HobBuddy

CM40179 Coursework 1: Business Plan

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Product

Introduction

Starting new hobbies can be difficult if you don't have anyone to do it with. Some sports or activities such as tennis or forming a band require other people. In modern society it has become more difficult to meet new people and loneliness is a problem many people face. Over 9 million people in the UK say they are always or often lonely (CtEL, 2020). Therefore, a solution is required to allow people to meet others looking for someone to join in a particular activity.

What is HobBuddy?

HobBuddy is a geo-social networking iOS application that enables users to find others in their local area who share mutual hobbies. The app is for anyone who wishes to find new friends in their vicinity. HobBuddy can help people who find it hard to make friends, or people who recently moved to a new location and don't know anyone in the local community. One such specific target demographic are students, particularly first year and exchange students, who are moving into a new environment without an established social circle. Additionally, HobBuddy can help users discover new hobbies.

Value Proposition

The key value which differentiates us from major competitors is connecting users based on hobbies. With competing products, it is not always clear to see a person's hobbies or level of expertise; as such it is unlikely people will approach each other based on their hobbies. However, HobBuddy is a platform for explicitly sharing your hobbies with other people and provides all the features you need for meeting the right people, e.g. the ability to see people's hobby related achievements, form group chats, add custom locations for meetups, and have a map to see live locations of where your HobBuddies are and where you are meeting.
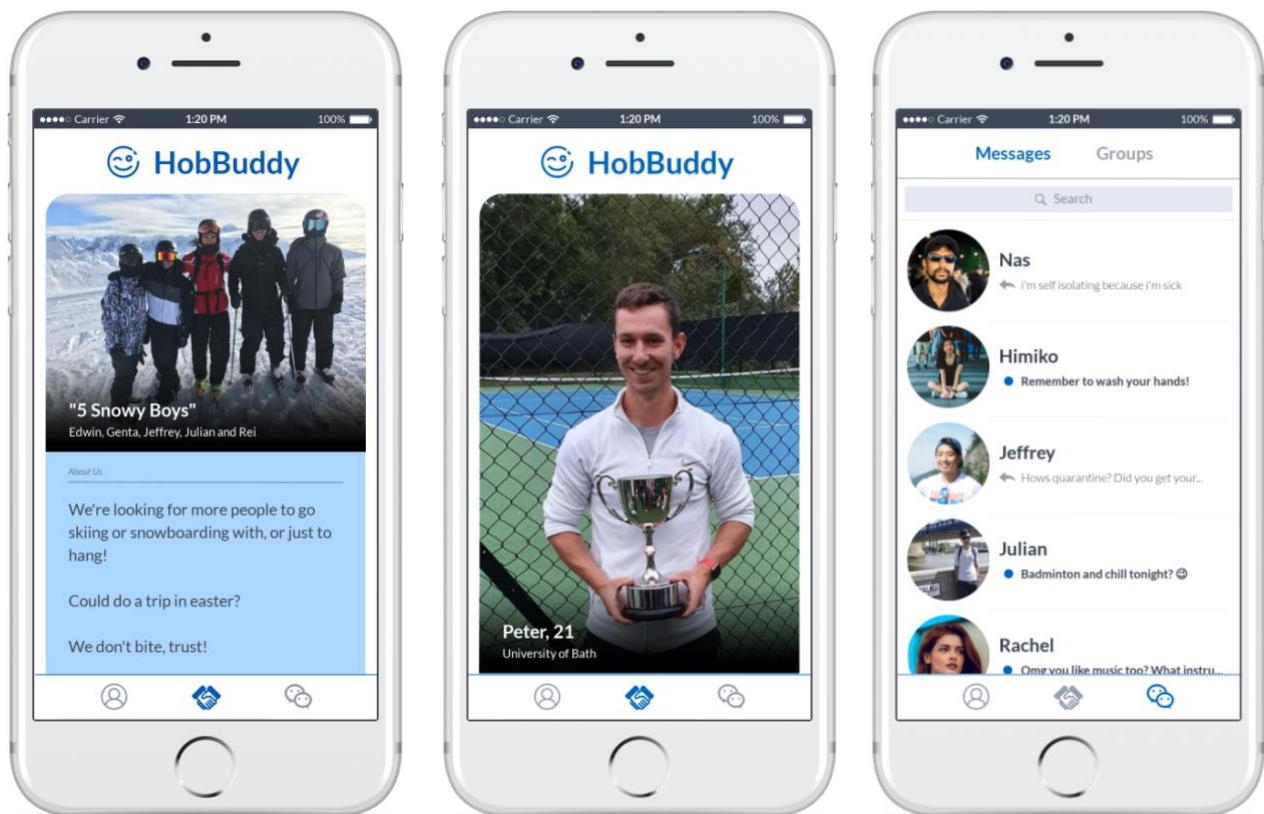
Left: Example of a group profile. Middle: Example of an individual users' profile. Right: A user's messages.

Features

HobBuddy has specific features explained below that allow users to find others who share the same hobbies as them, providing common ground to make it easier for people to start a conversation and a valid reason for strangers to meet up. For clarity, screenshots of the HobBuddy app have been included in the Appendix.

- *Swiping*: The primary function of the HobBuddy app allows users to swipe through profiles set up by other users (Figure 12) and groups (Figure 13). If the user finds another person they wish to speak to or meet up with, they can swipe right. If they are not interested, they swipe left. Profiles are shown to users based on the geographical proximity to other users and filters that users can manually choose from. For example, users can choose to only see profiles of users who are students, and only people within 5km of their location (Figure 10).

- *Account Creation*: When users create an account, they can provide an email address and password or use commonly available options such as 'Login with Facebook' or 'Login with Google'. In addition, HobBuddy allows users to use an institutional login to provide ease of access specifically to the student demographic (Figure 3). Users can then upload photos of themselves, write a bio and add a set of 'hobbies' to their profile (Figure 6, Figure 7).

- *Hobbies*: In HobBuddy, hobbies are unique data structures that can be added to each profile and form the core of the value proposition - when swiping through other profiles, users can see what hobbies other people have added; mutual hobbies are highlighted, allowing users to immediately see a shared interest (Figure 12, 13). The HobBuddy back-end platform stores data on what hobbies are popular in the users' area based on the number of people who have added that hobby to their profile, and the location services of each user. During account creation, Hobbies are suggested based on this geo-locational data (Figure 7).

- *Messaging*: When users match, they can message each other to discuss their hobbies and organise to meetup (Figure 14, 15). Requirement gathered from questionnaire (figure 29).

- *Group Profiles*: Following our market research, 50% of all participants answered that meeting in a group was a significant factor to feeling comfortable with meeting a stranger (Figure 29). Hence, matched users can also create a group chat with each other which they can create a shared group profile (Figure 16, 17). This group profile will appear on other user's profile feeds as they swipe (Figure 13), and individual users can choose to swipe right on the group to express interest in joining them. This aids in finding groups of 2 or more people to share hobbies with, solving a problem other social matchmaking apps cannot.

- *Profile Editing and Settings*: Users can also edit their profile (Figure 9), modify their profile search settings (Figure 10), and pay for a premium subscription which will allow additional features (Figure 11).

- *Advertising*: As users' continue to swipe, they will be exposed to in-app advertising, which will be targeted specifically towards relevant hobbies (For example, if a user has added 'Tennis' as a hobby to their profile, they may see adverts for tennis rackets or balls). Users who pay for premium will not see any adverts.

To match users together as easily as possible, we will design the User Interface (UI) to be simplistic and comprehensible. We expect that implementation of 'swipes' as a core feature will significantly reduce the learning curve of using this app because the design of this feature will be intuitive to smartphone devices. To use this core functionality and perform the main user activity on our app (Swiping through profiles), users only need one finger for input, and they will only need to perform two gestures. Many users will already know how to use this functionality due to the popularity of apps such as Tinder (Tinder, 2020), Bumble (Bumble, 2020) and Hinge (Hinge, 2020).

Another way we improve ease of use is to use information that other users have supplied to make hobby suggestions. As users pick hobbies that they are interested in, and the app tracks the users geolocational data, HobBuddy will be supplied with a database of information on what hobbies are popular in specific geographical areas. As more users join HobBuddy, this geographical data on hobbies will become more accurate, and more hobbies will also pop up within an area as a result, increasing the value for users on the HobBuddy network.

Future Development

We will continually support and update HobBuddy post-launch in order to improve our product. One of the main features we plan to implement is an interface similar to Snapchat's Snapmaps functionality. This will show a map, drawn from the Google Maps API, with geolocational information about popular Hobbies nearby shown directly on the map. The map will be accessible by changing tabs in the menu toolbar. This feature caters to users who might not have a specific hobby in mind but still want to meet new people or want to try new hobbies but aren't sure of which. They can simply have a look at what hobbies and activities are popular nearby, which would be most convenient for them to join, and "opt-in" to that hobby to add that to their profile search filters. Ease of use is a key focus here; Using a map is visually intuitive and makes it easy for users to find new hobbies.

