

Minh Anh Vu Dang

USER EXPERIENCES STUDIES AND THE DESIGNING OF STEPOUT MOBILE APPLICATION

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Minh Anh Vu Dang
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ABSTRACT

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Author: Minh Anh Vu Dang

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StepOut, an early stage startup based in Helsinki, designed and developed a platform for matching independent trainers hosting fitness sessions with customers who want to take activities in order to improve their health.

The work behind this thesis was done by researches, based on business analyses, online articles, courses, blog posts and researches. Furthermore, part of the thesis was also based on the author's personal knowledge as well as experiences in the previous work. The acquired research results were then utilized in the designing phase.

The thesis concluded with the app planning and designing phases fully accomplished, with the implementation phase was at its finalizing stage. The StepOut live fitness platform was designed, developed, successfully deployed, and served over 80 sessions with hundreds of reservations placed.

Keywords: User Interface, User Experiences, Interaction, Usability, Fitness, Application, Mobile, Design

PREFACE

The work behind this thesis was done in Helsinki, Finland. The thesis topic was chosen by StepOut Founders and assigned to the author of this thesis. The author, at the time of writing this thesis, was fulfilling the role of User Experiences designing, Product designing, as well as Technical Coordinating, at StepOut.

Supervisors of this thesis were Tarnjit Saini, CEO and Founder of StepOut, with Lasse Haverinen, acted as the tutoring teacher, along with Kaija Posio, who provided language inspection. They provided guidance and instructed the author to compose this thesis properly.

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Minh Anh Vu Dang

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ABBREVIATIONS

B2B: Business-To-Business

B2C: Business-To-Consumer

UI: User Interface

UX: User Experiences

UXD: User Experiences Design

1 INTRODUCTION

In today's society, consumers are conscious about their health, more than ever before. They care about what they consume into their body, as well as what fitness activities or formats should they anticipate in order to improve their health.

The fitness industry has grown dramatically, to serve the market. Many fitness entities grow into global-size corporations, serving millions of customers with their huge network of facilities as well as trainers and employees.

To be more specific, the fitness marketplace industry has also seen a huge development within the last 5 years. Many products are released to the market, for matching trainers, fitness formats with consumers. However, these products are mostly targeting big fitness entities as partners. Users are left with usually high prices, limited formats of fitness, as well as binding subscription models. Furthermore, product design and user experiences design of the fitness marketplace industry still have room for improvements.

StepOut, an early stage startup based in Helsinki, is targeting this gap in the market. StepOut's mission is to help independent trainers and small fitness entities, which do not have enough resources. StepOut provides a platform for matching independent trainers with suitable studios and places to host their session, as well as finding customers for them. StepOut creates earning and learning opportunities for everyone, while at the same boosting fitness and promoting a healthy life within the community.

The ultimate aim of this thesis is to research, plan, design and coordinate with the development of the first release phase of StepOut mobile application. At this first phase, consumers will be able to browse fitness sessions that were offered by StepOut and their partnering trainers, make reservations and payments directly with the app. In order to design a great product as well as a pleasant, intuitive user experience, the author needed to conduct deep studies into User Experiences Designing, as well as researches into the industries, markets, and competitors. With a better understanding, the author then utilized the acquired knowledge in planning strategies for the StepOut platform, as well as designing

User Experiences and producing Interface prototypes for the StepOut mobile application.

The first part of this thesis will cover User Experiences studies conducted during the designing and development of StepOut mobile application. The second part will go deeper into StepOut's planning, researching and designing processes, as well as the final results.

As of Spring 2020, the COVID-19 situation caused the market to almost ceased operations. Most businesses were suspended or had to temporarily migrate into online businesses. The third part of this thesis will cover how StepOut managed to combat the situation as well as fulfil their mission of promoting healthiness.

2 USER EXPERIENCES STUDIES

User Experiences itself can be considered as a relatively wide term. It covers virtually every aspect of a product development process, from researching phases, planning phases, information architecture design to a business model.

In order to achieve a great product design and a great intuitive user experience, the author conducted deep studies into User Experiences.

2.1 Usability and Usability Testing

Usability means how easy and enjoyable the usage of a product, an application or websites is. Usability can be determined by the usable, features as well as users' context of that product. A good usability means that it should be easy for users to familiarize themselves with, to achieve what they wanted to do, and to memorize the UI easily as well. (1.)

Usability testing is a set of tests with the purpose of evaluating user experiences as well as usability on a product, an application or a website. By doing this type of tests, UX researchers can gather data and information concerning whether their customers could use the product/application with ease and pleasant or not. (2.)

Usability testing is usually conducted with the subjects being people who are mostly not involved in the development of that product or application. The reason behind this was that all the engineers, workers who have spent a huge amount of time, resources as well as effort into developing that product, are and should be, too emotionally attached to it. This means that there should be errors, glitches, sectors or spots that should be fixed or could be improved, but they could not realize that. An outsider's point of view could help overlooking these, and potentially provide the development team with new interesting, creative ideas and solutions. It is not a smart choice to rely solely on the development workers. Learning from people, whom this product/application was meant for, is what helps developers to achieve the best possible user experiences.

This process of usability testing is usually conducted at the early stage of the product/application development. By doing the tests at this stage, UX researchers could discover problems and could have enough time to figure out solutions for it. Furthermore, it should not be too hard as well as too expensive to have resources in the process of identifying and fixing these issues, as developers do not have to make adjustment, modification on a much larger set of codes at this early stage.

To do a usability test, all what moderators need is a quiet room, recording equipment (or taking notes instead), and a usable computer (or tablets, smartphones, depending on the platform that this product/application operates on).

Beside of providing accurate, direct answers and results on the actual user experiences, usability testing addresses these issues long before the development team spends money and resources into a poor design. Furthermore, while monitoring the test subjects to navigate and use their application, UX researchers can tell what actual customers will do there and why they do it in that way. UX researchers can also come up with new, intuitive designing ideas that potentially boost the customer usage as well as increase demand for their application or product. (2.)

2.2 User Interface

A User interface is what the user will actually see and interact with in the process of using the product, application or website. The user interface plays the role of a link between a human and a computer, where the user interacts with and gives a command. This UI will transfer the command to the computer to be processed. The UI provides users with an effective control over the product, the application that they are using, as well as appropriate feedbacks for effectively communication between users and the system. (3.)

A user interface can be considered good or successful if it is intuitive, meaning that users will not need any training in order to operate, or efficient – no part of the UI is unnecessary, and of course, user friendly.

In software, a more specific term could be named, that is a Graphical User Interface. The word 'graphical' was meant to differentiate from the coding part of the application, as every UI element, such as text, links, buttons, were constructed by code, and were to make the application more user-friendly, as well as to form user experience. (3.)

While designing a User Interface, designers should consider putting their design in a sort of systematic order. This is to ensure that whatever they build will be consistent to other parts, sectors. A design system not only keeps this consistency, but also keeps other development team members to stay on the same page as the designers and provides them with all the needed guidance. Furthermore, it is important to take interactions and animations into consideration. Designers should consider how their animations designs will respond to interactions from users. All above are a few factors that an UI designer should consider in order to achieve a good design. (4.)

2.3 User Experiences

While user interface is the presentation, implementation, or what users will see visually, user experience on the other hand, plays the role of strategy behind it. User experience can be considered a term to cover all aspects of interactions, reactions, emotions as well as perceptions of users while they are using the product/application. (5.)

A good user experience not only means giving a pleasant experience to customers, but also to improve brands images from their point of view. For example, when a user tries to purchase an airplane ticket, the website has a beautiful UI design, along with a thoughtful and neat layout, all information is clearly displayed, easy to find, and the process is smooth. If an airline has all of the above, then users are obviously having a good experience, but also, the love for that brand will increase in them, which potentially makes them come back to the brand later on. On the other hand, a bad user experience leaves customers with frustration, and possibly hate towards the brand, which most likely means that they would never come back to that brand or service ever again. (6.)

There are many factors that make a good user experience. Of course, usability plays a big role, but so do UI designs, which include responsiveness and aesthetics. In the making of a user experience, researches on the target audiences or users are absolutely needed. (5.)

Before going deeper into User Experiences, it should be defined what is not UX. User experiences design is not a process. This is a job for everyone who involves in the development of a product, and UX design happens almost continuously, throughout every single phase of the product development, from very abstract planning steps, to concrete assets being formed. UX design is happening non-stop. User Experiences designing is also not just for the technical industry. A User experience is any interaction of users with virtually any product, how easy, intuitive and enjoyable it is to use. (7.)

User experiences are not just the interfaces that users can see visually, or not just usability that users can interact with. User experience designing covers not only efficiency, but also learnability – how users know what to do, by themselves, unconsciously and unconditionally. It also covers emotional side – how users react to certain experiences, such as how a colour palette makes a product more energetic. And finally, User experience designing also covers behaviours of a product – how a product reacts to interactions that make sense, and are expected by users. (7.)

In short, A User experience is the way a product behaves and is used. User experiences designing considers and tries to balance both users' needs as well as business objectives. A user experience can be considered valuable if it is useful, usable, findable, credible, accessible and desirable.

2.3.1 UXD Activities

Every designing work should start from the very abstract level first. In the case of User experiences design, that should be a user research. During this task, UX designers should be able to identify who are their target users. Who is this product trying to serve, and who can utilize the most out of this product. During

this task, UX designers will try to define users' needs and expectations from their product, as well as what they consider valuable. (7.)

Content writing is the task where UX designers typically work in collaboration with copywriters, content creators, marketers as well as possibly product founders themselves. This task is for creating and defining all contents that are needed to be delivered by the product, for example languages, words or images. Proper content design will be resulted in more engaging and compelling experiences for users. (7.)

With content creations done, comes Information Architectural Design. This task is to manage, and organize contents, for example how and why to prioritize certain assets as well as a set of contents over others. How users interact with contents, and how they understand them, need to be carefully planned during this task. (7.)

During the Interaction Design task, UX designers will design how their product behaves under interaction from users. For example, when pressing a button, then users should expect what action to be done, what response or feedback should the product should deliver, in the way that provides the most efficiency. In addition to this, users should also be able to understand the behaviour of the product, know how to perform actions that they need, and intuitively interact the product in the most effortless way possible. (7.)

A Visual Designing task starts when concrete assets are being developed. During this task, UX designers will control what is going to be displayed and be seen by users. From a colour palette, typefaces usage, to sizing, borders radius or any other visual elements. People tend to love beautiful design. Therefore, a visual designing task is one of the most important tasks in any product development project. A good visual design will significantly improve users' emotion towards the product. (7.)

After assets and contents have been finalized, UX designers will then have to define all logics that drive the design during the Front-end development task.

For example, what pop-up will be displayed if users press this button, what image will be shown in this area, how a form input behaves when users put in data. All designs logic has to be carefully pre-defined, so that front-end development phase can be done in the most effective way possible, and to clear any confusion between team members. (7.)

As all designing tasks and decisions consist mostly of assumptions from designers, a user testing task is equally as important, in order to validate everything UX designers have done. During this task, users will have a chance to test the product, use and see how hard, or easy it is to use. UX designers can even spot hidden bugs or usability issues that did not appear during the designing and implementing phases. (7.)

2.3.2 Understanding UXD

First of all, a designing task is all about trying to identify the correct problem to solve. From user researches, UX designers can find the right user needs. From stakeholders' or founders' interview, UX designers can find the ultimate business goals. And from these two sets of results, UX designers will try to identify the overlap sits in between. This overlap is where UX designers should spend their efforts into, in order to meet and exceed all expectations. However, before going into work, UX designers must also consider feasibility, figure out could this problem be solved, could this product be created and implemented, and in what way. (7.)

A good user experience design is to ensure that people use things. To be more specific, this means that users will actually use, and deeply utilize the product, as well as all of its features. In order to achieve that, the product needs to be designed in a way that users can easily figure out how to perform their tasks, with steps being simple, and effortless. User flows must minimize "cognitive load". This term means that in order to perform a desired task, users need to spend effort on learning and understanding the mechanic underneath it. Minimizing this will ensure the most seamless user experience. Feedbacks for interactions are equally important as well, for the reason that without feedback given towards an interaction from the user, they will feel anxious about their action, as

they will be unsure of what is going on, what just happened, or maybe their actions were not properly registered. This anxiousness will eventually turn into frustration. And a user experience that causes frustration towards users is not a good thing at all. Obviously, there is no error-proof design, as not every user is alike, some will instantly understand what to do, and how to do it, while some will need some learning curve into it, and will encounter mistakes. And if user makes mistakes (which happens relatively often), the design must allow them to recover from their mistakes easily as well. (7.)

User experiences designing can be considered as a balancing act. When designing and developing a product, there are 3 aspects needed to be considered. First, there is desirability; do users actually need the product, and how important the product is to them. Then there is viability; how viable the solution is, in terms of bringing that concept into reality. Lastly, there is feasibility. This grades how easy or difficult it is to implement this, into actually developing this product. The overlapping section between these 3 aspects is innovation. A product can be considered innovative when it is successfully balancing all competing acts. (Figure 1.)

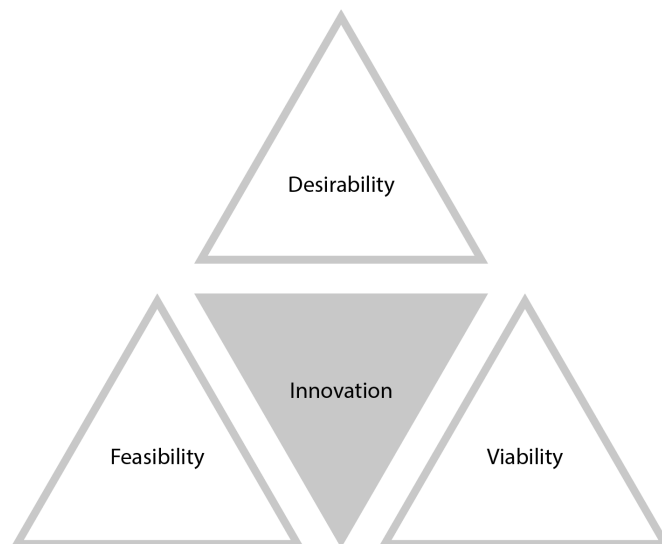


FIGURE 1. User experiences designing as a balancing act (7.)

User experiences design elevates the quality where users' emotional needs as well as functional needs are satisfied at the same time. Products are being used

by people. Great products with great user experiences bring joy, satisfaction and values to users. However, all these positive points will be outweighed only by a bad experience. In fact, users tend to remember bad experiences often more than good ones. These bad experiences will eventually lead to bad reviews toward the product. This significantly impacts the product's image, causing damages in marketing, in new potential users. This is why User Experiences Designing is such an important task in product development. (7.)

2.3.3 UX elements

When designing user experiences, there are 5 levels of tasks, planning and designing decisions to be made, from the most abstract stage, to the most concrete one. This section will briefly cover these 5 levels, or elements, of user experiences designing.

At the most abstract level, there is Strategy. At this stage, UX designers try to identify all of user needs and expectations of the product, do users researches, find target users. However, at the same time, they conduct interviews with stakeholders or product owners, and work closely with them to define the ultimate business objectives. Their job at this stage is to find the overlapping section between user needs and business objectives, in order to answer the question: why does this product exist in the first place? (7.)

Up one level in the concrete/abstract scale, there is Scope. From this stage forward, UX designers' workload starts to separate into 2 different sections, as technical tasks, and planning tasks. More specifically into Scope, at this stage, UX designers will try to define all requirements needed from the product, based on all objectives obtained from the previous stage. UX designers will translate all these objectives into more actionable points. On the planning side, these would be what content is required, or what is needed to be served in the product, for the interactions of users. On the technical side, these would be what feature, functionality, description or specification needed. (7.)

The next stage is Structure. This is where the product is starting to be concrete. On the planning side, UX designers will build up Information Architecture. This

is how contents are being arranged, organized and placed, contextually, throughout the product. With these, on the technical side, UX designers will work on Interaction Design, how these contents are being delivered and interacted by users, how the product behaves under certain actions by users. (7.)

The product is forming more concretely. So, at this next stage which is called Skeleton, UX designers will work on tasks to make it even more concrete. On the planning side, Information design will continue to work on how contents are being displayed, and delivered, with Interface design on the technical side. Navigation design is a hybrid between both sides, in which UX designers work on how users will navigate within the product, to reach contents, features and functionalities that they need. (7.)

