COMM3780 Mobile Media

Assessment 2: Option B

200939808

Word count: 2082

Introduction

The argument as to whether mobile devices are making society more productive has been of research interest since the increase of smartphone usage. It is said that 85% of adults in the UK own or have access to a smartphone compared to 52% in 2012 (Consultancy.uk, 2017). This rise is likely to have an impact on society, particularly in regards to their productivity in their home and work life. Many scholars express that blurring these boundaries raises several opportunities, as a mobile device essentially allows a user to engage in work activities any place, anytime (Kay et al, 2017, p.975). This was once only possible through a desktop computer, but now with the advanced affordances of a smartphone, they are allowing users to "manage their 'absent presence' in contexts where they are not physically located" (Hislop and Axtell, 2011, p.42) and are therefore able to easily carry out work during non-work time. While this indicates that mobile phones are increasing productivity, there are concerns that people are now feeling more dependent on these devices (Hall and Baym, 2011). This begins to raise questions as to whether mobile phones are making society less productive, as it could be argued that they are becoming disruptive and are distracting the users away from the tasks on hand. It will therefore be interesting to focus on this current debate to help discover what impacts the smartphone can have on productivity.

Are smartphones making us less productive?

It is already clear that smartphones have many positive affordances, as they provide users with a "more intense form of connectedness" (Wajcman et al, 2008, p.636), which therefore leads to more effective communication. This is particularly useful for workers, as they are

able to contact any employer or employee at any given time, which according to Hall and Baym (2011), is one of the most liked qualities of a mobile. However, this affordance is surely going to highlight some key issues, as being continuously available to others begins to add pressures on home and work life. The boundary between these two spheres of life begin to spill over into one another, which essentially "summons the worker to work, while at home" (Wajcman et al, 2008, p.648). This implies that work expectations are becoming more pressured, which has the potential to decrease the individuals productivity, as well as their satisfaction at work. What makes jobs even more demanding, is that employees "spend most of their time at work engaged in communication" (Wajcman and Rose, 2011, p.948). It could therefore be argued that being continuously connected with others could begin to interrupt the quality of the work. Park explains that "the user has no control over from whom or when he or she may be messaged" (2014, p.183), which suggests that mobile phones have the potential to disrupt the user at any given time. In fact, Jing and Dabbish (2009) conduced a research study on workplace behaviour, and discovered that people are interrupted around every 12 minutes, which results in switching from one task to another. This will likely impact the work quality, as the individual is not fully engaged with the task on hand which could lead to increased mistakes. Not only this, but it is also possible to negatively impact the worker, as it is well documented "that interruptions can cause stress, annoyance and anxiety" (Warnock et al, 2011, p.178). It is therefore clear that being continuously available through a mobile device can lead to dissatisfaction at work and at home, which potentially decreases their productivity. While many individuals enjoy the quality of being able to contact someone else, the most disliked quality is that others can always contact them, making them reachable everywhere and every time. Being confronted with this constant connectivity begins to infringe on their private space (Hall and Baym,

2011), which users should “sometimes withdraw [from] in order to maintain their solitude” (Park, 2014, p.183).

It could be argued that the applications on the individuals phone have the same effect. The majority of apps on a phone send notifications in attempt to get the users attention and to encourage them to use the application. Some users may find this feature useful, particularly on reminder apps as it could be notifying them of an activity of high importance. However, many other apps send notifications that could be classed as interruptive or unwanted; this could be Facebook notifying the user about an event they are not interested in or a gaming app influencing them to play their game. Notifications similar to this would be particularly irritating when a “user is engaged in an important or demanding task and does not want to be distracted” (Warnock, 2011, p.178). This being said, the only way to know if a notification has been delivered to the phone is to check it, and according to Cutino and Nees (2016), this is becoming a repetitive and scheduled task triggered by impulse rather than choice. This implies that many individuals have become dependent on, and attached to their devices and are routinely checking it for notifications, causing the user to disrupt their own productivity. Therefore, working without the disruption of a phone may be the best solution. Cutino and Nees (2016) conducted a study that supports this argument, stating that “those studying without their phone, attained about 12% more of their study goals than those with their phones” (p.75). This implies that restricting an individual from their phone in a high-pressured environment is likely to positively impact the work and tasks that they are carrying out, which will result in increased productivity.

On the other hand, it seems reasonable to suggest that some individuals need their phones whilst they are at work or carrying out a task, in case they receive urgent notifications or need it to aid them in doing their work. Kay et al (2017) reinforces this argument by explaining that the "primary advantage of using a mobile device… is it improves learning experiences" (2017, p.975). This may be useful for those carrying tasks outside of an office, such as commuting or at home. However, what is forgotten here is that many mobile phones are not just used for work-related tasks; they are also used as an entertainment device. They enable users to "stay in contact with friends… capture memories and to be entertained" (Meschtscherjakov, 2009, p.1), meaning there is a danger that the individuals use their devices to divert themselves from the task on hand. This could consequently affect the users work flow and performance, and effectively lower their productivity. Though it may seem practical to converge a work-related device and an entertainment device together, it is clear through this research, that mobile phones have the potential to lower the productivity of the users and distract them during highly pressured and demanding times. However, the majority of smartphones now include both of these elements, as it is almost impossible to separate these forms of media (Wajcman and Rose, 2011). Therefore, a solution for these mobile features to work coherently together, without affecting the productivity of the user, is essential.

The App: Off Zone

To help address the issues identified in this report, the most reasonable solution seems to be through a new mobile application, which attempts to decrease the number of distractions from an individuals device. This is where Off Zone fits in. This new mobile

technology aims to block notifications from a user's phone, which will consequently increase their productivity when they need it most. This may seem similar to other applications, such as Husher, OffTime or FlipD, but the significant difference is Off Zone uses the individuals location as an indication to when the notifications should be turned off. For example, when the user arrives at work, the application will be aware and will silence the notifications that the user has identified, in the hope to increase their productivity and decrease the number of interruptions. Thus, the main target audience for this application would be those who struggle to concentrate during demanding or pressured times due to the distractions from their mobile device, such as employees or students. However, Off Zone could also attract many other audiences. It could be those who attend several social events, those who find it difficult to sleep due to mobile distractions or others who essentially want to be less attached to their phone. Either way, the purpose of this new application is to attempt to make the mobile device less disruptive by blocking distracting notifications.