Market

Consumer Groups

There are two groups of consumers we need to consider when releasing our application; early adopters and core demographic. The early adaptors are people who get new technology as soon as it comes out to try something new. To attract the early adopters the application will need to be marketed as something new, different and unique from that currently available. Whereas, for the core demographic the application will need to be marketed to show the usefulness of the system and why the person seeing it will benefit from it. Our core demographic are those that are looking for friends to carry out their hobbies with (see "Interview" and "Focus Group" in the appendix), ranging from people who are good at a hobby and are just looking for a good match, perhaps in terms of expertise, to people who want to find someone that would be keen to try out a new hobby with them. Our product deals with these pain points by providing them with a platform to do exactly that and showcasing exactly what people are looking for.

Market Research

Since, the initial target market for HobBuddy will be university students, we conducted a survey, interviews and a focus group to gain a better understanding of how they find new hobbies and actively pursue them. The survey was created on Google Forms, and had a total of 66 responses. To ensure unbiased answers, we reached out to a director of studies at the University of Bath, who broadcasted our questionnaire to other students. The demographic is analysed further in the "Student Questionnaire" section in the appendix.

Hobbies
84.8% of survey respondents dropped at least one hobby when arriving at university and 22.7% of respondents did not know where to look to continue a hobby upon arriving (see figure 24). International students found looking for a hobby particularly difficult. 3 out of 4 international students responded with answers between 1 (very hard) and 3 (not easy or hard), on a Likert scale of 1 to 5

(figure 23). Therefore, it is important to note that international students seem to find it more challenging than non-international and EU students.

The specific problem that potential users of our solution are currently experiencing is the ability to find new hobbies and actively pursue them. Not all students have the same requirements to find a new hobby. Some students have a lack of confidence and are afraid to join a society, whereas some students do not find societies attractive as they do not have enough focus on the hobby itself and end up having social events revolving around drinking (see "Student Interview" and "Student Focus Group" in the appendix).

Meeting Strangers
International participants were more likely to have never met up with a stranger in person after connecting through social media (63.6% for the entire sample and 76.2% for international participants). Therefore, there is a greater importance to understand what would make international students more comfortable with meeting a stranger so they can pursue current or new hobbies with someone. Analysing the collected data further, the trends to help the participants feel more at ease to meet a stranger show that knowing the stranger's name, appearance, age, interests, if they have had a conversation beforehand and if they are a student are the most important factors. However, international students showed greater interest if the stranger was a student (40.6% of international respondents against 32.1% for entire sample) and if they had a conversation beforehand (50% of international respondents against 46.4% for entire sample) (see figures 27 and 29 in Appendix). Therefore, including features like built in messaging to the application will be important to implement.

Summary of Discussions with the University of Bath's Students' Union

In the early stages of designing HobBuddy, we had a few informal discussions with the University of Bath Students' Union Community Officer for the academic year 2020/2021. She confirmed that currently, student loneliness is one of the biggest issues' universities face and addressing this is one of her main priorities. The SU acknowledges that there are currently many opportunities in fresher's week for both new and returning students to find new hobbies and societies. However, with the overwhelming number of things to adjust to when moving to a new place, many first-year students may not make the most of these opportunities. Therefore, the SU seeks to create more opportunities for students to network and meet each other.

In the latter of the discussions, we proposed HobBuddy as a solution to this problem - enabling people to network and make like-minded friends without having to attend a timetabled networking event. We showed her an early version of the prototype which she thought looked really good. Her main concern was that if the SU were to actively promote it, there may be issues if students become victims of individuals pretending to be other people. We agreed that the use of the university's single-sign-on would be a great way to authenticate that users are students from the university. Unfortunately, due to the rapid escalation of the COVID-19 outbreak we were unable to set up a follow up discussion with the SU about our product. However, early discussions have been very positive, and we look forward to arranging more before the next academic year.

Competitors

We have found that HobBuddy has three main direct competitors, Bumble (Bumble, 2020), Meetup (Meetup, 2020), and HobbieSpot (HobbieSpot, 2020). Currently, Meetup is growing in popularity within the UK and HobbieSpot has only a small amount of popularity mainly within Spain. In terms of our indirect competitors, we would be looking at social networking apps which facilitate the ability to

meet up with people, such as Facebook (Facebook, 2020), Tinder, Hinge and Bumble. We utilised Porter's Five Forces Framework to analyse our competition, the following sections provide the details.

Direct Competitors

The popular geo-social dating application Bumble added a "BFF mode" in 2016, with the aim of helping people who are new to an area discover friends (Bumble, 2020). Users are encouraged to include photos which depict their hobbies and connect their Spotify accounts to show potential matches with their interests. However, unlike HobBuddy, this is not explicitly achieved by matching people who are looking to share a hobby.

HobbieSpot makes you sign up with an email or Facebook account, select a University you go to, the location you are based in, and select your three favourite activities before you can proceed. With HobBuddy, users are given a similar sign up experience with the ability to choose however many hobbies you want. The key difference is that you have an option to sign up with the institution you are at and this is verified by signing in through the institution's single sign on page. HobBuddy users that sign up through an institution have a note on their profile saying they are a verified member of that institution to add a level of trust.

With Meetup and HobbieSpot, we noticed that the hobbies are quite vague, e.g. "Learning", "Friendship", "Travels", "Music". Negative reviews for these apps seem to focus on the fact that you are not able to add your own hobbies, it is clear that users want to meet up with people based on specific interests and hobbies. HobBuddy tackles this issue by allowing users to be as specific as they want and enter in their own hobby or a tag for a hobby, e.g. a certain musical artist would be a tag under "Music". Notably, both competing apps have no feature for explicitly meeting people based on their hobbies, simply a feature for viewing posts from other people, events in the local area, notifications, and profiles. Whilst you can access user's profiles and see their general hobbies, there is not much else that is specific enough for you to gauge someone might be like as a person. HobBuddy explicitly allows users to meetup with people based on their profile, their description, including their specific hobbies and interests, and the chats they have together. Since HobbieSpot only has some popularity within Spain and Meetup is focused on having people meet up at events, they operate in a slightly different market to HobBuddy.

We need to be wary of the threats from new entrants into our specific market. As there are low barriers to entry in the social media industry, new companies or products can be created at a relatively low cost. Due to typical low user loyalty in the social media industry, if a new social media platform is introduced which implements HobBuddy's features, but better, there is nothing to stop users from switching to the new platform. However, there are many economies of scale in the social media industry. Also, as there are many social media platforms in existence, we need to consider the power of our buyers. Most social medias are free of charge to use, so users can easily sign up for a new social media platform. To ensure that users continue to use our product once they have found friends, we will encourage them to meet more than one person. Also, due to our group profile functionality and other meetup-related functionalities that are not provided by other social networks, we will ensure that users continue to use our messaging platform as opposed to alternatives such as email or SMS texting.

Indirect Competitors

Social network apps such as Facebook, Tinder, Hinge, and Bumble are all platforms that enable users to view other profiles and message one another. HobBuddy provides a very specific focus on people's hobbies. Some people are reluctant to use social media because it does not provide a meaningful service to them and they prefer using apps with more specific uses, HobBuddy caters to this crowd, amongst others. Large social media apps have all been very successful at attracting large user bases,

they provide a way to keep up to date with what friends are doing and allow you to chat with people. However, there is not yet a great way of finding people who might share your interests and hobbies, for example, finding a relevant Facebook group with people who enjoy the same hobby is difficult. HobBuddy does the advertising for local events or local friends and groups, with this anyone can find a local group for their interest or hobby.

Whilst we operate in a more specific market to current social networking applications, we do not have access to their large user bases and need to start one from scratch. As of now, rivalry competition is low within the specific market that HobBuddy will operate in, meaning there is low competition in terms of advertising the specific functionalities that HobBuddy provides. We have identified many substitutes (both online and offline) for making friends to share hobbies with. Local clubs and University societies offer introductory/taster sessions free of charge or at a reduced price. However, many of these opportunities have to be actively sought for, meaning people interested have to know exactly where to look and what to look for. This often means people have to undertake a lot of research to discover available options and there is no guarantee that people will enjoy the club they visit or find like-minded individuals who want a similar experience of the Hobby. HobBuddy, on the other hand, will help users to find other like-minded individuals to share their hobby with.

Strategy

Company Structure & Legal Status

HobBuddy is a profit orientated business. In the near future, HobBuddy will be legally registered as a limited company with Companies House. As HobBuddy is a profit-oriented business, the company will be limited by shares.