At the top level, there is Surface. At this stage, UX designers will carry on with visual design. In collaboration with marketers, visual designers and graphic designers, they will control how the product looks and feels. This is the stage when UX designers will create things that users can actually interact with. (Figure 2.)

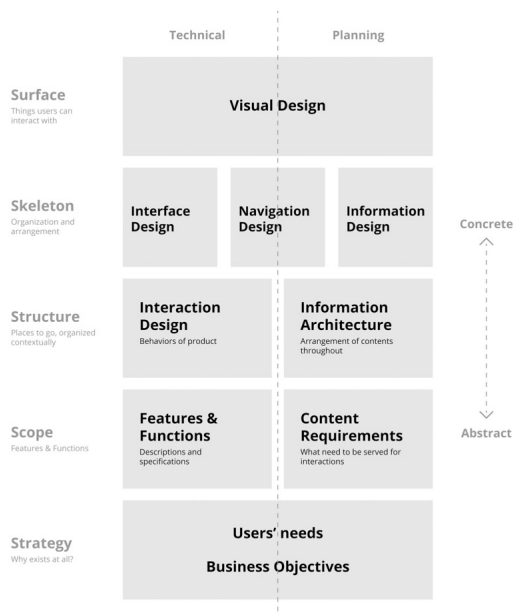


FIGURE 2. Elements of User Experiences (7.)

2.3.4 Strategic research

In order to find the perfect overlapping section between business objectives and users' needs, there are certain tasks to be done at the Strategic research. Producing good results at this most abstract stage will most definitely give positive impacts and benefits for later stages.

First of all, it is to conduct stakeholders or product owners' interviews. By doing this first, UX designers will be able to clear all doubts that both parties may have and define the ultimate objectives behind this product. What the product needs to achieve? Who should be targeted customers? How to fit this product and its objectives with the overall business strategies of the company or organization? How to make this product stand out from its potential competitors and the whole market? Has any technical decision been made yet? (7.)

During discussions with stakeholders and product owners, UX designers must also tackle on customers' strategies along with them. Issues must be solved including the reasons why customers would like to use the product, as well as the reason why should they choose this product over other competitors in the market. If possible, UX designers should also acquire any information related to product complains of customers, as this might be the reason or ultimate goal behind the product.

The second phase in the Strategic research, is competitors' reviewing. UX designers need to analyse potential, direct or indirect competitors of the product that they are developing. UX designers need to review on how competitors met up with the problems, what are their approaches on trying to solve the problems, what are their pros and cons, who are their targeted customers, how do their customers feel about it, read all their good and bad feedbacks, and try to decide what UX designers should learn about the competing products, as well as what should be avoided. By doing well in competitors researches, UX designers should have a clearer overview of the market where this product is heading toward, to know what is the value needed in this market, as well as to know what could be the key factors that will become leverage points that make their product stands out from that of competitors. (7.)

The next stage within strategic research is to do users' researches. With results from previous stages, UX designers should have a clearer sight on who are the targeted users of the product. In this stage, UX designers will conduct a set of interviews on potential users of the product, in order to look for users' needs. However, not every product design is alike, and so it is with user interview structures. Overall, the thesis targets 2 commonly known, distinctive types of products, B2B – Business to Business, and B2C – Business to Consumers. (7.)

When conducting a user interview for a B2B product, UX designers will typically meet up with employees of a company or an organization. In this case, UX designers need to know their background or role in the company first. And since they are directly involved in the business, they should have a better idea on what makes their workflow much more productive. UX designers should acquire more information on how they perform their tasks normally, who, which groups or which roles are needed to be involved, and how do these roles collaborate together. In case the interviewee had worked in a similar role within another company or organization before, then UX designers should ask them how these current processes are compared to the one in the previous company. Then they should ask from interviewees if have they found or encountered any problems, issues or inefficiencies with the current product, and is they have any preferences on other products that may offer better values in mind. These pieces of information can be added to the product's potential competitors as well. (7.)

On the other hand, when designing and developing a B2C product, a typical user interview should be done with a normal consumer. In this case, the interviewer should turn the discussion toward the user experiences of the product itself. An obvious question should be: what thing or value makes up a good user experience? UX designers should find out, in the perspective of the interviewee, what do they usually do first, what can be minimized, shortened, or completely put off? How often do they use this product or any others in the same category? Did they find any value in them, and how much? Furthermore, UX designers should ask about their usage purposes; why and what is the reason for doing this task. If possible, UX designers should specifically ask interviewees to actually perform the task themselves. During this process, they can see an actual

user's interaction, how did they perform it, and what can be improved. Interviewers should further ask from them if they need to do any certain actions or tasks before, during and after the usage of the product. This might give UX designers ideas on potential additional features. And finally, designers should ask interviewees for feedbacks on other similar products, how do they compare with each other, and if they have any recommendation. This can be added up towards the list of potential competitors. (Figure 3.)

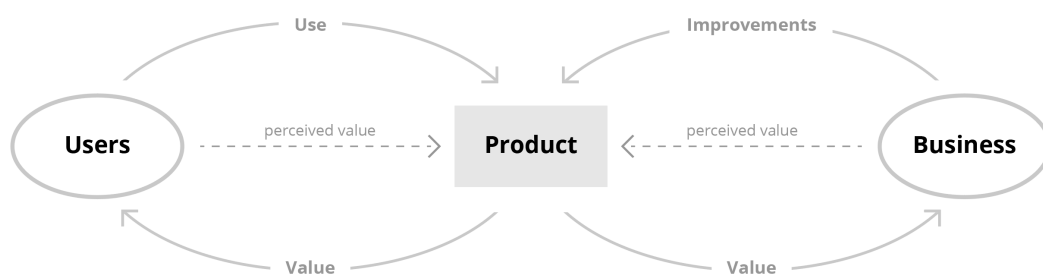


FIGURE 3. Values of product perceived (7.)

Also, in users' researches phase, UX designers should find out more about users' expectations. In this, users' "first use" experience should leave a lot to learn about. Within only the first 3 seconds of using or encountered with the product, users are looking for answers of these 4 questions: What is this product? Did the user find what they expected to be found? Is this product trustworthy or not? Is this the product offer that the user was looking for? After this short 3 seconds of determination, if the users find that all answers satisfied them, then they should stick around, to find even more answers before actually deciding: Is this product offer enough value for the user to stick around? What are the actions to be made? Where to go if the user wants to learn more about this product? Is there any contact information? (Figure 3.)

In conclusion, strategic researches should be done so that UX designers can answer these 3 questions: What is worth doing and developing? What is this

project trying to create? What value does this product provide? Before moving into the next stage, UX designers should have a clear product roadmap that gives value for both customers and business and has a clear strategy with determined user experiences, which were driven by both business goals and users' needs.

2.3.5 Defining scopes

Every person within a team, a company or an organization might work towards a same pre-defined big goal, but most often, there will be a confusion. By carefully constructing plans and scopes, the team can address all potential conflicts and confusion before getting into work.

A carefully defined set of scopes can also act as a reference point, to describe the work that this team is building towards, in a highly specific manner. Documentations on this will provide a common understanding of all the contents, features, functionalities, specifications, as well as development schedules, deadlines and milestones. (7.)

Scopes are clear descriptions of what the product goals are, and when these goals will be achieved. Good scopes can help identifying a potential overlapping work: tasks that might not serve the common strategy, or might not provide the right values needed, or even unnecessary. Good scopes help in improving the productivity of the team. (7.)

It is hard to define a set of targets in the present and try to predict what is coming in the future. New ideas, features and functionalities will eventually and continuously emerge. However, not every new idea and concept actually serve the original and primary objectives of the product. A good set of scopes will help UX designers to determine whether these new ideas align with the primary strategies or not. Scopes will also determine which ideas should be put into work right now, and what need to wait. (7.)

A poorly defined set of scopes will leave negative impacts toward the product and its development path. If scopes are too big, they will contain unrealistic expectations on the product deliveries, leading to slipping deadlines as people

cannot keep up. Big scopes can also lead toward desire for even more features. To make matters worse, too big scopes also make team members become nervous and anxious with their work progresses. On the other hand, too small scopes contain too little details, with paths that are unclear toward the full vision of the product. Therefore, the product will eventually become unremarkable and unimpressive. Not only to be carefully defined, scopes need to stay consistent. If UX designers let new and additional suggestions, ideas are added into the original objectives, the work for product development will eventually stack up and will be out of control, leading to slipping deadlines and wasting resources. (7.)

Ambitiousness is always a good quality that drives innovation and development. However, when defining scopes for a product, there will always be trade off. UX designers need to identify and decide what is important to tackle, and what is not. As no one can have everything, something needs to be trade-off. In order to make these decisions, UX designers need to put into consideration values, objectives as well as the business.

There are 2 ways to look into this issue. When people look at limitations, they are only focusing on what is across the boundary, which are the things that cannot be done. In contrast, if people look only within the boundary, this is called constraint. Constraint means to eliminate choices, in order to focus on what can be done, within that boundary. With less things to do, the team works with less, but this will actually increase their creativity and innovation, while at the same time, it provides them with more solid understanding of what can be accomplished. (7.)

Ikea's strategies, can be analysed as an example of how constraint would actually help with improving the product development and the results quality. At an Ikea mall, obviously there would be many employees there to keep the store operating. However, comparing to other malls at similar sizes and scales, Ikea does not assign quite as many employees towards directly serving customers as its competitors. This might seem to take negative impacts toward the user experiences itself. However, by limiting employees to serve customers, they

turn their attention into designing the stores routes and customer journeys so that their products become presented themselves towards customers, such as walking routes through various scenes to showcase how Ikea's products would fit into any home. With these walking routes, customers are able to explore many options and products that they may not even have thought of before they arrived at the store. So instead of straightforwardly give customers what they need, Ikea makes them have to look for it, and in the process of doing so, they might discover things that they never thought they want. Along with that, many actions that were previously done by humans are now automated or done by customers themselves, such as tablets being placed throughout the stores so that customers can search for specifications and information of products that they are looking for. Almost the whole warehouse is automated, as well as all checkout gates are automated. Not only make shopping experiences more intuitive, Ikea can even lower their prices, as significantly less employees are needed, therefore less wages to pay. (7.)

All Ikea's products come in flat packages and can be knocked down. This means not only customers can assemble Ikea's products themselves, but the packages themselves are as light, and as compact as possible. This make transportation much more pleasant for customers, and even Ikea will benefit from this, as they can keep their warehouse storage as efficient as possible. (7.)

Even Ikea stores' locations have significant impacts. They usually put their stores at less crowded areas, usually at suburban areas. This helps them lower facilities cost, and also give them more space to build much larger sites. The larger areas not only help them to deliver customers serving spaces, but also enlarge their storage capacity. This resulted in expansive and huge on-site inventory. Customers would find virtually all products offered by Ikea, simply by visiting any of their stores, without having to wait or redirect to anywhere else. (7.)

By all means, scopes are just equally important as strategies. A scope helps shape and define the product development process. Therefore, construct scopes should be done extremely careful. In order to construct and establish a

set of long-term scopes, there are a few key points that UX designers must take into consideration. (7.)

First of all, the designer needs to identify the engagement point of the product. This is exactly the touch points where the product delivers values towards customers. And also, from that, UX designers can figure out what, and how to engage with customers, through interactions of the product. (7.)

From comprehensive industry studies, stakeholders' and product owners' interviews, as well as users' researches, UX designers will have a deeper understanding of the market, of the whole industry. From that, they can figure out if there is any opportunity, any new or old space, or even gap in the market, where no one has not tackled ever before. Are there gaps that bring possibilities of new functionalities toward the product, that create the leverage for that product to stand out. (7.)

A product, or to be more specific, an application, will eventually be outdated, through time. This is why, updates toward the app are the essential key in keeping existing customers as well as acquiring new ones. So, in this case, UX designers need to create a product delivery process that is repeatable. The more consistent updates are, along with the more consistent level of qualities, the more trustworthy that product is in the eyes of customers. (7.)

Designing, developing and delivering a product is one thing, but how customers receive, feel and perceive the product, is another thing to be considered. UX designers need to coordinate their product development and delivery with how customers perceive it and change their plans accordingly if needed.

3 STEPOUT MOBILE APPLICATION

3.1 Introduction

StepOut is a mobile application, designed and developed, with the ultimate purpose of boosting fitness in society. StepOut acts as a middle ground platform, for independent trainers to find studios and spaces to host their fitness classes, as well as to find customers.

Nowadays, the fitness industry is being dominated by big entities. These huge companies and organizations have the resources to host fitness sessions with not only a great capacity, but also a great amount of facilities. However, their business models are usually based on binding subscriptions that tie customers with monthly or yearly payments. This may be the benefits and be valued by some people, but many others, who just want to take some specific type of fitness, will also have to pay for things that they do not use. In other words, the industry is lacking of easy access.

To make matters worse, these companies are only targeting famously known, widely used, and already proven fitness activities and sports. This leaves independent trainers, as well as small fitness entities with a gap in the industry, where they have the skills to teach new fitness types but do not have the resources to do it. These talented and energetic people are lacking of opportunities, very valuable ones in fact.

This is where StepOut values come to shine. StepOut provides a one-stop digital platform in serving fitness and recreation. This is the destination for customers who are looking for easy and instant access to a wide variety of fitness and recreational activities that are being hosted and happening around them, every single day.

StepOut delivers a diversity towards the fitness industry, offering many different dance forms, HIIT workouts, street workouts, pilates classes, yoga, and a huge variety of other mental well-being activities. Combined with easy access,

StepOut helps people who are curious about different cultures to get a chance to try out new sports and fitness activities.

With no binding, single payment, users pay only for what they want. Combined with easy access and great user experiences, StepOut delivers the ability to instantly book and pay for fitness sessions, whenever customers need it, and wherever customers are.

Not just great values for customers, StepOut brings new opportunities for works as well. StepOut helps independent trainers as well as small entities to organize their fitness sessions and also assists them with sales processes, provides them with marketing works, increases their exposure, and most importantly, gives them earning opportunities.

Therefore, in order to deliver these great values and offers toward the industry, the StepOut team is designing and developing a mobile application. The author was assigned to conduct researches, lead the planning and designing phases, as well as to coordinate the development phase with onboard developers.

This mobile application will be built using React Native. The app will be deployed to iOS and Android. NodeJS will be used for backend, with MySQL used for the database. The StepOut mobile application server will be hosted on Amazon Web Services (AWS) and it will use Stripe as the payment gateway.

3.2 Industry and market studies

The StepOut product is operating on 2 different sectors. The first one is obviously the Fitness industry, as this is StepOut's primary value: to boost fitness in society. StepOut offers fitness, wellness and recreational values directly towards consumers. The other sector that the StepOut product also operates in is the marketplace industry. StepOut is, at its core, a platform. StepOut matches independent trainers with the resources that they need, in this case, studios and spaces available for them to host their fitness sessions. On the other hand, StepOut also helps matching them with the right customers who need these sessions. Therefore, on the marketplace front, StepOut is operating in both

business-to-business (B2B), as well as business-to-consumer (B2C). This section of the thesis will cover study cases of both the Fitness industry and the Marketplace industry.

3.2.1 Fitness industry studies

According to an article by Business Insider, written on September 3rd, 2019, the fitness industry is generating a huge amount of revenue, nearly 100 billion US dollars globally, to be specific. (8.)

Nowadays, there are so many different options out there for consumers to choose, in terms of fitness activities. From technology-driven sessions such as the utilization of Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality, to workout at home with on-demand instruction videos or even live streaming sessions with real-time feedbacks.

Working out at home might be a popular choice among majority of consumers or not. This matter is up for debate, as some might consider this trend will eventually dim out and only surge up in certain occasions, while others argue that having the ability to workout anywhere, and anytime is their need. In that reason, time constraints are the key factor. According to Glofox in one of their articles in 2019, the fitness app market has generated over roughly 2.27 billion US dollars globally. Even more, this market is expected to grow up to 29% in the period from 2019 to 2026. This workout-from-home market seems to develop in a steadily manner and sends out signals that traditional gyms will have no choice but to implement and integrate more technology into their business in order to compete. (9.)