However, many scholars argue that "being denied access from one's phone could cause negative emotional reactions" (Cutino and Nees, 2016, p.65), which may then increase the likelihood of self-interruptions. While this key concern should be considered, Vincent suggests that "many people manage without their mobile for work… but [can] feel uncomfortable without their mobile if they leave it behind" (2005, p.3). To address these issues, Off Zone will be customisable and will only restrict the user from receiving notifications if it is stated in the application. Warnock et al (2011) explains that users only accept notifications during demanding times if the message is urgent, so it is therefore vital for the notification feature to be effective and appropriate for the user. Therefore the

individual will be able to manage which notifications are switched on or off, depending on which location they are at. For example, if they are at work, they may want to receive emails, text messages and calls, but would find entertainment or social notifications distracting. By enabling this personalised feature, it should increase their productivity and work flow, as well as avoiding the user from feeling withdrawal-like symptoms while their phone is silenced (Cheever et al, 2014).

As well as the location feature, the user is also able to mute their phone depending on their weekly schedule. According to Hall and Baym, “people rely on mobiles to plan, share, include and validate (2011, p.317), thus it is essential to consider this for the development of Off Zone. The application therefore allows users to insert events that are occurring in their coming week that would benefit from having a silenced phone, such as a work meeting. The app can also include repeated events that happen each week, such as driving to and from work. Off Zone would be particularly useful for this activity as it is stated that “driving performance declines after drivers receive a notification on their phones to which they cannot reply” (Kass et al, 2016, p.1138). This is highly concerning, but with the help of Off Zone, the notifications can be blocked to avoid the users from being distracted. Therefore, this app does not only benefit the users from less disruptions, but they can also plan out their schedule for the week in the hope to increase the individuals productivity and performance.

To further advance the application, it also tracks the users progress in terms of how many hours they have saved from using Off Zone as well as the amount of times they use their

phone. Whitson states that “when we subject ourselves to this quantification, we come to know and master the self” (2013, p.167). Quantifying the self can therefore allow users to understand their actions more clearly, and consequently reflect on how they can change these behaviours to further impact their life. By including this tracking feature in Off Zone, it may potentially encourage the individuals to use their phone less if the tracking results are significantly higher than they imagined.

In terms of feasibility, the application will be a reasonably small project that does not require a large budget. To ensure it makes a profit, the application will be commercial and supported by advertisements, unless the user pays 99p. Off Zone should also be moderately simple to develop. Through research, it is clear that many other applications that block notifications are available on the app store and google play, indicating this app is feasible and functional on all operating systems. For the location-based feature, the application will incorporate Geolocation API which will retrieve the location of the users mobile device.

Overall, this new mobile application has massive scope to help solve the issues identified in this report. It is clear that blocking unwanted notifications through a phone will result in less distractions for the user and increase their productivity and performance at work or at home. Off Zone will therefore aim to decrease the users dependence on mobile phones in the hope to achieve a more productive society.

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OFF ZONE

specification report

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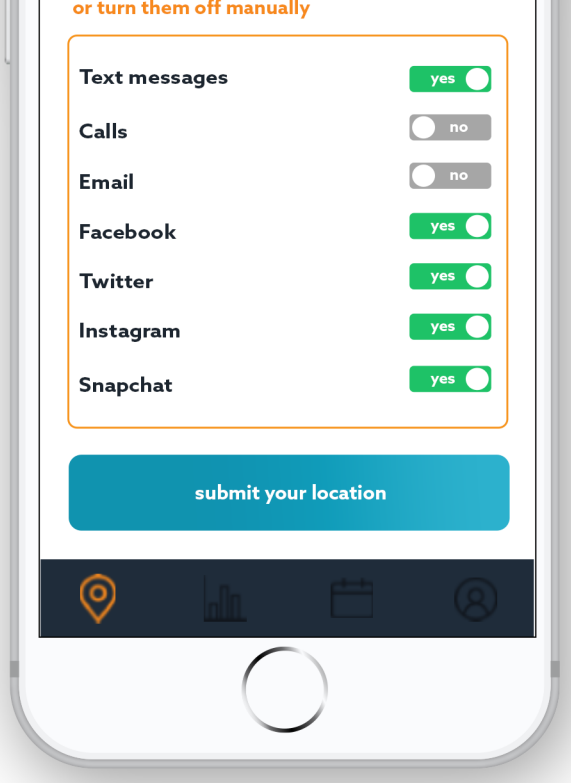
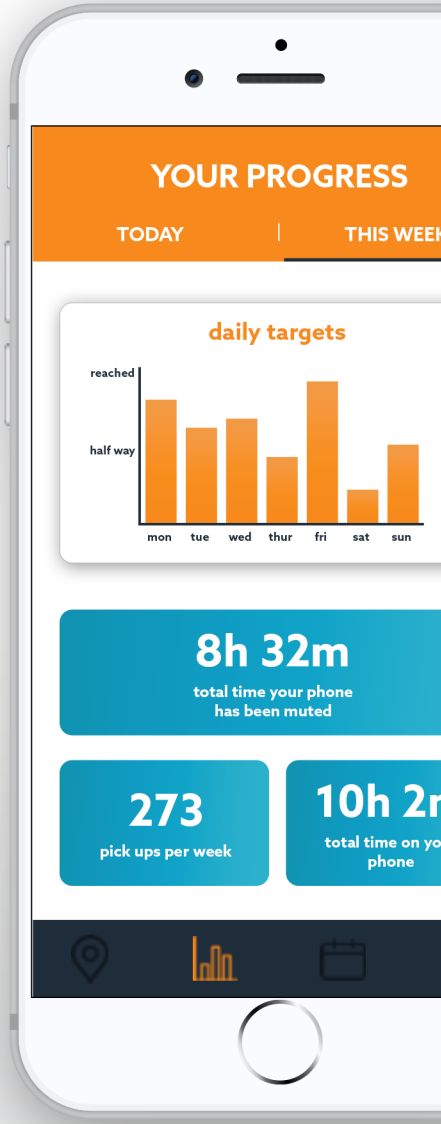
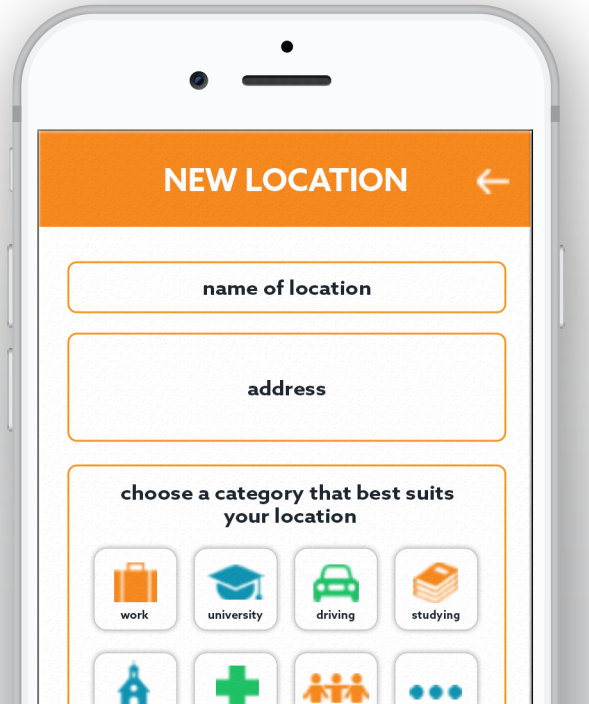