Currently, the HobBuddy team consists of five people, who each bring their own personal set of skills. Sam Relf will assume the role of product manager, focusing on high level business strategy and product requirements, as well as ensuring work items are completed in a timely manner to the expected level of quality. Thomas Wooliston is our market researcher. He will network with potential users to investigate the need for our app and to find out what users would like from our application and how they would like it to work. Nasar Khan's business background means he will work as our business developer, focusing primarily on competitor analysis, ensuring the positioning of our product takes advantage of market opportunities, taking into account potential threats too. Jeffrey Lin will be our UX designer and prototype developer. His previous experience supplies the required skillset and knowledge to design a standout application with a professional looking prototype to build our application from. With experience of software development, Peter Carrington will work as our technology lead, ensuring that the app is completed and works as it should to the expected level of proficiency. Due to the small size of our team and varied skillsets of all members, team members will be able to take on additional tasks outside their role description when required.

Business Roadmap Overview

In our business roadmap, we have laid out an aggressive but realistic forecast for the next 3 years of HobBuddy (Figure 1). In phase 0, we plan to design and create HobBuddy v1. This is the institution exclusive version of the product, in which universities, colleges, workplaces etc. can partner with us in order to enable students/employees of the institutions to network and make friends. This has the additional advantage of providing authenticity to the users of the app, as they must use their institutional single-sign-on to set up an account. Throughout Q2/Q3 of 2020, we will focus on establishing our partnership with the University of Bath's Student Union to prepare for a successful

launch of HobBuddy v1 before Freshers Week at the end of Q3. In phase 1, we will focus on continuous iteration and support for HobBuddy v1 to ensure the product meets the needs of our users. Additionally, we will begin reaching out to other institutions to develop new partnerships and roll out HobBuddy v1 at these institutions. Meanwhile, we will focus on preparing for a public roll out of HobBuddy v2. Phase 2 will begin with the public release of HobBuddy v2 in select markets in summer 2021. We will continue to iterate and add new features in order to create a great experience for our users, conducting AB tests to ensure new features have a positive effect on our KPIs (key performance indicators). Phase 3 (starting in 2022) will consist of introducing HobBuddy in new markets, analysing opportunities and localising the product in order to achieve maximum attachment in these new markets.

Technology

We have chosen to develop our system as a smartphone application due to available access to the target market. In the UK in 2019, 96% of people aged 18-24 owned a smartphone (O'Dea, 2019). This is the age range of our initial target market. We will develop the application for both Android and iOS phones as devices with these operating systems are the most popular (Kielty, 2019). This means we will be able to reach a larger market. Therefore, the programming will be done using Xamarin and C# as this allows for easy cross platform development. To develop the application, we will require an iOS phone, android phone and laptop with visual studio installed. Members of our team already own these items so will not need to be purchased.

Development

We will be using git versioning for source control of the code for the project. This will be done using the GitHub software. This will ensure that we do not lose any progress with the development of the project and allows for multiple developers to work on the project. Our development will be done using the Agile Scrum development lifecycle. The development team will have week-long sprints of work with a weekly scrum meeting to overview work completed and plan the next work to be done. This will allow us to ensure that the development stays on track and identify any issues that may arise early so they can be solved as soon as possible. To keep the development costs to a minimum we will utilise free software where possible. We will also utilise free APIs for development where we can as this will help speed up the development. As mentioned previously the outbreak of the coronavirus will have a major effect on the project. Due to social distancing, our development will need to be performed remotely. The use of GitHub allows the code for the system to be stored on the cloud so can be accessed remotely. We will also utilise a Google drive for storing all documentation online that can be accessed by everyone remotely. Finally, for team meetings we will use Zoom to communicate with one another throughout the development process.

Funding & Revenue

In order to fund HobBuddy through phase 0 and the majority of 1 [Figure 1], we will crowdfund through Kickstarter. A recent example of a social network which has successfully done this is Junto, which managed to receive $106,949 through crowdfunding (Kickstarter, 2020). We aim to raise at least £10,000 through Kickstarter prior to the release of HobBuddy v2. If we fail to raise this amount, we will use bootstrapping, investing our own personal funds to ensure that we can successfully build our company from the ground up.

In phase 1, following the release of HobBuddy v1, we will start generating revenue as we begin to gradually roll out the application across different Universities and institutions and the number of

active users increases. Revenue will be generated through two means - HobBuddy Plus and targeted advertising.

The base version of HobBuddy will be free, similar to other social media. However, all users will have the option to upgrade to HobBuddy Plus - a premium version of the application. If a user subscribes to HobBuddy Plus, their profile will be displayed early in other users' search for a potential buddy; they will be able to return to previous potential buddies they declined; and the experience will be entirely ad-free. In order to establish a relatively large number of HobBuddy Plus users, we will initially employ a penetrative pricing strategy, offering the subscription plan at the low price of £0.99 per month. This is considerably less than competitors' premium subscription rates. This low price will also appeal to our initial target market of university students, who are typically not very wealthy. Following the release of HobBuddy v2, we will offer HobBuddy Plus subscriptions for the general public at the higher price of £3.49 per month, then employ a price skimming strategy to determine the optimum price which generates the largest amount of revenue.

The nature of HobBuddy will ensure that our targeted advertising is both attractive to third parties and non-invasive to users. Due to the key feature of HobBuddy being users displaying their hobbies and interests, we will be able to present users with advertisements associated with their hobbies and interests in a way which is more helpful than intrusive. Additionally, the confirmation that users are interested in specific hobbies should mean that they are more interested in a third party's adverts, which should result in a high click-through, therefore large ROI (return-on-investment) for advertisers. This will enable us to charge a relatively large amount for advertising on HobBuddy. Advertising on Snapchat using 'Snap Ads' is also relatively expensive for the same reason - i.e. a high click-through and ROI for advertisers (Wallaroo Media, 2020).

Distribution & Marketing Channels

HobBuddy will be distributed as a free mobile application on Apple's App Store for iOS devices and Google's Play Store for Android devices. To distribute our app on the App Store, we will have to pay an annual fee of £99; and on the Play Store, there is a one-off instalment of £25. However, Google will receive 30% of our ad revenue on Android devices.

When HobBuddy v1 is initially released, it will be exclusively available for University of Bath students. We will promote HobBuddy to this audience through advertising around the campus and at Fresher's Week fairs – which we should be able to do free of charge, or at a reduced cost, depending on how our partnership with the SU develops. As we launch HobBuddy in new universities and institutions, we will invest in Snapchat Geofilters to promote the launch. This enables us to advertise to individuals in a very specific area (e.g. a University campus) and is considerably cheaper than other advertising methods on snapchat, costing as little as $5 per day (Wallaroo Media, 2020). When the public version of HobBuddy is released, we will begin a more widespread social media marketing campaign on Facebook and YouTube. Facebook advertising will cost around £5 per week and will enable us to target a certain number and type of people (Facebook, 2020a). Facebook also provides notifications about the performance of our advertisements, which will enable us to dynamically change our advertising strategy as required. YouTube video advertising will initially cost £1.25 a day and this campaign will be active for the first 20 days after launch (YouTube, 2020). Usually, the cost would be £5 a day, but YouTube has an offer where advertisers receive £75 of free credit when buying £25 worth of video advertisements, which we will take advantage of. We will invest an additional £200 into first 6 months of YouTube advertising following the initial campaign; and double our social media marketing spend every 6 months.

Profit Forecast

Using the aforementioned figures for revenue/costs, we have calculated a 3-year profit forecast for HobBuddy (Figure 2). These calculations are based on the assumption that 20% of University of Bath students will become active users following HobBuddy's launch, and that the number of active users will increase by 5 times every 6 months due to a heavy focus on University marketing. Following the release of HobBuddy v2, we expect the number of active users will double every 6 months. We also assume that similar to Tinder (Business of Apps, 2020), 10% of our users will subscribe to our premium service, which accounts for around 75% of revenue. Additionally, renting office space will cost £1000 per month and employees will receive no salary until HobBuddy generates profit. Then, employees will receive 10% of the profit, or £30k, whichever value is lowest. The remainder will be our final profit.

Marketing Strategy

Initially, we will be targeting university students. Similar to Facebook's origins, where it was launched at Harvard University and spread at a huge rate due to word of mouth. Mark Zuckerburg then gave access to outsiders once there was a lot of attention from campuses and Facebook grew at a phenomenal rate. Bath will be used as a first major testing location for our application and to gather initial users. It will also allow us to gather some reviews for our application so people can see we have a trustworthy system when we expand. A well-structured marketing plan will be key to make sure we capture the attention of our initial target audience so that we have a large enough base of users to expand from. By expanding to other universities before expanding to the general public, our system can build a number of users across different areas in the UK so that most people will have several users already nearby to find through the app when they start using it.

