**201045926**
**COMM3780**
**Assessment 2: Option B (Research and Design Project)**
**Research Report - 2471 words**

Mobile dating is a market that has grown astronomically since the inception of smartphones, and is worth an estimated $3 billion in the USA alone (Lin, no date). Mobile dating, as a development of the previously popular online dating model, takes the form of an application. This allows users to conveniently match people on the go, interacting with the profiles of other singles that meet their criteria of sex, age or geographical preference. Most new apps in this field follow the model of the highly successful Tinder, boasting 9.6 million daily active users (Carr, 2016). The app uses swipe cards, allowing people to accept or reject other accounts based primarily on their visual appearance. Due to the success this model has received, subsequent Tinder-clones have emerged. Therefore, the market is dominated by apps similar in style. This unhealthy obsession with aesthetics promotes a culture where individuals are constantly battling feelings of insecurity about self-image (Gibbs et al, 2006; Strubel & Petrie, 2017) whilst also contributing to issues of misrepresentation (Hall et al., 2010) and privacy issues (Gross and Acquisti, 2005; Madden and Rainie, 2015). Because of this, I will be proposing a unique alternative to the mobile dating market.

To understand mobile dating, it is important to acknowledge the biggest player, Tinder, and find solutions to its many criticisms. It is reasonable to suggest that other dating services are often a clone of the Tinder model, therefore to redesign the mobile dating market, it is important to step away from the accepted norm. Tinder puts high value on visual appearance, which consequently translates into what a user perceives as the most important factor (Strubel & Petrie, 2017). Whilst viewing your profile on Tinder, the most obvious icon is a prompt to “add media” (see fig. 1), ensuring that the user is continuously adding fresh visual content to supplement their profiles. Furthermore, when viewing a profile, the vast majority of screen real estate is given to the visual image, with only a very small area provided for name and age. All other information is only available through pressing a tiny “i” icon (see fig. 2). This alarming norm has clearly been embraced by many users, as Kim and Chock found that people upload photos which follow social beauty trends and accentuate

their appearance (2015). This is one causation factor of misrepresentation that can potentially lead to difficult face-to-face interactions, as the user does not live up to their online appearance. It was found that female users are more likely to misrepresent their weight online (Hall et al, 2010), whilst female photos have also been judged as less accurate and more elaborated (Hancock & Toma, 2009). These findings imply that female users of mobile dating are not entirely happy with their appearance, and subsequently look for methods of obscuring this information such as strategic misrepresentation, discussed later. It is therefore proposed that any new mobile dating application should put less emphasis on aesthetics. Although physical attraction is important to a relationship, personality, humour and other characteristics are arguably just as key. Current mobile dating simply promotes physical appearance as the primary factor. Therefore, an alternative service could prioritize personality traits. This would create a different dynamic of online dating that would certainly be unique amongst the currently successful models.

Misrepresentation in a mobile dating environment is the act of exaggerating or refuting personality traits about oneself, and is not always malicious, or even intentional (Gibbs et al., 2006) but is extremely commonplace. As many as 86% of Tinder users believed they had experienced physical misrepresentation (through edited or favourable pictures), whilst nearly 50% of users thought they had encountered misrepresentation regarding relationship goals, age and income (Gibbs et al., 2006). Regardless of intentions, misrepresentation leads to unrealistic online personas that are very hard to maintain in the real world, should the pair meet face-to-face. Many see this potential deception as the main disadvantage of online dating (Brym and Lenton, cited in Ellison et al., 2006). At its worst, misrepresentation can be strategic and malicious. It is easy to use the photos of another to create a false, believable online persona, which has been found to occasionally lead to identity theft and stalking (Gross & Acquisti, 2005). It has also been discovered that many women still believe in these stigmas surrounding misrepresentation in online dating (Cali et al, 2013). Therefore, any app

that aims to break the mould must do more to fact-check users, and keep false information to a minimum. This is difficult to accomplish, as misrepresentation often occurs at a user level. Therefore, a balance must be struck to ensure that users can still enjoy the app without feeling the need to obscure or edit the truth about themselves.

Another key concern in mobile dating is the privacy risks associated with sharing so much data online, with people unbeknownst to you. Other social networks, such as Facebook, request similar amounts of personal data, but allow much more control over who sees the information, and the account holder is fully aware of individuals who can and can't see their data. Mobile dating networks however, with their "blind" interactions, expose images, locative data, personal information and any facts you may give away in your biography such as social media handles, to a multitude of unknown individuals. This of course brings major privacy concerns, as previously outlined, it can lead to identity theft and stalking (Gross & Acquisti, 2005). However, an important study by Madden and Rainie found that although many Americans consider themselves concerned with privacy risks, few act upon this concern (2015) which therefore implies that more needs to be done on the side of the app publisher to ensure that users remain safe, or are at least more inclined to consider their own safety online. Therefore, the privacy risks present in current iterations of mobile dating apps dictate that any new online dating space should strive to be safe, and not give away excessive personal information to people that the user is not aware of. This is potentially possible through live chatting services, where the partners interact with one another real time, and so the user is always aware where and when their data is being shared. However, it is important not to stray too far from the gamified, swipe card-style Tinder model that has proven so successful. Developers can provide more written warnings about safety online, or simply present less information to other users, making the individual feel safer in the online space.

Research has also found that of 50% of Tinder users are reportedly aged 18-24 (O'Brien, 2016) whilst their motives for using the app have been found to be extremely varied. Contrary to popular belief, a study showed that only 5.1% of Tinder users downloaded the app specifically to look for hookups, with the majority (48.3%) doing so due to mass market popularity (their friends used the app), and another 14.8% because of the swipe card format (LeFebvre, 2017). This demonstrates that a likeable design and mass market popularity will lead to the creation of a successful dating application. Taddicken found that people are more likely to open up and share information on social networks that are seen as relevant (2013). This is reflected in LeFebvre's study, and the popularity that Tinder has received as the go-to mobile dating app. This shows that a simple and gamified application is the way forward, to ensure that the teenage audience can enjoy the app due to recognisable swipe cards and a fun, clean aesthetic. This will bring positive attention and allow the app to grow.

The swipe card inspired gamification of Tinder is an important aspect of why the format has become so popular, as shown by LeFebvre (2017). Research has found that "Tinder offers a space for online flirting as an exclusive form of gaming" (Rocha, 2018, p.77). This demonstrates that a lot of users simply enjoy the act of swiping and are not necessarily searching for a romantic relationship. Seidel (2015) goes further and distinguishes different types of players of the game. 'Achievers' want to see results, such as hook-ups; 'explorers' want to discover what people exist within the app; and 'socializers' send messages to most of their matches to try and meet new people. The fulfillment of each of these roles is what makes Tinder so popular, yet it is the inclusion of 'achievers' that attach the negative stigma to mobile dating. A new application in the market could cater to a particular type of player by offering something completely different, that in turn removes the stigmas attached. It is essential that the gamified aspects remain, as it is these that make the most of mobile media, and create a place to both seriously hunt for relationships and pass time.