On the other hand, the needs for communities and group training sessions are almost guaranteed to increase. There is a huge amount of benefits offered by group classes, and the industry is well-known of it. First of all, there is motivation. Attendees of group sessions are seeing their motivations significantly boosted as they are being taught and instructed by fit, talented, energetic trainers. As fitness activities are being hosted in group of multiple customers, this model creates such an engaging environment for them. Furthermore, attending

a large group of people with the same purpose and motivation, is one excellent way to socialize, and even, a chance to compete with a much wider audience. By all means, social interactions are always pushing fitness motivation forwards. (8.)

In consumers side, there is a big shift in consumers' behaviors and preferences in favor for health, instead of convenience. Living in the digital world nowadays, consumers are well-informed more than ever before, and they showing their interests towards fitness. Consumers' awareness towards health is higher than ever, especially among the young generation. They are more devoted to healthy diets and care more about health than generations before them. And they are willingly to pay a high price for their health. (9.)

Health Insurance Costs are also a contributing factor to the rise of Fitness industry. As people start to realize that the healthier a person is, the less it cost to insure them. This is the reason why many employers, cooperates and companies are paying more for their employees' fitness classes and memberships. Just as simple as promoting healthy lifestyle, such as riding by bike to work, or hosting health educating sessions to employees, employers can significantly lower costs for insurance. (9.)

3.2.2 Marketplace industry studies

Fitness marketplaces are among many aspects of the fitness industry that are prospering. As customers do not like to subscribe to one single gym and attend to whatever there is offered by that gym, they would like to explore for more options. More and more marketplaces are offering a place to match providers to buyers.

The convenience of marketplaces is one very clear advantage. In fact, customers choose marketplaces for their pleasant using experiences. It saves customers from visiting gym by gym, now all they need is an Internet connection, and a few simple search queries on Google. Nowadays, customers can find their desired sports and fitness formats easily and intuitively through a fitness marketplace. (11.)

In independent trainers' perspective, they choose marketplaces instead of gyms or fitness entities, because of their visibility on the market. When joining a marketplace, trainers are exposing themselves and their contents' values towards a whole community. Not only that, but the marketplace can actually push sales and marketing quality of its onboarding trainers, significantly. All of which, resulted in much higher conversion rates (the rates of visiting customers becoming paying customers), higher revenues, as well as improving credibility. (11.)

3.3 Competitors studies

In selecting competitors for conducting study cases, the StepOut team realized that it is unnecessary to solely focus on fitness applications. While these applications would directly compete with StepOut within the same market, their Product designs and User Experiences designs were not necessarily the best in term of marketplace platform designs.

This section of the thesis will cover 3 of the main study cases of the StepOut mobile application project. A part of the reason why these 3 were chosen was the fact that all these products are directly operating in the Finnish market, where StepOut firstly launches its product.

The 3 products will be covered in this section are: Wolt, Airbnb and Classpass. At the time of writing this thesis (Spring of 2020), the Covid-19 situation was forcing business to migrate temporarily to online and remote approaches. For this reason, screenshots of products shown in these study cases were taken when their businesses were focusing toward online experiences, not their usual offers.

3.3.1 Wolt study case

Wolt is a food delivery application. It provides a platform for a restaurant to independently sign up and list their own menu and offering on the platform. From there, Wolt provides consumers with a mobile application or a web app for browsing, ordering and getting their food delivered directly to their doors.

On consumers' side, Wolt's targeted users are people who do not cook. As a fact, many people, nowadays, do not cook at all. It could be that they are too busy with work and do not have time for cooking, or they would rather spend more time on work.

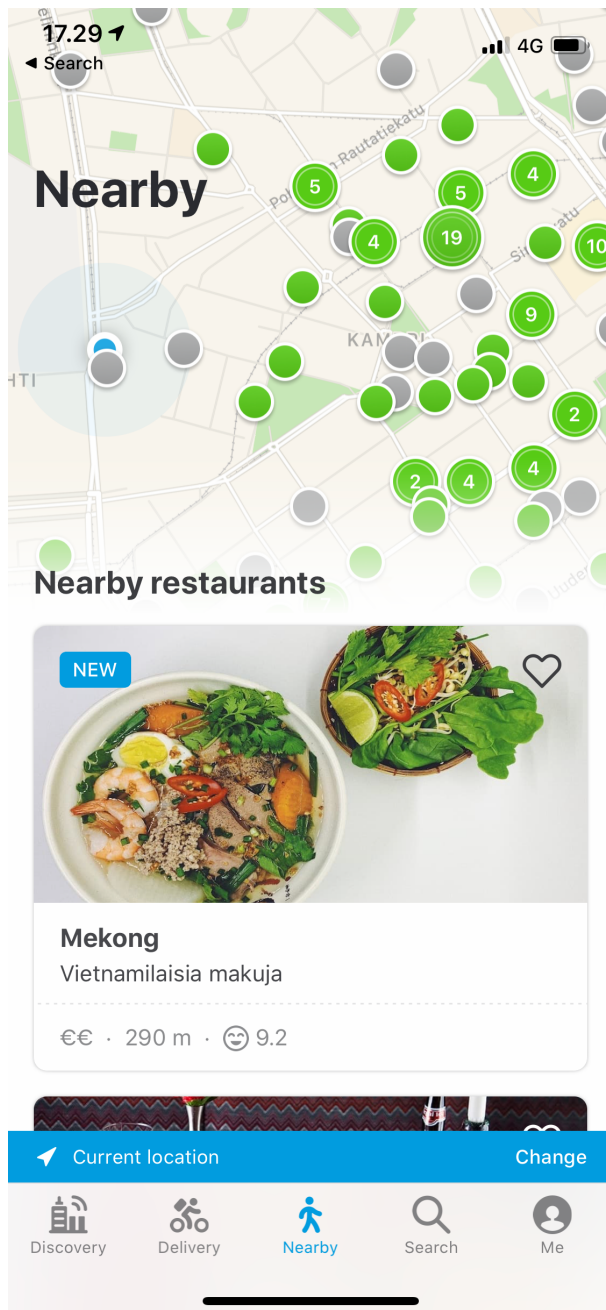


FIGURE 4. Wolt Nearby UI (12.)

On business side, Wolt offers delivery services towards almost only restaurants ever. Big food chains in the industry such as KFC, McDonald's or Burger King,

have resources that are more than enough for them to operate their own delivery service and cutting down on cost. This is the reason why the majority of restaurant partners on the Wolt platform are medium to small restaurant. Aside from an additional delivery service, Wolt offers these restaurants marketing power, visibility as well as exposure on the market for many more customers (Figure 4.).

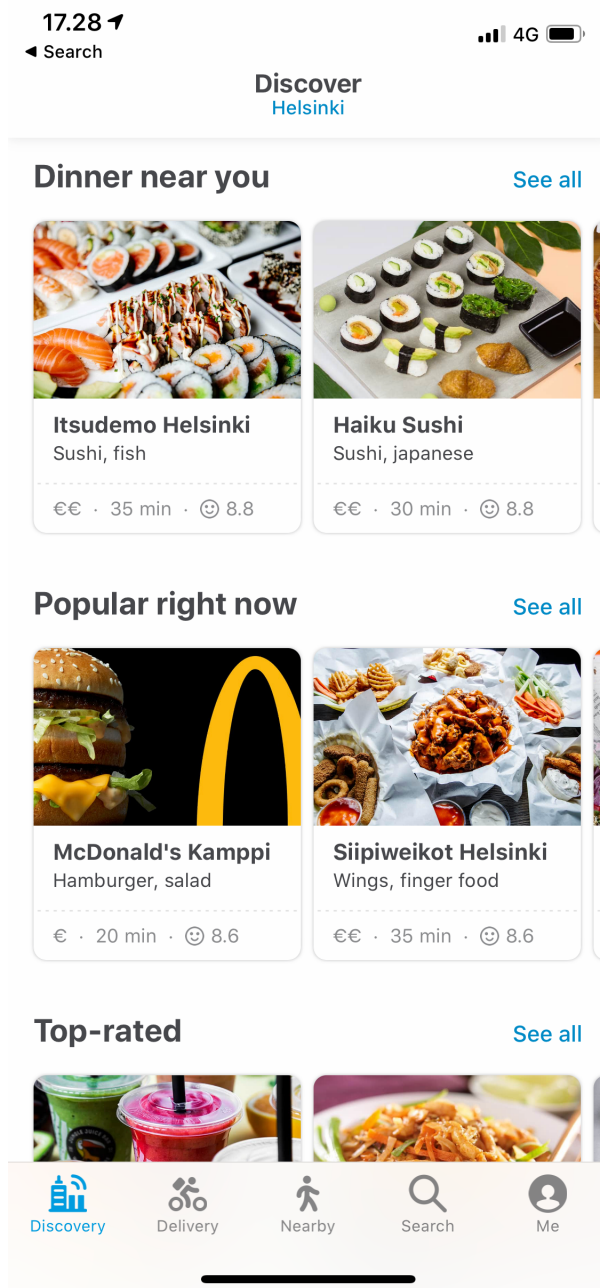


FIGURE 5. Wolt Discover page UI (12.)

Their Product and User Experiences designs clearly demonstrate this. The app's main tab is called 'Discovery' (Figure 6.), and the user flow is strongly focusing on the exploration of new restaurants and new foods. They have an announcement section on top, and right at the second section is where they promote new restaurants. Not only that, restaurants are also sorted by categories, type of meals, and location based, so that customers can do high comprehensive searches for their needs (Figure 5.). Wolt is also offering exclusive discounts for their users on specific restaurants.

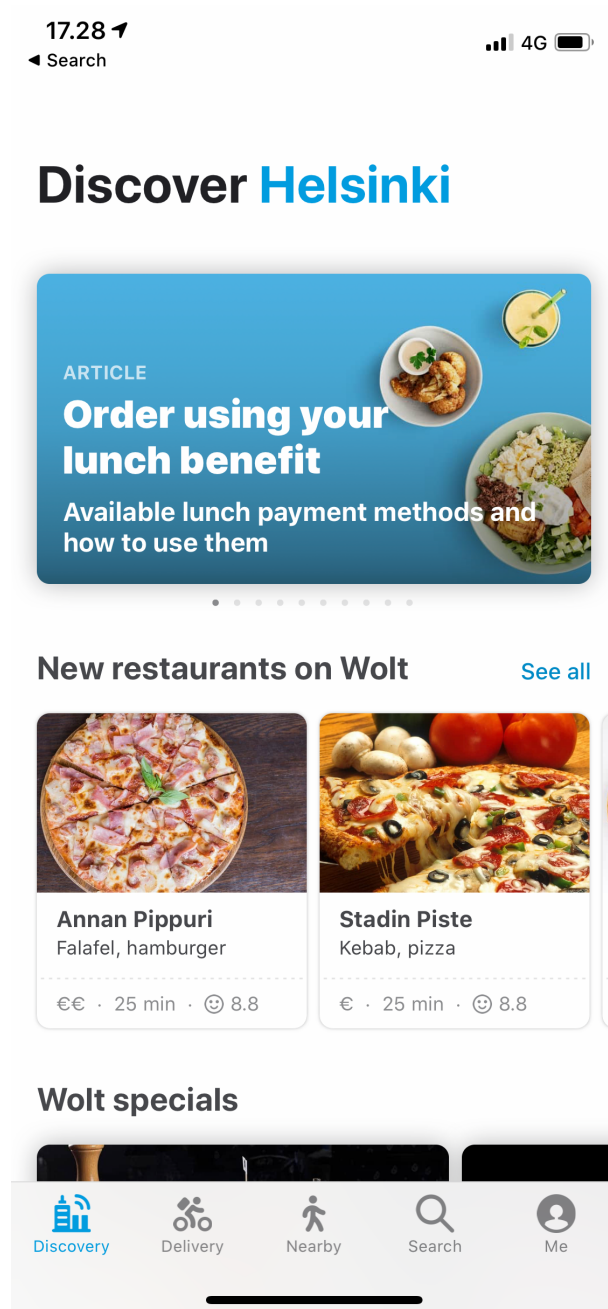


FIGURE 6. Wolt Landing screen UI (12.)

However, Wolt product has some limitations. The first one is their service prices. Not only that delivery fees are quite high, the listing prices of foods on Wolt are sometimes even higher than the prices of the restaurants' actual menu. Secondly, only restaurants that are signed up to be a Wolt partner will be appearing on the platform. Many other products in this delivery sector are offering customers with the option of having the couriers to go into a registered restaurant and order the food for them. This is a gap in the Finnish market that no one has ever tackled yet.

Overall, although Wolt operates in a different sector than StepOut, their product is trying to offer the same value: boosting values, sales, marketing and exposures for small entities in the way of creating an intuitive exploration for consumers. StepOut product's user experiences will learn a lot from the Wolt study case.

3.3.2 ClassPass study case

ClassPass is somewhat a direct competitor with StepOut. It operates in the same fitness marketplace industry as StepOut. ClassPass offers a monthly membership for accessing fitness classes to all of their partnering studios, gyms and fitness entities worldwide.

ClassPass uses a credit plan system. Depending on how expensive the plan is that users choose, they will get an amount of credits accordingly, and will use these credits to purchase for fitness classes at any fitness entities partnering with ClassPass. The price for classes reserved via ClassPass is not consistent, as it varies from the types of classes, time of the day, as well as if users decide to take the same class for more than 2 or 3 times per week or per month, depending on studios, they may charge customers with more credits than usual. However, ClassPass prices are still relatively lower than the 'drop-in' prices directly at the studios.

In terms of benefits, ClassPass indeed delivers certain values towards customers. Through ClassPass, customers can try out many classes at many studios and gyms, with many types of sports and fitness formats to choose from, all with

a much better price than the trial or drop-in offers by the entities themselves (Figure 7.). ClassPass also allows its members to use their credits in any ClassPass partnering gyms, studios and entities worldwide. This offers a great workout on-the-go experiences for travelers, who would prefer a cheap and easy access experience over a binding subscription. Lastly, ClassPass also offers a selection of on-demand workout tutorial videos (Figure 8.). These videos are made by either ClassPass themselves or by their partners. And these videos come with no additional cost. A great add-on feature for those who need a workout but cannot come to the gym.

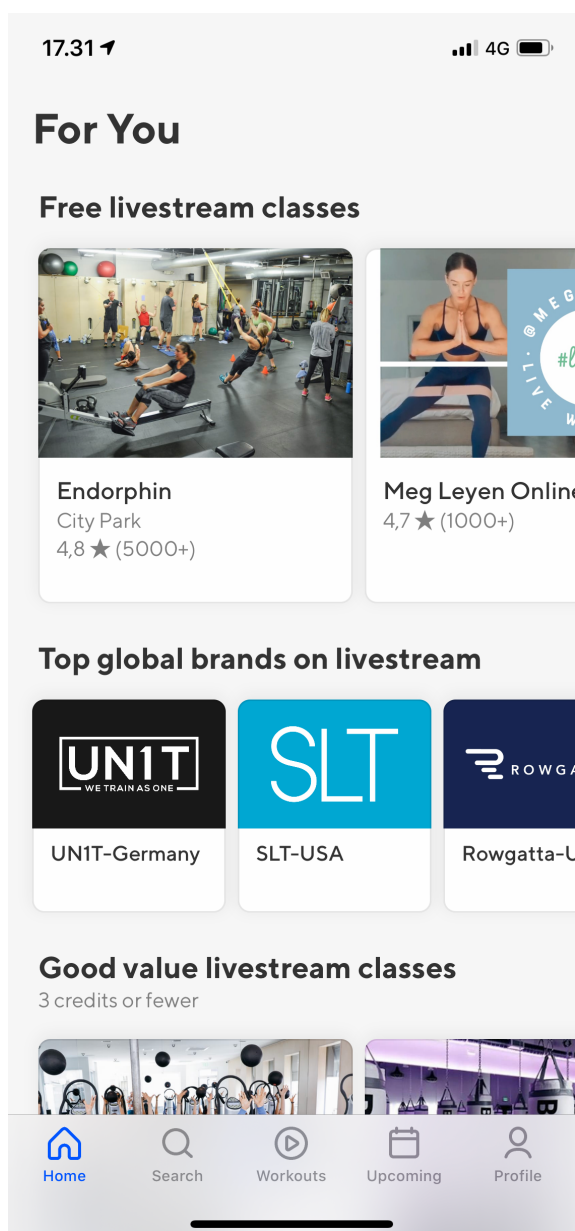


FIGURE 7. ClassPass Landing screen UI (13.)