Introduction

Off Zone is a mobile application for iOS and Android devices that helps users be less distracted by their mobile phones. The application blocks other apps from sending notifications, based on the users location.

The user is able to add different locations where they want their phone to be silent to avoid being distracted. This could be at work, at university or even driving. The user can also add timed events such as meetings. This does not only allow the phone to be less disruptive, but it also allows the user to schedule their weeks. Many other features are available from Off Zone that will be explained further in this document.

The aim

It is clear through research that mobile phones are becoming disruptive and are distracting people from the tasks on hand.

Off Zone therefore aims to make the users more productive by blocking other apps on the phone and to allow them to focus on what they need to.

Key selling points

There are 3 main key selling points about Off Zone.

1

Location-based app

The main key selling point about Off Zone is it uses the current location of the user to turn off and silent their applications. The user can either add locations to their profile that turns off their notifcations every time they are at that location or the application can send push notifications whenever the user arrives at a location where notifications should be turned off such as the cinema.

2

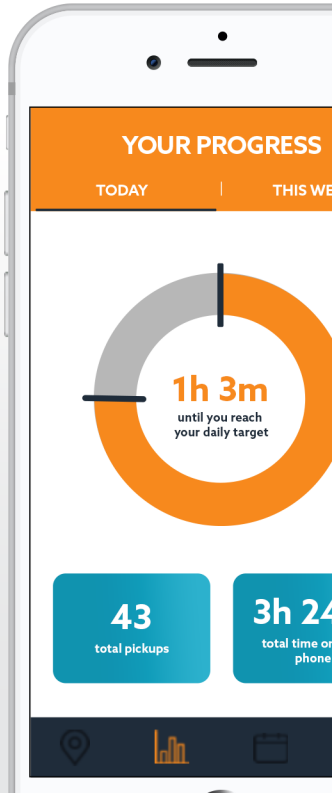
Increases productivity

The reason for downloading this app is to allow users to be more productive and to be less distracted by their phones. Through research it is clear that many mobile phone users find their phones disruptive while they are trying to work or out in public, which this app is trying to avoid.

3

Goals and achievements

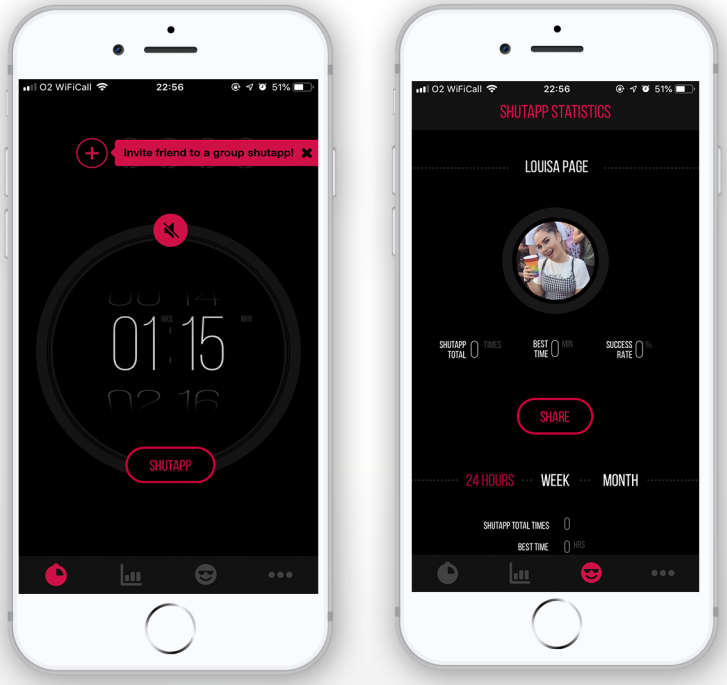
The final key selling point is the user is able to set goals for their week. They are able to insert how many hours they would like to be off their phone in a day (12 hours) to encourage the user to be less distracted by their phone. The app will then display their weekly achievements to show if they reached their daily targets as well as how many hours they have spent on their phone.



Competitor analysis

1 App overview

ShutApp is an application that aims to encourage the users to use their phone less and live in the moment. It uses a timer that counts how long the user has been off their phone to help them take a break from their mobile phones. Overall, it is an effective app, but the user is unable to lock their phone while using it otherwise the timer will stop, which does not seem appropriate for this type of app. Also, the colour is not very appealing.



ShutApp

2 Similarities

The aim of the app is very similar to OffZone as they both want to encourage the users to go on their phones less. ShutApp also tracks the users progress throughout the days and weeks to help them understand their phone activities, which will be similar to OffZone.

3 Differences

There are many differences between the two apps. ShutApp does not use the location of the user, they instead have to press the timer button when they want to not go on their phone. The app also does not have a scheduling feature which OffZone has. The app only works if the user takes part, which may not work as effectively.

