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7CCSMPRJ

Final Project Report

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Domain Specific Sales System Generator with Augmented Reality

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Thesis submitted as part of the requirements for the award of the MSc in Advanced
Software Engineering with Management.

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Abstract

As the scope of using mobile and web applications in the retail market segment increases, start-ups which identify a niche business opportunity based on vendor-customer interaction may face difficulties in the creation of the software solutions. This paper presents the scoping, planning, designing and implementation phases underwent for the development of a tailored retail system generation platform. Upon inputting the customisation criterion, a complete solution is generated comprising a server component, a database, an iOS mobile application and a website templates, adjusted for the specified needs. The architecture is a combination of the MVC and Client-Server models. The client platforms provide offer management features and the iOS mobile application provides navigational directions through the use of augmented reality.

Keywords: retail, iOS, customisation, generation, augmented reality

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Motivation	1
1.2	Project Aims and Objectives	1
2	Background Theories	3
3	Main Result	6
3.1	System Analysis and Planning	6
3.1.1	The Scoping Process	6
3.1.2	The Planning Process	10
3.2	System Design	13
3.2.1	Use Cases	14
3.2.2	Business Type Model	18
3.2.3	Component Identification	19
3.3	System Architecture	22
3.3.1	Architectural Model	22
3.3.2	Design Patterns	25
3.4	Implementation	26
3.4.1	Technologies and Tools	26
3.4.2	Database Templates	29
3.4.3	Server Template	32
3.4.4	iOS Mobile Application Template	33
3.4.5	Web Application Template	37
3.4.6	Generation Platform	38
3.4.7	User Interface Design	40
3.4.8	Results and Evaluation	41
4	Conclusion	43

References **46**

A Appendix **48**

List of Figures

1	First phase of the project plan	11
2	Second phase of the project plan	12
3	Use Case diagrams for the main and generated systems	14
4	Business Type Model with Business Interfaces	20
5	System Interfaces	21
6	Client-Server architecture[22]	23
7	Customisable system architecture	24
8	Database template for service based systems with product categories . . .	30
9	Augmented reality checkpoint markers on the camera screen	36
10	Barber shop variation of the web application	38
11	Barber shop and restaurants targeted variations of the iOS mobile application	40
12	Work Breakdown Structure into work packages	49
13	Third phase of the project plan	50
14	Fourth phase of the project plan	50
15	Business Concept Model	51
16	System Interfaces	51
17	The filtering options for the offers list	52
18	The map view of the barber shops variation	53

List of Tables

1	Prioritising the Scope Triangle	9
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1 Introduction

1.1 Motivation

As the concept of entrepreneurship has gained momentum and considering the digital era evolution, more and more business opportunities have emerged, encouraging the appearance of new software based companies. One such affected market is composed of software solutions that promote already existing retail businesses to increase their sales and to provide customers with a unified platform for their specific needs. Through such solutions, users can identify and select the best available offers considering criteria such as proximity, price and quality. Also, the target vendor segment is broad, encompassing markets varying from restaurants and bars to bicycle repair shops and barber shops.

One obstacle that such start-ups are facing is that even though they have identified a particular business opportunity, they are discouraged by the need to develop a software solution. As most of the entrepreneurs do not have advanced knowledge in Software Engineering, they need to turn to software companies for the development of their product, which is often costly.

1.2 Project Aims and Objectives

This project aims to develop a platform that provides customisable software products tailored for this category of business ideas. Based on customisation related input from the start-up, the system generates a complete software solution that organises and presents a list of offers for the targeted range of products or services in the form of both a web platform, as well as a mobile application. The features of the software solutions cover all of the necessary functionalities looked for in a retail application. The already existing vendors and their products are displayed in a list sorted by distance, price, review mark or category, which can also be presented on an interactive map for better visualisation. The selection of the best offer is aided by descriptions of the products, photos

and review marks. Once the customer decides on an individual product, he/she has the option of the instant buyout, generating a receipt that can later be redeemed at the particular vendor, following which the experience can be rated. To provide directions to the seller, the customer can either choose to view a map with the shortest route or follow 3D generated images that guide him/her by using the camera through the means of augmented reality. The mobile application also provides notifications features for the current appointments, as well as geolocation notifications that let them know they are in the proximity of a favourite vendor. These are some of the functionalities from which the start-ups can choose for their software solution.

The structure of this paper follows the stages underwent for developing a customisable retail solution, starting with an analysis of the market segment and the scoping of the project. After presenting the identified requirements, the planning process is described, followed by outlining and interpreting the system architecture and design. Finally, the implementation approach is related in detail, and the final results are interpreted.

2 Background Theories

The scope of this project is to generate customisable solutions that connect vendors and customers by managing and displaying special offers and discounts. The particular product or service segments regard only the systems resulted from the generation process. However, as all aim to provide similar software platforms, there are resemblances concerning the overall scope and customer interaction method. To understand the need for such a retail system, the targeted market segment requires being analysed.

Retail companies have already started taking an interest in mobile solutions for more than seven years, aiming to take advantage of their technological expansion through advertising, information gathering and targeting promotions[7]. However, the primary reason that mobile retail solutions offer is given by the very nature of the device. Being a portable and personal object, these devices have a much larger role than just telecommunications. Providing the means of both organising every aspect of everyday life and a portal towards social interaction and media, the mobile devices are in constant use, thus providing broad scope for the retail market[21].

These factors are proven by the significant increase in the percentage of time spent for shopping on mobile devices in contrast to desktop platforms. Whereas in 2013 the time spent on mobiles for retail purposes was 46% and 54% on desktop[1], the percentage in 2017 has increased in favour of mobile devices with 18%, reaching 64%[16], thus outbalancing the scale and becoming the primary medium for this segment. As a result, in addition to the vast applicability of the customisable software platforms, the market section proves to be very favourable.

The previous analysis has shown that the retail market division has been positively affected by the impact of web and mobile applications expansion. Due to the advancements in mobile technologies and the devices miniaturisation, the range of software

solutions has expanded, encompassing almost all social domains. Although simplistic in comparison to industrial systems, mobile applications have reached high levels of profitability and allow the centralisation of data on remote platforms, where it is processed and conveyed seamlessly to the users.

One such existing software solution is the 'Too Good To Go'[5] mobile application, which targets restaurants and taverns that are legally required to throw away excess food at the end of the day, providing a platform through which customers can purchase the leftovers at meagre prices. This benefits both the customers and the restaurants by increasing sales, offering cheap food alternatives and reducing the high amount of thrown away products. Even though 'Too Good To Go' targets only unsold food, it has shown great business value, expanding from only a London focused application to over 10 European cities. The great success of this application is the primary incentive for this project's target, this being but one of numerous niche segments that benefit from the design of such a software platform. The rest of the markets will be more easily available using this project's customisable retail system.

Their solution consists of both Android and iOS mobile applications, which display the offers either in the form of a table or a map based on proximity and stock. Category based filtering of the restaurants has also been featured in a recent update of their mobile solutions. The customers have the option of an instant buyout for any particular offer and can only redeem it at the restaurant between closing hours. Another functionality of this mobile application is the storage of credit card details for more seamless transactions, as well as increased security. Also, it offers the possibility to rate previous experiences for other customers' future reference. The system does not present many functionalities, as it is focused on the scope and providing a simple and quick mobile solution.

The 'Appsmakerstore'[2] system is a web platform that provides the means to cre-

ate a customisable retail mobile application for both the iOS and the Android mobile operating systems. Even though it does not target vendors based upon specific types of products or services, its relevance derives from the feature of deploying mobile software solutions only by using functionalities filtering systems and a graphical interface for the clients. This is similar to this project's solution, the only differences being the overview design of the generated mobile applications and the list of functionalities that the client can choose from.

As the 'Appsmakerstore's generated applications fall under the retail category, they provide targeted features from which the customers can choose for their tailored applications. The list includes displaying the available products, managing the client's shopping cart, real-time order and requests processing, displaying promotions, photo galleries, push notifications and loyalty systems. Also, one of the more exciting features is geolocation alert messaging that has the scope to attract customers when they are in the proximity of venues.

The system also allows their clients to manage and update the mobile applications' content remotely, further enhancing the possibilities of seamless customisation. However, this feature is possible through the 'Appsmakerstore's hosting and maintenance package, through which they are the ones who publish the clients' solutions to the AppStore and Google Play. However useful this option is, this project's system aims to generate the software platforms and to offer the clients complete control over their product.

3 Main Result

This chapter provides a detailed description of the process through which the proposed system has been created. Starting from the requirements elicitation process up to the implementation and testing phases, the step by step workflow of the project is reported in the following sections.

3.1 System Analysis and Planning

The scope of this project is to develop a platform that provides customisable software products tailored for correlating vendors and customers in the form of both a web platform and a mobile application. To ensure that both the designing and the implementation phases converge to the successful attainment of the project's goals, project management techniques have been applied. As a result, some deliverables have been created to help identify the specific requirements of both the primary and generated systems, as well as to plan and organise the development phase. These deliverables consist of the Conditions of Satisfaction, the Requirements Breakdown Structure, the Work Package Breakdown and the project's development schedule.

3.1.1 The Scoping Process

The analysis of the project's scope leads to the identification of the Conditions of Satisfaction, which provide the means of establishing when the project has reached the end stage. The COS outlined for this project are:

1. A fully-functional solution is generated in less than 10 minutes.
2. The customers are provided with two different means of using the system.
3. The system customisation options cover most types of vendors.

Having determined the success criteria of the project, the properties of the end system could be established. Derived from the scope of the project, the core functionalities of the system comprise the high-level requirements, which form a necessary and sufficient set for the attainment of the goal [9].

1. A complete system is delivered based upon specific requirements and features.
2. The solution presents a list of offers for the chosen product or service categories based upon distance, rating score or offer value.
3. The chosen offer can be purchased and redeemed at the location.