As one of the direct competitors of StepOut, each ClassPass's weakness is immediately an opportunity for StepOut. And there are quite a few to point out. First of all, ClassPass' business model may sound great at first, but when people start to get a set of preferred fitness formats or prefer to a specific gym or studio, they would cancel their ClassPass subscription and sign up for a membership at that studio directly. This is because if they start to prefer a studio, it would be significantly cheaper to subscribe to that studio alone. ClassPass prices are only cheaper than these drop-in prices for non-member of studios. To make matter worse, if users want to take the same class for multiple times a week, they may have to pay even more credits for these repeating times. Therefore, not only that the ClassPass product is not for a long-term usage, and prices might seem to be cheap and value at first, it will eventually add up significantly.

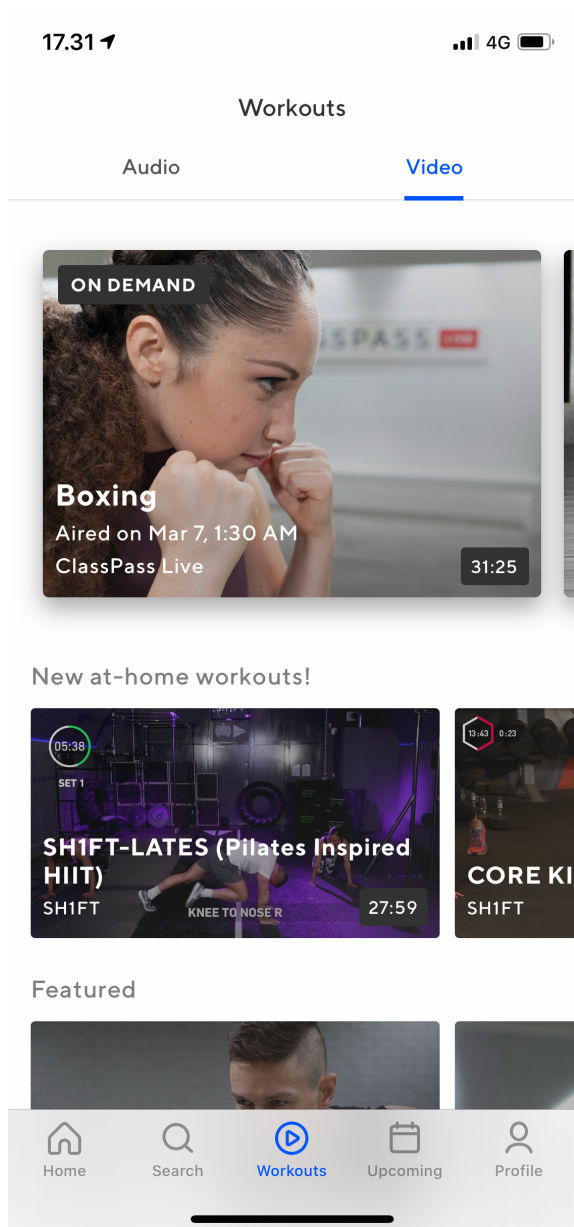


FIGURE 8. ClassPass On Demand Page UI (13.)

One other flaw of ClassPass is their User Experiences. Their interface visual designs might be relatively fine, simple and clean. However, it lacks the intuitiveness and a welcoming feel. Their search UI, for some reason, only allows users to search for activities, with a selected date. There are use cases when users only want to search for a certain type of sports or a class and not have a specific date in mind yet (Figure 9.). Furthermore, an individual studio page and class page are not designed well enough. The UI is far too simple with just normal text and no illustration.

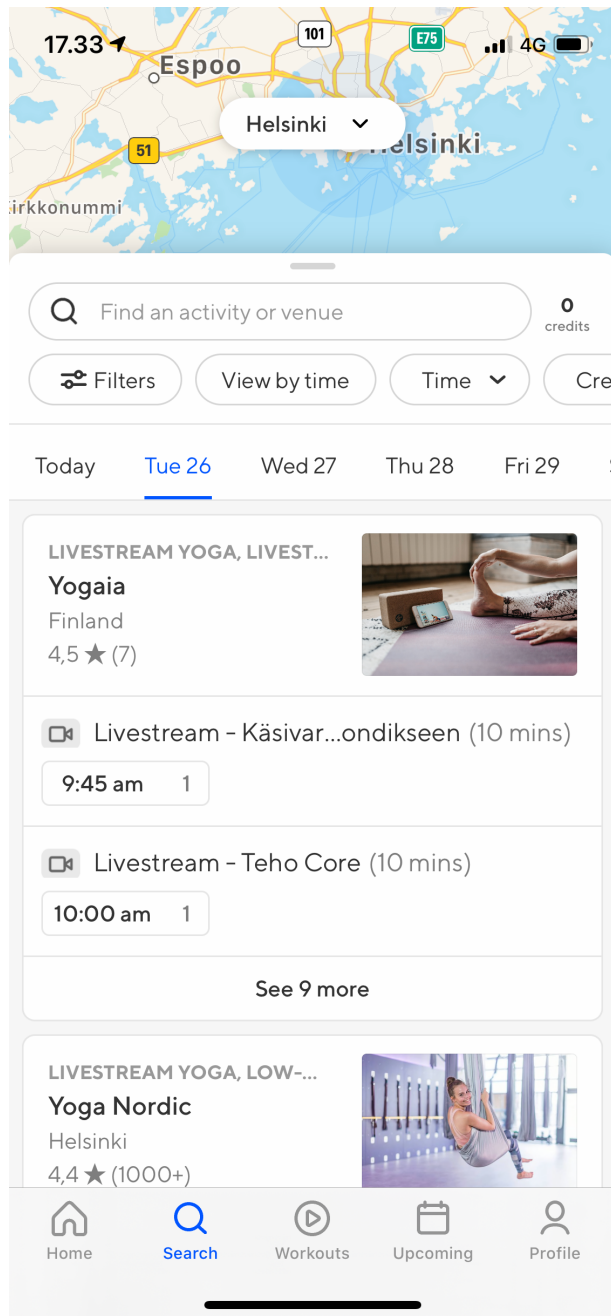


FIGURE 9. ClassPass Search UI (13.)

ClassPass operates in the same industry and offers relatively the same set of categories as StepOut, but their strategies and business model proved to be much different than what StepOut is trying to achieve. And with many flaws in their product, it indicates that there are so much more to be improved and innovated in this fitness marketplace industry.

3.3.3 Airbnb study case

Airbnb is the place for people with spare houses or bedrooms to put up their offers so that tourists and travelers can find a great place to stay the night, with great comfort of a home, and relatively cheap prices compared to traditional hotels and hostels. Airbnb's main product might seem to be irrelevant towards StepOut, but there are 2 reasons why StepOut chose as their primary study case Airbnb. First of all, Airbnb is a platform, and it is specifically targeting independent homeowners who do not have enough resources to open their own hotels or hostels, which is the same as StepOut targeting independent trainers. Secondly, Airbnb's designs of their 'Experiences' section are simply too good. So apart from Airbnb's accommodation offers, they also have experiences tours for tourists. A session would usually take from 2 hours to a full day or even multiple days. In combination with accommodation, tourists will get a chance to experience the uniqueness of the place they are visiting. It could be a traditional cooking session in Sicily, or a visit to a farm in Antwerp, a boat trip in Melbourne. The possibilities are endless. This urges for trying new things, combined with a great customer journey design of the product, makes Airbnb Experiences section a primary study case for StepOut (Figure 10.).

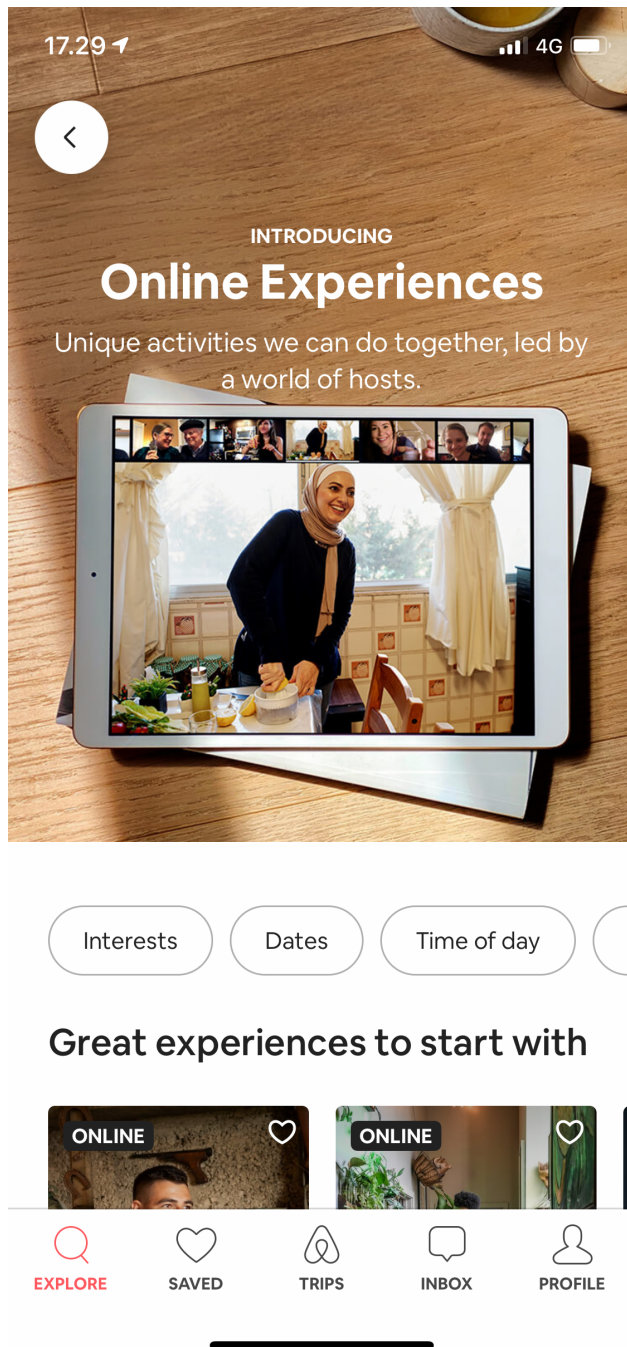


FIGURE 10. Airbnb Experiences landing screen UI (14.)

What makes Airbnb study case stand out, is definitely its user experiences designs. Its home screen is very detailed and informative, with many different sections to categorize its contents, while keeping the interface minimal and not too overwhelming for customers. On the session page, users firstly get greeted with an image slider, similar to social media stories nowadays, with the top area providing the most essential information about the session (Figure 11.). In this

way, users waste no time trying to find their answers, before going deeper into its information. The session page was designed in a way that it would not look like an app user interface at all. Instead, it looks just like an article, trying to tell a story, purpose and motivation behind the session by the host themselves (Figure 12.). It is not only intuitive, but also very informative, with all previous guests' reviews, and all necessary policies as well as requirements are there, too. The checkout process is simple enough as well, with all steps laid out clearly, and users can re-do actions at any point.

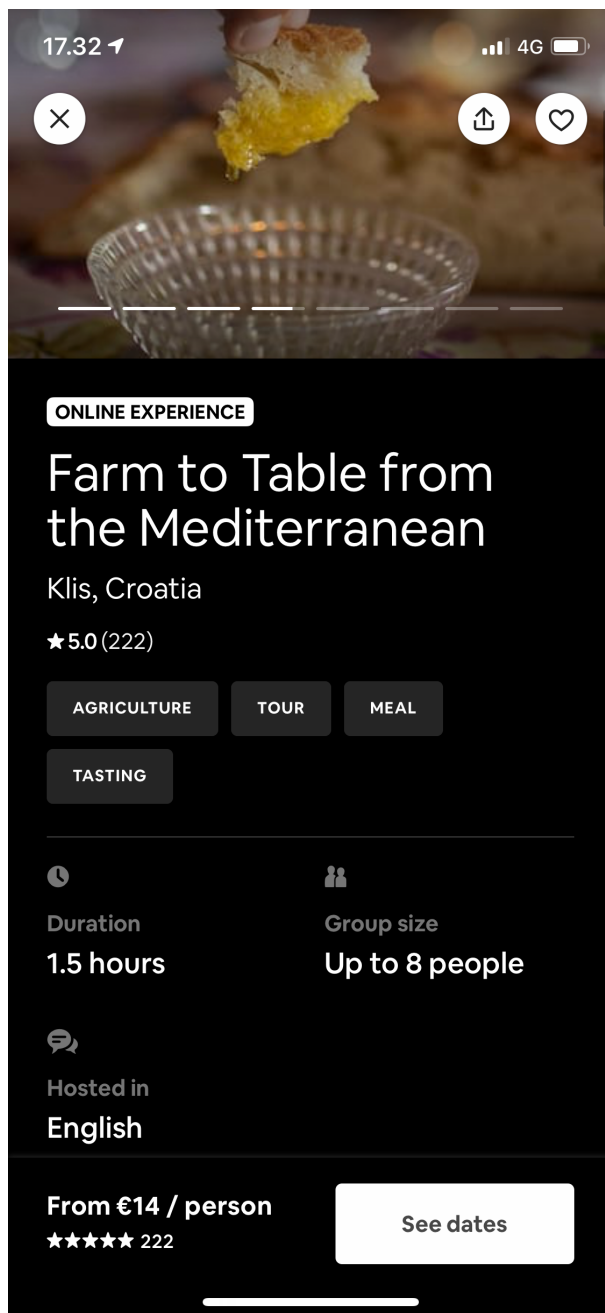


FIGURE 11. Airbnb Experiences page UI (14.)

However, there are still a few minor flaws in Airbnb designs. For all reservations made, Airbnb requires hosts to review each and every guest, individually, before deciding to whether to accept their spot or not. Obviously, this is a matter concerning security of the hosts themselves, but this method might lead to discriminations at some areas. There are already many cases when the hosts did not accept spots of guests just based solely on their nationalities, races and skin colors. This is a controversial issue that Airbnb has yet to solve. Another issue that might leave customers with frustration is their policies. To be more specific, each host is allowed to choose a totally different set of rules and requirements from others. While this might give hosts the flexibility they need, customers are required to carefully read through each host's policies in order to clear all misunderstandings and confusions. Anyone who misreads something, will potentially pay hefty fees without awareness.

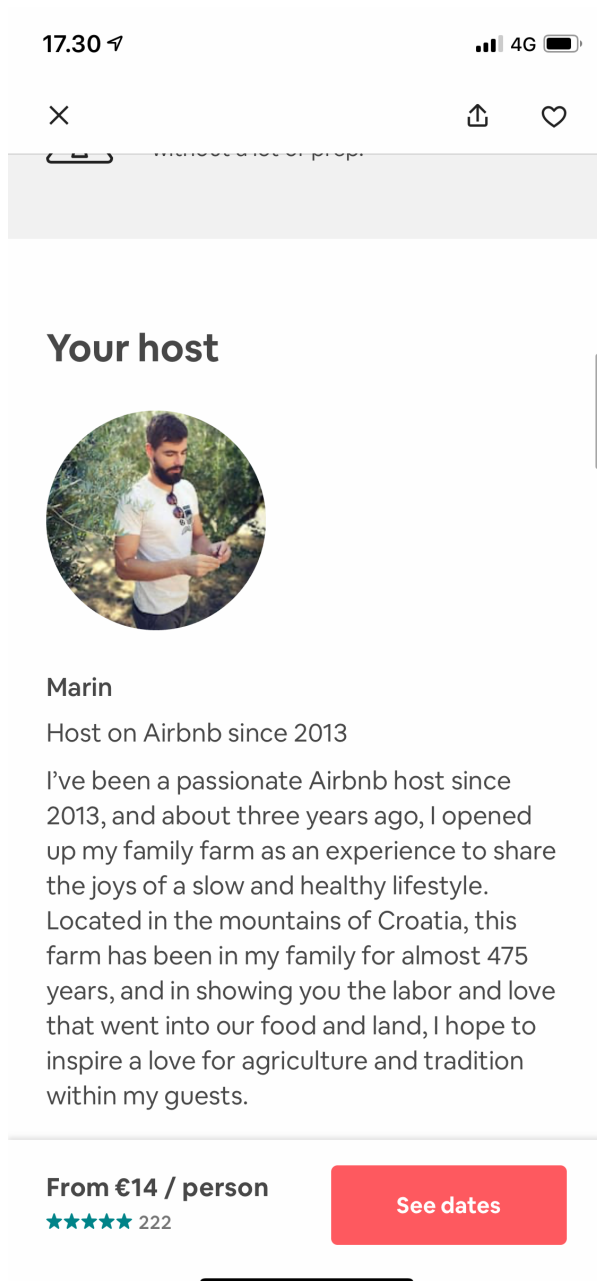


FIGURE 12. Airbnb Host's Story UI (14.)

