesfully";
    }
    else {
        echo "Error: " . $sql . "<br>" . $conn->error;
    }
}

else {
    echo "Email is not valid";
}

$connection->close();
?>

```

3.3 Unit Tests for Login and Register

```

describe('LoginController', function() {

```

```
var controller,
    loginServiceMock,
    stateMock,
    ionicPopupMock;

beforeEach(module('app'));

describe('#doLogin', function() {

    // TODO: Call doLogin on the Controller

    it('should call login on dinnerService', function() {
        expect(loginServiceMock.login).toHaveBeenCalled('sea6@aber.
    });

    describe('when the login action is performed,', function() {
        it('if successful, should change state to home', function() {

            // TODO: Mock the login response from DinnerService

            expect(stateMock.go).toHaveBeenCalled('app.home');
        });

        it('if unsuccessful, should show a popup', function() {

            // TODO: Mock the login response from DinnerService

            expect(ionicPopupMock.alert).toHaveBeenCalled();
        });
    });
});
```

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