In response to this research, I would like my solution to bring something new and unique to this linear mobile dating world. Relationships are based on multiple facets but current iterations of mobile dating place more importance on physical attraction. My alternative model will look to match people based on their personality traits rather than physical appearance. This will be achieved by an introductory survey when the user signs up to service. It will be fun in style, putting the user in various scenarios and will build up a character profile based on their responses. Initially, users will not see a photo of their match, and must swipe based on how attracted they are to another user's character profile. This adds an entire new dynamic to the initial relationship forming stage. It gives everybody an equal playing field with no racial or aesthetic prejustice, and is based solely on personal characteristics that can be controlled through the survey responses. The application will remain gamified through the use of swipe cards, but will cater mostly to 'explorers' (Seidel, 2015). These are players that will engage in conversation to learn about a person, and will enjoy the mystery of not seeing what they look like. Furthermore, this change will lead to a reduction in URS (uncertainty reduction strategies) employed by users who doubt the authenticity of their matches. They know that the profile is built up from genuine survey responses and is not trying to be something it is not. This publisher-level change brings about much more user-level trust in the system that the people on the app are genuine. Physical attraction is important in any relationship however, and so after a certain amount of time, photographic profiles will be unlocked. Providing opportunity to develop the relationship, and also makes the application safer as a face can be put to a name.
Re-evaluating the primary dynamic on which mobile dating applications initiate relationships will benefit users who are worried about living up to societal standards of physical

appearance, and also prevents users from reaching stereotypical conclusions about another user based on how they look, before interacting with them in some way.

A drawback of current mobile dating iterations is the room for misrepresentation. Although this occurs on a user-level, it is important for publishers to limit the opportunity to misrepresent and deceive. The initial removal of photos does remove this aspect to some extent at least visually. However, it is important that photos are available further down the line, for safety reasons. Other methods of reducing misrepresentation include not allowing the initial surveys to be redone. This ensures that much time and effort is put into the users answers, to provide an authentic reflection of their personality. If a user was not collecting many matches, they may be encouraged to redo the survey with disingenuous answers, but as this is not possible on my app, so users can be assured that responses are authentic.

The final drawback that my research discovered was the various privacy concerns associated with mobile dating. Identity theft will be considerably harder without the initial access to the photos of another user, and much more control over who has access to images. Personal data is more strictly controlled and moderated, with the user having much more input into what information is displayed and to who. Due to the lengthy sign up process, and drawn out conversation before allowing access to images, criminals would be a lot less inclined to use this app over alternatives that make their activity a lot easier. Therefore, this solution will be considered a safer, much more genuine online dating environment that its competition.

My research also found that the Tinder model of mobile dating is highly accepted as an industry standard, and so it is important to maintain some of these key elements in my design. My app will use the same swipe card style as its competitors. This design is intuitive, therefore does not need much adaptation. Users will appreciate being able to relate their initial interactions to previous experiences and will settle into the app a lot quicker because

of this. Furthermore, the freemium model under which Tinder operates has proven very successful financially and so this is a business move that would be used on my app. Allowing access to all basic features for no cost will ensure that the app is tried by many people. A paywall often puts users off trying an app they would otherwise be interested in. These users will pay for their usage through carefully-selected advertisements, these will be infrequent and non-intrusive so as not to hinder user experience. There will also be various paid options, that allows the user to subscribe to the application, and in return receive unlimited swipes, and quicker access to user images. Because of the mystery behind the matches, users will be very excited to see their partner and so I believe this model would be a great success. There is also scope for more survey packs, such as seasonal, holiday sets that the user can buy to flesh out their profile in a fun way. These will be individually purchased for a one-off fee which offers something different from Tinder, yet adds to the gamification in a collector-style, which is popular in mobile card games. This could too prove to be a very successful business move.

To conclude, current mobile dating solutions are exceedingly popular, yet follow a linear format designed by the market leader, Tinder. There are a whole host of problems with this model, ranging from cyber security to misrepresentation. Fundamentally, the focus on forming relationships based primarily on aesthetics is very narrow-minded. Existing alternatives differ little in format, and so a new mobile dating app should examine other factors key to forming relationships, such as personality. A new app must offering a unique alternative to current solutions, whilst improving on their privacy downfalls. My concept achieves this through reimagining the core dynamics of what an individual is looking for in a mobile dating app.

## Appendix

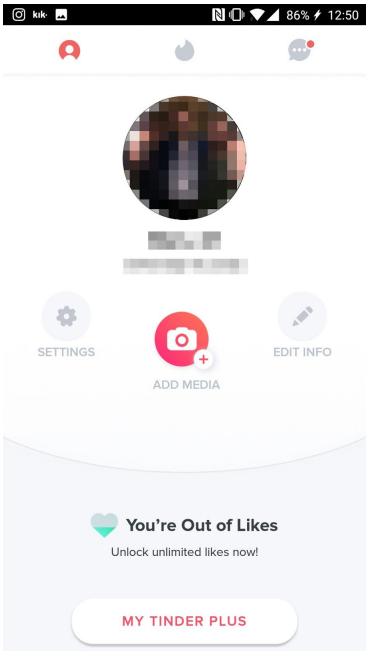


***Fig. 1*** *- the most prominent feature on this page is the "Add media" button. The "edit info" is much more obscure and therefore shows a clear hierarchy by Tinder on what they see as important*

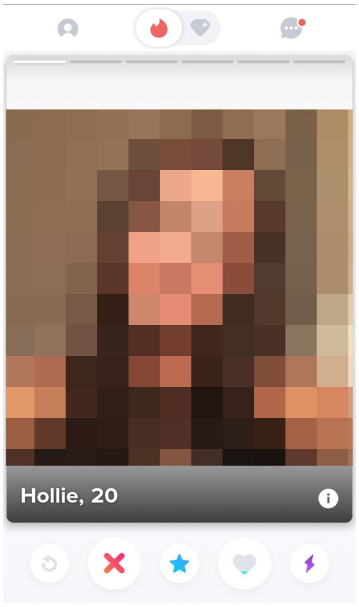


***Fig. 2*** *- when viewing a users profile, at least 70% of the screen is dedicated to an image of the user. The smallest button on the page, the tiny "i" icon in the bottom left corner, is the one that actually allows you to learn more about the user through their biography.*

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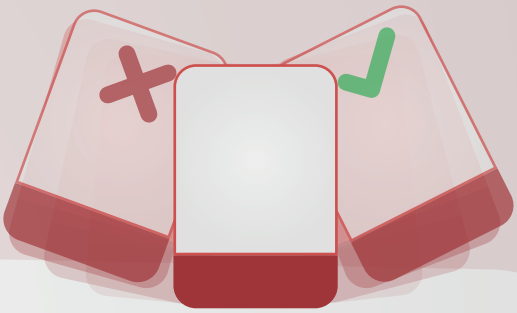
# SPARK

## 1. Introduction

***Spark* is a new mobile dating alternative that re-imagines the accepted methods of finding love online.**

Retaining the much loved swipe card feature that many of its competitors boast, *Spark* looks for love using your personality instead of physical appearance. Users complete a survey upon sign up, their responses form a character profile that others swipe left or right for. Personality is just as important as physical attraction to a relationship, yet mobile dating alternatives pay much more attention to looks. *Spark* completely changes the dynamic of mobile dating.

