

Spiel

Connect to people by sharing stories through your favorite discoveries

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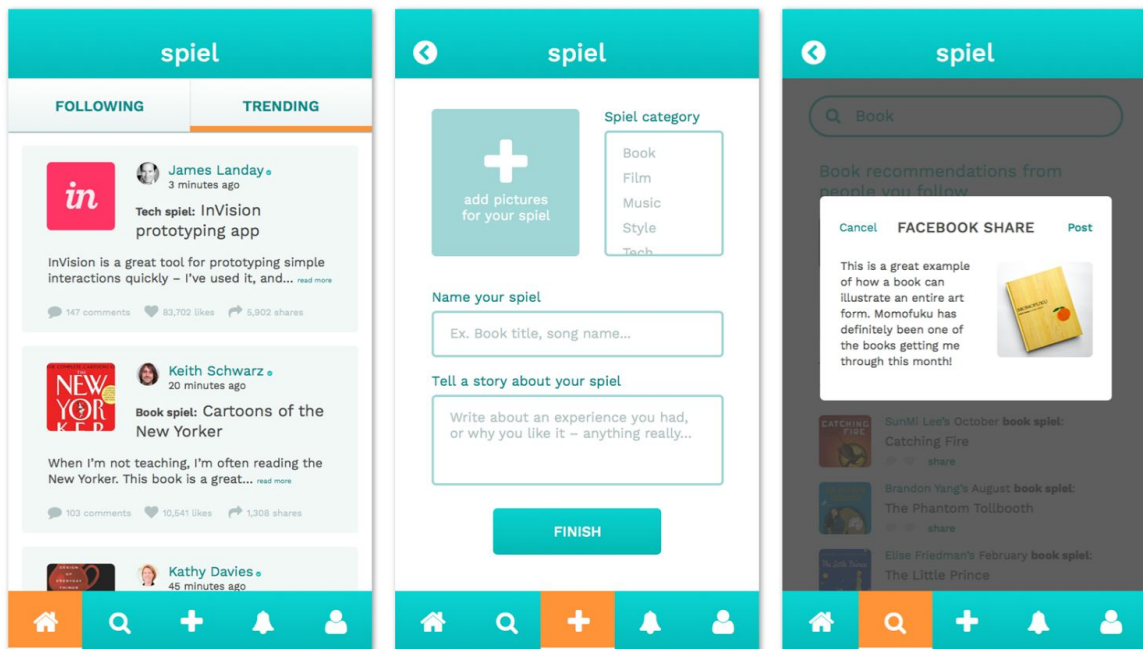
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Problem and Solution Overview

People are searching for a better way to learn about the lifestyles of the people they like, admire, and respect. Spiel helps users tell stories about their favorite discoveries – it provides a simpler, more elegant, and more personal platform that allows people to discover new interests through people-centric product recommendations and be inspired by the lifestyles of people they admire.



Spiel helps you connect to others through favorite discoveries

Tasks and Final Interface Scenarios

Our Three Tasks

Simple task: Share interesting spiels with your other social networks.

This simple task helps users share their new finds from Spiel with friends outside of the app – we chose this task because it is critical to allow potential users to discover content within Spiel. Sharing also helps current users of Spiel spread their own discoveries even further while drawing people to the application.

Medium task: Learn about the lifestyles of people you admire.