After having seen an increase in users, we will use multiple apps as advertisement platforms, allowing our product to reach users of social media apps. As our app has the option of sharing that you have signed up to HobBuddy, users can advertise HobBuddy through their social media posts. As we spread to different campuses, we will gather brand advocates at each universities and set them up with marketing tasks such as putting up leaflets around campus, posting about HobBuddy on social media pages, and using word of mouth to promote it and garner attention from early adopters and the core demographic, who will be encouraged to provide feedback.

After targeting students, we aim to target working professionals and the general public. A study by Victor, 2017 has shown that Facebook and YouTube rank amongst the top 10 apps that smartphone users "couldn't live without" and they are also in the top 10 apps that have been downloaded this decade (Venkatraman, 2020). Therefore, it would be appropriate to advertise through YouTube and Facebook ads as they allow you to target ads to certain users based on their profiles, location, or the type of video being watched.

Due to COVID-19, we may need to ensure that the release of HobBuddy on the app store is done at a time where people feel confident that they can go out and meet people without any risk of catching the virus. Conversely, since people will be staying at home or avoiding contact with others, it is inevitable that they will get bored or lonely and need something to do. During these times, we think HobBuddy could be marketed as a way to chat to like-minded people, which will be an appealing concept to many during their times of loneliness.

Risk Analysis

We have assessed potential risks by utilising the PESTLE analysis technique. As HobBuddy is a networking platform, some of the risks our business faces are linked to 5 fundamental properties of networks (Zhu, Iansiti, 2019):

- *Network Effects*: The greater the amount of HobBuddy users, the more likely new users are to join the platform. Past evidence has shown that the strength of network effects can change over time. Weakening network effects is a risk we can manage by implementing features that can strengthen its network effects. For example, as more users join and add hobbies, HobBuddy can more accurately make hobby recommendations based on geolocational data.

- *Clustering*: The more a network is fragmented into isolated local clusters, the more vulnerable a business is to challenges (Zhu et al, 2019). Even though HobBuddy will initially only be released in local areas, it will provide a service to exchange and international students, strengthening our global network.

- *Risk of Disintermediation*: After users are matched, they may no longer use the app. To retain users, we will encourage users to match with more than one person (for one or many hobbies) and utilise the group profile functionality (which no other platforms have). These features would be great for sports like tennis, it is good to play against lots of different people with different play styles. As well as mitigating disintermediation, we can also focus resources on growing our user population.

- *Vulnerability to multi-homing*: As there aren't any other major social matchmaking apps that have HobBuddy's 'hobby' and 'group profile' functionalities, HobBuddy's value proposition reduces our vulnerability to multi-homing.

- *Bridging*: In the long run, we can potentially build in new synergies to HobBuddy by connecting the platform with other networks; For example, connecting to the SU's platform and allowing societies to integrate the group profile functionality, or allowing users to link their Spotify and Instagram (similar to what apps like Tinder have done) can increase the value users obtain when using HobBuddy.

Another risk is that our initial market research did not cover a broad enough number of people to give an accurate representation of what users want and the overall demand for the system. During our research with users, they may not have given honest opinions of the system, saying what they think we wanted to hear instead (Social Desirability Bias), affecting the validity of the information gathered. To mitigate these potential issues, we will work with potential users during development to see how they react to the system.

Also, we may have underestimated the profit we can earn through the application, for example if advertising generates less revenue than expected. We will actively monitor the situation and consider an alternative strategy if we are financially underperforming.

Finally, people may not want to use our app as they are not comfortable with meeting up with strangers. Users who can utilise the institutional sign-in feature may feel more comfortable knowing all individuals they match with are from the same institution as them. Also, one of our questionnaire results (Figure 28) shows that most people are actually comfortable meeting up with strangers.

Exit Strategy

Our exit strategy accounts for three possible futures for HobBuddy. If HobBuddy is very profitable and successful, we will sell the company if a large amount of money is offered. If HobBuddy causes us financial loss in the long term, we will dissolve the company. Otherwise, if HobBuddy makes very little money but continues to have an active user base, we will maintain the application, but we will treat the day-to-day operation of the business as more of a side-hobby as opposed to our main careers.

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Appendix

Phase 0

Priorities	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020
Market Research			
Develop Business Plan			
Develop Prototype			
Engage UoB SU			
Develop HobBuddy v1			
Demo to Partners/Stakeholders			
Beta Testing			
Test, iterate, improve			

Phase 1

Priorities	EOQ3/Q4 2020	Q1 2021	Q2 2021
Release HobBuddy V1			
Manage load/stress			
Bug fixing			
Iterate based on user/partner feedback			
Establish partnerships with other institutions			
Plan HobBuddy V2 (public version)			
Develop HobBuddy V2			

Phase 2

Priorities	Q3 2021	Q4 2021	Q1 2022
Release HobBuddy V2			
Manage load/stress			
Bug Fixing			
Iterate based on user/partner feedback			
Conduct AB testing for new features			

Phase 3

Priorities	2022+
Analyse Market Opportunities	
Intorduce HobBuddy in new markets	
Localisation of Product	

Figure 1: Strategic Roadmap

	Q1 + Q2 2020	Q3 + Q4 2020	Q1 + Q2 2021	Q3 + Q4 2021	Q1 + Q2 2022	Q3 + Q4 2022
Active Users	0	3600	18,000	90,000	180,000	360,000
HobBuddy Plus Users	0	360	1800	9000	18000	36000
HobBuddy Plus Revenue	£0.00	£356.40	£1,782.00	£31,410.00	£62,820.00	£125,640.00
Ad Revenue	£0.00	£118.80	£594.00	£10,470.00	£20,940.00	£41,880.00
Kickstarter/Bootstrapping	£0.00	£6,000.00	£4,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Total Income	**£0.00**	**£6,475.20**	**£6,376.00**	**£41,880.00**	**£83,760.00**	**£167,520.00**
Snapchat Marketing	£0.00	£100.00	£200.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Facebook Marketing	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£130.00	£260.00	£520.00
YouTube Marketing	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£225.00	£550.00	£1,100.00
University Marketing	£0.00	£50.00	£100.00	£150.00	£200.00	£250.00
App distribution fees	£0.00	£141.82	£89.10	£1,669.50	£3,141.00	£6,381.00
Rent	£0.00	£6,000.00	£6,000.00	£6,000.00	£6,000.00	£6,000.00
Total Costs	**£0.00**	**£6,291.82**	**£6,389.10**	**£8,174.50**	**£10,151.00**	**£14,251.00**
Profit before payroll/loss	£0.00	£183.38	£170.28	£33,875.78	£107,484.78	£260,753.78
Payroll	**£0.00**	**£91.69**	**£85.14**	**£16,937.89**	**£53,742.39**	**£130,376.89**
PROFIT/LOSS	**£0.00**	**£91.69**	**£85.14**	**£16,937.89**	**£53,742.39**	**£130,376.89**

Figure 2: Profit Forecast

Figure 3: Login page – When users log in, they can opt to stay signed in next time; They will skip this screen the next time they open the app.

Figure 4: Signup page 1 – A users' details has been filled in as a mockup.

Figure 5: Signup page 2 – Terms & Conditions

Figure 6.1: Signup page 3 – Users can upload photos of themselves and write a bio as part of the account creation process
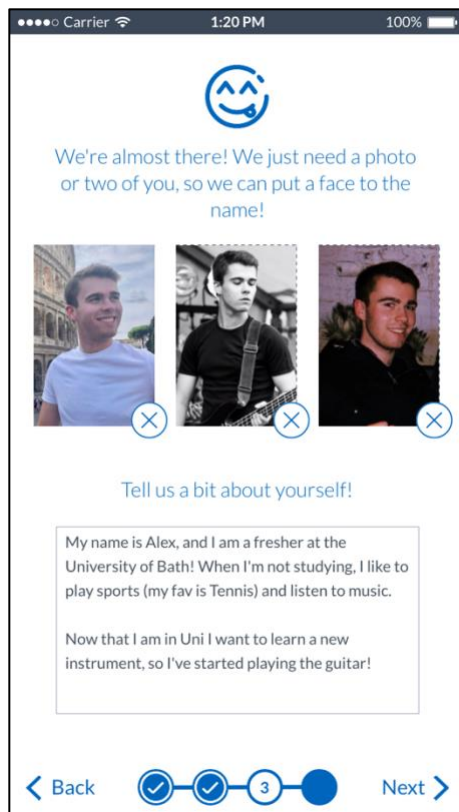
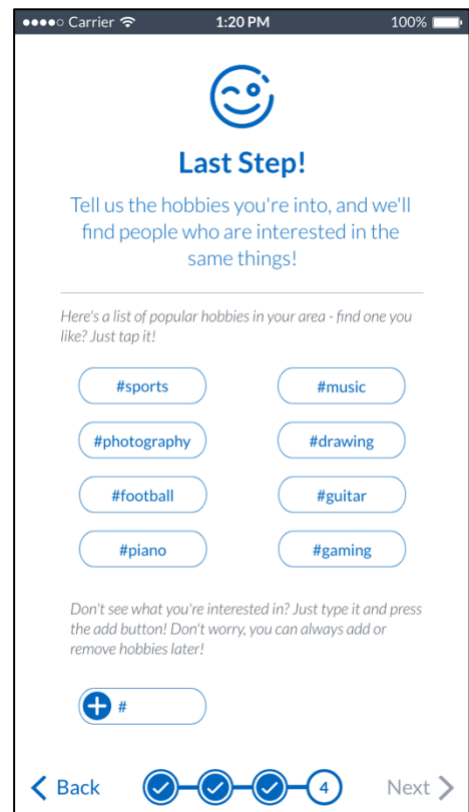Figure 6.2: Signup page 3 – A users' images and bio has been filled in as a mockup.