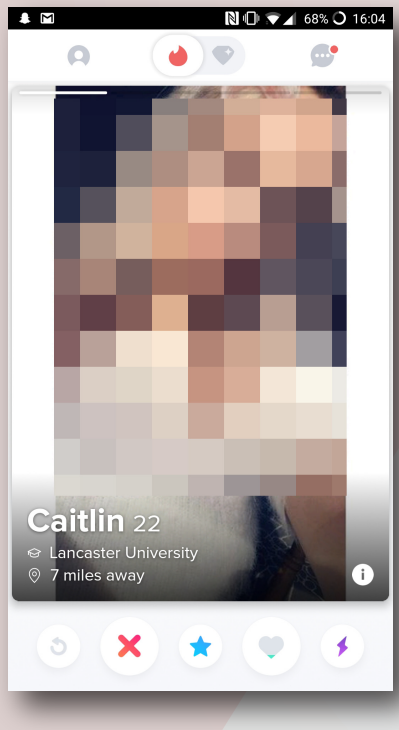


*Spark* is an application built for mobile, making the most of touch screen capabilities and locative data to find matches nearby. Mobile also allows for convenient text communication and media uploading. The application is targeted at teenagers and young adults, meaning mobile is the most viable device to cultivate interest.

**18-25**

## 2a. Competitor analysis - Tinder

**Tinder is the market leader when it comes to mobile dating. Their development model has been used for many apps.**




The app works using user profiles, built by an individual to reflect the best possible version of themselves. Initial data provided includes name, age, sexual orientation and location. A user will then add 1-9 images of themselves, and write a short biography. They will finally set preferences on age, distance and sex of their matches and begin swiping. Users will then swipe on other profiles, left if they are not interested, and right if they are. Should two users both swipe right on each other, messaging features become available. Tinder is aimed primarily at young professionals and students aged from 18-30.

The app is built specifically for mobile and uses the camera, locative data, touch capabilities, and links with other social media (Facebook, Instagram).

**SWOT analysis**

**Strengths**

Tinder has been so successful that most mobile dating apps use its swipe card format for their products. The huge user base they have accumulated has led to a robust system where a user will rarely run out of matches. There is a good trade off between features available in the free version and the subscription service. Allowing Instagram profile integration improves the safety of interactions, as you can be sure the user is authentic.

**Weaknesses**

Profiles are easily and regularly faked, using the images of somebody else and writing a fake profile. Advertisements on swipe cards can be annoying and distracting. Users can be frustrated by the limited number of likes per 12 hours. The importance of being attractive puts some people off using the app, such a format can cause insecurities if a user does not receive many matches. Many stigmas attached to Tinder as brand.

**Opportunities**

The company have spoke about how they would like to develop the swipe cards in other industries such as professional job searching. Creating similar apps under a different name may serve Tinder well due to the stigma attached to the brand. Creating more dynamic, interactive profiles would enhance the gamification of Tinder.

**Threats**

The focus on visual appearance can lead to insecurities amongst users with few matches. Fake profiles are very common and Tinder could be home to malicious users that may be looking to conduct criminal activity. The stigmas attached to Tinder will prevent some from joining the platform. Limiting swipes may stop people from using the platform.

# 2b. Competitor analysis - Bumble

**Bumble is a successful Tinder alternative that aims to empower female users.**


Similarly, Bumble uses a profile feature with several images, basic demographic information and a short biography about yourself. The profile section has been developed further however. There are several prompts to choose from that can make your profile more interesting, for example "my dream dinner guest is..." and this demonstrates more personality than a Tinder profile. There is also a large selection dedicated to providing facts about yourself, such as smoking and drinking habits, religion, pets, etc. This certainly builds on the basic profiling that Tinder conducts. The main difference is that after matching with another user, it is on the female to instigate the conversation, alleviating many of the perceived risks attached to the use of Tinder. Bumble has a target audience ranging from 18-30 year olds.

The app is also built specifically for mobile and uses the camera, locative data, touch capabilities, and links with other social media (Facebook, Instagram).

**SWOT analysis**

**Strengths**

Bumble empowers female users on the platform. This feminist outlook takes what they perceive as a position of male power on Tinder and other dating sites and gives it instead to female users. Bumble also has much more dynamic profiling options. The design tries to separate itself from Tinder in as many ways as possible yet still retains the swipe cards. The layout is intuitive for a new user.

**Weaknesses**

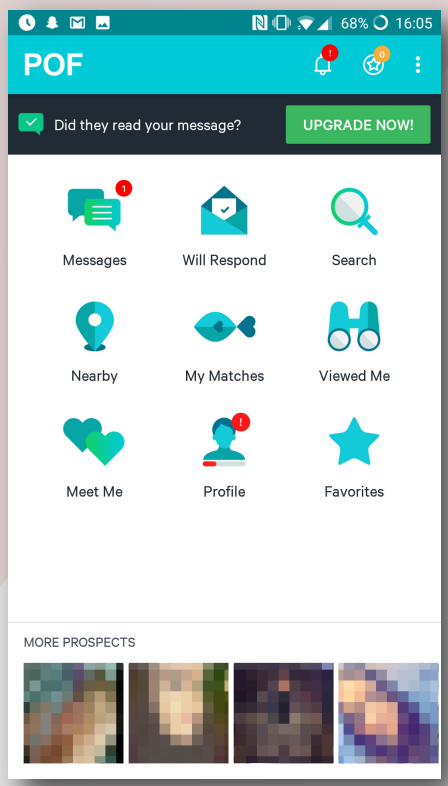
Male users may feel unfairly targeted and are more likely to use alternative apps that give them a level playing field. There are still issues regarding fake profiles and disingenuous people on Bumble, such as those using the platform for identity theft or criminal activity. The focus is still on visual appearance which isn't to the taste of everybody. Limited likes per day annoy users who want to look for love.

### Opportunities

The platform could expand into other markets like Tinder plans on doing. They could release a similar app that gives all the power to the male users. Bumble could allow male users to participate more in some aspects and limit them more in others to make the project more experimental.

### Threats

Not allowing male users an equal platform is going to result in most male users joining a different mobile dating service where they receive equal treatment. This will not only reduce traffic on Bumble but also result in a disproportionate amount of female to male users.