This provided a sufficient base for generating an initial Requirements Breakdown Structure. The initial step for identifying the core features of the system was decomposing the high-level requirements into necessary functions and sub-functions. However, due to the complexity and dynamic nature of the end-solution, the set of system requirements has always been adapted throughout the development process. The final form of the Requirements Breakdown Structure is:

1. A complete system is delivered based upon particular criterion and features.
 - 1.1. A customisation platform is provided to the client.
 - 1.1.1. The client can choose a system based upon location, product or service.
 - 1.1.2. The system must be suitable for offers of different categories.
 - 1.1.2. The client can customise the appearance of the end-system.
 - 1.2. iOS and Web applications, server and database templates are created.
 - 1.2.1. Database templates matching any combination of customisation criteria are designed.
 - 1.2.2. A server component template is created.
 - 1.2.3. An iOS application template is created.
 - 1.2.4. A Web application template is created.
 - 1.3. The necessary and sufficient set of features and functionalities for the generated

system are identified.

- 1.3.1. Any solution provides rating, directions and offer description features.
 - 1.3.2. Product or service based solutions offer the possibility of offer purchasing.
 - 1.3.3. Service based solutions provide an appointment management system.
2. The solution presents a list of offers for the chosen product or service categories based upon distance, rating score or offer value.
- 2.1. An updated list of offers is displayed, specifying the distance from the customer's current position.
 - 2.1.1. The system can locate the customer's current position.
 - 2.1.2. Customers can view all the offers within a 50-kilometre radius.
 - 2.2. The customer can filter the list of offers.
 - 2.2.1. The list can be sorted by proximity, rating score or offer value.
 - 2.2.2. Customers can manage their favourite locations list.
3. The preferred offer can be viewed, purchased and redeemed at the location.
- 3.1. The solution provides details about the vendor and the location.
 - 3.1.1. The customers can view the description, rating mark and available offers for any location.
 - 3.1.2. The system provides directions to the location via GPS or through Augmented Reality.
 - 3.1.3. Customers can provide a rating mark after purchasing an offer.
 - 3.2. Customers can purchase offers with credit and debit cards.
 - 3.2.1. Customers can add credit to their accounts.
 - 3.2.2. The vendors are transferred the value of an offer when purchased.
 - 3.2.3. The customers receive receipts for their purchases.

Following this set of requirements ensured the generation of autonomous systems suitable for any product or service. The presentation components provide all the necessary functionalities needed in customers' search for the best-suited offer, as well as a platform for loyalisation by enabling them to select their favourite vendor locations.

Variable / Priority	Critical (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Flexible (5)
Scope	x				
Quality		x			
Time			x		
Cost				x	
Resource availability					x

Table 1: Prioritising the Scope Triangle

Also, this Requirements Breakdown Structure helped in identifying the customisation criteria necessary for covering most of a potential client's requests. As a result, a Project Overview Statement was written to record and maintain a reference to the initial decisions for the project.

The next step towards identifying the best-suited approach to developing the system was prioritising the Scope Triangle. The scope of the project is the most critical aspect, as it must target the needs of a vast number of both customers and vendors, thus making it prone to revisions. The system's quality is of close importance, as it is essential to acquiring and maintaining a good customer base. Having less than three months for all of the phases of development, the time for creating such an extensive project is short, proving to be the third most critical aspect. Despite that, the priority is developing a comprehensive and reliable system. The resource availability and the cost could turn out to be an issue in the development of a complete solution. However, these aspects are least likely to change as they are outlined from the beginning.

While the project started with a clear goal, the solution was not yet fully identified at the time. Even though a minimum set of requirements was identified, both the primary and the generated systems were not clearly outlined. Also, further functionalities for such a retail system could have been identified further on. Based on these factors, the analysis conducted previously, as well as on the importance of the project and the amount of time available, the chosen approach towards developing the systems was the

Agile Project Management. Thus, the Adaptive Project Management Life Cycle was adopted, outlining the conclusion of the project's scoping phase.

3.1.2 The Planning Process

Having identified the initial requirements for the system, a project plan was outlined in order to organise the following stages of the development process. This provided a clear roadmap for the sequence of steps that needed to be followed as to minimise uncertainty and increase efficiency. However, as the Adaptive lifecycle was chosen as the PMLC, identifying clear tasks and creating an overall schedule was hindered by the large complexity. The approach to solving this issue and maintaining awareness of the progress and results is described in this section.

As the depth of the Requirements Breakdown Structure was not known after the features level, the solution could not be defined yet. Thus, the planning process started with documenting and creating an initial plan using a board and sticky notes. This task provided a good initial approach, as it helped in transforming the features of the RBS into work packages and estimating the duration and complexity of every one of them as can be seen in Figure 12 in the Appendix. This was followed by organising the identified work packages using a software tool to maintain persistency and to enhance the visual aspect of the schedule.

Not having an explicit description of the solution, the work packages were arranged into different development phases, following Agile development guidelines [23]. All phases ended with a feedback loop to assess their completion, helping to determine if the next phase could start or if a new cycle of the current step should be launched to shape further the work packages involved. Following this model aided in managing the complexity and uncertainty of the project, every cycle converging to a complete solution. Five development stages were planned, each starting with a partial perception of its expected result and based upon certain assumptions about the input received and

completion level of the previous cycles, thus establishing the five major milestones of the project. Aiming both to fulfil already existing tasks and to identify new functionalities for the system resulted in the definition and completion of the end system.

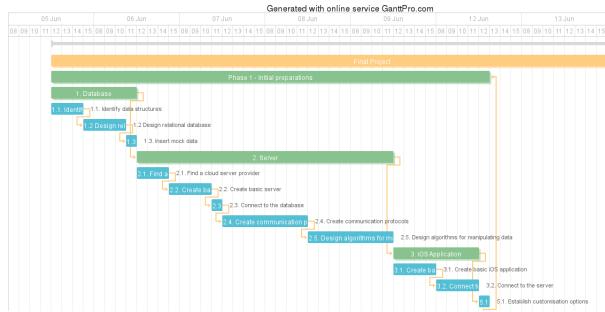


Figure 1: First phase of the project plan

The first phase was the most crucial as its primary purpose was to identify and perform the abstraction of all the business entities involved in the system. Also, the data structures had to be defined to start designing a coherent database structure. This was particularly challenging as the elements this system targeted were subjective and based upon customer preferences, so the requirements analysis performed had to be extensive. Further on, the server component had to be designed and implemented as it was responsible for all the generated system's business logic, acting as a middle point between the database and both the iOS and Web clients. The first milestone was considered reached when the server, the database and a rudimentary iOS mobile application were created and the communication between them was functional, these components representing the deliverables of the initial stage.

The second phase comprised the work packages related to the iOS application template. The launching of this stage implied that the server was active and that the system's functionalities were already implemented. Thus, the iOS client development stage would revolve around presenting the information received from the server and the specific mobile features of the system. However, this was expected to be a time consum-

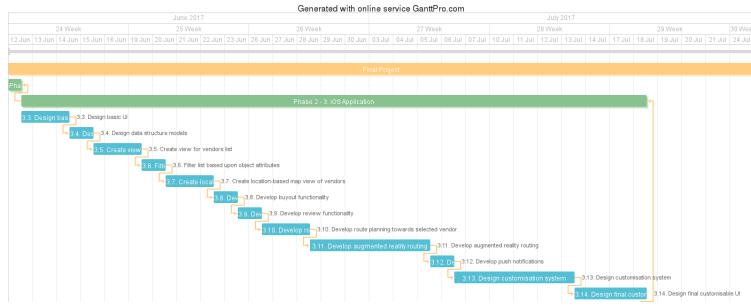


Figure 2: Second phase of the project plan

ing and of a high importance process as this component is the main interaction point with potential customers. Also, the augmented reality feature increased the level of uncertainty for this cycle. The deliverable of this phase was a fully functional iOS mobile application template, upon the completion of which the second milestone was considered to be reached.

The third phase of the project schedule (Figure 13 in the Appendix) plans the work packages responsible for the creation of the Web application and the generation platform. This stage was expected to be less complicated than the iOS application development, as some features were not included in this client platform, because they had to make use of particular hardware functionalities not available to a browser, such as geometric sensors and video camera usage. However, the primary generation system proved to be more complex than expected, requiring an extra cycle for the completion of this phase. The milestone was reached when all of the established features were implemented, the deliverable being a functional client Web interface template and a generation system.

The fourth and fifth phases (Figure 14 in the Appendix) consisted of deploying, debugging and testing the overall system, thus being dependent on the deliverables from the previous cycles. Extra time was allocated for each work package involved, as neither of the components was yet extensively tested. Thus, a time margin was granted for fixing any system or logic issue that became visible. Reaching the milestone of the fifth stage

implied that the project's solution was identified and created, this being asserted by evaluating the system based upon the success criteria of the Conditions of Satisfaction.

3.2 System Design

As an Agile project, the functionalities, features and even requirements may change throughout the development process. To increase the efficiency and reliability of the software solution, Model Driven Development has been chosen as the primary approach for designing and implementing both the main and generated systems. Through model creation and transformation, the complexity of the project will be reduced. As the initial step towards developing the solution is the abstraction of the components and interactions, this will aid in maintaining the core functionalities throughout the usage of multiple types of programming languages, as well as in the case of changing an already used technology. Also, following MDD techniques provides clear steps in case of changing or reusing the components involved [14]. This section aims to present the steps taken for outlining the resulted overall system design.

The first step towards identifying and defining the main functionalities and components of the system is to create a Platform Independent Model. The system model regarding the core domain notions and software independent structures helps to convey the high-level functionalities of the system, as well as provide flexibility and reusability across both the iOS and the Web platforms. This has been achieved by outlining the Business Concept Model based upon the business requirements identified in the previous section, in addition to the system requirements resulted from establishing the Use Cases for the two systems described by this project [19]. The Unified Model Language was chosen to present the elements of all the design and architecture components of this project.

3.2.1 Use Cases

In order to identify the expected system actions and the dynamic behaviour it must have, some Use Cases have been drafted and linked in a Use Case Diagram. This lead to a more in depth understanding of what the sequences of actions should be, thus giving insight for outlining the system's event processing order. This step also provided the means to recognise the actors involved in the usage of the solution, being able to tailor the functionalities based on their positive experience. Through this process, an overview of the components' workflows was able to be identified, providing the sequence of steps needed to ensure a successful interaction. The most important Use Case scenarios have been described in detail in this section to further establish the system's functionalities and requirements.