Figure 7.1: Signup page 4 – A list of popular hobbies in the users' geographical area is presented; The user can tap them to add them to their profile. They can also type to add a hobby manually.
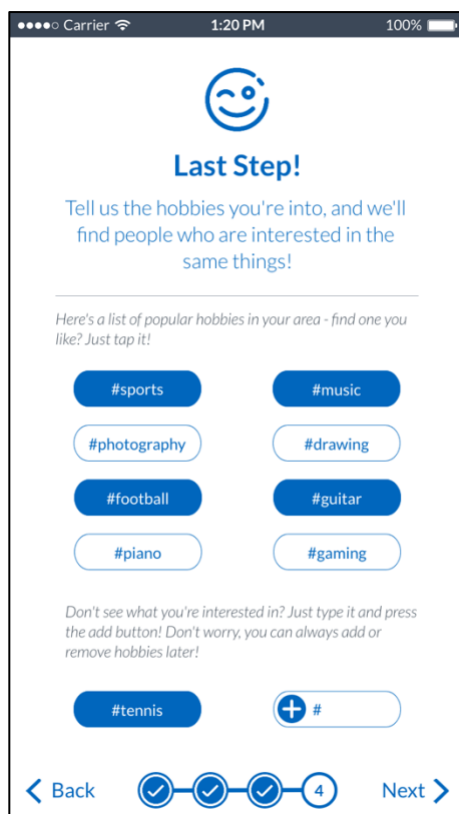
Figure 7.2: Signup page 4 – Hobbies that the user has added are highlighted in blue.
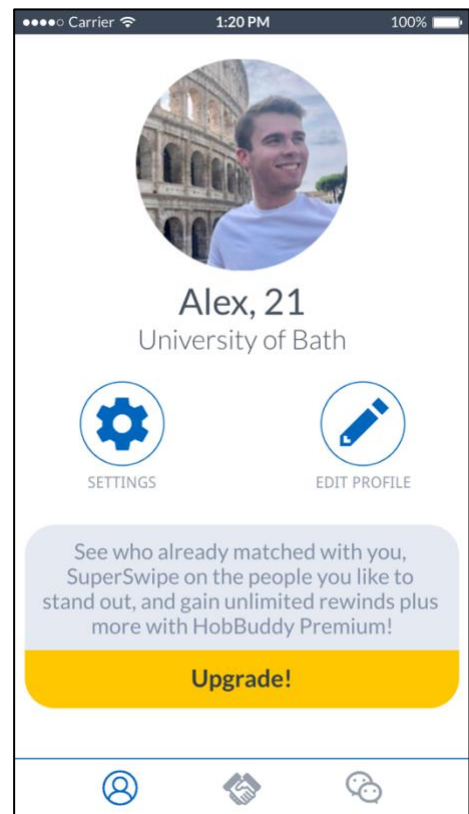
Figure 8: Profile page – Users can edit their profile, adjust the HobBuddy app settings or purchase HobBuddy Premium.
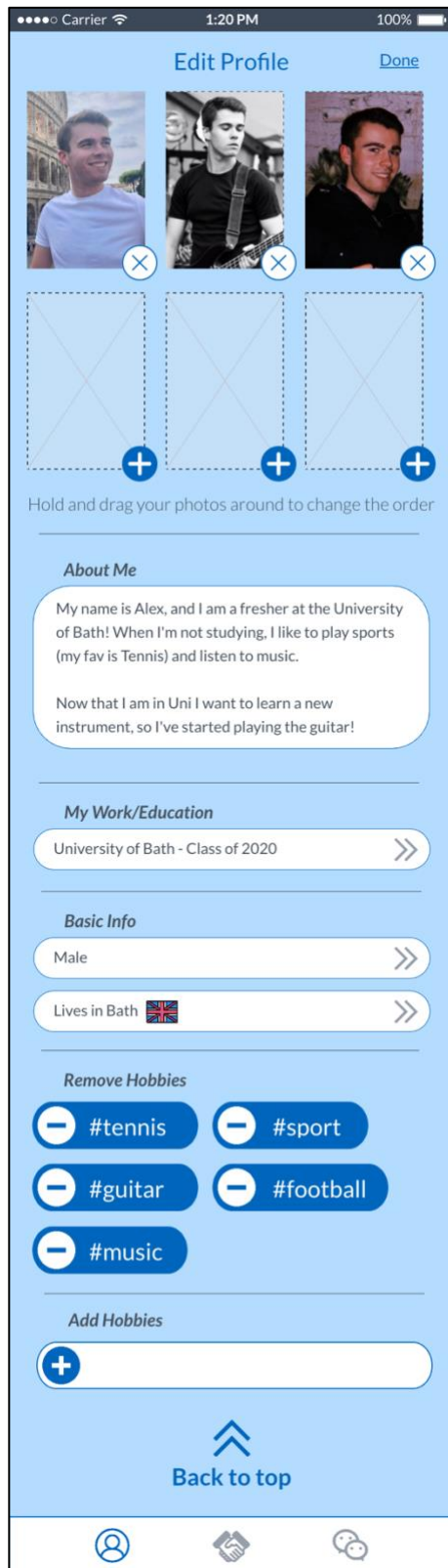
Figure 9: Edit Profile – User can upload/remove/rearrange photos on their profile, edit their bio and personal details, and add or remove hobbies
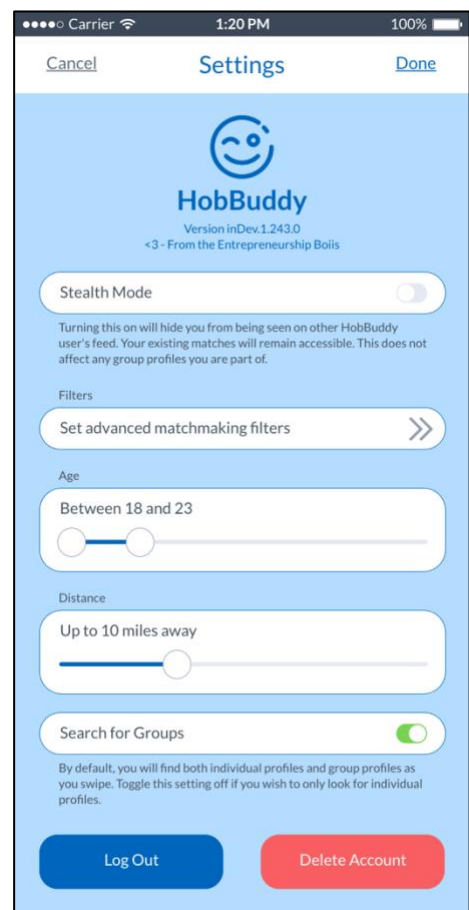
Figure 10: Settings – Users can adjust filters for what profiles they see, enable/disable stealth mode and delete their account.
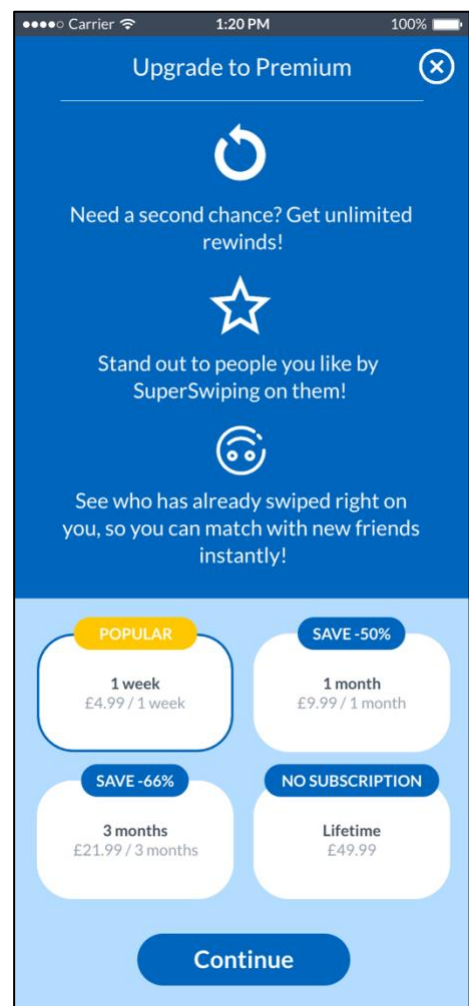
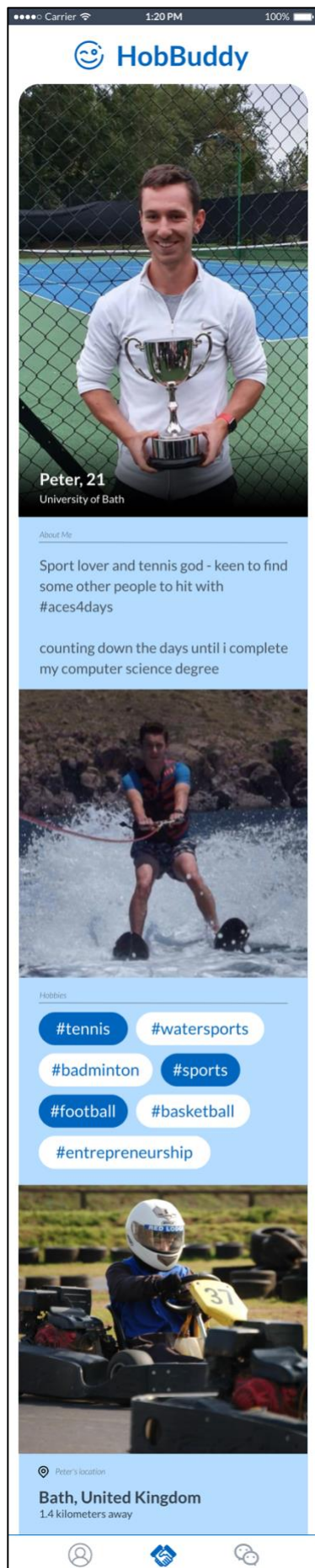Figure 11: Upgrade to Premium (Prices shown here are placeholders)