# 2c. Competitor analysis - POF

**POF (Plenty of Fish) is a dating website that has been ported down to mobile.**

The service has been long running as a website for years, and has been developed into a successful mobile app recently in order to capitalise on the success of mobile dating. Signing up through the app subjects the user to a very deep profile building process , followed by the opportunity to upload some images. The app has various ways of meeting people, such as through "Meet Me", their interpretation of the swipe card system. You can also search for nearby users, any user by name, or randomly selected partners along the bottom of the page. Providing so many methods of meeting people keeps the application fresh. It is also compatible with the web app, meaning that users can use the platform both on the go and on a workstation. The target demographic of the service seems to serve older users 30-50, but developing an app shows an interest in attracting a younger demographic to the platform.

The app has been ported down for mobile use, but does still see some mobile integration such as optimised touch controls for the swipe card functionality.

## SWOT analysis

### Strengths

Being available on multiple platforms allows for more convenient usage and also presents a wider demographic to the platform. Having multiple avenues of meeting people keeps things fresh for users. Stepping away from the Tinder-like design helps to distinguish POF from the crowd.

### Weaknesses

The app has been built to include all of the website features and so there is a lot more than you would expect on a usual app. The design is somewhat dated and not the most aesthetically pleasing. It is also not very intuitive for a new user. The initial sign up process is very long and not interesting,

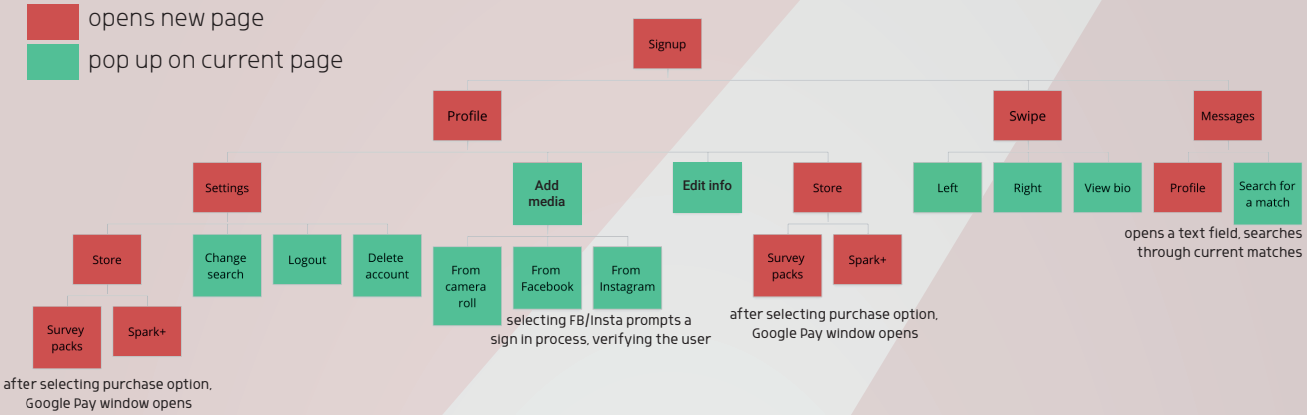
### Opportunities

There is opportunity to attract a more diverse user base due to the opportunity to use POF either mobile or browser based. Also, the developers could make the sign up process more exciting to entice users instead of feeling like a mundane survey.

### Threats

Having a dated and complex UI may stop users from returning to the app. Having an intimidating survey screen may be off-putting for new members. The length of the initial questioning may also stop users from wanting to sign up to POF.

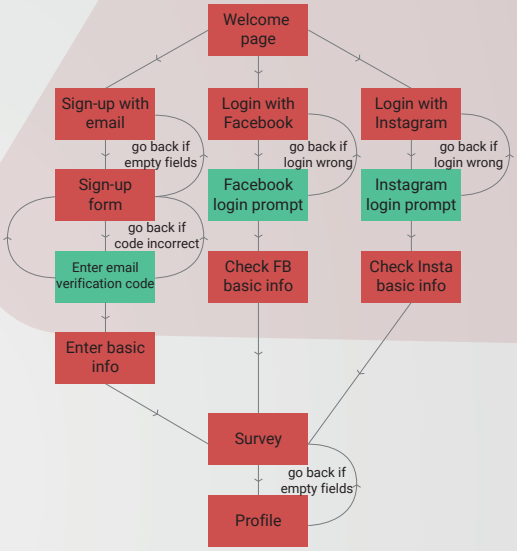
# 3. Site map

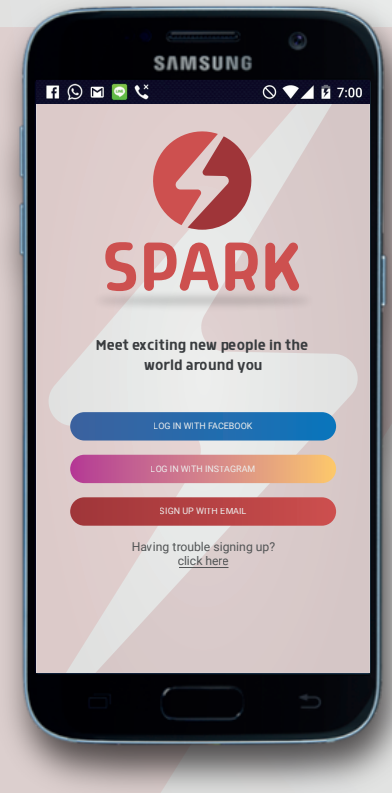



The app follows a similar format to Tinder with some key differences. It removes the additional tools when swiping, such as "super like" and "rewind" to keep things simple for the user. Media is also uploaded from multiple social media's instead of simply through the camera roll. The store has options for OTP (one time purchase) survey packs as well as the known subscription service.

Android hardware/software keys are used for navigating backwards through the app.

The sign-up process is more thorough and so has its own site map. Sign up can be achieved through three linear means as shown to the right. All require some form of verification from the user as an extra security measure to prevent fake/bot accounts. After creating an account, all users are directed to the survey, before landing on the "Profile" from the site map above.