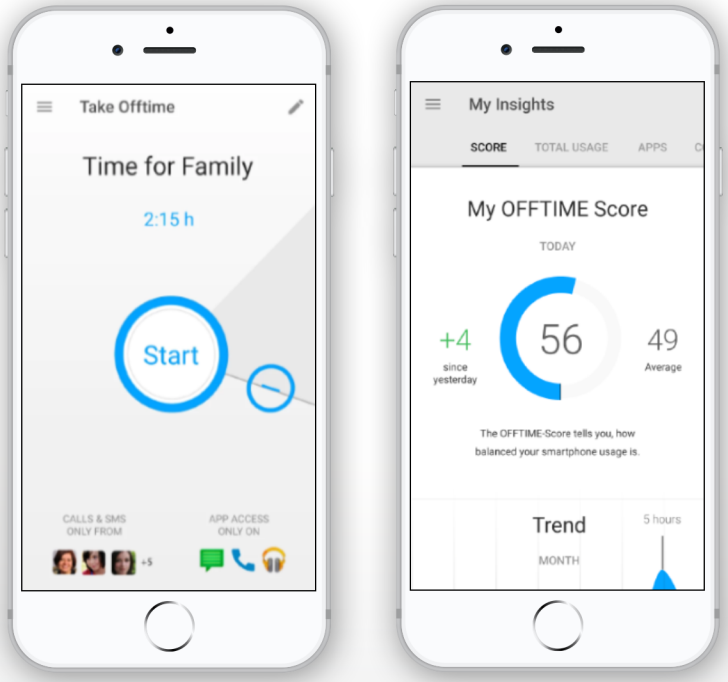
4 Inspiration

The one feature that I think is effective in this app, is you're able to challenge friends to see who uses their phone less which is likely to encourage the user to use the app more. While this feature is not included in OffZone, it could be something to add in the future. I also liked the beginning of the app, which outlined everything the app does, which I have used in my designs.

Competitor analysis

1 App overview

OffTime is an effective app that allows the user to track and customize their connectivity and limit their phone usage so they can do the things that matter. It aims to allow the users to focus on their work, have quality time without distractions with the people they care about, or simply enjoy some peace of mind. It is an overall good app and includes many features that would be useful when the user is needing to be most productive.



OffTime

2 Similarities

The app is quite similar to OffZone. It blocks texts, calls and other notifications when the user needs to be productive, which is what OffZone will be doing. It also allows the users to set goals with how much time they want to be on their phones, which is another feature OffZone includes. As well as this, the app also has a weekly planning feature.

3 Differences

There are a few differences with these two apps. Firstly, the application does not use the location to block the texts, it goes off the users weekly schedule. OffTime also has a feature that restricts the user from the apps on their phone. This feature may be effective, but in research, it is clear that if people are denied access to their phone, it can cause withdrawal-like symptoms so Off Zone has therefore not included it in the app.

4 Inspiration

One feature that stood out for me in this application was the customisable feature that allows users to choose which apps can send notifications, as well as which calls and texts can come through depending on who it is. I also like the fact the app can send out automated texts to people while they are trying to concentrate. This could be a feature to consider in the future with OffZone.

Competitor analysis

1 App overview

RealizD is an app that helps address the issues with phone addications. It is an app that is designed to monitor the users usage on their phones and tablets in the hope to decrease the time the user spends on their mobile device. RealizD explain that this app is like a diet tracker, but for the users digital life; they state it is a digital diet app. Overall, it is a good app with suitable designs and colours.

RealizD

2 Similarities

The similarities of this app and OffZone is that it tracks the users usage on their devices. It allows the users to set daily goals and displays how far they have left before they reach it, which is very similar to the feature on OffZone. It also displays other information such as daily pick-ups and screen time, which is another similar feature to OffZone.

3 Differences

These apps are quite different from each other. Although they have very similar aims, RealizD does not block notifcations whereas OffZone does. OffZone also allows users to schedule their weeks, whereas RealizD is all about how the user uses their devices to encourage them to use their phone less.

4 Inspiration

This is a very effective app for tracking phone usage. What I like most is the clean designs and colour palette, which I have adapted in my designs. I also like the family feature, where the users can monitor their own families phone usuage, which adds a more competitive feature to it.

