

TODDLE APP

For my app design case study, I've chosen a location-based app that will target parents of young children in providing recommendations for local services tailored to their needs. As a parent I'm very familiar with the difficulties of finding quality family friendly services, activities and venues, particularly when visiting a new location. It can really make or break your experience.

My concept is for a location-based listings & recommendation app that will simplify the search for child-friendly activities and services within a specific geographical location. Venues and services, such as cafes with baby changing facilities, child-friendly restaurants, recommended activities to do with young children on a tight budget, free attractions, great local parks and playgrounds, will all be listed with recommendations and reviews by a community of local parents and carers. It will feature preferences and filters enabling users to specify age-specific activities, special interests and health/special needs requirements, such as disabled toilets or baby changing facilities.

Competitor Analysis

I will conduct competitor analysis of another app that provides a similar or substitute offering and will cover the following:

- Competitor Overview
- Marketing Profile
- SWOT Analysis
- UX Analysis

The app I'm going to be looking at is:



The UK's market leading family-based app. Covering London and other major cities in the UK.

TODDLE APP



Hoop

Hoop is a market-leading UK wide children's activity listing app with review, share and booking facility. It claims to be the UK's most comprehensive database of family activity information and was designed specifically to respond to the needs of a new generation of parents that manage their life on a smartphone.

Daniel Bower, CEO and co-founder of Hoop, says: *"We believe that the influence of smartphones on modern families is going to increase significantly in the next few years as more Millennials become parents for the first time. This new generation of parents blend technology seamlessly into their lives and are confident using apps to manage their day to day life. They have grown up using Deliveroo, Uber and WhatsApp to organise their lives, and want to manage their family time in the same way, expecting information to be accessible at a moment's notice."*

Overall Strategy

Through its app based tools Hoop builds connections and they have made it their mission to inspire, educate and entertain children out of the home. All parents know the importance of introducing their children to the world outside of the home. That the opportunity to laugh, learn and make new friends improves outcomes. It's a goal that's shared by parents, family members, organisers and the team at Hoop.

TODDLE APP

Founded in London in 2015 and launched in 2016, Hoop was started by the entrepreneurs behind US company VoucherCodes. It's since expanded to cover the whole of the UK and has clocked up over 850,000 installs. Hoop was voted one of the Best Apps of the year by Apple in 2016 and 2017 – a rare achievement for a British startup. With 191 kids activity categories and 80,000+ different activities listed each month, along with 10,000 family organisers using the platform to take bookings, payments and grow their business.

User Rating

A Google search results in a first-page of 9 listings just on Hoop. It has a 4.6 star rating with 337 ratings on App Store and 4.4 rating on Google Play with 564 reviews. There's a Facebook page with 62K likes and a rating of 5 with 32 votes. They have a Medium blog, 'Hoop Rolling' currently with 217 followers, which covers topics such as design, engineering, London, parenting and running a startup. This has regularly updated content and latest posts are dated October 2018.

Press Coverage

In his Medium blog Hoop's CEO, Daniel Bower reviews Hoop's 2016 and name drops several media big-hitters who have covered their achievements, including The London Evening Standard, The Huffington Post, the Metro and The Sunday Times. So there's clearly some seriously slick marketing and PR at work here. Some serious money behind it too as Hoop attracted heavy investment, as noted in a post on Tech Crunch, dated 27th Sept 2017, which reported on the £2.4 million secured by Hoop in a round led by BGF Ventures, the UK-focused fund.

Source: <https://techcrunch.com/2017/09/27/hoop-app-for-millennial-parents-secures-2-4m-in-a-round-led-by-bgf-ventures/?guccounter=1>.

TODDLE APP

More recently, Hoop's founders have secured further investment to the tune of £4 million, as reported on UK Tech News in May 2018. Source: <https://www.uktech.news/news/investment-news/kids-activity-finder-hoop-secures-4m-series-a-20180521>. This new round of funding, described by CEO Daniel Bower as allowing Hoop to rapidly scale their operations and enabling them to “build a world class tool for organisers to reach new audiences, and continue improving the way we help families discover what’s on for their kids,” demonstrates confidence in the app’s offering and product. They plan to use the money to begin plans for expansion into the US. It will also help to develop the app and grow the company’s web presence. Clearly with this scale of backing, investors are taking Hoop’s expansion plans seriously.

Named ‘Start up of the Week’ on Spartacus in May 2017 <https://startacus.net/culture/startup-of-the-week-hoop> and Tesco Mobile named it App of the Week the following month, calling it ‘Foursquare for Kids’.

Compatibility:

Currently supports iPhone, iPad and Android. Haven’t tested behaviour on other browsers or on desktop as not supported.