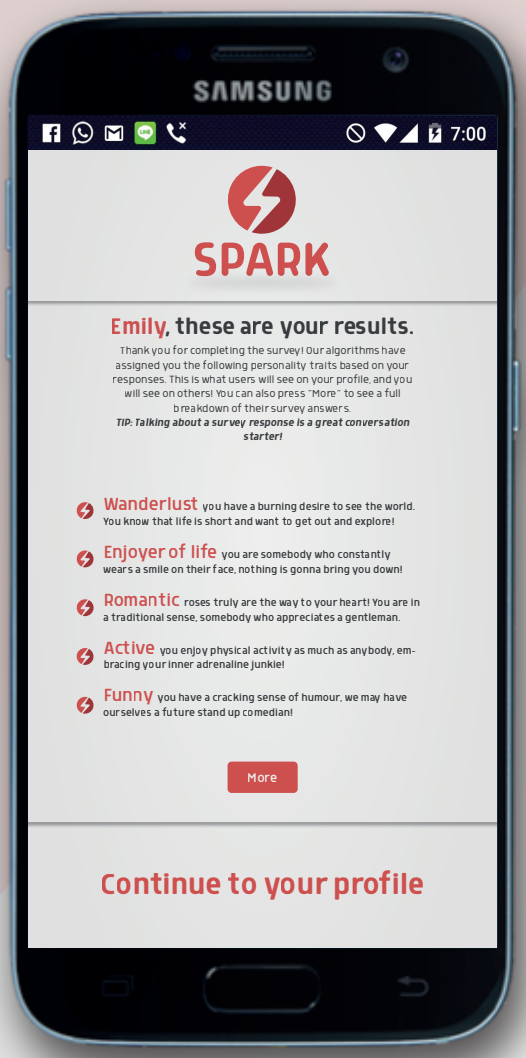




# 4. Design mock-ups

**A detailed selection of mock-ups have been produced to demonstrate how the app would look and feel to a user.**

This is the initial screen that a user will see upon loading up the app for the first time. It features the logo prominently and offers several sign in options for the user depending on preference. Research showed that developers need to do as much as possible to help keep users safe online. Therefore, all three are designed to verify the user in some way, and add a level of security to the platform. Facebook and Instagram connections to other social networks add a lot more effort for a faker, as they must make yet another fake account. Research also showed that the majority of users will be aged 18-24, and so it is expected that the majority will have an account on Facebook or Instagram. Just in case they don't, email verification is offered. This is good for privacy as it can prevent bots. A design for each of these login systems is available.


After a successful sign in and verification, if it is the first time on the app, users will complete some basic information (such as name, date of birth and location (the phone will ask for locative data to be turned on)). If signing in through Facebook/Instagram, these form fields will be auto-completed as appropriate. Then, the user will be sent to a survey. This gamified feature adds to the fun of swiping in mobile dating. The scenario-based quiz will be completed using multiple choice answers. Algorithms in the back-end will use the responses to assign some general personality traits to the user, Which will be presented to them at the end of the survey in the form of personality traits. This builds on research showing that the younger user base of mobile dating enjoy gamification.

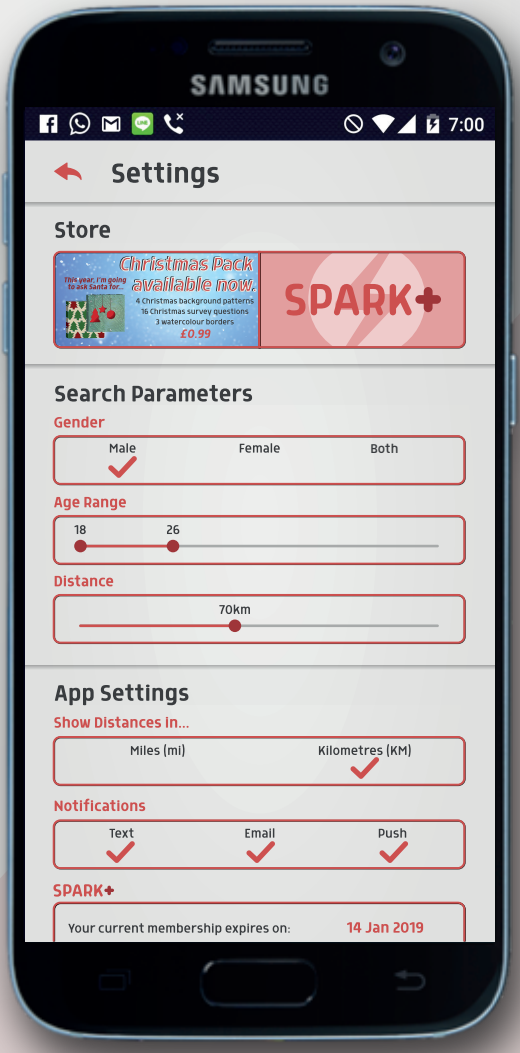



If the user presses "more" they will be taken to a detailed break down of their responses. This option is also available on every other user's profile, meaning you can see how an individual answered any particular question. This method of information gathering on a prospective partner is much more enjoyable and interesting than the methods used by POF, a simple list of answers to mundane questions that were not enjoyable or interesting. After viewing their profile, the user is sent to their profile. If a user is signing in having already made an account, they will skip the survey section and head straight to their profile. This is because we want authentic survey responses, and so do not allow users to redo the initial survey. Research showed that mobile daters fear they are not witnessing genuine self-disclosure, and so allowing a single run at the survey maintains authenticity.


This is your profile page. From here, most of the features of the app are available. Users can view their profile as it will be seen by others, with basic information and five characteristics. They can also edit their biography, a short description of themselves, which is available on most dating apps. They can also edit their profile (discussed shortly). Next, a preview of the user-uploaded photos is shown. These can be removed by tapping on them, and added using the "add media" button. There are also buttons to the settings, and to the store. The visual hierarchy puts most of the attention on the user profile, as research showed that other apps often prioritized the adding of media, which is something that *Spark* will step away from. And to the crux of the app, research showed that some were turned off by mobile dating due to the importance of physical attraction - this app does well to offer a viable alternative for those who want to explore different personality traits in potential partners, whilst also retaining images in some capacity to ensure the safety of users.


Pressing "edit profile" will open this page, that allows the user to customise the visual aspects of their profile. This feature is present to help extenuate a user's personality further. Their design choices will help to describe the individual in ways that the survey responses could not, and also add a little identity, ownership and gamification to the individual and their experiences on *Spark*. The customisable features include the background pattern, border, and border colour. These could be extended in the future to allow even more customisation, such as background colours, and fonts. Research showed that gamification was important to people's likening of Tinder, and so developing it even further is vital to success here. Furthermore, many games now use cosmetic items as a method of generating revenue, by charging users for new "skins". On *Spark*, an extra income can be achieved through OTP (one time purchases) for unique patterns and borders. The users will scroll down the page and swipe left to right to see all of their available options. Simply clicking an option will apply it, allowing the user to create a coherent, welcoming design. At the bottom of the page will be a submit button and also a reset button. Pressing either will return the user to the profile page.

From the profile page, pressing the "settings" icon will bring the user to this screen. It offers a mini store, clicking either of the links will direct the user to the full store page. There is also opportunity to change your search parameters, and more general app settings such as distances and notifications. Further down the page are legal documents, and options to logout or delete your account. There is little discussion around the settings of mobile dating services, therefore it was decided that it was best to stick with a layout that is familiar to the user in order to provide a better user experience. Users can return to the profile page by pressing their designated back key, or the return button in the top left.