At the end, Airbnb has an excellent product designs and user experiences designs. A warm, welcoming and intuitive customer journey has made Airbnb really stand out from the rest, and a valuable study case for StepOut.

3.4 An overview of StepOut Strategies and Scopes

The ultimate goal of StepOut is to create a platform or it can also be called a marketplace for fitness and recreational purposes. In there, independent trainers and small fitness entities can join and utilize their talents by hosting fitness sessions. StepOut helps them to find studios and spaces for hosting their sessions, while at the same time, getting customers to join their sessions by offering a consumer platform for them to explore.

The StepOut team is targeting 3 categories of users. The first category is independent trainers. They are highly talented and energetic people, who do not have enough resources to utilize their skills. What they need is market exposure, in order to get customers joining, as well as studios or spaces to host their fitness sessions. The second category of targeting users is studio owners. These are not necessarily meant fitness entities but can also be communities. For example, in Helsinki area, there are a few big startup communities, for example: Maria01, Kiuas or The Shortcut. These communities usually have at least one studio room where group fitness sessions can be hosted. When a StepOut fitness session is being hosted at their premises, then the community itself gains a market exposure as well. StepOut can coordinate and connect trainers with these studio owners. The final group of targeting users are consumers. They are looking for a platform to intuitively browse fitness types, formats and sessions that serve their needs as well as their availability.

For the first phase, the StepOut mobile application is targeting to serve consumers, or B2C operations. This means that during this first phase, all of StepOut B2B operations will be done manually, in traditional ways of emailing and in person communications. In the first release version of StepOut mobile application, the team tried to design and develop a fundamental core for future features. Therefore, the StepOut team is only targeting basic and core functionalities for serving consumers. The first functionality is a home screen with tailored contents. The flow will be differentiated into smaller sections, either to introduce new campaigns or to present categories. A session page will have cover images, along with a detailed view of its content, as well as information about the

trainers themselves. In the checkout process, users can choose dates and times that suit with their schedule, read the session's requirements and cancellation policies, and pay for their reservation directly with the app. After having reserved the spot, users can visit the User page to see all of their reservations, read again the sessions' stories, learn more about trainers as well as location information of studios where their sessions will be hosted. Also, from there, users will have the ability to cancel (with a penalty fee). For users' account features, there will be a possibility to sign up with Facebook accounts as well as Google accounts. Users can set and edit their names, phone number, email, gender and profile picture.

The contents that will be delivered in this first release version of StepOut mobile application include: sessions info, trainers' info, studios info, and StepOut blogs. There will be 2 types of sessions being available to book. The first type is offline, in person sessions, which are hosted at StepOut partnering studios. The other is online, live sessions, in the format of conferencing call, hosted directly on StepOut's live fitness platform called Net-Fit N' Chill. Through the StepOut mobile application, users can make a reservation for both types of sessions. Users can do payments directly within the app, with the integration of Stripe. Users can use credit and debit cards, as well as mobile payment options such as Apple Pay and Google Pay. Session stories and trainers' stories will be delivered through each classes' dedicated page. Lastly, there will be an announcement section at the top of home screen, in the format of blogs. These blogs will be done on an external site, designed and developed by the StepOut team as well.

3.5 Structure designs, Customer Journey & Interface visual designs

To accommodate all the features and requirements set to this first release version, the StepOut team has decided to split the whole product into 3 main sections: Explore, Search and User page.

When users open the app for the first time, they will be greeted with a few information screens (or Splash screens). These screens are there for briefly and quickly point out the biggest values of StepOut as well as further confirming the reasons they decided to download and open up the app. After going through the

Splash screens, there will be a welcoming screen. This screen has a very big and attractive 'Explore' button, providing users with the ability to explore StepOut's offers even before actually signing up for an account. In the case for coming back users, they would probably be familiar with the interface and its designing languages and would immediately realize there were a 'Log In' and 'Sign up' button up top. (Figure 13.)

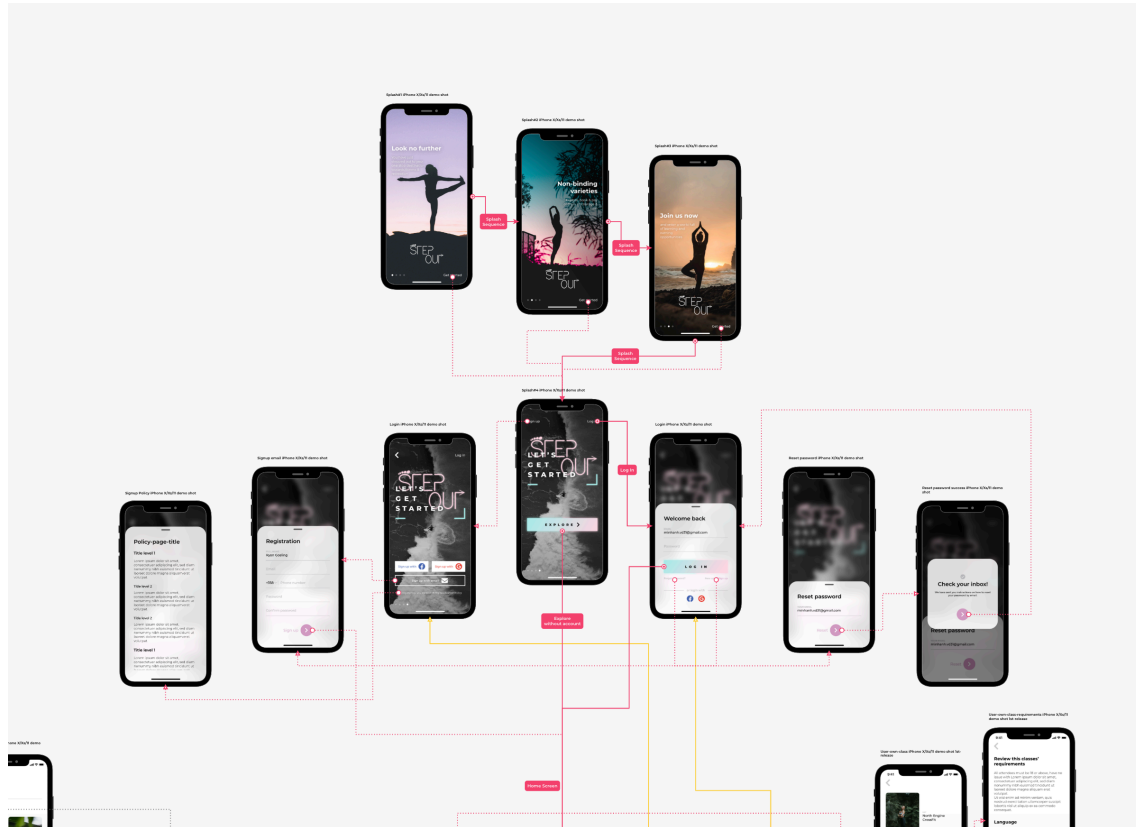


FIGURE 13. StepOut Splash screens and login user flow

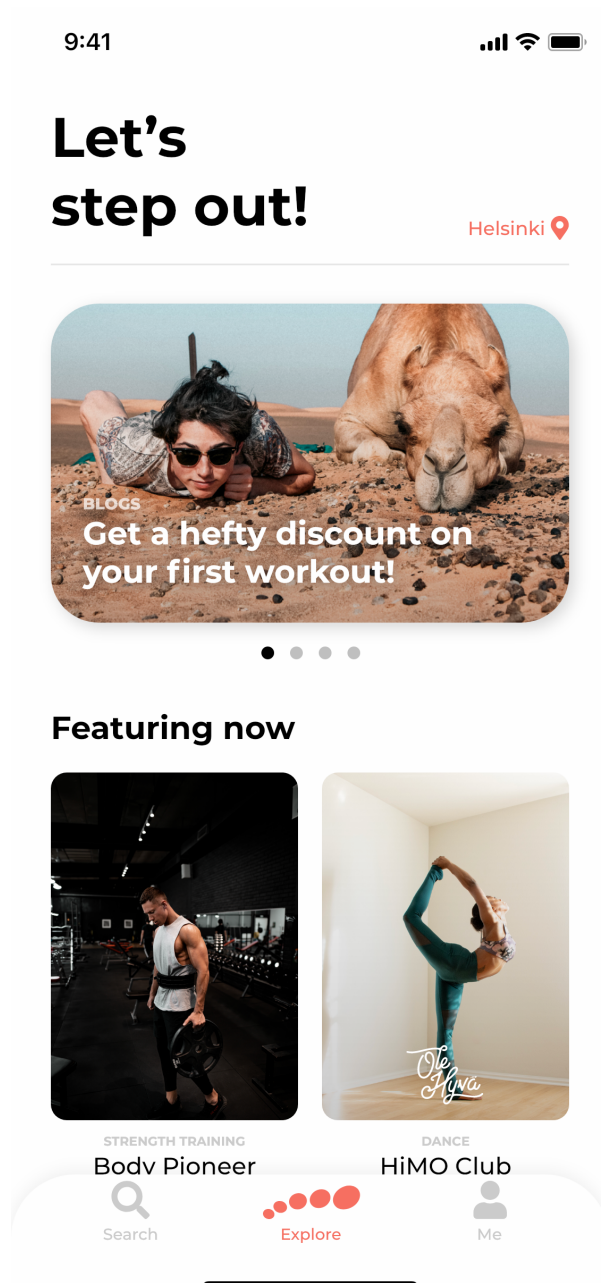


FIGURE 14. StepOut landing screen UI

On the first screen of StepOut app, users will be presented with announcement sections, showing StepOut news, articles written by StepOut's own editors, as well as promotions and other marketing campaigns. (Figure 14.)

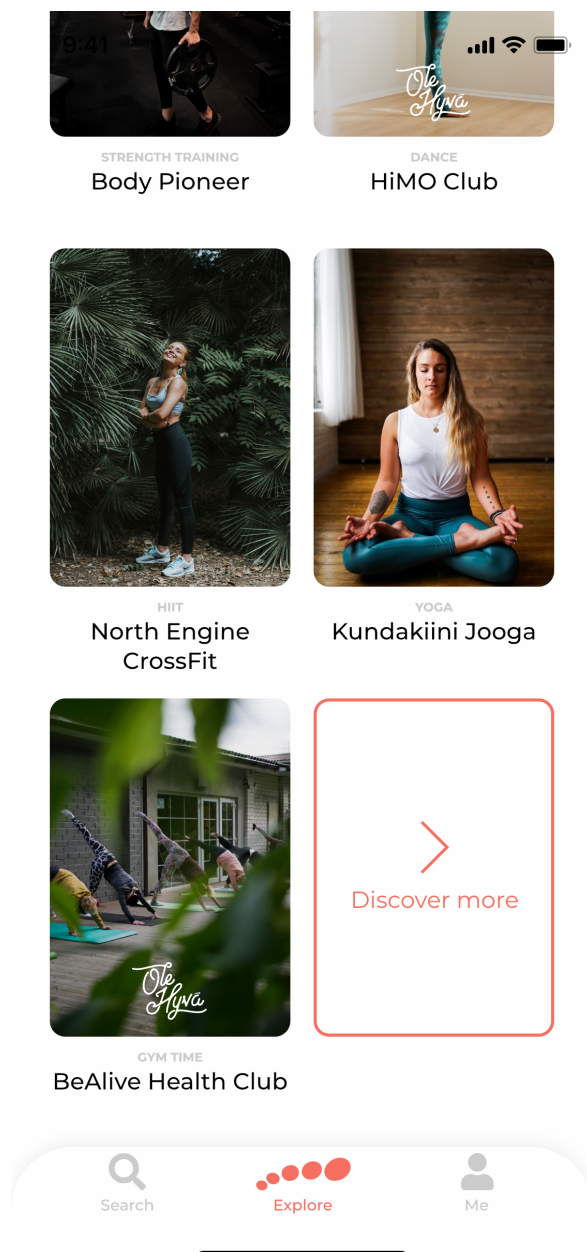


FIGURE 15. StepOut Explore UI

As this first release version is setting the fundamental for future updates, the StepOut team aimed to deliver this with only core features. This is the reason why the Explore page focus solely on presenting fitness sessions of StepOut partnering trainers. (Figure 15.)

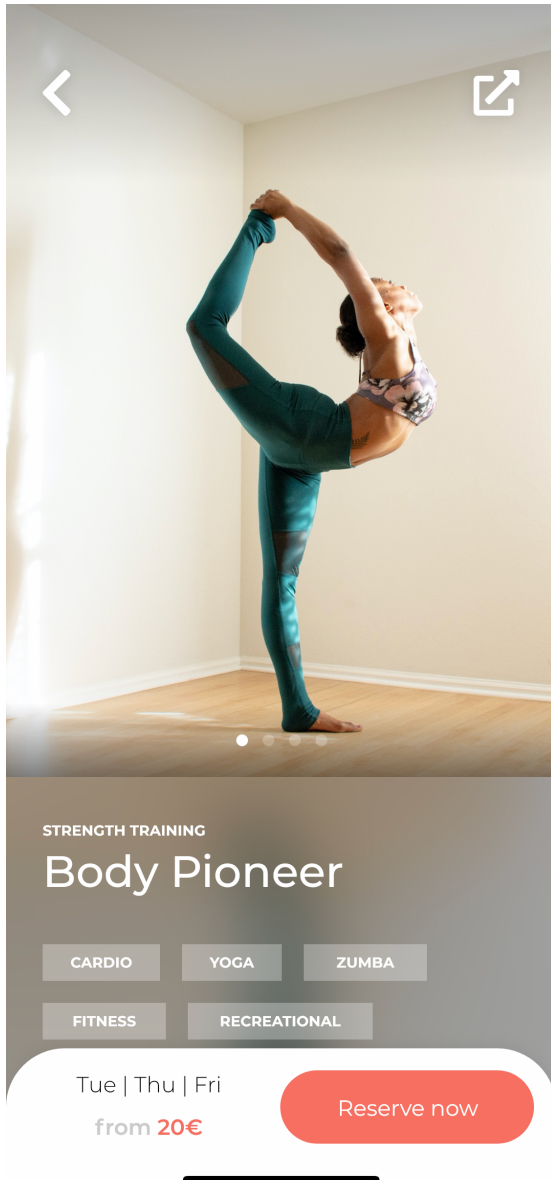


FIGURE 16. StepOut Session page UI

When users go into a session dedicated page, they will be attracted right toward its beautiful and high-quality footages of the sessions. In assistances toward trainers, these images will be carefully taken, processed or sourced by the StepOut marketing team. (Figure 16.)