Market Advantage

Hoop has the market advantage in being the #1 Family App in the UK and has growth plans to expand into the US multi-billion dollar market, a move that, if successful, will secure their market-leader position. They have secured the financial backing of private equity groups and have the advantage of a large platform of thousands of family organisers and 850,000 users.

Bottom Line

- Award winning market leader in UK.
- It has very well structured investment, marketing/PR and development strategies. Recently secured £4 million in investment.

TODDLE APP

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Award-winning approach backed by effective marketing, investment and business strategies. Well thought out offering and UX design, with useful features and unique tools, such as the booking feature.

Weaknesses

Some reviewers have reported issues with inconsistencies between the listed activities and the actual activity or event booked, i.e. not being as described or not running at all. Some timetable updates not happening in timely manner meaning users finding the event or class not running at the expected time. Developers admit that some of these issues are due to the scope of the app's offer and that due to the volume of content they look after across the country they can miss timetable updates.

Opportunities

Could maybe do with developing the UK offering before expansion to US markets. Some reviewers mention patchy or non-existent listings for smaller towns and cities in UK, with some stating that they found much better and more reliable local listings on Facebook.

Threats

Might need to consider success of competitors, such as Dribbble, in the harnessing of Facebook groups and using the power of social media-based communities to reach and recruit target market. Potential for lost users if they don't resolve weaknesses, i.e., not having reliable up-to-date activity information, such as local Facebook groups tend to have, as one reviewer reported.

Key observation: An app with a niche target market, such as families with disabled children, might out-perform them with a specially tailored offering and might also have the advantage of an established community.

TODDLE APP

UX Analysis

Usability:

Easy and intuitive to navigate and use. Found everything I needed to without difficulty. Uses vertical scrolling around one main home-screen so very easy to quickly get around and find what you want. There are just 6 options to choose from in terms of navigating away from the home screen, which simplifies the process even further.

When you create an account you have a series of setup screens to add a username and password, and you can also set your child's age to filter age-appropriate activities. You can set your geographical location with a postcode and a distance unit, and you can also add a payment method and set marketing preferences all from one scrolling page, which is very helpful. The usual links to About, Legal, Privacy, T&Cs, and the ability to delete your account and sign out.

Other than the Account page there's just 4 others; What's On, Booking Classes, Saved and then the option to set the Ages of your children or leave it as All Ages, and finally a search facility with an expanding text entry field and a friendly 'waving bear' that shows up if your search couldn't find any matching organisers. This is a lovely touch given the target users, parents of under elevens might be using the app with their children. Notable too is that the app creators have deliberately used a gender-neutral design, with a colour-scheme of white and pale grey, with primary coloured elements (echoing the logo colours) ensuring that it will have a broader appeal and doesn't risk alienating those parents and carers who don't enjoy everything child-oriented being pastel coloured, twee or cutesy. The app is very colourful anyway due to the various images of events and activities that provide a lot of colour and texture, so a good visual balance is struck via a limited neutral colour palette for all other text, icons and CTAs.

TODDLE APP

Content Design & Layout:

Uses a simple vertical scrolling layout with a 'Home screen' with static top bar and footer containing persistent navigation, options and tools. Follows a vertical listing hierarchy of 4 containers with upcoming events at the top -today, tomorrow, Saturday and Sunday, along with a date picker to filter by date, followed by New Classes Now Booking, Don't Miss Out (pulled from your saved activities), Popular Right Now and Top Picks This Week beneath that, with the SEND (special educational needs and disabled) activities at the bottom. **I'd like to see a filter setting in my account to be able to set SEND here too.**

Navigational Structure:

Well organised logical structure and good flow to screens. It couldn't be simpler to use as it's all on one-screen with scroll up-down navigation within the main 'What's On' page. All tools and functions are fixed to the top-bar and footer. The SEO should benefit from this type of structure as the main content is all on the one level, so should boost the ranking in search results.

Differentiation:

I feel bar far the best feature of Hoop is the booking facility and it its standout feature that sets it apart from the competition. A booking facility isn't available on Dribble as they focus on search and review, so all bookings are routed through to the organiser/service provider. Also great is the ability to have all your tickets digitally stored on the app, so no having to organise and remember to bring separate emails or paper tickets. **In terms of improvements, I have noted the lack of a filter setting in the account to be able to set SEND requirements or other special health or physical requirements that may hinder a family in accessing that activity, such as wheelchair-friendly venues and autism-friendly activities. This is a huge area for consideration and has implications for accessibility and inclusivity.**

Calls to Action (CTA):

Very simple sign-up and account set-up, again this gets a high-usability rating as there's not much to improved here, except maybe the additional filters as noted under differentiation - see above.