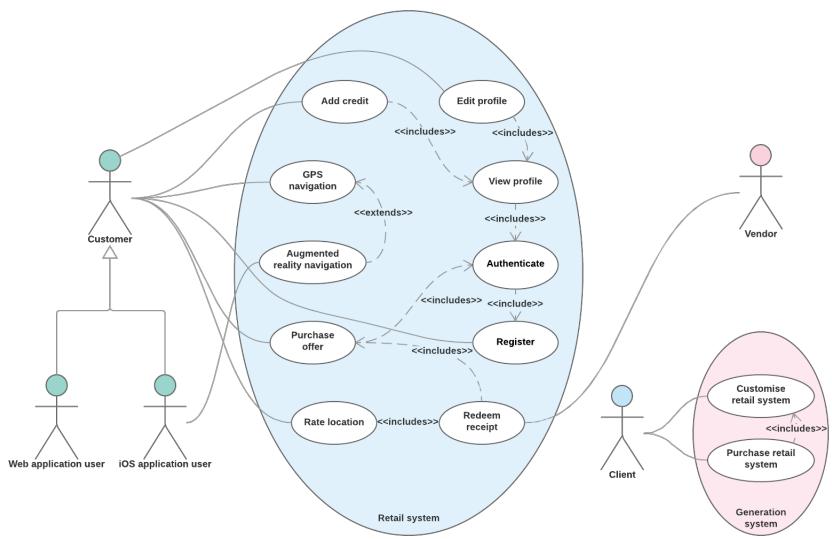


Figure 3: Use Case diagrams for the main and generated systems

As seen in Figure 3 , the generation system has two primary Use Cases for the interaction with the potential clients, which are abstracted into the Client actor. Following the scenarios of the two cases provides the necessary steps for which a solution can be customised and generated successfully, thus comprising the guidelines for using the main

program. The user must first pass through the 'Customise retail system' use case, in which all the generated retail logic components and customisation options must be defined. These include the name of the solution, some classification parameters such as the targeted type of vendors and offer categorising, as well as the colours of the visual elements. The 'Purchase retail system' case uses the client's preferences as input to generate a complete solution and provide the download links for it. This can only be done after the user provides a valid form of payment and the transaction is complete. Thus, this use case includes the first one, forming together the necessary set of steps for the usage of this project's main system.

Most of the success criteria and requirements identified in the scoping process concern the generated solution, as it represents the deliverable for the transactions with potential clients and is the main element that provides business value. Its complexity implied a larger number of functionalities, thus leading to multiple use case scenarios for potential customers. The actors identified for the interaction with the system are the customers and the vendors. As there are two different platforms of interaction, the customer agent can be either a web or an iOS application user, both having a large common base of functionalities to use. However, as the mobile application is the main platform, the iOS user has more features at his disposal, such as augmented reality navigation. Also, taking into account the reliability of the system and maintaining a logical sequence of activities in the user interaction, most use cases depend on the successful completion of the sequences of steps stated in other scenarios.

This applies to the 'Authenticate' use case among others. The system verifies the credentials entered by the customer actor and either grants access to the application functionalities or alerts the user that access is denied. However, a successful pass through this scenario is based on the completion of the 'Register' use case beforehand. Thus, only by creating an account will the system be able to identify the actor as a user with the necessary permissions. This is only part of the sequence of steps needed to undergo

to use the platforms, as the 'Authenticate' scenario is included in most of the others.

Adding credit to an existing account implies that a customer has already authenticated, this use case regarding both types of users. The topping up process is of high importance for the system as it is required for the purchasing of offers, the primary revenue source of the vendors and the potential clients. Thus, a scenario has been outlined in order to establish the required steps for customers to credit their account successfully.

'Add Credit' success scenario:

1. Customer accesses the profile page (having authenticated beforehand)
2. Customer selects to add credit
3. Customer enters the desired amount
4. Customer enters card credentials
5. System authorises the crediting
6. System alerts customer of the successful transaction
7. System credits the customer's account

Extensions:

- 5b. System rejects the transfer
 - 4b.1. Customer may reenter the card credentials or may cancel

One of the most important scenarios for the attainment of the project requirements is the successful completion of a purchasing and redeeming cycle. This sequence of actions ends with the vendor actor proceeding with claiming a valid receipt. However, there are a number of successive use cases included in this process. After the authentication, the next important step is to undergo the 'Purchase offer' scenario:

'Purchase Offer' success scenario:

1. Customer authenticates
2. Customer browses the offers and selects a location

3. System provides appointment intervals (service based vendors)
4. Customer chooses an appointment interval (service based vendors)
5. System authorises the purchase
6. System provides an electronic receipt

Extensions:

- 5b. System rejects the purchase
 - 5b.1. Customer may add credit or may cancel

The last step for redeeming a receipt can only be initiated by an iOS application user, as an initial requirement of the system and as the web component is dedicated to desktop users for the initial version. Thus, after a customer purchases an offer, he is expected to redeem it at the selected location in between the established hours (either between the location's hours for the product based solution or in the appointment interval selected for the service based systems). The main actor in redeeming a receipt is the vendor, as by doing it personally is the only way to ensure that each offer is checked out only once.

'Redeem Receipt' success scenario:

1. Vendor presses the receipt button
2. System asks for confirmation
3. Vendor provides confirmation
4. System verifies the receipt's validity
5. System approves the redeeming of the receipt
6. Vendor provides the service or product implied

One of the most exciting features of the iOS application is the augmented reality navigation. The system calculates the distance to the selected location and provides step by step directions using the iOS device's video camera. The only actor that initiates this use case is the iOS application user, as this functionality depends on precise measurements provided by mobile devices. However, this scenario extends the 'GPS navigation'

use case, which is available to both types of customers. The scenario is considered to be successful when the actor arrives at the selected destination.

'GPS Navigation' success scenario:

1. Customer authenticates
2. Customer presses the navigation button
3. System presents the options of providing directions
4. Customer selects navigation via maps
5. System presents a map with step by step directions toward the destination
6. Customer follows the directions until the arrival at the end point

Extensions:

- 4a. Customer selects the 'Augmented reality navigation' scenario:
 - 4a.1. System opens the camera with labels for the step by step directions
 - 4a.2. Customer follows the directions shown on the camera overlay
 - 4a.3. System shows an alert upon the arrival and closes the camera

3.2.2 Business Type Model

Identifying the core elements is important as the system will be further shaped based upon them. As a result, some steps have been covered to ensure that the resulting component design is reliable, first being to gather all the elements involved in the lifecycle of the solution and to outline the relationships and dependencies between them. The representations of the domain elements and the associations between them formed the Business Concept Model, an initial design of the entities used and handled in the business area that this system tackles (Figure 15 in the Appendix).

As the project aims to develop a customisable solution, both the primary and the generation systems had to be analysed separately. The abstraction of the main component's elements resulted in a set formed of the potential clients, the main system, the customised solution with different possible types and the orders placed for them.

Contrary to the reduced complexity of the generation platform's business domain, the group of elements that comprise the custom system's field of interaction proved to be very extensive, covering elements from the types of vendors and offers to the connections with the customers.

The next step in refining the business entities was to classify the elements of the Business Concept Model by identifying what components are of a core, dependent or the category type. This task aimed to distinguish the sections which correspond to primary business information, thus forming the starting point of the component identification process. The method used to differentiate them was analysing which were standalone entities and which were coherent only through their relationship with others. The latter could then be split by checking if they provided means of categorising the main elements or just depended on them. The resulted model for the proposed generated system is presented in Figure 4.

The single core entity of the generation component was found to be the Client. The System Type was easily identified as belonging to the category type, while the Customisable System depended on the Order piece, which in turn depended on the Client. Similarly, the customised template system was comprised of two core elements, the Customer and the Vendor segments, while the others were found to be related to the latter. The Category component provides classification criteria for the Product element, in the same way as Type is a category entity for the Vendor core segment. The rest were identified as dependent types for either the main items or for each other.

3.2.3 Component Identification

The acquired data obtained through the abstraction of the business elements and the system functionalities identified through formulating the use cases could then be used to model an initial overview of the system's architecture. However, the components

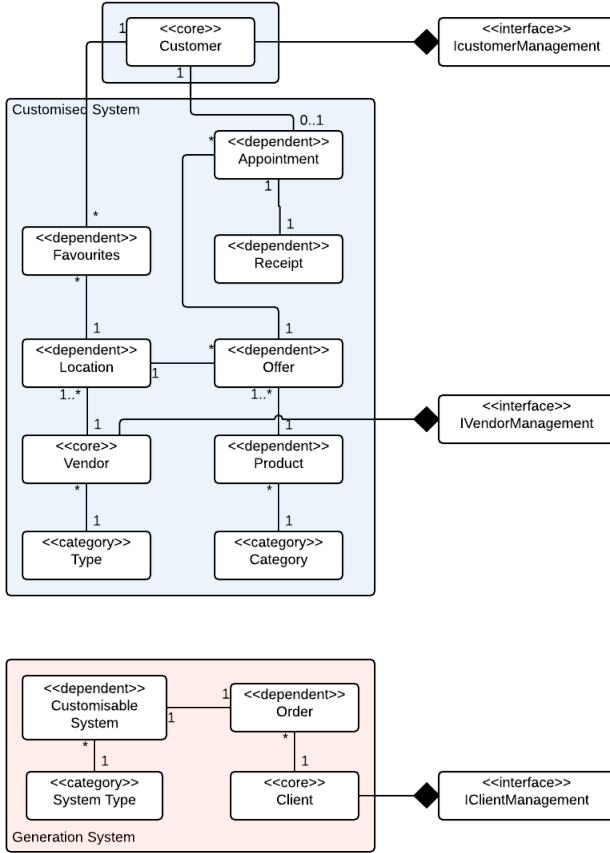


Figure 4: Business Type Model with Business Interfaces

that comprise it needed to be defined and the communication interfaces established. In accordance to software design and architecture guidelines, the dependent and category types of the business model belonged to a span of responsibility of the core types. As a result, the interaction points through which these elements could be accessed would be via the core elements, resulting in the identification of these regions as the system's business components and their access points as the business interfaces [8]. The resulting business components are the Customer and the VendorManagement elements with the ICustomerManagement and IVendorManagement interfaces as can be seen in Figure 4 in the Appendix. The operations present for the business interfaces are the descriptions of the interaction between the business and system components.