Figure 12: Example of another users' profile. The user can swipe left or right. Hobbies in common with the other user are highlighted in blue.

Figure 13: Example of a group profile. The user can swipe left or right. Hobbies in common with the group members are highlighted in blue.
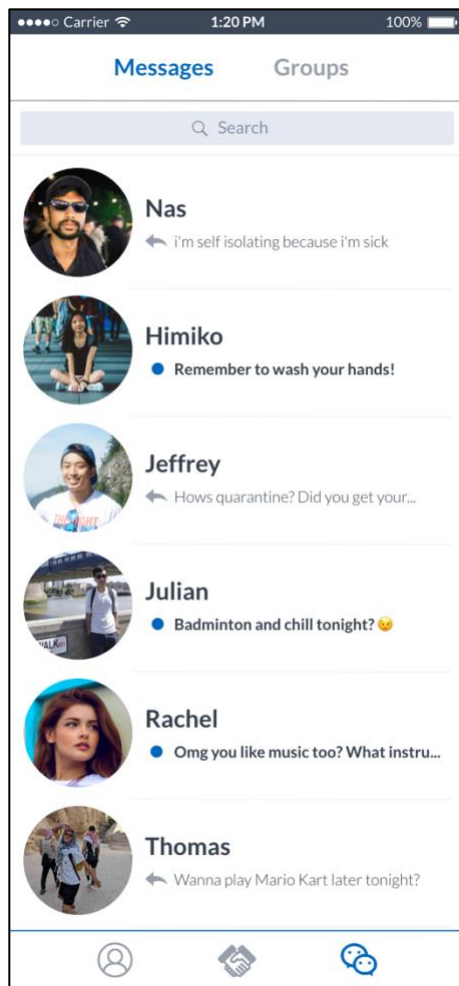
Figure 14: Messages – Once matched, users can directly message each other. Here, the user can tap on each user to see their messages with them or tap 'Groups' to navigate to the groups page.

Figure 15: Direct Message – Example of a message chain between one user and another. Users can report messages and other individuals using the icon at the top right.
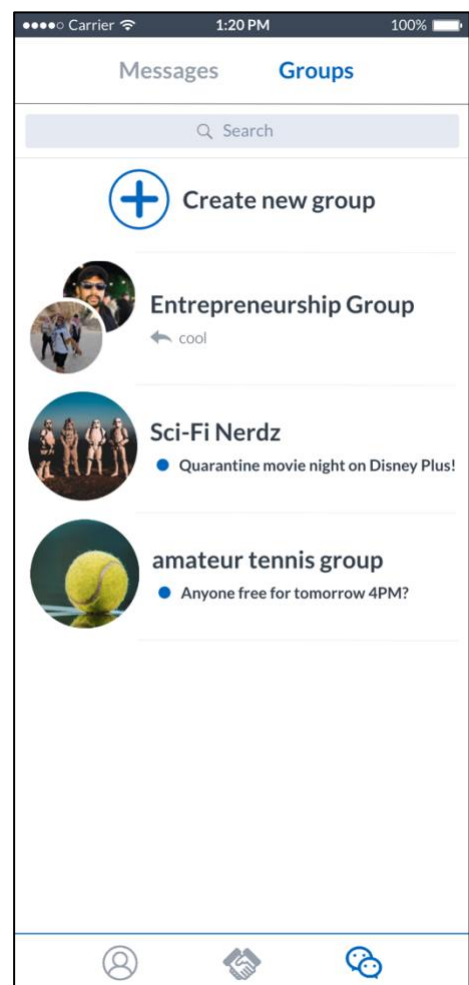

Figure 16: Groups – Users can see the groups they are in or create new groups.

Figure 16: Group Messages – HobBuddy facilitates group chats. Clicking the icon in the top right allows users to edit group details.

Figure 17: Edit Group Details – Users can add/remove/rearrange group photos which appear on the group profile. They can enable their group being shown as a group profile on other HobBuddy users' swipe feeds, and modify group settings.

Student Questionnaire

There was a good balance of age and students from different years of studies (figure 18 and 21). Hence, a broad look at how all students, from any stage in their degree, find new hobbies and actively pursue them. However, there were only 27.3% of the demographic who were females. On further reflection, this unbalance should not have a drastic effect on the results of the questionnaire as there are only generic questions about hobbies and does not go into questions that have a dependence on gender.

On the other hand, it is important to note that many responses came from students living in the United Kingdom, compared to international students (figure 20) in the appendix. Therefore, the results from this questionnaire could have a bias towards students being more comfortable and able to take more risks since they speak the same language. For example, a Chinese student with a lower ability to converse in English would have difficulty finding new hobbies, while at university, and actively pursuing them.

Furthermore, it is important to analyse the different answers depending on there the participant is from. There was a bias in the sample with 56.1% of participants being from the UK while only 31.8% from outside of Europe and 12.1% from the rest of Europe (excluding UK). Hence, the results may not be as accurate as possible.
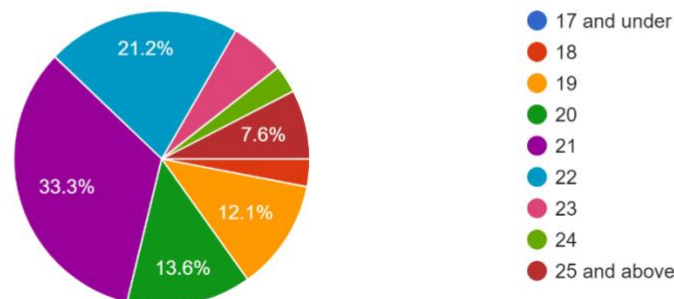
Age
66 responses

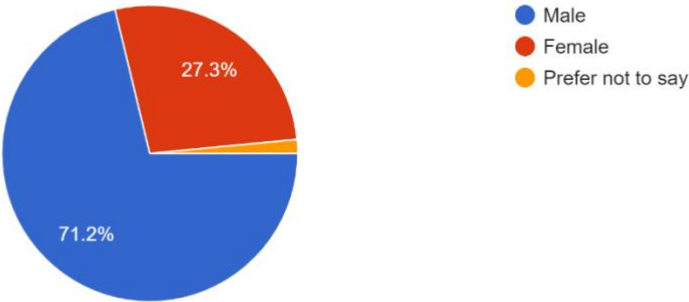Figure 18: Demographic: Age

Gender

66 responses

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

27.3%

71.2%

Figure 19: Demographic: Gender

Where are you from?