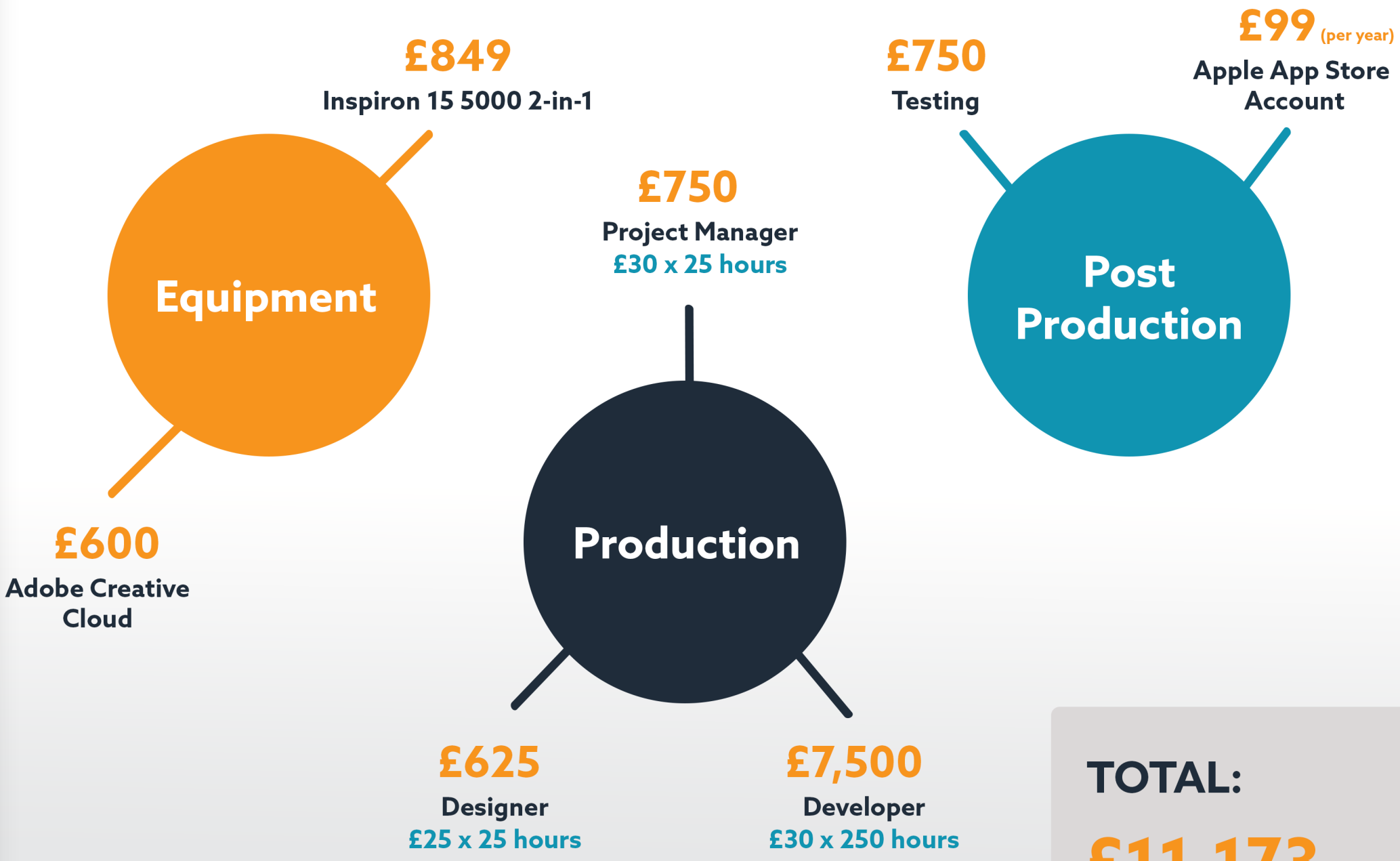
Risk Analysis: Part 1

Category	Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Solution
Design & Development	Location might not work	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	To ensure this does not happen, thorough testing will need to be carried out. However, if there is a small bug once its distributed, notifications can still be blocked through the schedule feature.
	The app contains many bugs	MEDIUM	LOW	Thorough testing will need to be carried out to ensure it works effectively once its realised.
	The app is not easy to use	LOW	LOW	The design of the app is very simple and should be straight forward to use. If not, in the settings section, the user is able to view how to use it.
End-user	Important notifications may be blocked	MEDIUM	HIGH	This will be down to how the user manages their notifications. They are able to identify which ones they want keeping on to ensure important ones are not missed.

Risk Analysis: Part 2

Category	Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Solution
End-user	Users do not accept sharing their location	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	This is the main feature of the app but the schedule feature is also available where users can just add events rather than locations.
	User may not want to pay 99p	MEDIUM	LOW	This is not an issue. Users can use the free version on the app which includes advertisements.
	Users may want to use a different app	HIGH	MEDIUM	Ensure the users are aware of the location-based feature which essentially makes this app novel and different from the others.