Following the same set of design rules, the system interaction with the business elements would be achieved through interfaces resulted from the system's behaviour in the use cases, with the limit of one such interface per every primary use case. In consequence, the system would form a single component with multiple interaction points. The identified system interfaces can be seen in Figure 16. Analysing the use case of the generation component lead to the decision that its only interface would be the `IGenerate` communication point, which provided the means of customising a solution and deploying it. Seven different interfaces were thus identified for the retail system, the first of which being the `IAuthenticate` terminal in charge of checking credentials and creating new accounts operations. `IEditProfile` would be responsible for presenting and managing user profile details, `IAddCredit` would provide the crediting authorisation and updating, and `INavigate` would show the directions based on different settings, as well as handle the augmented reality navigation. The `IPurchase` and `IRedeem` interfaces would be responsible for the managing and redeeming of offers and the `IRateLocation` with the feedback operations.

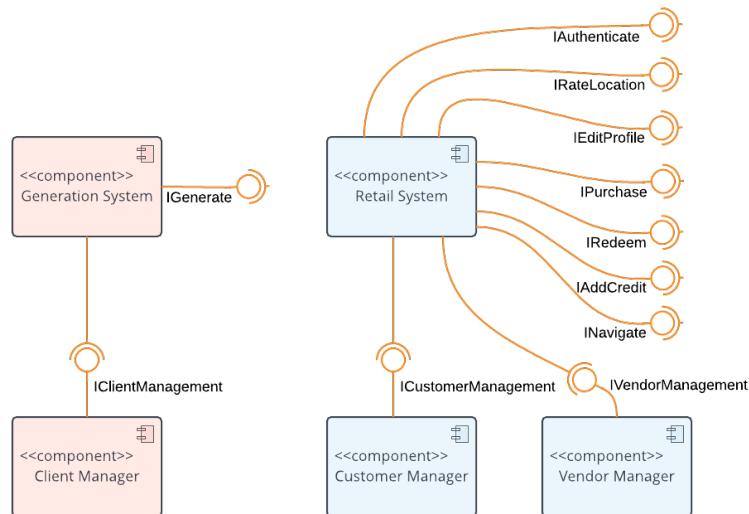


Figure 5: System Interfaces

Having identified and designed both the system and business components, their connection formed a rudimentary architecture of the overall system. By separating the generating and the customisable solutions, the component diagram in Figure provides an initial point from which further analysing and designing the components and communication of both systems would lead to a final coherent system architecture.

3.3 System Architecture

The initial architectural design identified in the previous section provides the necessary data to analyse and decide upon an overall structure. The best choices for a system with a server component and multiple client platforms are the client-server and the N-tiered architectures, both of which provide and define the means of interaction between the two main structures of the system, no matter their composition level. The reason for which they are the best fit is that both the generating and the customisable retail systems require communication functionalities from presentation elements such as web and iOS applications to the system logic elements which reside on remote servers. This interaction is attained by requesting services and data from the server component, which in return responds with the respective information, the reverse not being permitted. Also, these types of architectures target systems with more than one client platforms and only one centralised logic system that manipulates the information and manages the business data, as well as performs more computing intense processes.

3.3.1 Architectural Model

The decision that needed to be made at the time was whether to use the client-server (Figure 6) or the N-tiered architecture for each of the systems. The difference between the two types is that the latter has the components separated into more than two layers, whereas the other has only two main tiers. Each two consecutive layers of the N-tiered structure have a client-server design, thus allowing the elements from the higher-level tiers to request information and services from the next lowest. With regard to the gen-

erating and customisable platforms, the choice was either a client-server architecture or a 3-tiered one in which the data storage component would be migrated to a physically separate server. However, as the time and resources for developing the solution were limited, the decision was made to use the first structure, allowing the possibility of further developing the systems in future releases. The resulted layers were the Presentation and Business tiers. For the generation platform, the presentation segment is represented by the web application that provides the means to customise and order a complete retail solution, whereas the business logic sector is the server-side implementation charged with the actual assembly of the order deliverables. However, the customised retail system proved to be more complex, due to the more extensive business logic and the addition of a data management system. The iOS and web platforms comprised the client side of the solution, whereas the server side was formed of the information computing components and the database.

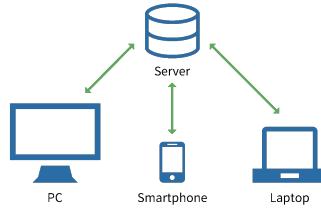


Figure 6: Client-Server architecture[22]

Having established the structure of the retail system regarding the separation of elements in tiers, a more in-depth analysis was performed to identify what architecture would fit best the client platforms. The chosen model for the components of both the web and the iOS applications was the Model View Controller architectural pattern. This ensured the logical separation of the user interface components used to present user specific information as View components, the data that provided the relevant information as Model elements and the actual logic of manipulating and when and how to display them as Controllers. This ensured a more robust and user-friendly structure of the application, also providing modularisation and control access, as well as clearly outlined

rules of communication between components. In addition, the iOS applications implementation language is based on the Model View Controller design, encouraging the reuse of elements and also providing the means of further extending the application functionalities and design [12]. About the current solution's structure, all the major functions that a customer can execute (from managing their profile to navigation features) can be accessed through six view elements. Upon the initiation of an action, the respective view component will send a request to the central controller, which will perform the set of steps required for the completion of the task. This is achieved by manipulating the model components which incorporate the data elements, upon the modification of which the view elements will, in turn, be notified and changed. As a result, the established architecture for the retail system is the Client-Server design in combination with the Model View Controller pattern for the client tier as can be seen in Figure 7.

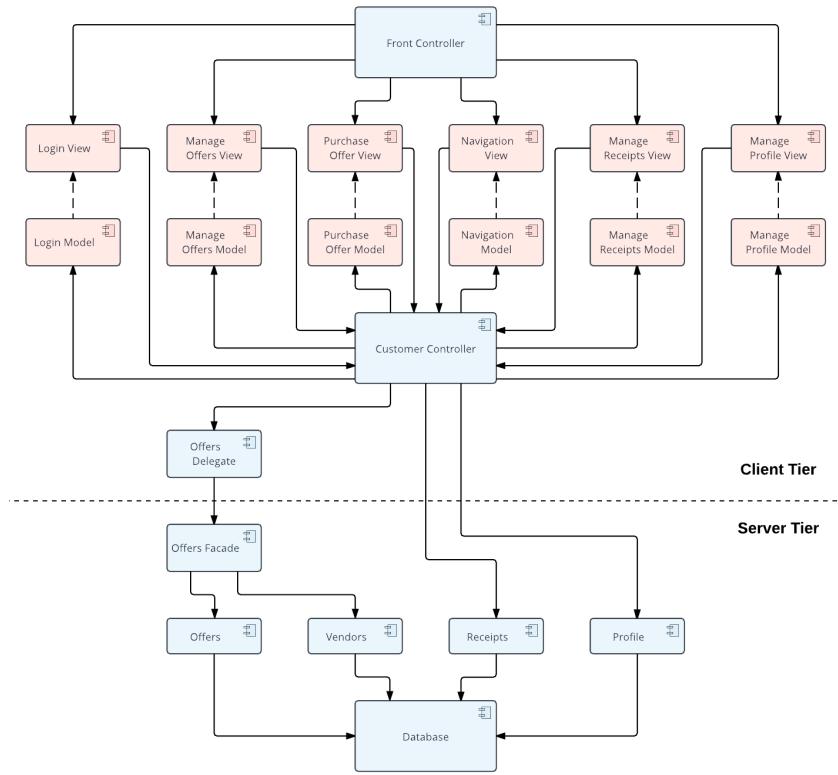


Figure 7: Customisable system architecture

3.3.2 Design Patterns

As the generation system's clients aim to use the software deliverable for large scale deployment, the retail system needs to provide robustness and high speeds in the communication between the client platforms and the server segment. To accommodate these requirements, some design patterns have been used, each targeting specific potential problems that might arise. These patterns provide further improvements concerning either speed or memory preservation and are general solutions identified for problems that have frequently appeared in software systems development throughout time. As a result, some improvements have been added to the system's Model View Controller, and Client-Server combined architecture in both the presentation and the business logic tier.

The first such structure used in the retail system's architecture modelling is the Front Controller design pattern, which aims to reduce the complexity of the navigation structure of the iOS or web platforms. Each view used for displaying information and detecting user intents in the client applications provides distinct functionalities specific to their segment of system logic. However, they share similar behaviour to accomplish their specific scopes, especially initial steps such as the authentication requirement and content retrieval. Through adding the Front Controller component as an intermediate interaction point with the views, the presentation applications seamlessly deal with handling errors and maintaining consistency in the navigation structure.

Another added presentation tier component is the Offers Delegate, which reflects the Business Delegate design pattern. This element has the purpose to reduce the number of connection points in between the two tiers, thus encapsulating the interaction in addition to providing modularity in the case of any business logic modifications. This approach leads to a decrease in the number of requests performed from the client side to server components, as well as providing an intermediate component which can perform mitigation regarding failed requests and also cache certain information, increasing the response speed and saving bandwidth. The identified segment of information that would

be most accessed throughout the system's lifecycle regards the available offers.

The final improvement made to the architecture of the vendor solution was adding the Offers Facade component in accordance with the Session Facade design pattern. Similar to the Offers Delegate element, this model reduces the number of accesses to various components on the server layer. However, its primary purpose is to relieve the presentation tier of complex business logic operations that involve requesting services or information from separate server-side components. Acting as an interface for the client platforms, it helps reduce the dependency of the client tier on the remote components, as well as managing the retrieval of complex information from other business elements and performing the necessary operations locally on the server, providing a better end-user experience due to the increased speed.

3.4 Implementation

This chapter aims to present the processes involved in the implementation phase of the final solution. Having established the expected functionalities and the architecture, the next step was to initiate the actual creation of the software system. Following the timeline set in the planning phase of the project, the sequence in which the deliverables were created was designing the database, writing the server files, developing the iOS mobile application, creating the web platform, finishing with the generating system which required the completion of the other components. In addition to the functionalities implementation and platform specific constructs, this chapter will also present the graphical concepts and elements that form the user interface.

3.4.1 Technologies and Tools

The extensive number of components and functionalities considered by this project lead to the usage of various implementation technologies and development environments, as well as tools for the planning process. The reasons and motivation for choosing them are presented in the following section.