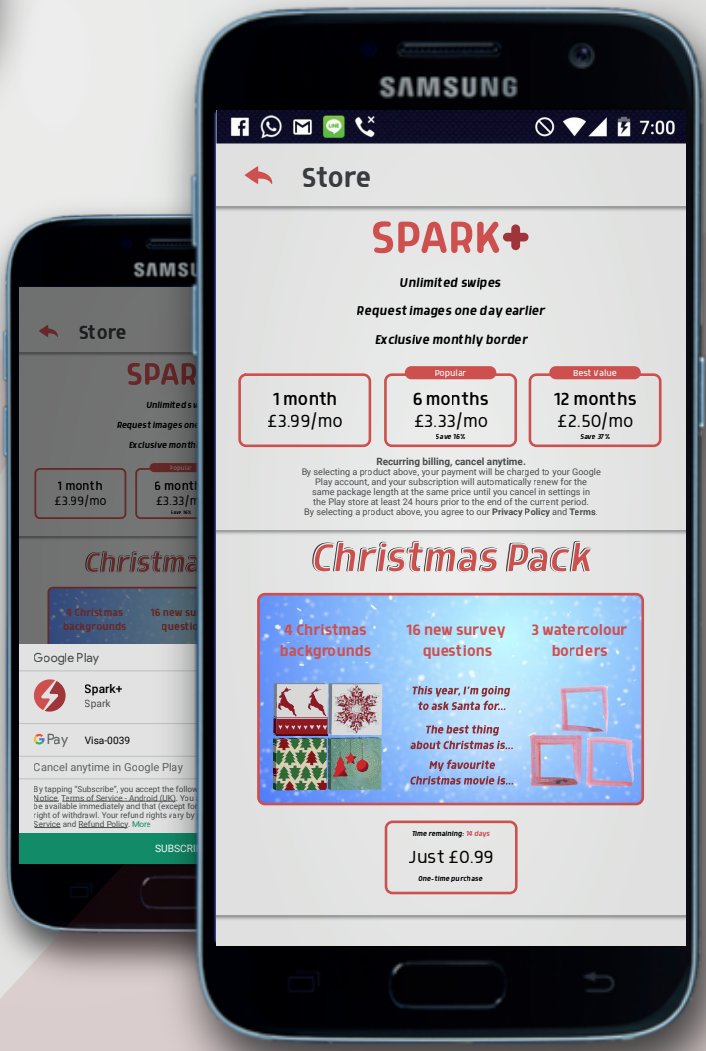


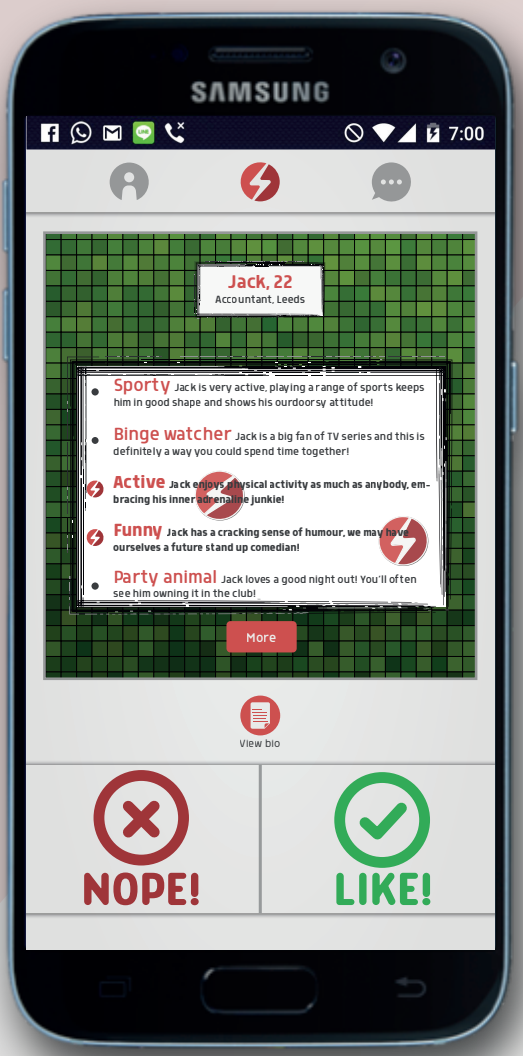

This simple page is the result of pressing "add media". Up to five images can be added by the user. These will be seen after 14 days since matching, or after 7 if both users agree to showing earlier. Reasons for this are discussed later. The user is presented with three options when uploading media. Selecting Facebook or Instagram relies on the user connecting their associated account, unless they already did during the sign up process. This is another example of building on research that stated users needed more cues to appreciate whether their match was real or fake. Verified photos from FB/Insta will display with a small logo watermark by them to show their authenticity. To upload from the device, the user must accept storage permissions, and then their regular albums folder will open.

Users can add up to a maximum of five photos. The number is low due to the focus on factors other than physical appearance. After five, if the user tries to upload again they will be prompted that they have reached their upload limit and must first delete a photo. This can be done by simply clicking on any of the five slots, and confirming that you would like to delete the selected image. These photos will only be seen after the 14 day window of getting to know each other is complete.

Pressing the "store" button on the profile page will direct the user here. There is a subscription based service as with most dating apps, known as *Spark+*. This allows the user special affordances that free members do not have access too, such as a unique monthly border. This builds on research and creates a sense of gamification, as users may want to collect exclusive borders. They also unlock the "request" feature earlier. Instead of waiting 7 days to ask a match if they would like to exchange photos, *Spark+* members can ask after 6. They also receive unlimited daily swipes. This premium account doesn't offer services used by other dating apps such as "super like", which do more to prioritise aesthetics. Research suggested this should be avoided and so these features are removed.

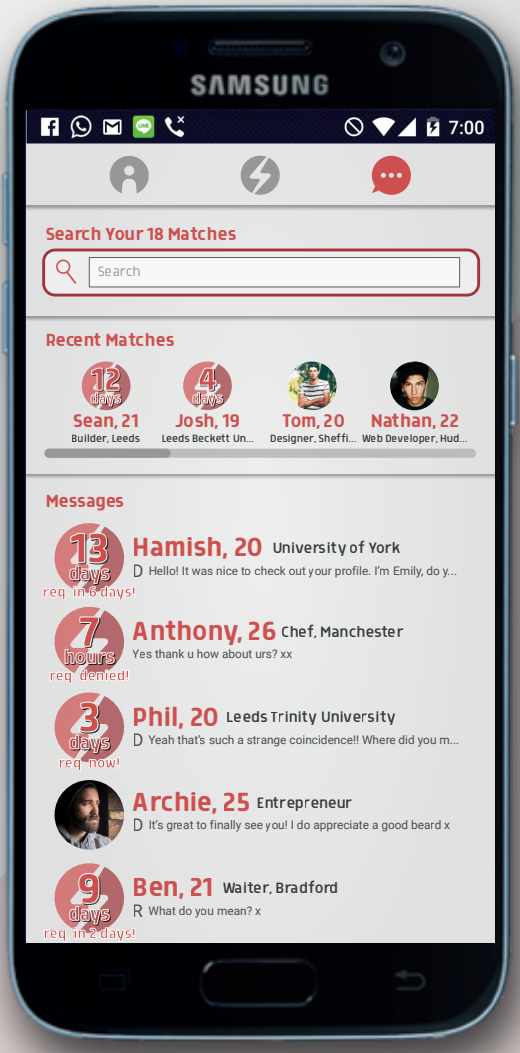
There is also a unique revenue stream to *Spark* in the form of OTP (one-time purchases). These once again build on gamification, and allow users to uniquely develop their profiles. Season events will bring unique profile customisations that will allow a profile to stand out from the crowd. Furthermore, they include seasonal questions, and the only opportunity a user will get to develop their personality traits after signing up. Upon pressing an item from the store, the Google Play pop up for purchasing appears. This is controlled by Google, so the design is true to theirs.