66 responses

- United Kingdom
- Europe (non-UK)
- International (non-EUR)

12.1%

31.8%

56.1%
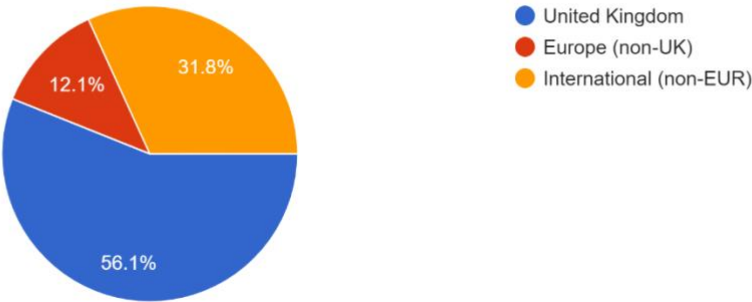
Figure 20: Demographic: Location

Year of Study
66 responses

Legend:
- First year
- Second year
- Placement/year abroad
- Final year
- Post Grad
- Third year
- Working
- Masters

1/2

- 19.7%
- 36.4%
- 12.1%
- 10.6%
- 13.6%
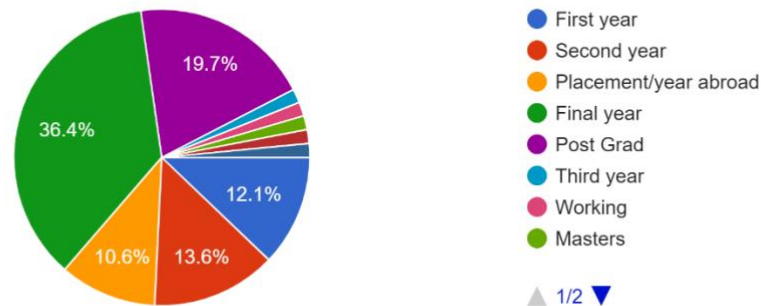
Figure 21: Demographic: Year of Study

How easy have you found continuing a hobby (started before university) to be at university?
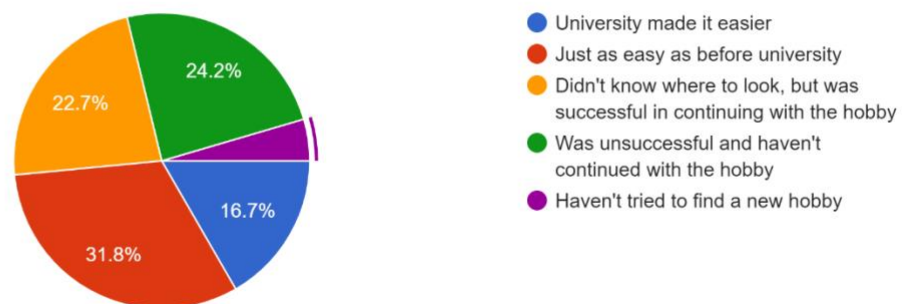66 responses

Legend:
- University made it easier
- Just as easy as before university
- Didn't know where to look, but was successful in continuing with the hobby
- Was unsuccessful and haven't continued with the hobby
- Haven't tried to find a new hobby

- 24.2%
- 22.7%
- 16.7%
- 31.8%

Figure 22: Hobbies: Continuing a hobby at university

Have you found that finding a new hobby at university has been easy?
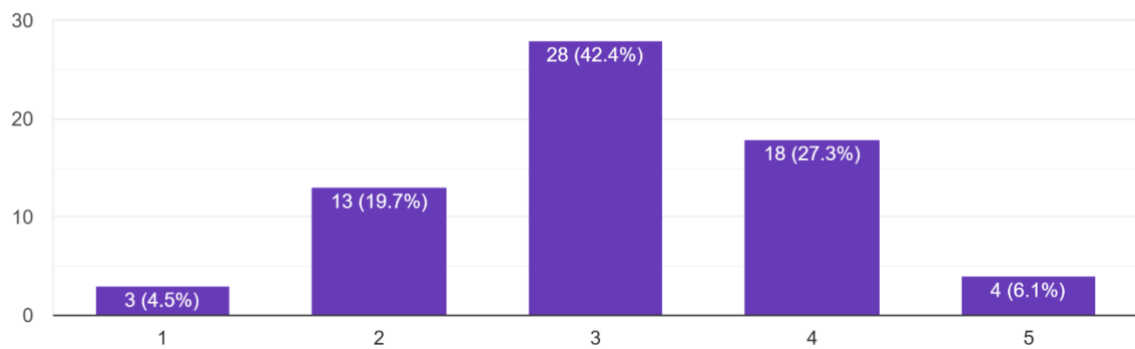66 responses

Figure 23: Hobbies: Finding a new hobby at university

Have you dropped any hobbies since starting university?
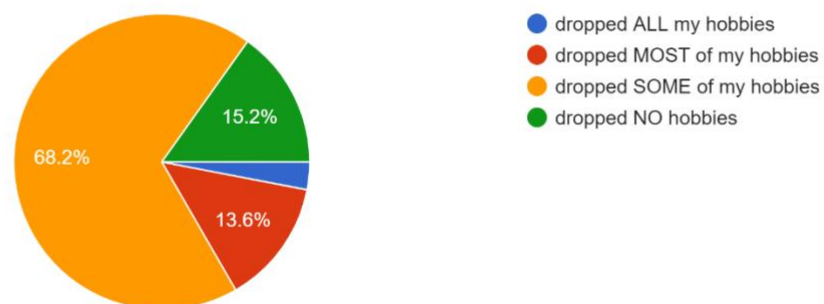66 responses

Figure 24: Hobbies: Dropping hobbies at university

How often do you use your phone a day?
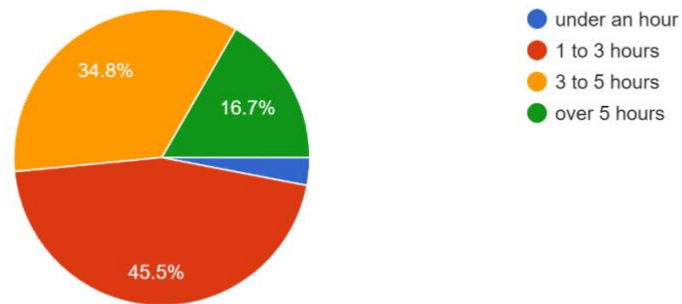66 responses

Figure 25: Phone Use: Daily phone use

What percentage of your phone use is directed towards social media?
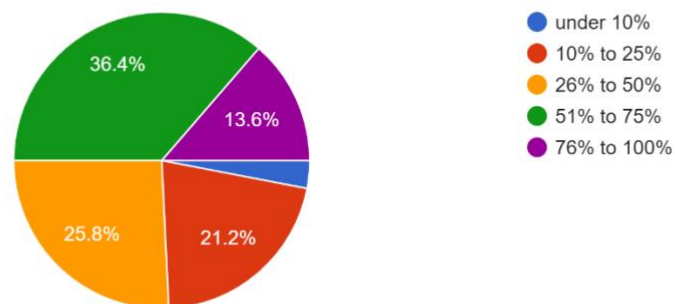66 responses

Figure 26: Phone Use: Social media use

Have you met up with a stranger met through social media before?
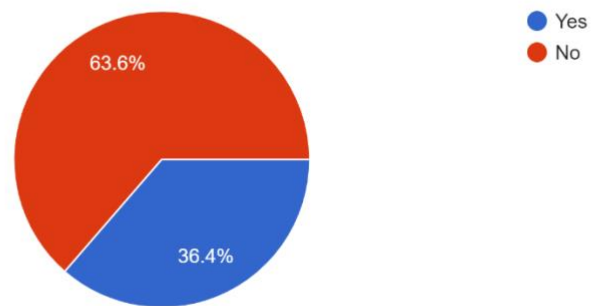66 responses

Figure 27: Phone Use: Meeting a stranger

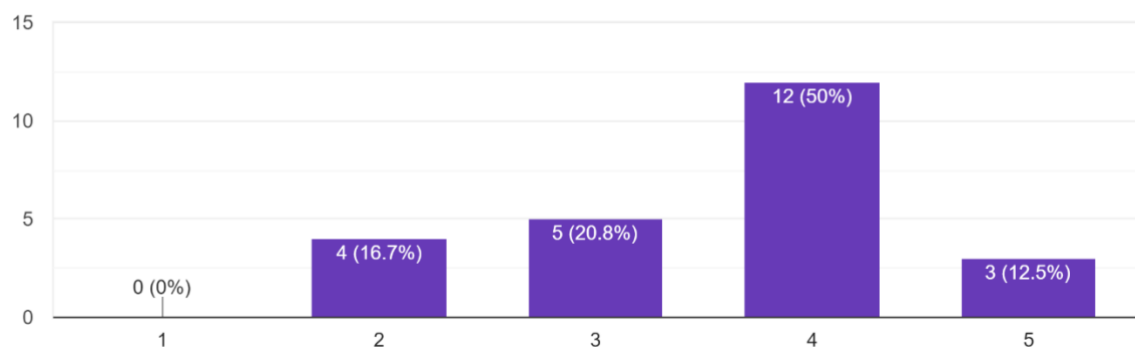Did you feel comfortable, meeting up with a stranger?
24 responses