The database manipulation language selected for the data management of the customisable retail system is MySQL, an open-source software provided by Oracle that offers a substantial amount of functionalities. The main reason for which it was the best choice is that it is the primary solution for interacting with phpMyAdmin, a tool that provides great ease in working with data storage for server components. The combination of the two provides features necessary for the successful deployment of a software system such as the insertion, editing and deletion of data entries, as well as trigger functionalities that are executed automatically when previously established events arise. In addition, MySQL supports multiple concomitant connections with most of the existing development platforms without requiring too many resources [20].

The language of choice for writing the server components source code is PHP, a server side scripting language developed for web programming, as well as general usage [18]. Using PHP ensured a seamless database connection process, being used exclusively in the data collection operations and the processing of the responses in the scope of forwarding only the relevant segments of business information. It has also been of use in the development of the client web pages for both of the systems of this project, providing the means of saving user relevant data persistently through creating sessions.

The development of the iOS application could only be achieved by using Xcode version 8.3.3, as Apple Inc. restrict the building process of any application to the usage of this development platform. However, this did not prove to be a limitation as the Xcode IDE offers a substantial amount of innovative features and functionalities, including a user interface generation system that provides ease in setting the boundary constraints and the customisation options of the graphical elements of an application. The chosen source code language for the iOS solution was Swift 3.1, a new version of the native object-oriented and functional programming language for iOS applications [11].

The design of the web pages included in both the retail system’s web client platform and the generation system has been written using a combination of the HTML, CSS3 and JavaScript languages. HTML is standard for writing web pages as all the major browsers render the files into graphical interfaces by following the described structure. This is aided by CSS3, a styling language used to describe the graphical rules of rendering, from customisation options like colours and fonts to the placement restrictions of the visual elements. To further ease the development process, CSS3 provides modularity, being able to describe the rules of all the web pages in only one document. The web applications’ functionalities and logic have been implemented through the use of JavaScript, a high-level language that enables programming the dynamic behaviour of websites[20].

Some external software solutions have also been used throughout the development process for providing the means of implementing the required features within the available amount of time. For example, the payment processing component used in both the web and iOS applications was developed by Braintree, a PayPal service that allows card validation and money transferring functionalities[15]. Danijel Huis’s HDAugmentedReality component is another already existing solution that allows presenting custom visual elements on the device’s video camera screen when it is pointing in a previously established direction[10]. Other external solutions helped in maintaining the graphical interface design throughout the whole system by providing the necessary elements for the iOS platform’s interaction. A drop-down menu component has been used for offering the means of hiding buttons that are not frequently used, and a range slider element helped in the selection of the time interval filtering options. Also, some of these companies required active licenses for granting access to their services, such as Google Maps for the navigation components, Apple for the provisioning profile of the iOS application and Braintree for the payment processing.

Furthermore, a set of tools has been used for the planning, monitoring and control-

ling of the project progress. The Gantt chart presented in the planning process section was developed with the use of GanttPRO's project planning online app, providing the means of breaking down the RBS into work packages and arranging them with consideration to the duration, starting time and phase in which they were involved. This lead to the shaping of an estimated schedule for the development phase[3]. Apple Notes has been used for outlining the structure of the final report and for keeping the record of all implementation comments and variations[13]. The choice of using this software was aided by the portability factor that helped to access the information from any personal device. Finally, the versioning control of the software package was done using the GitHub hosting platform[4]. This ensured a persistent copy of the source code files and the final report, as well as the means to go back to a previous version in the case of error.

3.4.2 Database Templates

As the retail system has to provide access to both global and user specific data for every client link established, whether it is from an iOS mobile application or a web browser, the need for a centralised data management system has been identified. To ensure reliable and atomic connections for requesting information from the global data source pool, databases have been used as the main component for storing and protecting the business particulars of the solution. Also, this enabled the possibility of further extending the functionalities of the platforms as databases have very scalable structures, as well as features for storing a large variety of elements[17]. Also, the database can be programmed to perform specific tasks either at previously established times or upon their modification through trigger mechanisms, a feature useful in the case of the retail system for resetting the offer quantities and appointment time intervals from one day to another.

There are numerous classes of databases, varying in terms of how they perform the data storage. However, the most frequently used are the relational databases which organise the information in tables, providing modularity and many data access methods.

To gather information stored in multiple tables, the allocation of a unique identification number for every entry is needed, which can also be referenced in other tables. Thus, tables can be joined based on the relationships established. This type of database has also been chosen for the retail system, as it provides all the required methods for accessing the centralised data. However, a poorly designed database structure can lead to hard to identify inconsistencies, resulting in the presenting of wrong information to the end user or even in receipt or credit storage mistakes, leading to financially related complications. To ensure that the structure designed for this project's solution is reliable, the database has undergone the normalisation process up until the third normal form, providing information integrity and preventing high levels of redundancy[6].

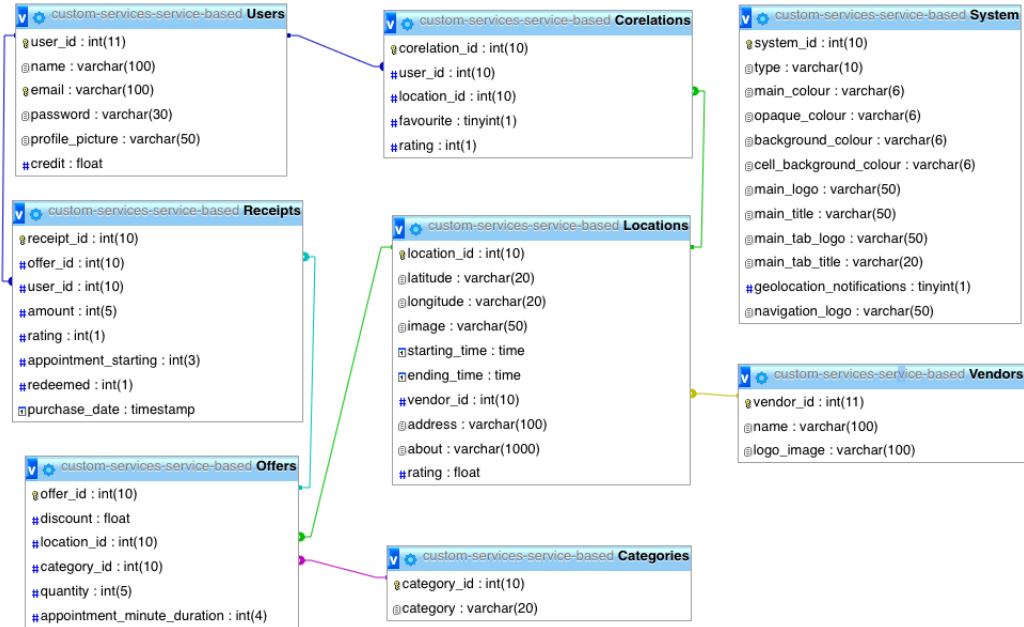


Figure 8: Database template for service based systems with product categories

Creating the structure for the retail system's database started with the abstraction of business entities process undergone in the System Design section. The resulted platform independent model was then transformed into the relational database platform specific model by following a defined sequence of steps. Firstly, the subclasses were included in

the parent elements to eliminate inheritance as this would have lead to redundancies in the database. This process was followed by providing unique identification key properties to all of the resulted classes to further restrict the possibility of having duplicate entries. These keys were then used to represent the relationships between entities by adding a foreign key field in the elements that needed a connection. Although, in the case of a many-to-many association, the relationship was reshaped by adding intermediary entities with references to both of the initial classes. Following this and the normalisation processes lead to the establishment of the database structure. However, the possibility of not having product categories and the three different types of retail systems regarded by the generating solution lead to the division of the database into six different templates. The structure of a service based retail system with product categories is presented in Figure 8, as it is the only variation that includes all of the tables from the others.

All of the templates share the larger part of the structure as the aims of the possible systems still are the correlation of vendors and customers, the differences referring just to two characteristics of the solution. These designs include the Users table, which stores all the customer related information and credentials. However, the credit field is not present in the two variations that refer to location based retail systems, as no purchases can be performed. The Vendors table shows little information as the central part of the relevant data refers to the different locations described in the Locations section. However, multiple sites can belong to a single vendor, thus resulting in a foreign key association towards Vendors. The Correlations table has the purpose of maintaining the relations established between users and their favourite locales, each entry pointing towards the user and the selected location record. The Offers structure stores the special promotions available in their respective locations, including the discount (in the case of location based systems) or price in the field 'discount'. The Categories table is missing in three of the templates as the targeted products or services offers may not belong to various types. The product and service based systems provide the means of purchasing offers, thus storing the receipts in the table with the same name, where the availability

is also recorded. The last segment is System, where the customisation options of the solution platforms are kept to be accessed by the client applications for redesigning the elements and filtering the available functionalities.

Having the possibility of triggering specific actions in the database at certain events was helpful in the case of service based solutions, as the quantity field is calculated automatically based on the appointment duration, the location's starting and ending times upon entering each record in the system. Another useful functionality that can be implemented in the future is setting the database to reset the quantity fields after the ending time of each location to restock the offers and appointments of the next day.

3.4.3 Server Template

Even though the main point of interaction between the retail system and the customers is on the iOS and web applications, having a reliable and well-designed server component is crucial for ensuring the best possible user interaction. The first step in reaching this goal was to rent server space from the DigitalOcean cloud service provider, ensuring that the system will be accessible throughout the implementation phase even from remote clients. Through this process and by configuring the server space with the LAMP stack provided the means to further scale the system in case of an increase in the number of users without having performance and storage space concerns. However, this feature targets only the retail platforms, as the server component of the generation system only has to provide the means for inputting data and generating the solution.

The transmission of information between the client and server tiers is achieved through HTTP, an application layer protocol that uses TCP to provide a more dependable connection for the transfer of data. The choice for this approach was straightforward as this is the primary communication method used in client-server architectures. The iOS and web applications perform HTTP requests to the server files which, upon the

completion of their respective sets of operations, respond with any necessary information. Also, to limit the risks resulted from using this approach, an SSL security layer has been added to the server component, thus providing further encryption by using HTTPS requests.