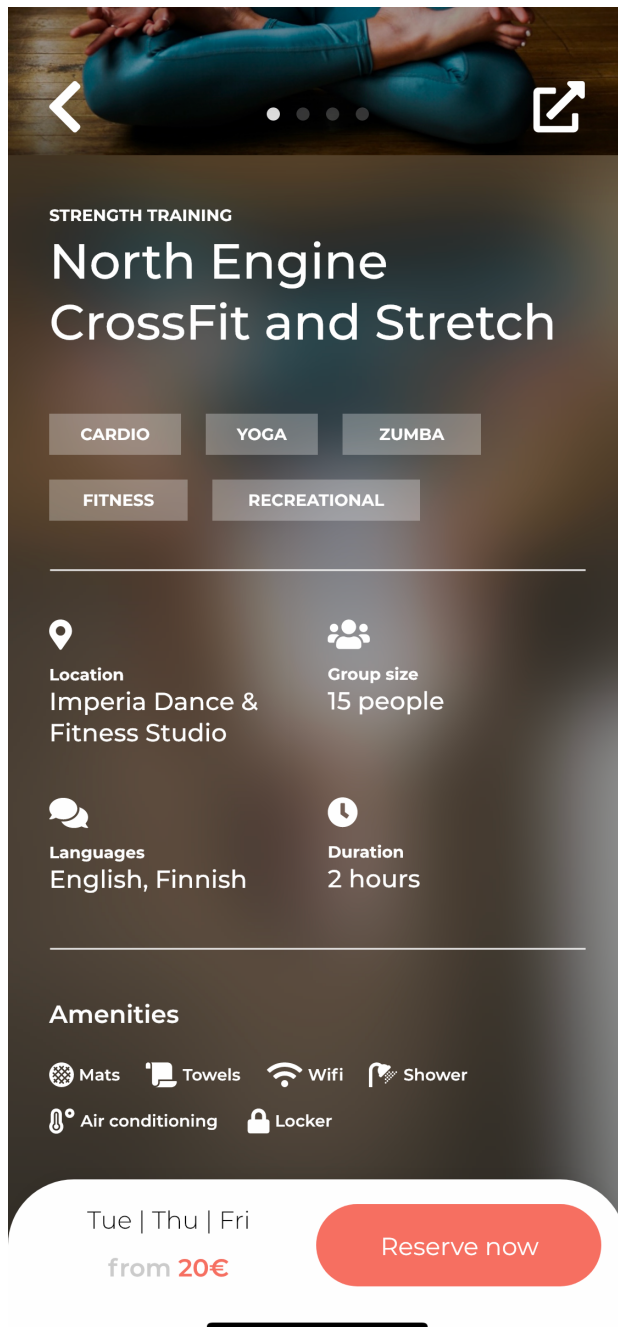
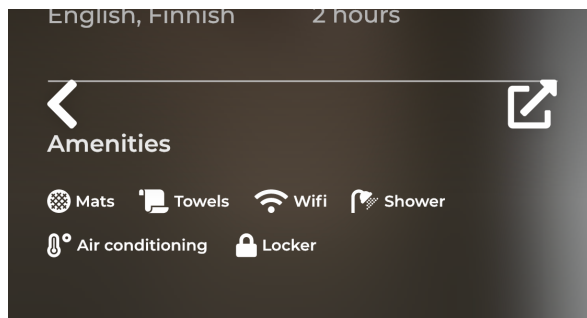


FIGURE 17. StepOut Session basic info UI

The top section is here for quickly and shortly presenting all important information about the session. Therefore, users can grasp all the details that they are looking for immediately, without having to scroll down. The background of this section is actually a reflection of the currently showing header image above, with an elegant blurring layer on top of it, to make the top section not only attractive and standing out from the rest of the session's info, but also connected with the header image, and creating a sense of interactivity. (Figure 17.)



About this class

High-intensity interval training (HIIT), also called high-intensity intermittent exercise (HIIE) or sprint interval training (SIT), is a form of interval training, a cardiovascular exercise strategy alternating short periods of intense anaerobic exercise with less intense recovery periods, until too exhausted to continue.

Though there is no universal HIIT session duration, these intense workouts typically last under 30 minutes, with times varying based on a participant's current fitness level. The duration of HIIT also depends on the intensity of the session.



Tue | Thu | Fri

from 20€

Reserve now

FIGURE 18. *StepOut Session story UI*

The session page is designed so that it does not express the feel of an app user interface. Instead, the layout resembles a story page. Each session page tells a story behind it, why the trainers would want to host this, what is their motivation, and what are the benefits for customers. (Figure 18.)

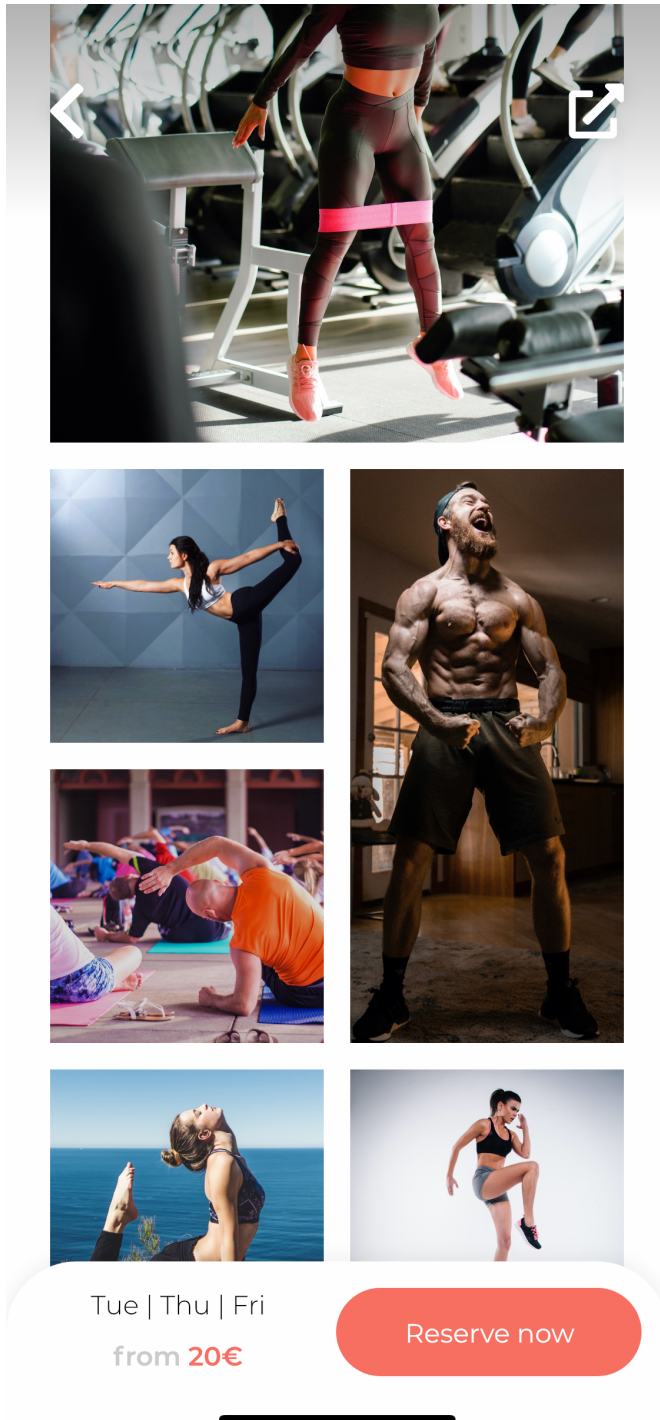


FIGURE 19. StepOut Session footages gallery UI

There is another images gallery in the middle part, for trainers to showcase even more footages of their offers. (Figure 19.)

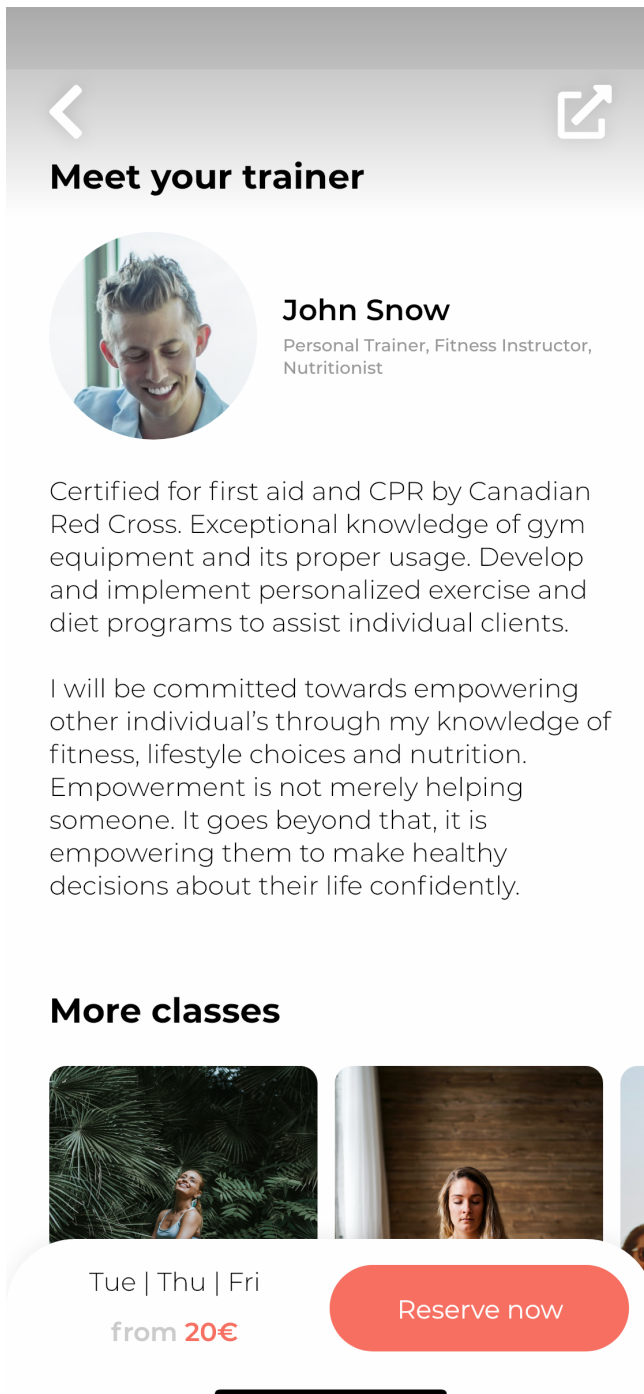


FIGURE 20. *StepOut Session trainer's statement UI*

Lastly, trainers also have a section to introduce themselves. In here, they can tell their personal statements, what are their strengths and skills, their motivation towards fitness. They can also send an inspirational message if they prefer to. (Figure 20.)

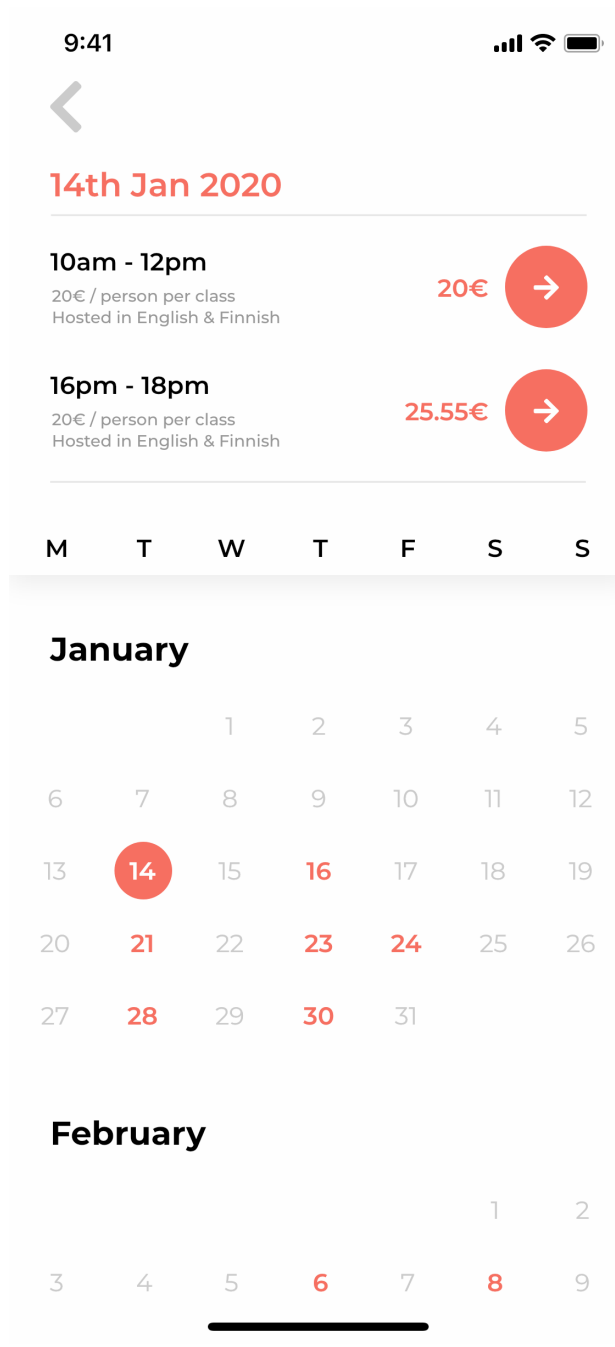


FIGURE 21. StepOut Session Date & Time UI

After successfully persuaded customers, the app takes them towards the date and time choosing screen. Here they can find all dates and times available for this session, with its own prices. (Figure 21.)

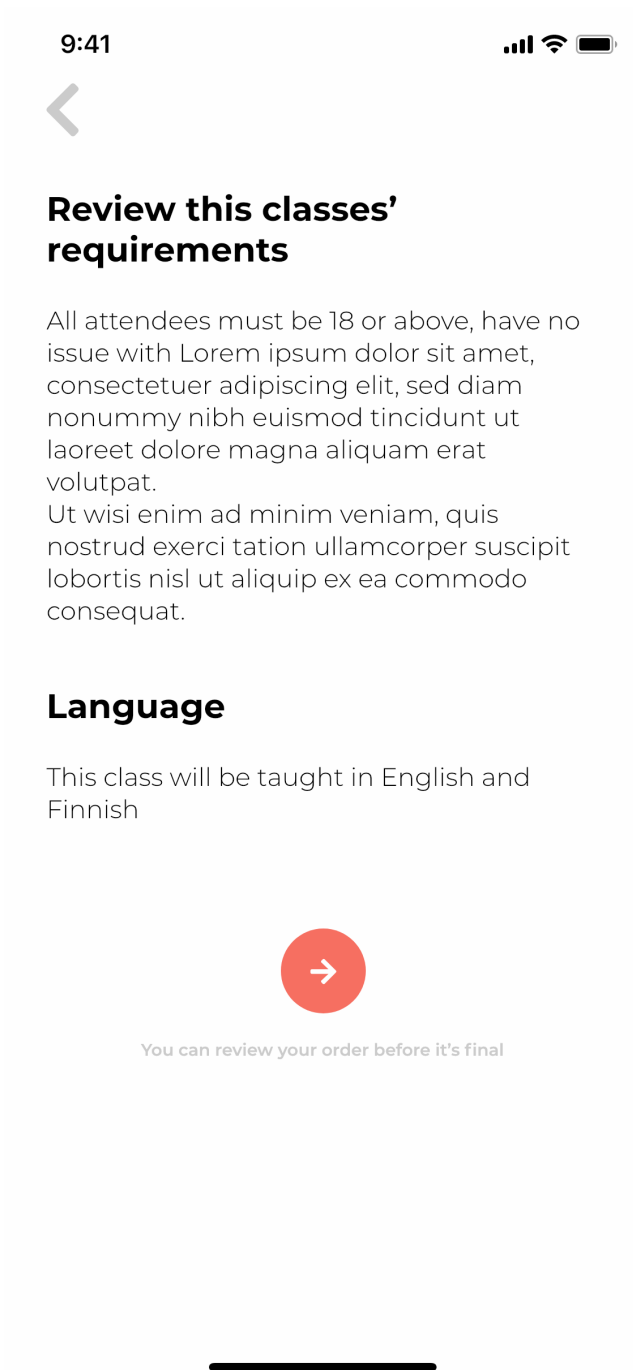


FIGURE 22. StepOut Session Requirements UI

Next, users will have a chance to read through the session's rules and requirements. As each format of fitness has its own set of requirements for its users, this should be a good place to remind customers, before they finalize their purchase of the reservation. (Figure 22.)