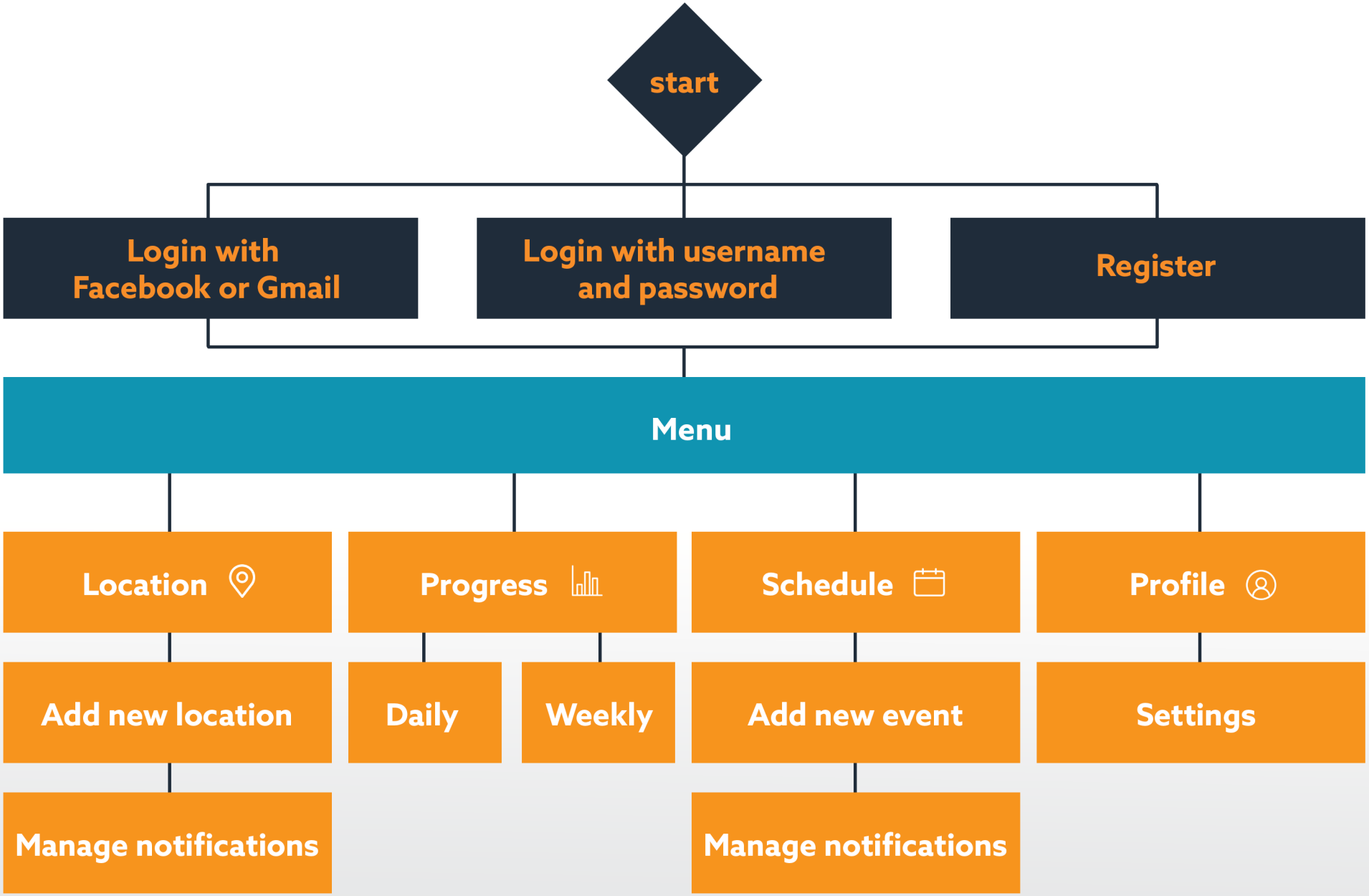
Fee Breakdown

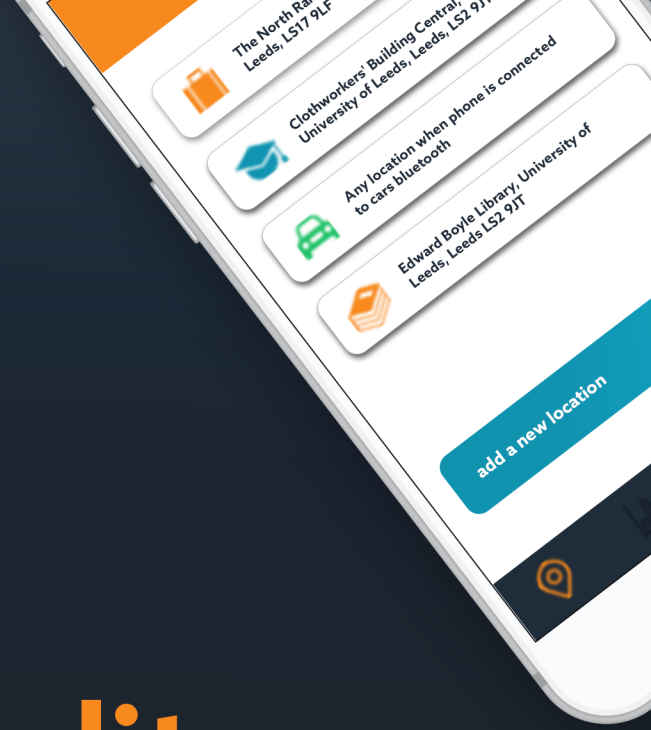


TOTAL:

£11,173

App Structure





Design and Functionality

concept work

colours

#f7941d

#1094b1

#1f2c3a

fonts

Headings:

Azo Sans Bold

Paragraphs:

Azo Sans

app badge

OFF ZONE

Design & Functionality

App Introduction

When the user first opens up the app when they have downloaded it, they get the introduction screens that outline what the app is about. The users need to swipe left to view each of the descriptions to help them understand further what the app is about. I have included small vector graphics to make it more appealing.

Once the user has looked through the screens, they have the choice to either **login** to the app or **register**. This would then direct them to these pages.

Design & Functionality

Login & Register

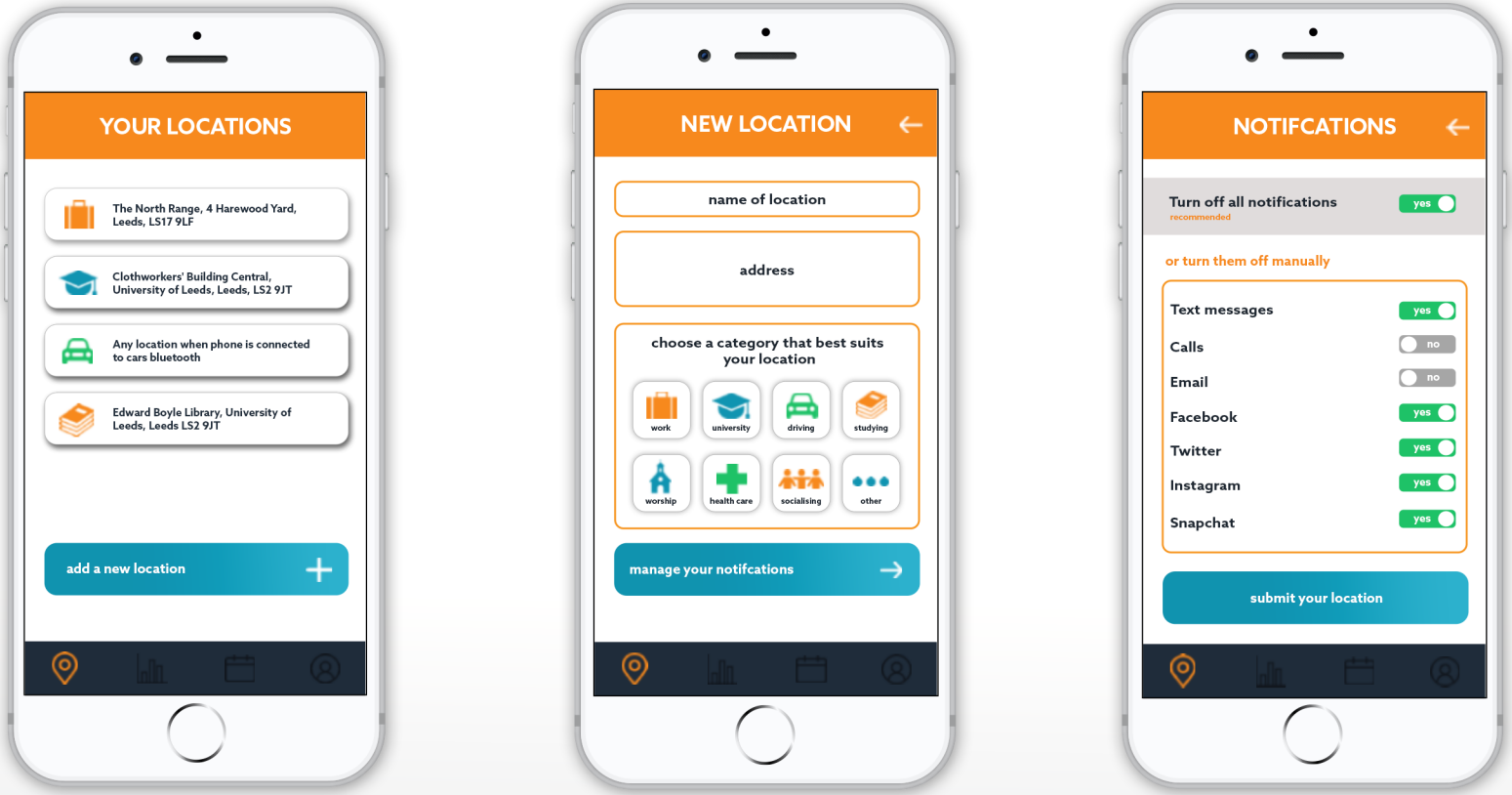
The user has the choice to either login with their **Facebook** or **Gmail** account to therefore reduce the steps in signing up for OffZone.

However, they are also able to use their **email address** if they wish to do so. They can do this by registering to the application and filling out the fields shown in the designs to the left.

Once the user has filled out the fields on the registration page, they will recieve an email as well as being directed back to the login page so they are able to login to the app using their registration details.

Design & Functionality

Location



The location screens are where the user controls the locations where they want their nofications turning off. The first screen shows the locations they have already set up. If the user clicks on these, they are able to manage which notifcations they want turning on and off, as well as being able to delete or alter them.

If the user wants to add a new location, they select the blue box which then takes them to the second screen. This is where they add in the address of the location and selects a category that it falls under. They then need to manage which notifications they want to turn off. This would direct them to the third screen, which allows them to chose which apps they want silent. The app recommends turning off all notifcations. They then submit this location.