The server tier of the retail system contains all the business logic required to provide the functionalities of the solution, acting as a middleware between the presentation applications and the database solutions. This was achieved through the component establishment and isolation performed in the architecture design stage described in the previous sections. As a result, the functionalities have been separated and tackled in different script files, each targeting specific data segments to manipulate and forward to the higher tier. One of the more extensive such components is 'service_checkout.php', which performs all the validation and storage operations involved in the purchasing of service based offers. The necessary steps for achieving this interaction start with the validation of the offer and the available quantity, the existence of the user and the required credit amount, and the availability of the chosen appointment time interval. Next, the user details have to be updated with the new credit information, followed by reducing the offer's available quantity. Finally, a receipt is generated and inserted in the database, upon which the customer's new credit value and the identification number of the new entry are prompted to the client application for updating the visual interface with the new information.

3.4.4 iOS Mobile Application Template

The core element of the customisable retail system is the iOS mobile app, which targets most of the potential customer segment. This component was developed with regard to the system requirements identified in the scoping process, as well as aiming to create a robust and proficient solution and to provide a high-quality user experience. Thus, the implementation phase was based upon the architecture established in the previous chapter, as well as following specific development guidelines and best practices. The

functionalities include user session management, offers list filtering, map viewing based on current location, a purchasing system and augmented reality, therefore covering most features of a vendors and customers correlation application.

As the primary goal of the platform is to provide the means of visualising and choosing the best offers available, the three component views of the application's tabular structure target the filtering and management of discount products and services. This is achieved through using a table view element in the general and favourites offer sections and a map view for providing a more visual representation(Figure 18 in the Appendix). The data source of all three segments is an array of offers received from the server tier after an initial request is performed upon the loading of the application. This array is saved in the persistent storage of the application to ensure having a backup version of the global list of promotions. The tables use variations of the array which are filtered based on category, the maximum distance from the current position, time intervals and availability, as well as sorted by proximity, rating score or discount value (the filtering options can be seen in Figure 17 in the Appendix). All these parameters can be modified by the user of the application to narrow down the list to the offers with the most potential. Also, as downloading all of the images beforehand can lead to unnecessary usage of storage space, they are retrieved only when presented on the screen. As such, one of the solutions implemented to reduce the latency produced by the cell renditions triggered by the scrolling gesture is caching the images to ensure that any latency will only affect the application once. Another is using Swift's mechanism for reusing the cell view instances that have disappeared from the screen and changing just the content.

The initial point of the platform is a front controller element which handles the navigation sequence. Thus, as the system targets only customers who are represented in the centralised database, the authentication process is initiated by opening the application. If user credentials are present in the persistent storage of the application, they are verified through a network request, and the main tabular view is displayed, thus reloading

the user session. If the authentication fails or no information was previously stored, the login view is presented with the option of also registering. If a user wishes to change any personal details, the profile view offers such functionalities, as well as the possibility of crediting their account for product and service based systems. This operation implies entering the required amount and debit or credit card details, which are sent to Braintree [15], a payment validation system provided by PayPal.

This credit is used when an offer is purchased, the iOS application sending the request to the server which, upon acknowledging that the promotion is available, returns the receipt details. Service based systems operate on an appointment structure, in which case the application monitors their availability. As a result, if a location is fully booked, the purchasing button is disabled. The receipts resulted from bookings and purchases can be viewed in the Receipts section, where all of the user's previous orders are displayed in chronological order. When available, they are shown in the main colour of the system and can be presented to the vendors or, in the case of the receipts which have been previously redeemed, a rating button is enabled.

The functionality of showing notifications has also been implemented with two different scopes. Upon the creation of a receipt, the iOS application automatically triggers a notification event for thirty minutes before the redeeming is due. Also, if the system configurations allow it, geolocation notifications are set for all of the locations marked as a favourite. This was achieved by monitoring the current position using the iOS phone's location services and checking periodically if the customer has entered a one hundred meter radius area from the site of any favourite location. If so, an alert is presented to inform the user of the proximity. However, the application needs permission for using both the notification and the location services provided by the device.

The most interesting feature of the iOS application template is the possibility to provide navigation directions to any vendor location through augmented reality technol-

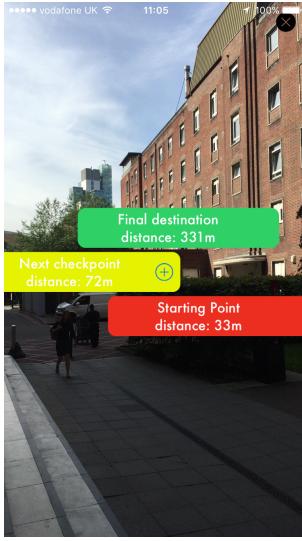


Figure 9: Augmented reality checkpoint markers on the camera screen

ogy, as can be seen in Figure 9. The implementation of this service involves requesting the step by step directions for the journey from Google Maps, parsing the JSON response for the retrieval of each checkpoint’s coordinates, opening the camera for the augmented reality usage and presenting custom markers in the directions of the targeted points. An external solution has been used to accurately recognise when the device is pointed towards a particular point represented in three-dimensional coordinates. However, the navigation process consisting of the location monitoring for identifying when a checkpoint has been reached, and the sequence of displaying them were included in the implementation task on the mobile application. Permissions for accessing the camera and the location services are also required for this functionality. In the case that camera features are not allowed, the customers can choose between using either Google Maps or Apple Maps services in order to receive navigation directions towards the locations.

Finally, the feature that allows the iOS application to be called a template refers to the customisation options of the design and the selection from multiple visual elements based upon the system’s type, as can be seen in Figure 11. When the platform is started, an initial request is sent to retrieve the characteristics of the overall retail solution from

the System entry in the database. Thus, the application detects the type, the presence of categories, the permission to enable geolocation notifications and the customisation parameters. The information is saved in the persistent storage and is accessed whenever a new view is triggered to appear on the screen, in order to set the label text values and system specific images, as well as to change the colours of the visual components.

3.4.5 Web Application Template

Most of the functionalities presented in the iOS mobile platform are also featured in the web application, except for the augmented reality navigation and receipts redeeming. The reason behind removing them from the web template is given by the platform limitations, as this component requires the usage of an internet browser. However, this environment provides better visualisation for the list of offers due to the larger size of the screen.

The initiation steps of the web application component are the same as in the mobile version, the front controller being represented by 'index.php', the root file of the platform. Upon accessing the website, the user session commences, and previously stored credentials are verified through a request to the server tier. If successful, an offer list is populated and the main view is presented. If not, the navigation is redirected towards a login and register page. In case of the occurrence of any major malfunction, an error page is rendered, and the navigation process must start from the beginning.

The steps through which the information is acquired and manipulated are identical to the ones used in the iOS application, as both rely on network requests to the server and parsing of the responses. However, the presentation of the information is different due to the various structures of managing the graphical interface (Figure 10). Whereas the table view cells could be reused in the iOS solution, that feature is not present in the web application, possibly leading to heavily loaded pages. In contrast, the implementation process is simpler, as graphical elements that contain location specific information

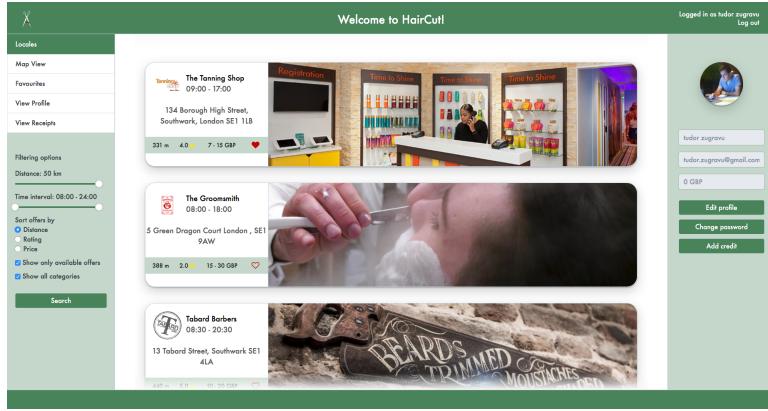


Figure 10: Barber shop variation of the web application

are just appended to the main view while iterating through the data source arrays. Also, the increase in screen size provides the means of presenting the filtering options and the profile details on the same page as the offer lists or map view, leading to a less complicated and possibly more intuitive workflow.

As in the iOS template solution, the current retail system characteristics are retrieved and saved in the user's session when the initial controller is accessed. They are used whenever there is a choice of elements that need to be presented based on the system type. The graphical customisation variables are also set through CSS classes, thus not having to change the appearance of every single element, as the elements are rendered based upon the classes of which they belong.

3.4.6 Generation Platform

The project's primary system was built last as it was dependent on the successful completion of all the other components. The first stage of its implementation was creating the client side web page through which potential clients could input their vendor system customisation requirements and perform the payment. The personalisation criteria for the solutions are the product's title, the name of the targeted consumer section, a set of colours for the graphical interface, the type of system, whether it be location, product

or service based, the presence of categories and the choice of adding the geolocation notifications feature. If the payment process is complete, the generation of the solution is triggered on the server side.

The client platform of the main system sends the vendor platform customisation preferences of the client through a network request to its counterpart on the lower tier. The back-end operations for this segment are different from the retail server ones, as the focus is not on database queries and manipulation, but on the management of the various files that the retail system templates are comprised of. Upon the reception of a request, the system specifications are assessed to choose the best fit for the database structure out of the six different templates. The rest of the customisation options are formatted as an entry in the System table of the database and appended to the resulted file. It is archived together with the solution templates and a download link is provided to the client tier as a response.

The deployment process is described in a 'readme' text file attached to the generated archive, starting with filling in the solution server's IP address and the Google Maps API key needed for the augmented reality navigation system in the iOS client template. For the mobile platform to be released for commercial usage, the application also needs to be linked to an Apple versioning profile. The last step for this component's generation is to provide the folder with full permissions, as this is needed to build the iOS mobile application package. The server and web platform files need to be uploaded to the same IP address specified earlier to grant full access to any remote requests, and the database structure template should also be imported and populated with the system's targeted vendor and offer information. The last step is to locate the web application's configuration file and fill in the database name chosen beforehand, thus leading to a fully functional retail system.