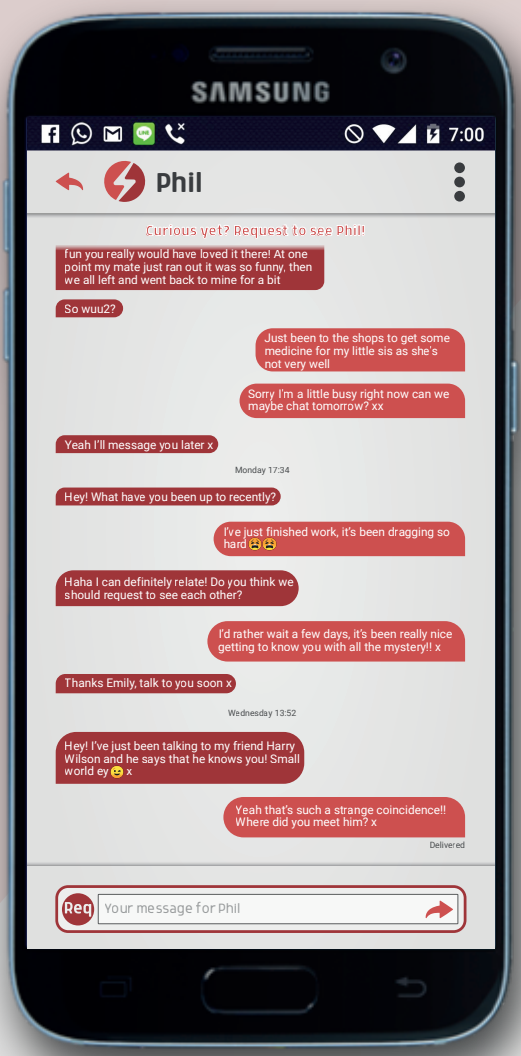





Pressing the logo at the top of the screen will move the user over onto the swiping section of the app. This is the main component and how you find potential dates. Here we can see another user's personalised profile. The main difference is that Jack has some bold character traits and stickers, this is because Emily and him match up in those traits, and have *Sparked*. These are a small identifier of who might be a good match, and also give meaning to the name. You can once again click to see more, or view their bio which contains a short written piece about themselves. Keeping things simple, users either press "nope!" or "like!", or swipe left or right depending on their preference. This is a key element of mobile dating apps that has seen them grow in popularity through the ease and gamification of finding a match, as research suggested. Therefore, this basic functionality has not been changed. Some additional elements have been removed to keep this screen very basic and intuitive for a new user. First time users will see a short animation overlay, demonstrating the ability to swipe left/right, so that the user can make the most of the touchscreen.

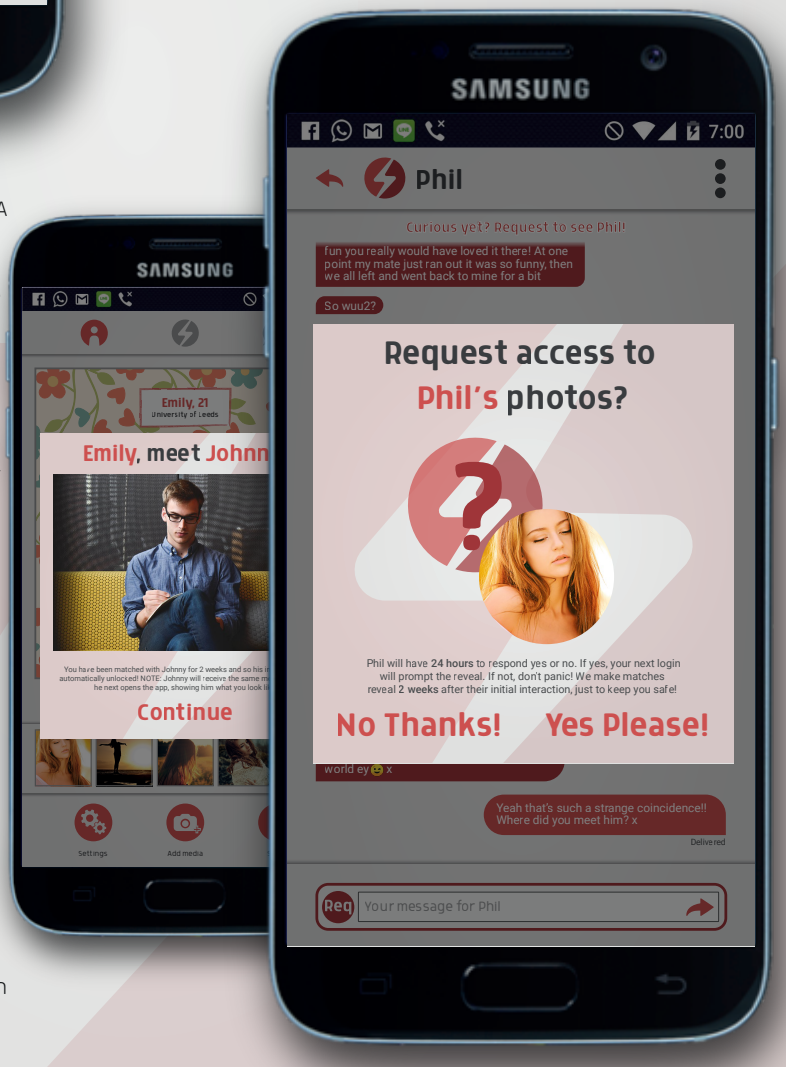
The final tab accessed from the main menu at the top of the device is the "messages" tab. Anybody a user matches with will be added to the "recent matches" section of this page. There is a search functionality so popular users can easily find the person they want to communicate with. In this example, most users are represented by the *Spark* logo with some information inside it. This is how accounts without images will look. There is a 14 day countdown from the moment another user hits "recent matches". For example, we can tell that Sean has been matched for two days, as he has 12 remaining. We can also see that Tom has been matched for at least 14 days, but no messages have been exchanged. This is because his image is unlocked, but he is still in the "recent matches" section. Any user who has messaged you, or you have messaged, appears under the "messages" heading. This has a similar layout, but also includes a preview of the last message sent, and whether it was sent / delivered / read. Users who have exchanged messages also have the option to request images (more later). The concept of hiding images even from matches, once again builds on research that found many people were not happy with their appearance in online dating, and so this format truly allows users to be themselves, without fear of having to maintain a persona.