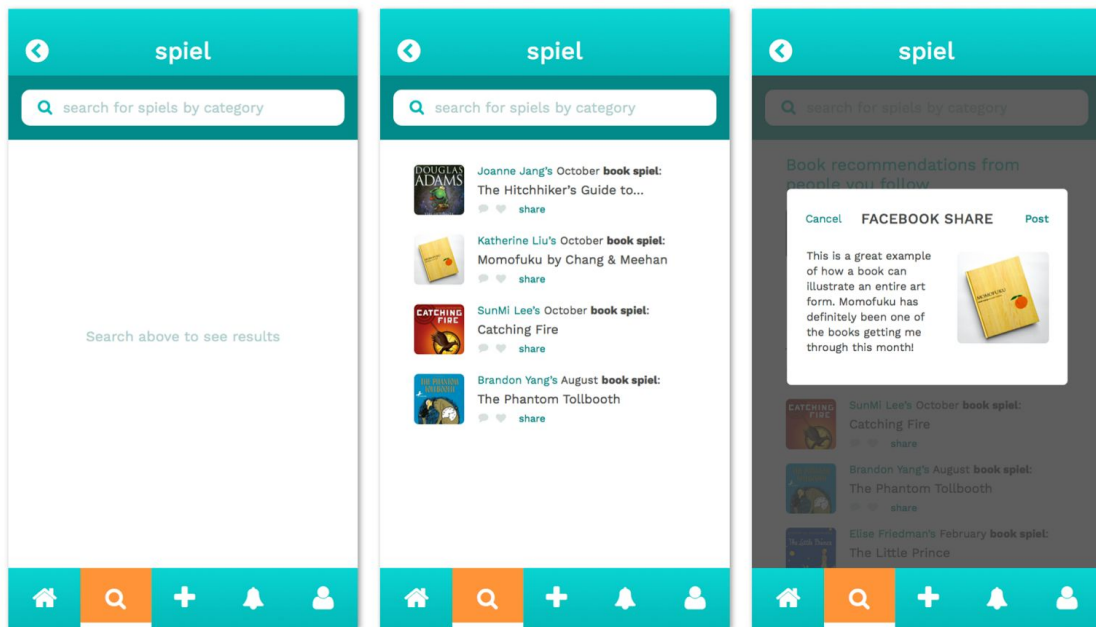
This medium task consists of browsing the home feed, viewing details of particular spiels, and perusing the profiles of people you admire and follow. Helping users discover more about the lifestyles of the people they follow is core to Spiel's solution ("discover new interests through people-centric product recommendation and be inspired by the lifestyles of people they admire"), and we wanted to implement this task in a way that felt familiar – so users wouldn't have to learn completely new interaction patterns – yet provided a different end value from existing social networks.

Complex task: Inspire others with your new finds and stories.

This complex task is the act of posting your own spiel on the app. To help users tell stories about their favorite finds and discoveries, we wanted to choose a relevant task that would help tie together the experience of both viewing other people's spiels while also creating their own content.

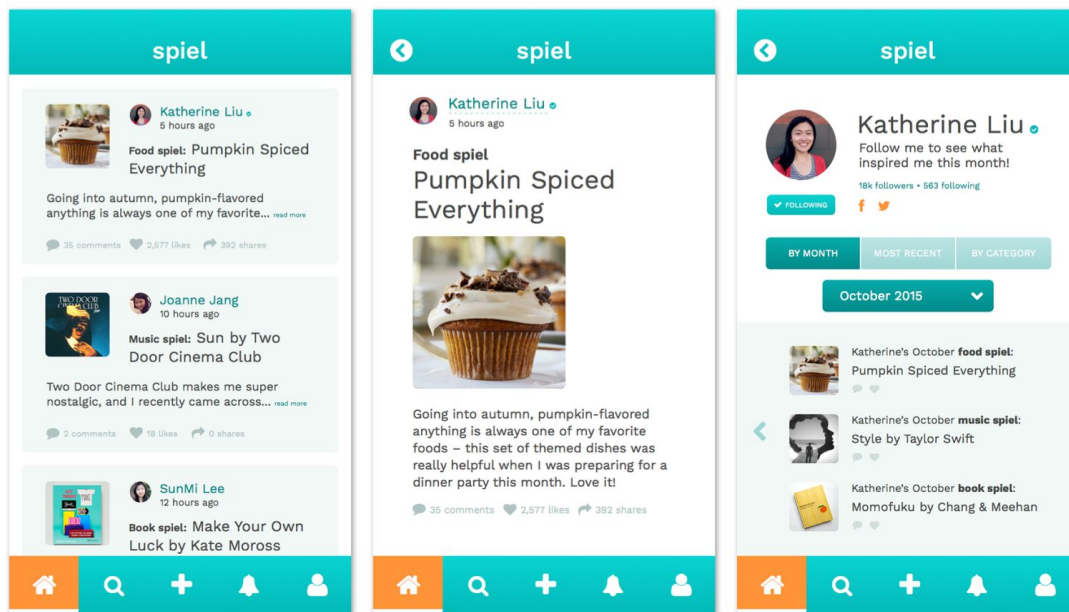
Final Interface Scenarios

Simple task: Share interesting spiels with your other social networks.