3.4.7 User Interface Design

The main aspect that was taken into consideration while designing the visual elements of both the iOS and web application templates was maintaining consistency between platforms. This was ensured partially by the customisation criteria applied in both solutions. Also, the use of previously established design structures leads to cognitive recognition, thus providing a more simplified user interaction every time the platforms are accessed. Furthermore, the navigation sequences were simplified, and restrictions were enforced to prevent irregularities. For example, the navigation process of the iOS application works by pushing new views on top of the existing ones. As a result, if two pages have links to one another, going to and fro between the two views creates new instances over and over again, thus straining the memory and resulting in increased latency.

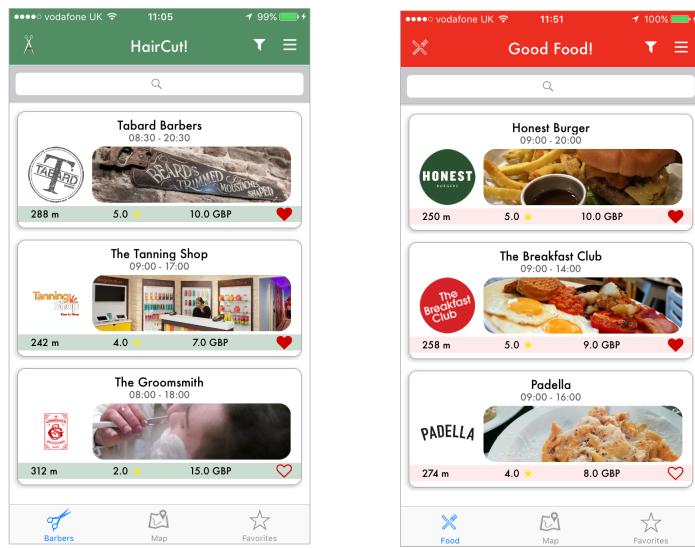


Figure 11: Barber shop and restaurants targeted variations of the iOS mobile application

The customised solution generation implemented in this project implies adjusting the colour palette based on the client's preferences. However, the first version of the system does not allow choosing the position of the graphical elements on the screen. A

previously established layout is provided, the design of which regarded the most strategic points of where the information should be displayed. As such, the only visual aspects that can be changed are the colours, the iOS application's tab bar item logo and the images of the platforms, as seen in Figure. To ensure that the layout rules applied to the pictures do not derange the visual aspect, constraints have been enforced on the images sizes uploaded by the client.

3.4.8 Results and Evaluation

The final solution's development was finished upon the completion of the generation platform, as all the template components have been created and their functionalities implemented before that. Also, the communication processes and the dependencies between them have been defined and applied while building the solution, thus resulting in a completely functional system. Performing an analysis of technical requirements of the system suggested that the results are satisfying. Both the iOS and web applications have an almost indistinguishable latency, except when retrieving the offers for the first time, as the images need to be downloaded. However, the caching feature solves part of having this additional waiting time, even though better algorithms should be used in future releases. The space allocated on disk needed for installing the iOS application is not small, this being a potential problem for the customers. The increased storage requirements are due to the Google Maps component, which is essential for the navigation steps and the map view. However, the dynamic retrieval of images and offer related information helps mitigate this solution by reducing the bundle size. From a user experience point of view, both the web and iOS templates can be considered efficient, customers being able to access any page seamlessly as the number of steps needed to reach any view has been considered when the navigation structure was designed.

In contrast, a limitation of the system is that both the client applications require an internet connection to operate. Storing the data persistently was considered, but as

the information is very dynamic and can change in a matter of seconds, this solution was abandoned for this version. Another major limitation is that the server component was designed based on the LAMP structure, restricting the configuration possibilities. Similarly, the only present mobile solution is for the iOS operating system, confining the customer segment to only iPhone users, as well as adding the requirement of having a device running on the OS X operating system, which is needed for building the application. The last major system constraint is that the customisable retail solutions can only be location, product or service based and not any combination of the three, thus restricting the target offers as well as the customer basis.

The testing of the five template components was performed by considering every one of them as backboxes. Thus, some evaluation cases have been established including acceptance criteria based on the system specifications. As such, the functionalities tested number the authentication, register, user session, profile editing, adding credit, purchasing, redeeming and navigation features. This process pointed to the discovery of some of the limitations and performance issues. However, the acceptance criteria were met for the functionalities, thus indicating that a complete solution for the retail customisation system was created.

4 Conclusion

The main scope of this project was to develop a customisable retail systems generator to be used by entrepreneurs who target specific product or service market segments. The available customisation options cover the larger part of potential target categories. Also, a solution comprised of two different client platforms, a server and a database component is generated in less than five minutes time, thus achieving the success criteria established in the early stages of project planning.

The system's business sector has been outlined, and the development process has been described, keeping account of the different stages of the project's lifecycle. The first step was the scoping process, which pointed to the establishment of the success criteria and the system requirements. Afterwards, the planning stage described how the work packages were scheduled for outlining the development sequence. The conditions lead to the identification of the system expected functionalities which, in addition to the abstract business knowledge elements, formed the components of the initial architecture. This structure was further refurbished and improved by using both the Model View Controller and Client Server architectural stereotypes and various relevant design patterns, the result of which laid the basis for the implementation stage. Through this process, the design components evolved from an abstract conceptual form to classes and structures source code. The tools and technologies used for the development are documented thoroughly and frequently used for similar solutions, being chosen for their applicability for the current project. Finally, the testing phase provided the results required for establishing the attainment of the success criteria.

Even though the customisable system's applications possess all the fundamental characteristics of retail solutions, the final product can still be improved and expanded for an even better user experience. Future work could include adding an admin interface for managing the database and the vendor images, developing solutions for all of the major

mobile operating systems devices, as well as providing the means of targeting combinations of offer types. Also on the lines of the system's structure, database connection APIs could be defined for the case in which a three tiered architecture is adopted. Another useful addition would be to create database triggers that reset the quantity fields after the location closing hours, thus preparing the system for the next day's purchases. Finally, the next version of the templates could include some form of analytics algorithms that compute statistics based on the recorded transactions and frequently visited information segments of the applications, thus providing also insight into customer behaviour.

As a result, the proposed solution is capable of providing competition for the already existing solutions and asserts itself through business logic complexity veiled by a clear user interface. Once the previously stated improvements are integrated, the system will take a complete form and will be distinguishable from a high level of excellence.

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A Appendix

Task name	Start date	Duration h...
Total estimate	05/06/17 12:00	468.00
Project name	05/06/17 12:00	468.00
Phase 1 - Initial preparations	05/06/17 12:00	41.00
1. Database	05/06/17 12:00	8.00
1.1. Identify data structures	05/06/17 12:00	3.00
1.2 Design relational database	05/06/17 15:00	4.00
1.3. Insert mock data	06/06/17 11:00	1.00
2. Server	06/06/17 12:00	24.00
2.1. Find a cloud server provider	06/06/17 12:00	3.00
2.2. Create basic server	06/06/17 15:00	4.00
2.3. Connect to the database	07/06/17 11:00	1.00
2.4. Create communication protocols	07/06/17 12:00	8.00
2.5. Design algorithms for manipulating data	08/06/17 12:00	8.00
3. iOS Application	09/06/17 12:00	8.00
3.1. Create basic iOS application	09/06/17 12:00	4.00
3.2. Connect to the server	12/06/17 08:00	4.00
5.1. Establish customisation options	12/06/17 12:00	1.00
Phase 2 - 3. iOS Application	12/06/17 13:00	208.00
3.3. Design basic UI	12/06/17 13:00	16.00
3.4. Design data structure models	14/06/17 13:00	8.00
3.5. Create view for vendors list	15/06/17 13:00	16.00
3.6. Filter list based upon object attributes	19/06/17 13:00	8.00
3.7. Create location-based map view of vendors	20/06/17 13:00	16.00
3.8. Develop buyout functionality	22/06/17 13:00	8.00
3.9. Develop review functionality	23/06/17 13:00	8.00
3.10. Develop route planning towards selected vendor	26/06/17 13:00	16.00
3.11. Develop augmented reality routing	28/06/17 13:00	40.00
3.12. Develop push notifications	05/07/17 13:00	8.00
3.13. Design customisation system	06/07/17 13:00	40.00
3.14. Design final customisable UI	13/07/17 13:00	24.00
Phase 3 - 4. Web Platform	18/07/17 13:00	136.00
4.1. Design basic UI	18/07/17 13:00	16.00
4.2. Connect to the server	20/07/17 13:00	8.00
4.3. Create vendors and products list	21/07/17 13:00	16.00
4.4. Create map view with routing	25/07/17 13:00	16.00
4.5. Develop buyout functionality	27/07/17 13:00	8.00
4.6. Develop review functionality	28/07/17 13:00	8.00
4.7. Design customisation system	31/07/17 13:00	32.00
4.8. Design final customisable UI	04/08/17 13:00	32.00
Phase 4 - Deployment	10/08/17 13:00	40.00
5.2. Deploy customised iOS applications	10/08/17 13:00	8.00
5.3. Deploy customised web platforms	11/08/17 13:00	8.00
5.4. Deploy customised database structures	14/08/17 13:00	8.00
5.5. Deploy customised server files	15/08/17 13:00	8.00
5.6. Deploy entire customised solutions	16/08/17 13:00	8.00
Phase 5 - Testing and further development	17/08/17 13:00	43.00