Design & Functionality

Progress & Tracking

Daily targets

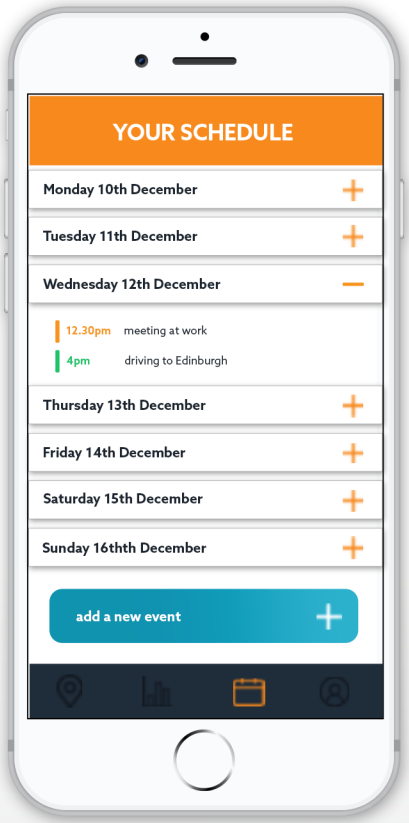
The **Today** tab shows the users progress that they have achieved in that particular day. They set daily goals which outlines how many minutes they want to spend off their phone a day. This is then displayed as a target, and will show the user how many hours/minutes they have left until they reach it. It will also show many times they have picked up their phone and how many hours they have used their phone in that day,

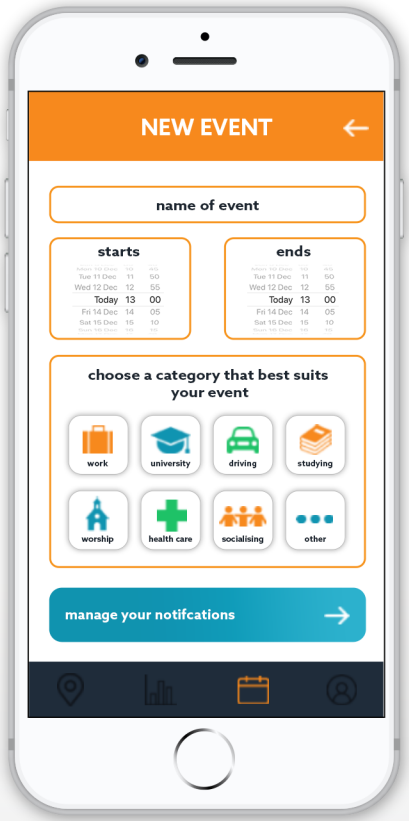
Weekly targets

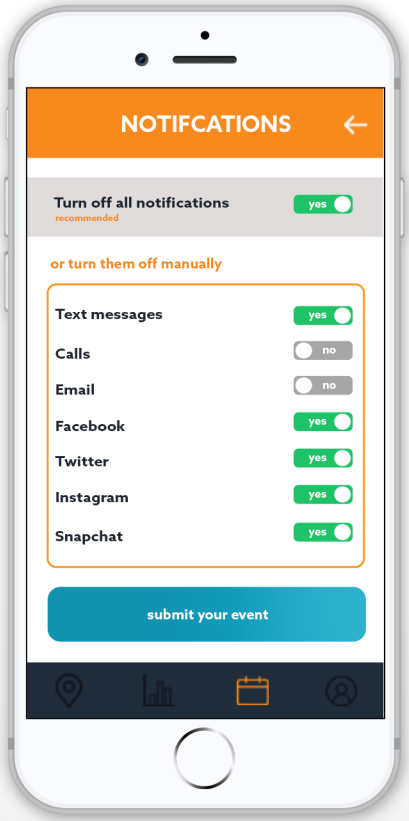
The **This Week** tab shows a graph which outlines how close the user was to their daily goals. This should hopefully encourage the user to use their phone less. This screen also shows the amount of total pickups and how many hours they use their phone this week. As well as this, it also displays how many hours the user has saved by muting their phone through OffZone. It shows whether this has increased or decreased from the past week.