Figure 28: Meeting a Stranger: Comfortability

What would make you feel more comfortable meeting up with a stranger?
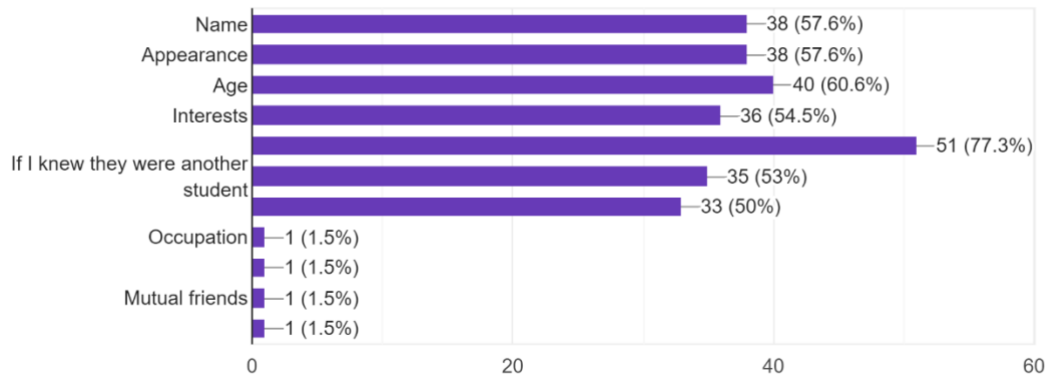66 responses

Figure 29: Social Media: Reasons to find comfort when meeting a stranger

Student Interview

This interview was conducted with a European (non-UK) student fitting into the average demographic seen in the questionnaire. Questions were made to avoid pushing for certain answers and attempted to follow the "Mom Test" direction as close as possible. The following interview is a brief guide to follow during the interview that was conducted with the answers being notes on all the valuable information gained.

	Questions	Follow up questions	Answers
1	Do you have any hobbies?	**YES** - How did you find them? - do you share hobbies with friends? How did you meet them? - How do you actively pursue them? **NO** - How would you attempt to find hobbies?	School linked to hobbies Linked to more specialised schools Books (look up lists for best books) Art shops (architecture inspires + architecture styles + exhibitions)
2	What do you find helpful about those methods?	Why?	Article - positive side effects Character/exhibition - inspiring creativity is encouraging Recommendations (friends) - reasons why you should try

			Straight to the point and interesting things standout
3	What do you find annoying/inefficient about those methods?	Why?	Still need to try on your own (may be better suited for different people) Meet up app - join groups for nonUK - themes/hobby groups (groups may not reflect title) Haven't thought about different methods than those given Never joined society (heard cliquey) + scared
4	How would you change those methods?	- How would you use social media to find new hobbies/find new people to pursue your hobbies with? - What are the benefits to this compared with current methods? - What are the drawbacks of this compared with current methods?	Less drinks based (societies) Have projects or activities (like sport competitions with other universities) Bumble BFF (simple to use with sharing interests/weird to swipe on friends and hard to move to real life) and Meet up (haven't used/doesn't seem attractive to use and groups die out)
5	Have you dropped any hobbies since starting university?	Why?	Table tennis weekly - scared to join society - self-aware and would feel uncomfortable in new situations where you must show off your skills (lack of confidence in skills)
6	Have you tried finding new hobbies?	Did you manage? Why?	Not with purpose - introduced by other people - if a character does something interesting - article talking about something Meditation - with an app - subscription based - easy cause of app so managed
7		Ideal	Advertise where someone else can browse Keep new members up to date (transparent - who met who + when people met up/with who with activity that occurred = real people doing things and feels personal, including what people think about it) - makes new people want to join and not give up because it still looks active Hobby based + activity (reason for meet) + goal/you know what you're doing

Student Interview Summary

These results are based on the collection of all the information from the interview while making it more concise and structured in order to reference during the business plan.

Started new hobbies in school/friends + tend to avoid societies

Actively pursue:
- looking up what other people are doing (reviews and recommendations)
- Inspired by other people's work (can be encouraging)

Reason to start a new hobby:
- Articles listing positives (i.e. health benefits)
- Display of personalities can be inspiring and encouraging
- Friends' recommendations offer a personalised touch
- Start with a friend
- An app solution could make a start and continuation easy

Reasons why not to start a new hobby:
- Need to start on your own
- Societies can be cliquey
- Scared to join
- Intimidating initial social interactions
- Self-aware and scared to be embarrassed
- Uncomfortable in new situations
- Lack of confidence in skill
- Lack of need to find new hobby
- Available solutions are often a waste of time
  - Groups don't reflect hobby (more for drinking)
  - Groups die out (waste of time to look)
- Not aware of other solutions

What would make picking up a new hobby more attractive
- Less focus on drinking in societies
- More focus on activities/projects (like with university competitions in sport)

Benefits of existing solutions
Bumble BFF:
- Profiles bundled up showing hobbies and interests
Meet up:
- Forums to find new friends/hobbies and people in the same situation as you (people moving to a different country)

Drawbacks of existing solutions

Bumble BFF:
- Weird to swipe on friends (in same way as tinder)
- Hard to move from app to real life

Meet up:
- Not attractive
- Groups die out
- theme/hobby doesn't reflect in the group

Ideal:
- Browse hobbies
- Keep new members up to date in a hobby group
    - Transparent
    - Who met with who and when
    - What activity occurred
    - Shows group is active and real people are in it
    - Feel personal
    - What people think
    - Would make externals more interested in joining
    - Won't die out/people won't give up
- Based on hobbies
- Show peoples/groups goals
- List activities (reason for meet)

Student Focus Group

This interview was conducted with one UK and 2 European (non-UK) students. Questions were made to avoid pushing for certain answers and attempted to follow the "Mom Test" direction as close as possible. The following focus group table, of questions and answers, is a brief guide to follow during the focus group that was conducted with the answers being notes on all the valuable information gained. However, it is important to note that these participants had no experience using similar applications to our envisioned solution.

	Questions	Follow up questions	Answers
1	Do you have any hobbies?	**YES** - How did you find them? - do you share hobbies with friends? How did you meet them? - How do you actively pursue them? **NO** - How would you attempt to find hobbies?	Friend does Freshers week • tasters Groups advertise Not at university (for drumming) • Did grades so did more • No reason so does less • Only for fun now (no other reason)

			Not many methods
2	What do you find helpful about those methods?	Why?	Grades - achieve something • Focused to do well School - advertised it Initially do it with friends then was more into it
3	What do you find annoying/inefficient about those methods?	Why?	Didn't like the teacher (piano) Stress from doing it in front of people (drums loud) Don't like team Lack of confidence in skill Need to have level of commitment that you want
4	How would you change those methods?	- How would you use social media to find new hobbies/find new people to pursue your hobbies with? - What are the benefits to this compared with current methods? - What are the drawbacks of this compared with current methods?	Easier when other people are involved
5	Have you dropped any hobbies since starting university?	Why?	Replaced by other things (other music) Meet new people and start something else
6	Have you tried finding new hobbies?	Did you manage? Why?	Societies Friends
7		Ideal	Cheap to get involved Enter parameters and find hobby (time frame/competitiveness/skill level) Room rent?

Student Focus Group Summary

These results are based on the collection of all the information from the focus group while making it more concise and structured in order to reference during the business plan.

Actively pursue: • Formal learning • For fun (entails less time) • With friends

Reason to start a new hobby:
- Friend to start/pursue with
- Freshers week (using tasters)
- Third parties advertise
- Didn't think there were many methods to find hobbies to start/pursue

Reasons why not to pursue hobby:
- Don't like instructor (if formal)
- Stress of performing (if too loud or confidence in skill)
- Don't like your team (if team activity)
- Need a high enough level of commitment to pursue which isn't always available

What would make picking up a new hobby more attractive
- When people you know are involved
- When you have more time available

Why are hobbies dropped
- Replaced by other things (even other hobbies)

Ideal:
- Enter parameters to find people looking for the same thing
- Different categories like how much time you want to dedicate, level of competitiveness and skill level
- Needs to be cheap to start off
- Possibly look for a room to rent if something (playing an instrument/art studio/sports room)