Figure 12: Work Breakdown Structure into work packages

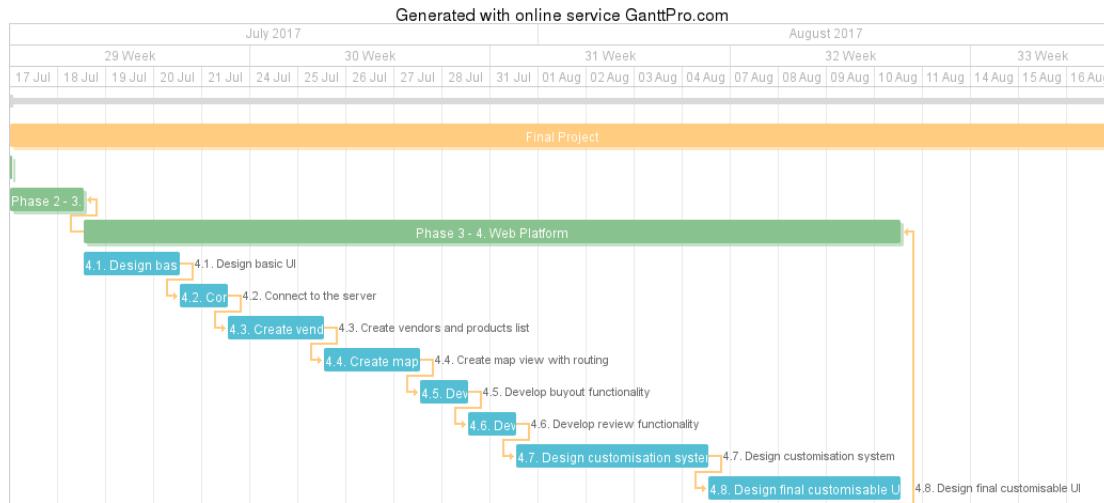


Figure 13: Third phase of the project plan

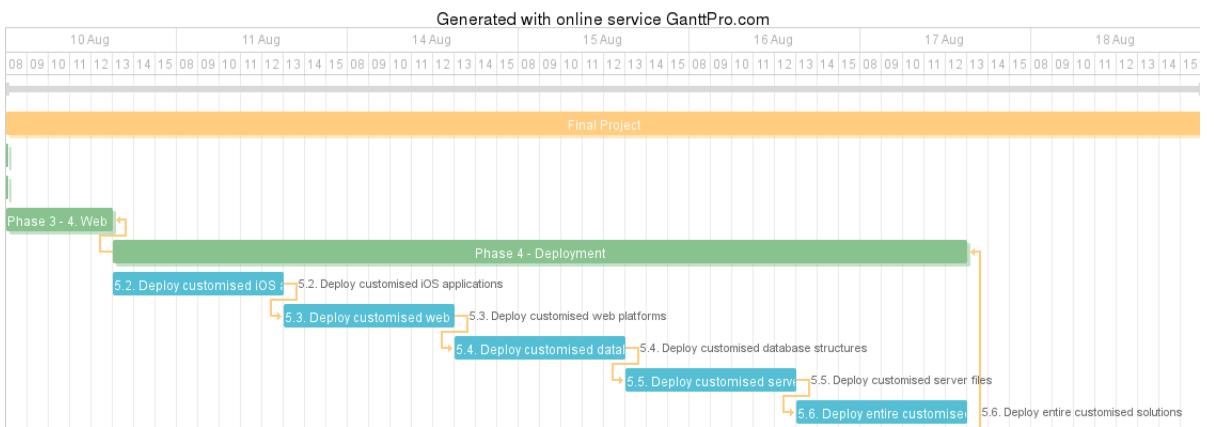


Figure 14: Fourth phase of the project plan

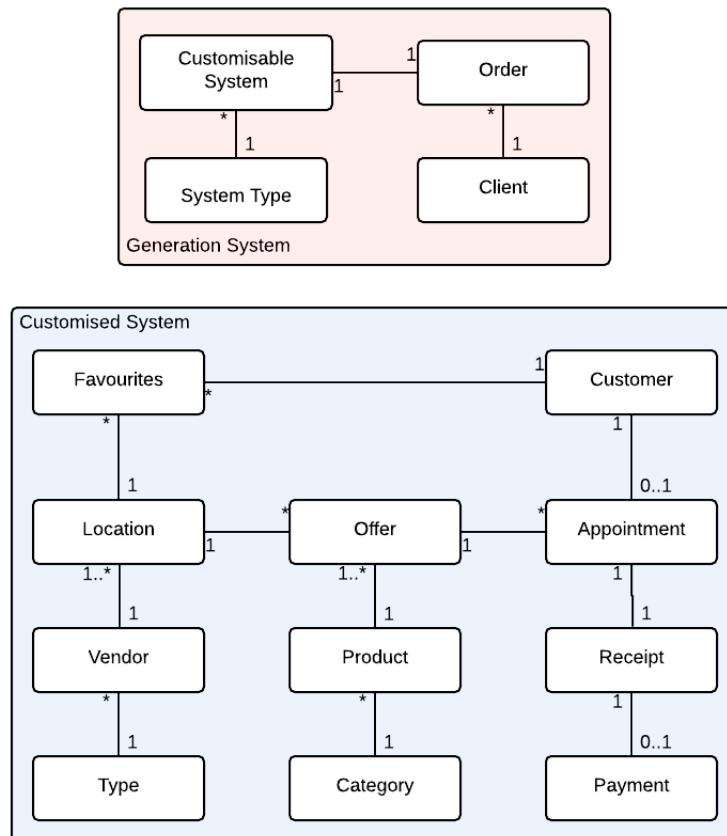


Figure 15: Business Concept Model

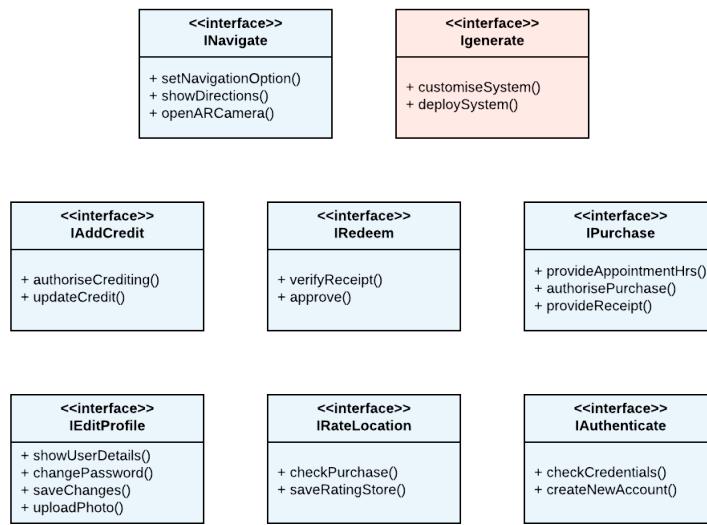


Figure 16: System Interfaces

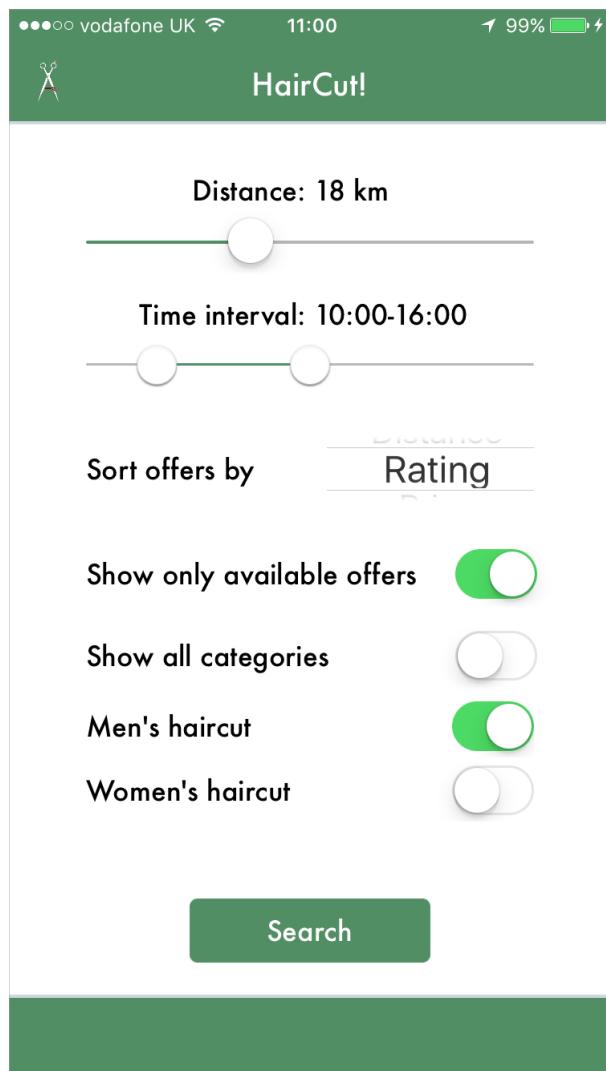


Figure 17: The filtering options for the offers list

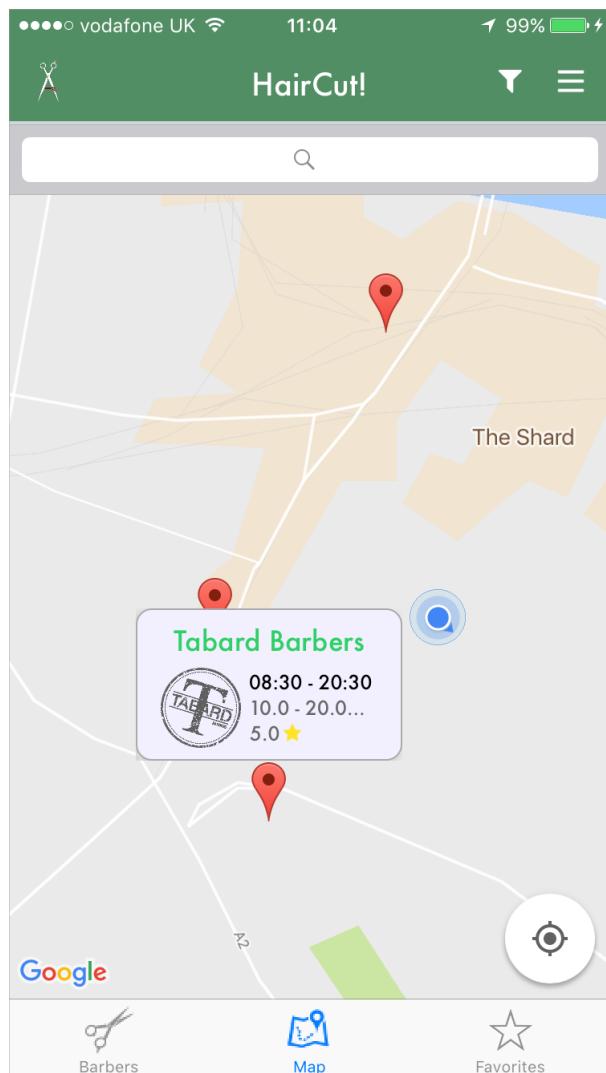


Figure 18: The map view of the barber shops variation