Clicking on any particular message will open up that chat. This works like most instant messaging services. The name at the top can be clicked on to view the profile, whilst clicking the three dots will provide options such as unmatching and reporting. This functionality is essential after research showed that some users don't feel safe because of potential identity theft or malicious intentions on dating apps. The messages are coloured as per the *Spark* logo to create a sense of unity. The main difference is the "req" button attached to the keyboard. This is greyed out until seven days (or six with *Spark+*) have passed. Users can open their in-built keyboard by clicking on the text box, and send messages with the enter key, or the dedicated button. Users can exit this page by pressing their hardware back key or the button at the top of the page, returning the user to the messages screen.

After seven days (or six with a *Spark+* account) users have the ability to request images unlocks. A user can press the "req" button on their messages, and the pop up will appear and pictured. If you request to view images, the other user will receive a push notification and a pop up message when they next open the app, where they will have the choice of yes or no. Saying yes will open up a new area of the profile where you can view up to five pictures they have uploaded, saying no will return the users to their conversation with no differences, other than neither user can request again. After 14 days since matching, when a user logs in they will receive a pop up revealing their match, unless they had already successfully requested prior, as can be seen in the smaller screenshot. Although it could be argued that this subtracts from the uniqueness of the app, research suggested that users felt much more safe online when they could assess who they were talking to visually. This also holds true for arranging face-to-face meetings, as users would feel much more comfortable knowing who to look for. Furthermore, there are issues with self disclosure if you cannot assess how someone describes themselves against an image. The fact that this process takes days or even two weeks is justified through trying to detach Spark from the hook-up culture surrounding mobile dating, which research suggested was another factor that put some people off trying similar apps.



# 5. Budget

**A budget breakdown will assess where money needs to be spent in order for a successful launch.**

Competitor initial costing estimates:
Tinder - $14,400 (£11,308) (for Android only)
Bumble - $5,000-$30,000 (£3,927-£23,559)
POF - $3000-$10,000 (£2,356-£7,853)

Additional services Spark offers, that competitors do not:
Customisable profiles
Revelation dynamic
OTP (one-time purchasing)
Early requesting

Based on this, it is estimated that the initial budget would need to be around $18,000 (£14,135) in order to develop for Android only. Future developments would include expanding over to iOS and would come at a similar cost.

Estimated pricings for competitors below, salaries as of PayScale.com
https://bit.ly/2SGAJen
https://bit.ly/2RaykvG
https://bit.ly/2C7sktl


# 6. Risk Assessment

**Finally, an analysis of all of the risks involved that would potentially harm the application's development.**

| SECTION | RISK DESCRIPTION | LIKELIHOOD | IMPACT | ACTION PLAN OR JUSTIFICATION |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Research and design | Research showed that some people like the hookup culture on other platforms so do not need an app like this | 2/5 | 2/5 | The app may attract a slightly different crowd, but this is nt a bad thing. There is no reason for stigmas to be attached to Spark, and it will be a more friendly, welcomeing environment for all. |
| | In research, some users wanted to step away from a visual format of mobile dating all together, this app does not | 3/5 | 2/5 | It would not be very safe to completely remove photos from a dating app, as the users would have no idea with whom they are communicating. Spark does well to remove photos whilst also keeping the user safe. |
| | The colours and style used during design is similar to that of competitors and should be changed | 3/5 | 2/5 | Red is a colour commonly associated with romance and therefore fits the theme well. Most dating apps use a similar swipe card format, and like to keep their apps familiar to that users of other mobile dating apps can easily adapt. |
| | The concept is foreign to people and so may not be very intuitive | 3/5 | 3/5 | To counter this, there will be lots of tutorials for first time users, that offer an insight into how the app works. There are various examples of descriptive textused around the app to explain to the user what is happening, such as on the request screen. |
| | | | | |

| SECTION | RISK DESCRIPTION | LIKELIHOOD | IMPACT | ACTION PLAN OR JUSTIFICATION |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Research and design | Misrepresentation of my ideas by designers | 2/5 | 3/5 | Ensuring that there is sufficient reference such as the concepts provided will ensure that the designers have plenty to work from and will ensure that their ideas are in line with my own. |
| | Research showed that most mobile daters are aged 18-24 and it is a concern that they may not be interested | 2/5 | 4/5 | The idea is not for everybody, but offers a unique alternative to those who are bored of traditional mobile dating, and also those who have previously not tried it due to stigmas attached. |
| | It may not be especially clear to a new user why this dating app is unique | 3/5 | 3/5 | After signing in and seeing the survey and a description, it will be obvious to users that this is no ordinary dating app. |
| Development | The algorithms and coding required for the survey to function correctly could be especially difficult | 4/5 | 5/5 | To counter this, lots of money will be spent on back-end developers specialised in this area, who can best complete the survey and initial user profiling. This component is essential to the app and therefore must be implemented correctly. |
| | The designers and developers may have conflicting opinions on what should be in the app. The developers may not be able to complete some elements. | 2/5 | 4/5 | This will be prevented by employing designers with some basic level knowledge of app development, and developers who have some knowledge of design. This will allow all to work cooperatively. Designs will be based on my initial concepts and therefore should not change too much. |
| | There will probably be bugs and errors in the code present after development | 4/5 | 3/5 | The application will initially launch in Beta, with purchases disabled. This will not only attract a loyal initial userbase, but also allow developers to iron out any problems discovered when the app comes to market, without the pressures of the app being live and trying to make a profit at the time. |
| | If many bugs are present, they may delay the offical launch of Spark | 3/5 | 4/5 | Although not catastrophic, this is not a good first impression for users if the launch is delayed. Therefore, before Spark goes into Beta launch, there will be an initial user testing session to iron out obvious issues. The Beta launch will be used to find more niche issues when globally available. |
| Post-launch | Not many people are using the application and this is making it hard for existing users to find matches | 2/5 | 5/5 | This would be very bad as it would prevent users from being able to use the app. If this were to happen, a big marketting budget would have to be made available in order to push the project out into the market. If that failed, perhaps incentivising a free month of Spark+ membership would draw in users . |
| | The app may struggle to make money if users do not buy into the premium membership/OTP's | 3/5 | 4/5 | If this happens then Spark would be forced to place more advertisements throughout the app, in order to sustain the business and bring in money. |
| | Users may find that the wait time is simply too long and lose touch with their match before reaching the request period | 3/5 | 3/5 | This may happen initially, but the purpose of Spark is to reimagine the mobile dating culture. Having such a delay gives users the chance to form genuine bonds based on personality, rather than appearance. Having said that, if there was enough complaint, then the developers would consider reducing the wait by a few days. |
| | Users find an account they think is fake, or has malicious intentions, and this deters them from Spark or online dating in general | 3/5 | 3/5 | People cannot be controlled and there will most likely be some bad people on every social platform. Users will have access to a report function, which will send a chat log to a member of staff to assess. It is hoped that, based off research, having such a lengthy comms process will deter a lot of people with bad intentions from joing Spark. |