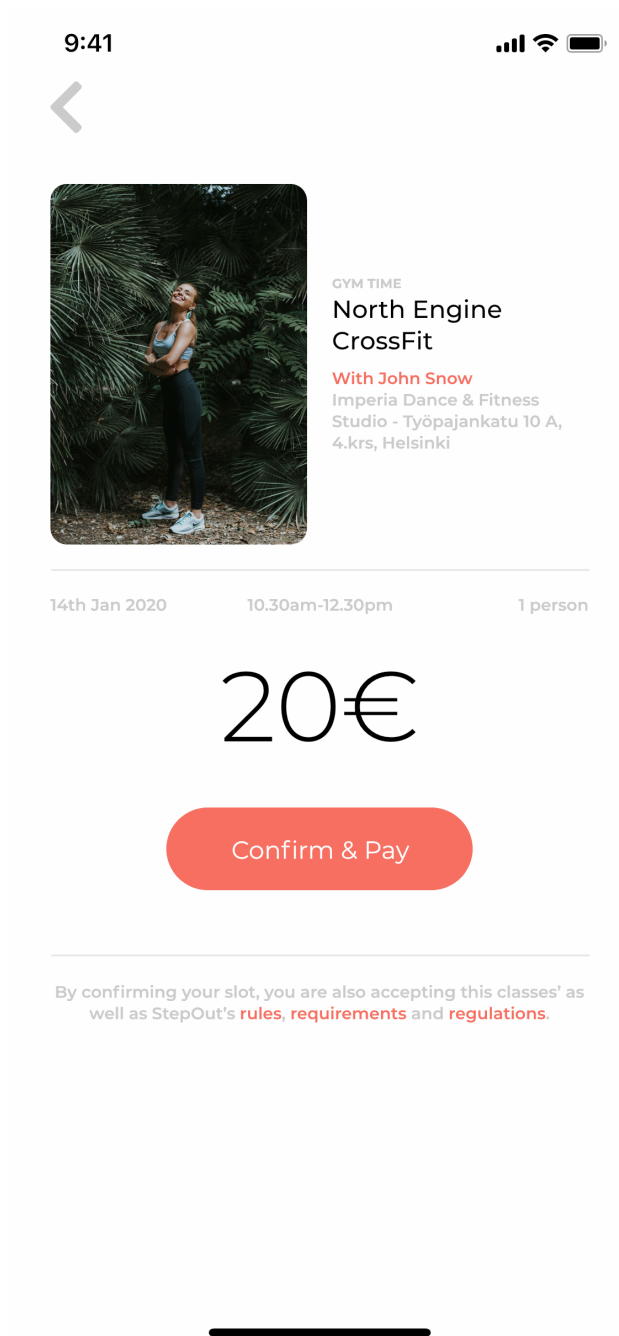


FIGURE 23. StepOut Order Finalize UI

Finally, users are brought to the order finalize screen. Here users receive a summary of their reservation, name of the session, their trainer, location of the studio, as well as the date and time. After having pressed 'Confirm & Pay', users will be directed toward the Stripe payment screen, as a full-screen browser.

The author and the StepOut team decided to use the Stripe payment UI, because of reliability. One less thing to take care of, so that the team can direct their focus on developing and maintaining other core features. (Figure 23.)

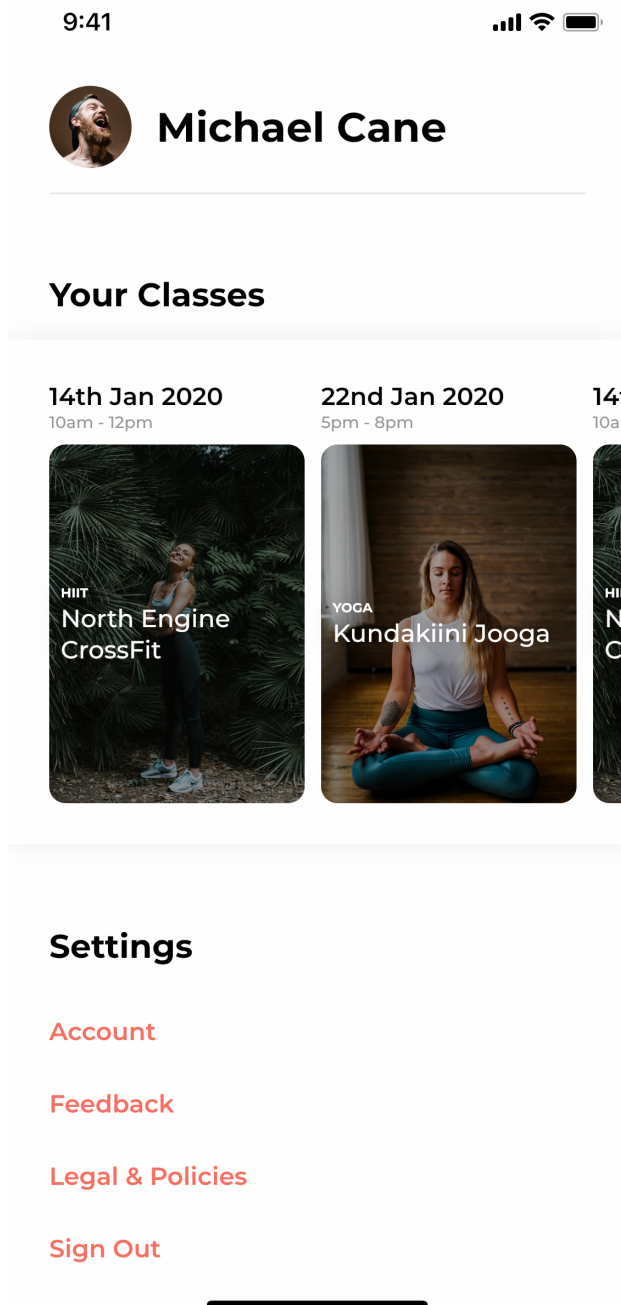


FIGURE 24. StepOut User page UI

In the User section of the app, users can find all information that is directly related to them. Users can easily access to all of their reservations here, read

StepOut policies and rules, edit their account settings, give feedback to sessions that they took before, or give feedback directly to StepOut. Users can also sign out from this page. (Figure 24.)

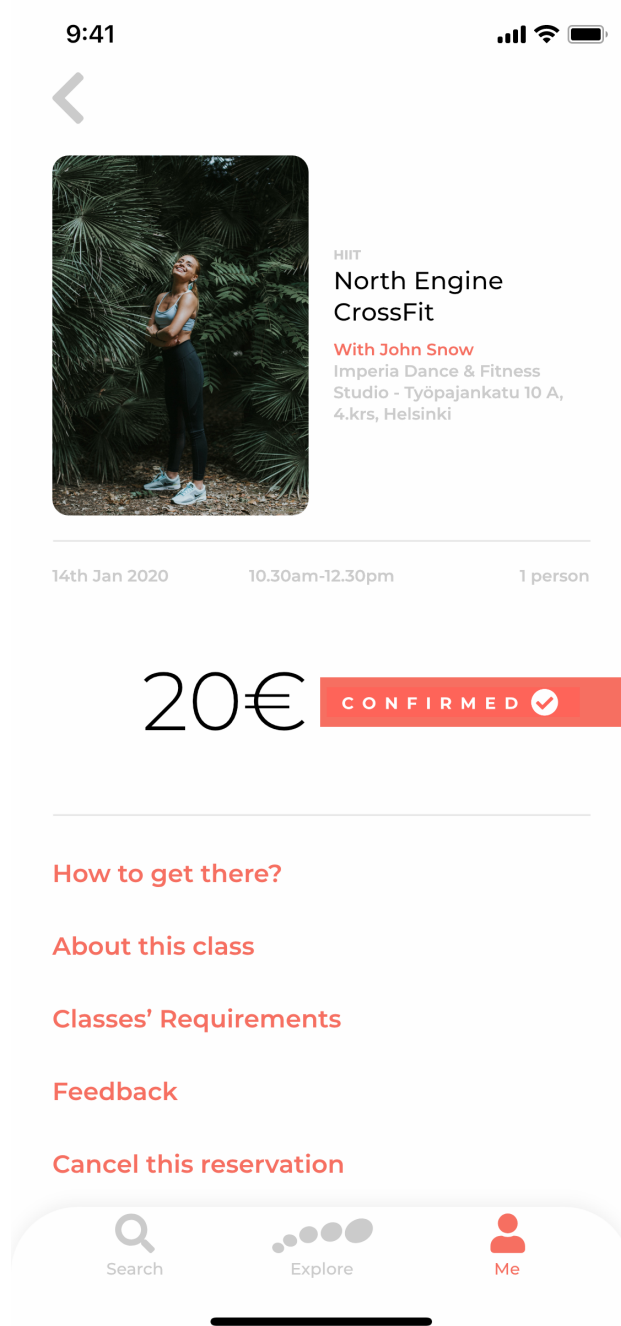


FIGURE 25. StepOut User-own reservation UI

When viewing their session reservation page, users receive all the same information as the summary page, along with addition buttons to quickly access to directions towards the studio, read the session's info and requirements again,

as well as an option to cancel their reservation. The feedback option will appear only after users have taken the session. (Figure 25.)

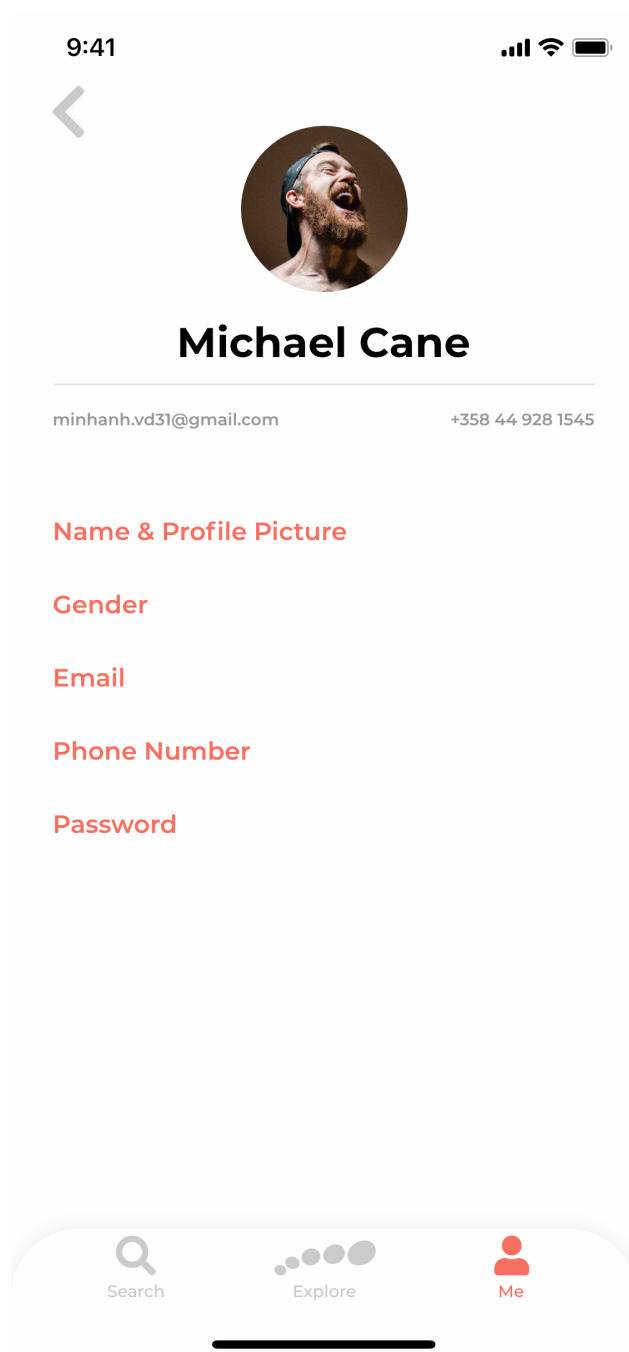


FIGURE 26. StepOut User-own reservation UI

Users can easily configure their StepOut account. They can change their profile picture, name, phone number, email address, gender, as well as their password. (Figure 26.)

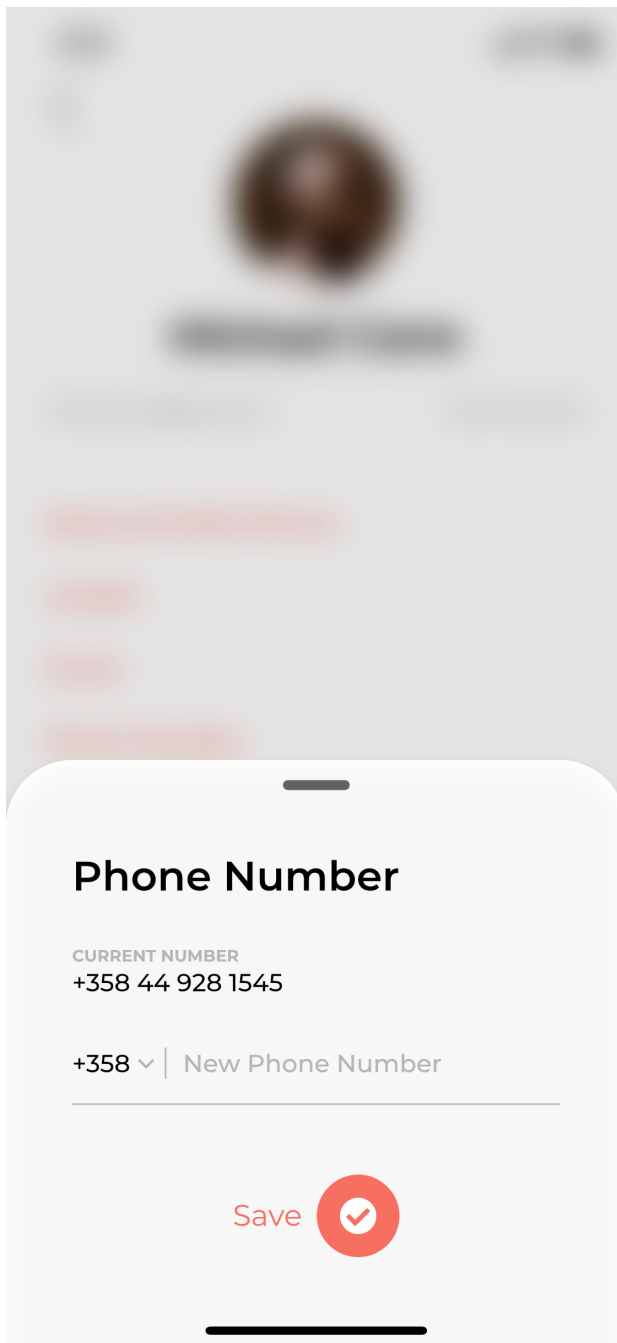


FIGURE 27. StepOut pop-up UI

Multiple pages routing will usually lead to a confusing user flow. This is the reason why the author decided that aside from the checkout process, there will be no more than 3 layers of pages depth. To achieve this light flow, all short and unnecessary contents will not have their own page, but instead, a pop-up from the previous screen. This is not only making the experience more intuitive, but also minimizing confusion. (Figure 27.)

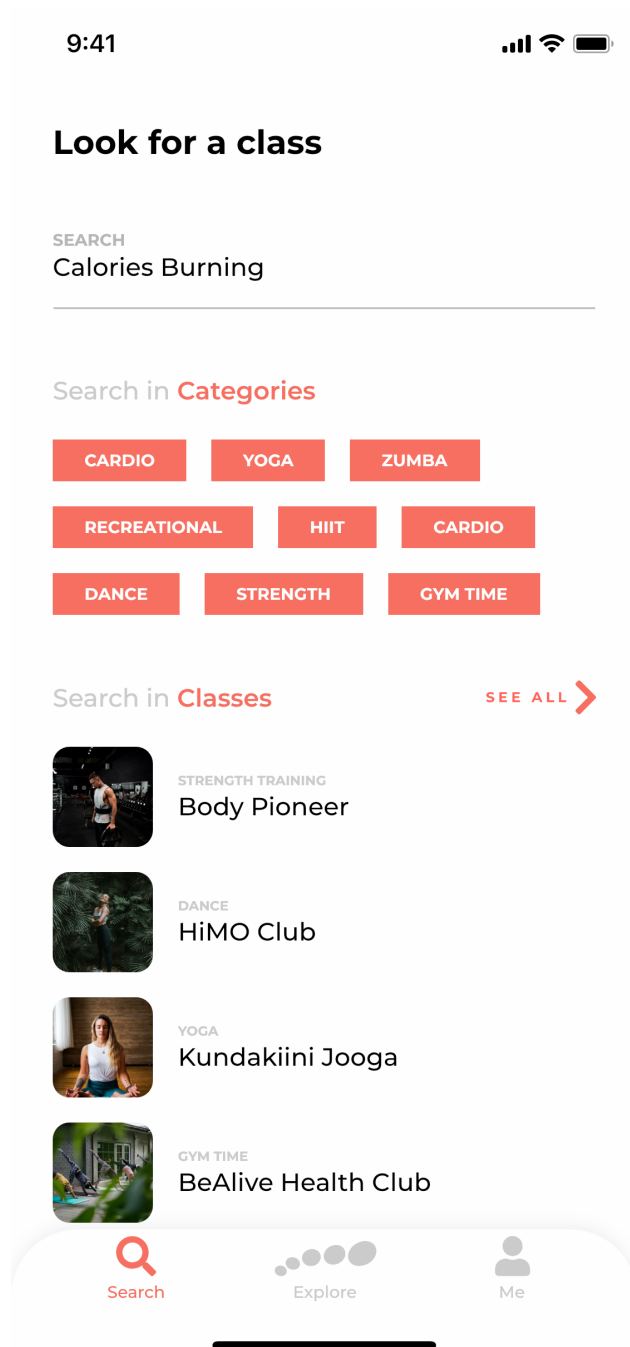


FIGURE 28. StepOut Search UI

Lastly, the search function allows users to browse the app and do queries using chosen keywords, and comprehensively sorting the results. Users can look for sessions offered by names, by specific trainers, by categories, or even by all three options. (Figure 28.)