Design & Functionality

Scheduling



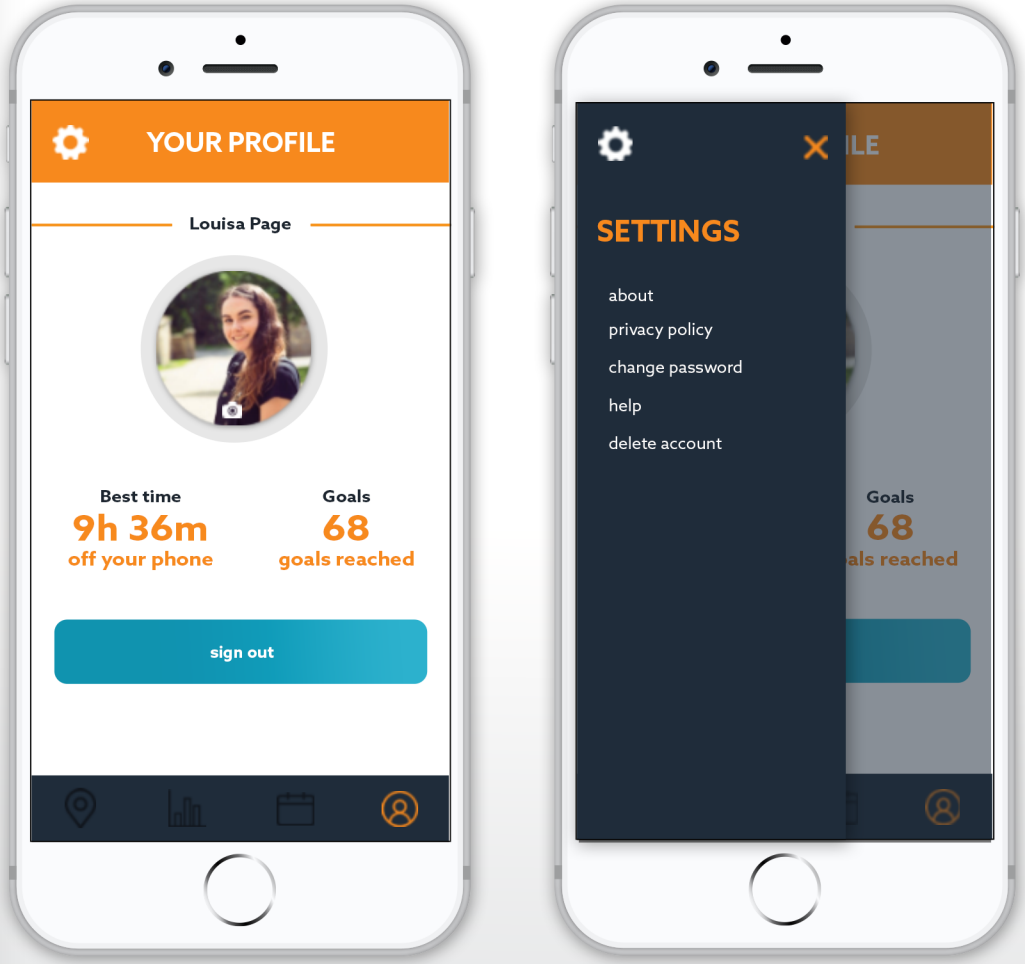




As well as being able to add locations, the user can also add events to their weekly schedule. This outlines what tasks they have to do in their week and where they want their phone muted. The first screen is an example of this. The user then clicks add a new event which directs them to the second screen. In this screen, the user is able to add an event, the times they are occuring as well as the category they fall under. They then manage the notifications that they want muting for that event.

Design & Functionality

Profile & Settings



Profile

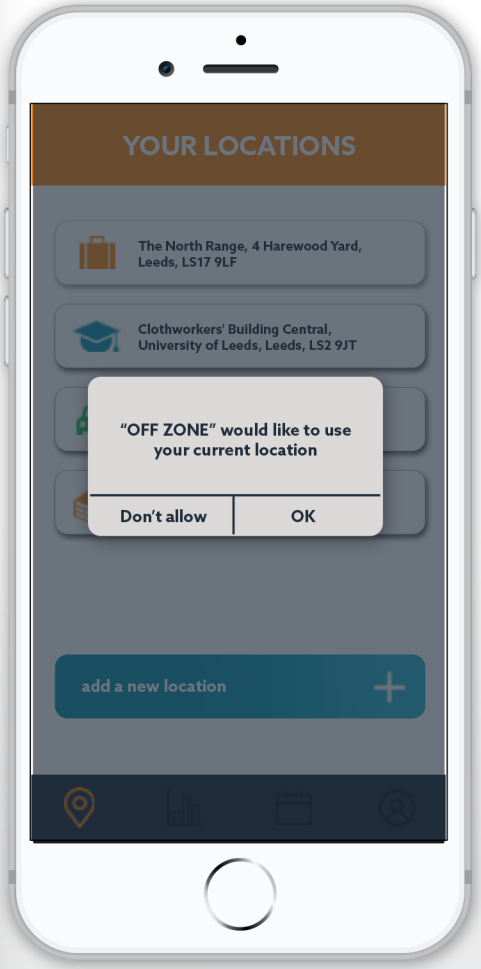
On the profile screen, this is where the user can change their details such as their profile picture. They can also see their best ever time off their phone as well as how many goals they have reached since using OffZone. They can also sign out from the profile page.

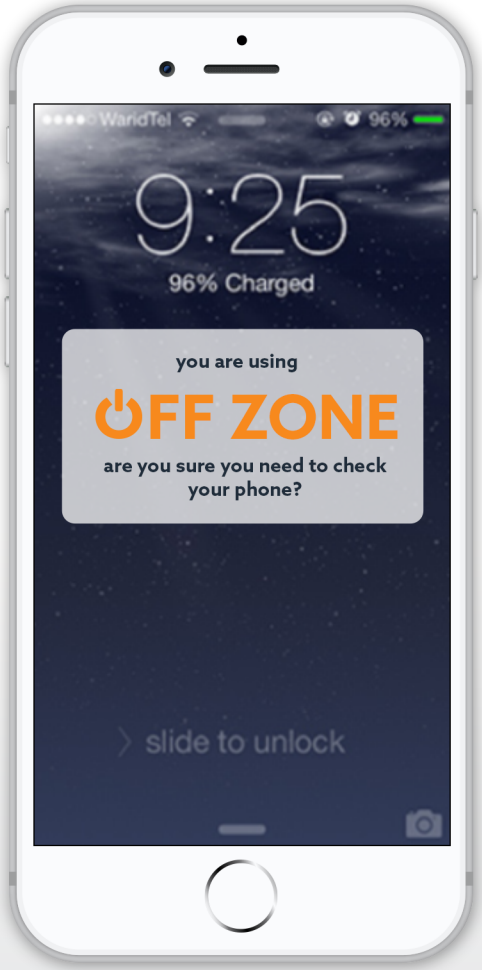
Settings

To get to the settings, the user needs to click the icon in the left corner. This will then bring up the menu thats shown in the second design. This is where the user can get help, change their password or delete their account.

Design & Functionality

Other





Access

To ensure the user is happy for the application to use their current location, the app will ask for access as soon as the user logs in. If the user denies access, they are able to still use the app through the scheduling feature. The app also asks if the user wants to link their mobile phone calendar to the application.

Notifications

Whilst the user is in a location where their phone is muted through OffZone, a notifcation will appear asking the user whether they really need to check their phones to encourage them to stay off it.

OFF ZONE

Marvel Prototype URL: https://marvelapp.com/aedh954

Declaration of non-original sources used by BA New Media students, ICS, Leeds

Name: Louisa Page

Module: COMM3780 Mobile Media

Assignment: Assessment 2 Option B

1. Mobile Icon – used on introduction app design

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=mobile&i=546912

2. Pin point location icon – used in the mobile menu design

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=pin%20point&i=1426583

3. Bar Chart icon – used in the mobile menu design

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=bar%20chart&i=1600036

4. Calendar icon – used in the mobile menu design

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=calendar&i=1780145

5. Plus icon – used in the location and event screens (add event/location)

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=plus&i=2048206

6. Brief case icon – used in the add event/location category section

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=brief%20case&i=591846

7. University hat Icon – used in the add event/location category section

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=study&i=1979181

8. Car Icon – used in the add event/location category section

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=driving&i=1420324

9. Church icon – used in the add event/location category section

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=church&i=1271366

10. Hospital icon – used in the add event/location category section

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=hospital&i=540558

11. Friends icon – used in the add event/location category section and in the introduction screen

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=friends&i=1682151

12. Other icon – used in the add event/location category section

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=other&i=1002227

13. Settings icon – used on the profile and settings page

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=settings&i=1187809

14. Camera icon – used on the profile page on the profile picture page.

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=camera%20icon&i=721270