These results presented in this section were the final ones designed. The author and the StepOut team conducted multiple usability tests as well as users'

tests, in order to test out several approaches and possibilities. Test results gave the author many more perspectives to put into consideration and several changes were made to accommodate newly found issues. For example, the order finalize screen went through many changes, as the author received many reports on missing information within the screen, and the layout had to be changed to display more info related to the order. Another example is the User page. At first, it was meant to display not only upcoming reservations of users, but also their past ones. However, after several tests and trials, the team discovered that if the screen tries to display both upcoming and past reservations, the amount of data to be loaded would be too much, causing various performance issues. The final design only shows users' upcoming reservations and moves past ones into the Feedback section.

4 STEP-OUT HOMEPAGE & LIVE FITNESS PLATFORM

4.1 StepOut Homepage

In order to present all values of StepOut and its values towards potential customers as well as trainers, the StepOut team has designed, developed and successfully deployed a homepage. This was initially a single page website, presenting all core values and the missions of the StepOut platform. (Figure 29.)

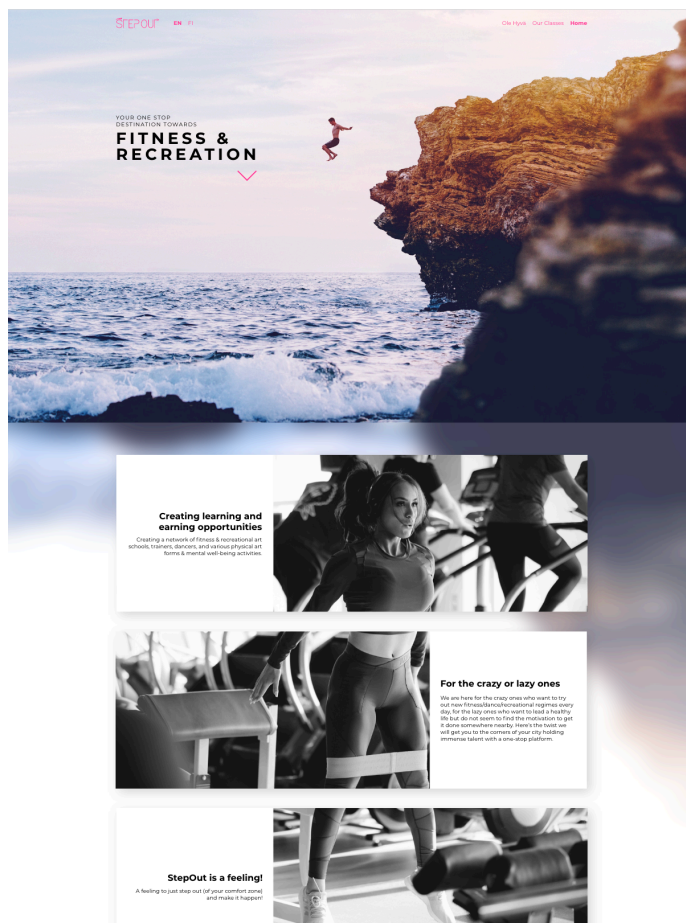


FIGURE 29. StepOut Homepage UI

During the time when the StepOut mobile application was being designed and developed, the team decided to host a few free trial sessions, called Ole Hyvä, to receive early-stage feedbacks, as well as to find even more potential users for the platform (Figure 30.). Reservations for these free sessions were also made on the StepOut homepage directly. (Figure 31.)

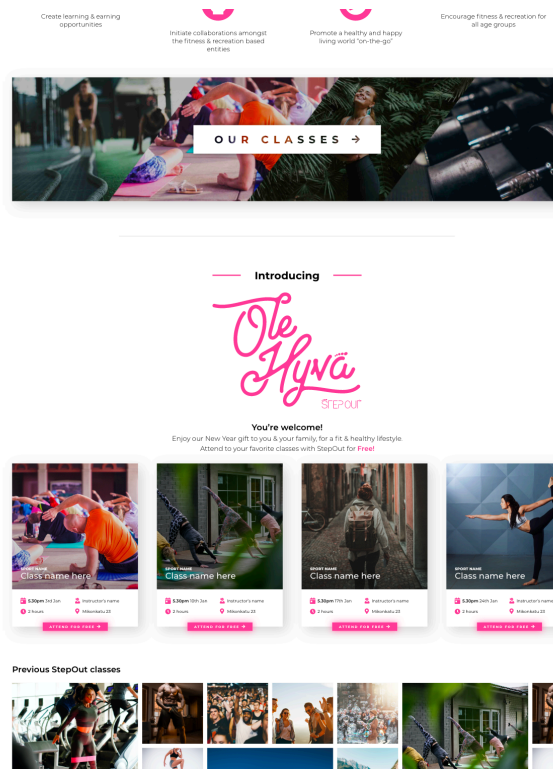


FIGURE 30. StepOut Ole Hyvä section UI

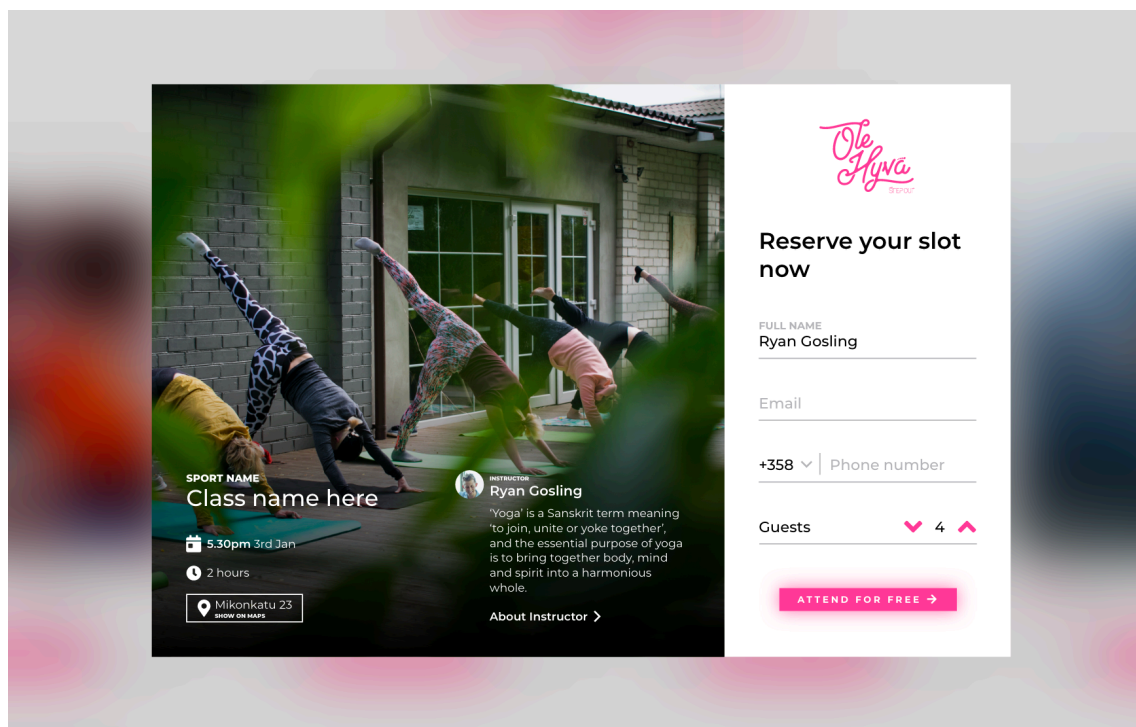


FIGURE 31. StepOut Ole Hyvä reservation UI

4.2 StepOut Live Fitness Platform

Initially, StepOut's plan was to be running Ole Hyvä free sessions up until April. The StepOut mobile application was targeted to be released by the beginning of April 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 situation, almost all businesses had to be closed down. The Finnish government was not allowing any kind of gathering of many people in small places. This meant that fitness sessions were banned as well.

Therefore, StepOut decided to postpone the development work of the mobile application and moved all of their resources into designing and developing a live fitness platform, as light and quickly as possible.

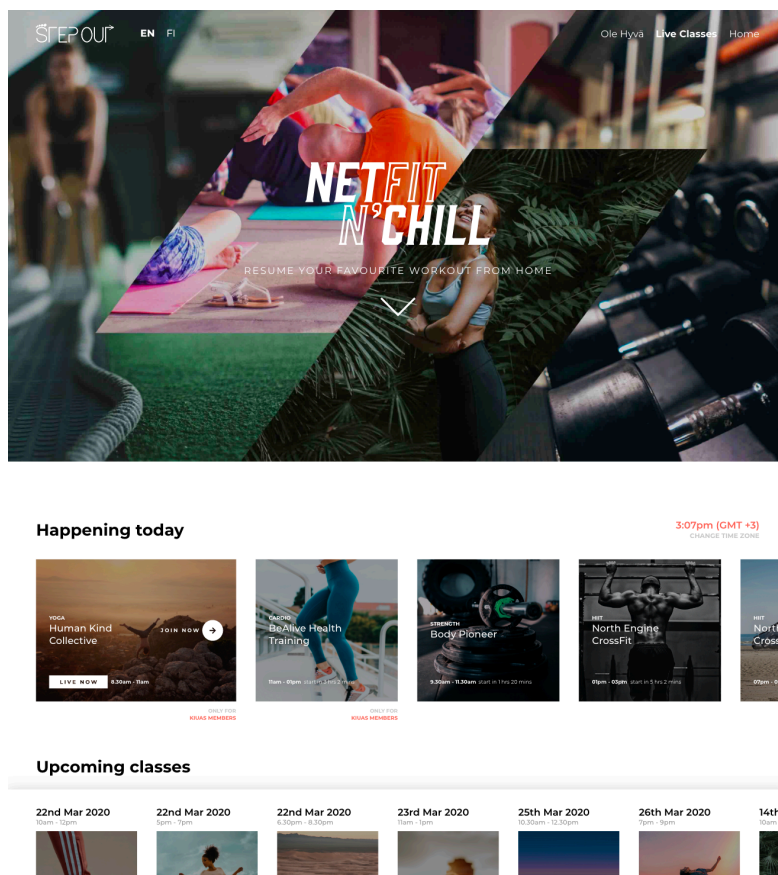


FIGURE 32. StepOut Net-Fit N' Chill platform UI

After 2 weeks of intense working, on 11th April 2020, StepOut was able to successfully launch Net-Fit N' Chill, a live fitness platform. This is an extension to the previously done homepage. (Figure 32.)

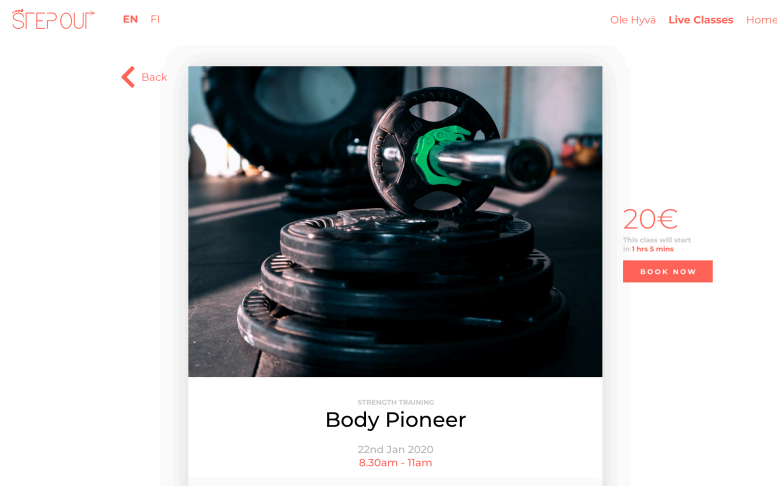


FIGURE 33. StepOut Net-Fit N' Chill class page UI

To make the platform as light and easy to develop, the StepOut team designed the user flow in a way that it does not require the login at all (Figure 33.). Instead, users only have to provide their name, email address and phone number. And after they have successfully paid for their reservation, they will receive unique access code (Figure 34.). They can use this code to access the session after the trainer has begun hosting it. The live fitness session is done in the format of a live conferencing call.

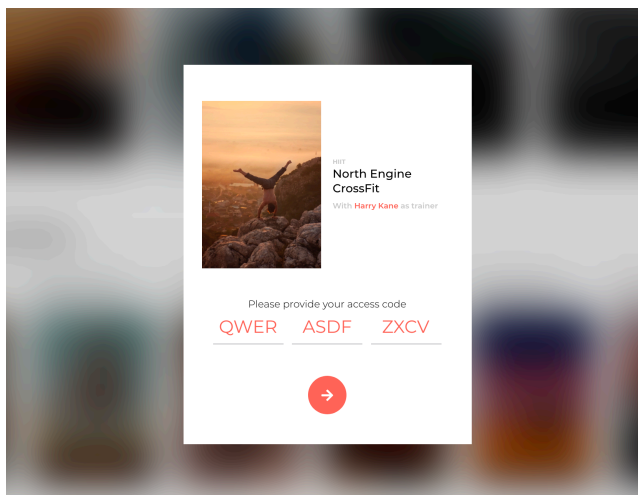


FIGURE 34. StepOut Net-Fit N' Chill class access UI

As of May 2020, the COVID-19 situation has been significantly better in the Helsinki region. Many people were allowed to go outside and attend events that

have a limited amount of participants. Therefore, the StepOut team was targeting to have the Net-Fit reservation capability to be integrated into their mobile application, as they aimed to launch the app by the beginning of June.

5 CONCLUSION

At the time when this thesis was finished, StepOut Net-Fit N' Chill had been operated for almost 2 months, with over 80 sessions hosted, and hundreds of reservations had been successfully placed. StepOut received many good comments, feedbacks and recommendations for their quick responses to the COVID-19 situation, as well as a platform with relatively good user experiences, which was designed and developed in just 2 weeks.

The fitness industry, or to be more specific, the fitness marketplace industry, has seen an exponential growth in recent years. StepOut joined this industry, to help independent trainers to utilize their skills, increase their market exposure and reach out their customers. StepOut helped raising competitiveness in the market, while at the same time fulfilled their mission of boosting fitness as well as promoting healthiness.

Although the team encountered with many obstacles along the way, such as the COVID-19 situation caused the app launch being delayed, the author and StepOut team instead managed to create a live fitness platform that performed relatively good, in such a short amount of time, and gain more time to fine-tuning the mobile application. StepOut targeted to release their mobile application by the beginning of June. At the time of finishing this thesis, the app researches, planning and designing phases were all fully accomplished, and the implementation phase was at its finalizing stage.

As from the thesis aims, the author managed to fulfil his part in the planning and the designing phase, with short-term and long-term plans, strategies were finalized. Also, the author conducted usability tests and users' tests. The designed user experiences were based on researches and said tests' results and high-fidelity interface prototypes were successfully produced at the production-ready level. The author coordinated with the developers' team to implement and execute the designs. At the time of ending this thesis, the implementation phase was at its final fine-tuning steps.

Studies, researches and work results achieved through this project helped the author and StepOut team to gain significant knowledge of the fitness industry, the marketplace industry, as well as user experiences designing. This knowledge helped shaping the plans and designs of both the StepOut mobile application and the StepOut live fitness platform.

There are many possibilities for future functionalities. As the StepOut platform grows, with the increasement of capacity, many new upgrades would be needed, such as location-based searches, nearby sessions, and a home screen set of contents that is tailored according to users' preferences. There is also potential integration of machine learning into the platform as well.

The results of this thesis will become a guideline to help shaping the future planning and designing works of the author, as well as the StepOut team. Furthermore, studies conducted in this thesis helped shaping the mindsets of the author and the StepOut team in working within both B2B and B2C environments.

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