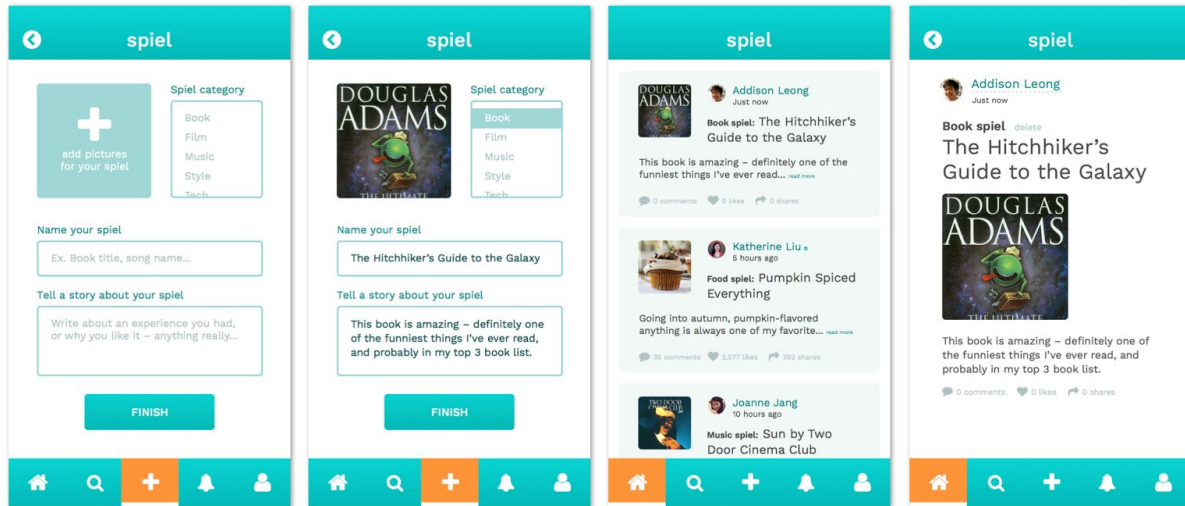
Users can share any spiel – this example scenario takes place when the user searches for a category, sees the matching spiels, and chooses to share the spiel to other networks

Medium task: Learn about the lifestyles of people you admire.



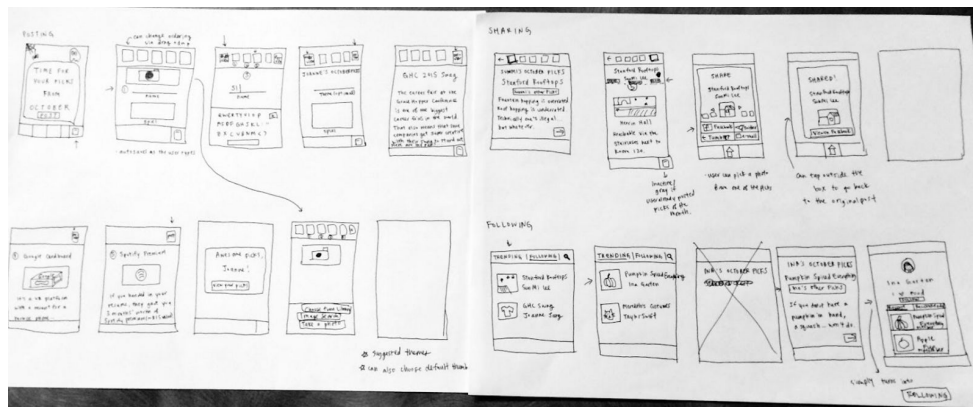
Users can view spiels from people they follow on home feed, see details, and visit profiles

Complex task: Inspire others with your new finds and stories.



After posting a spiel, users have the option to share their new spiel to other networks, and then see their new post at the top of their home feeds

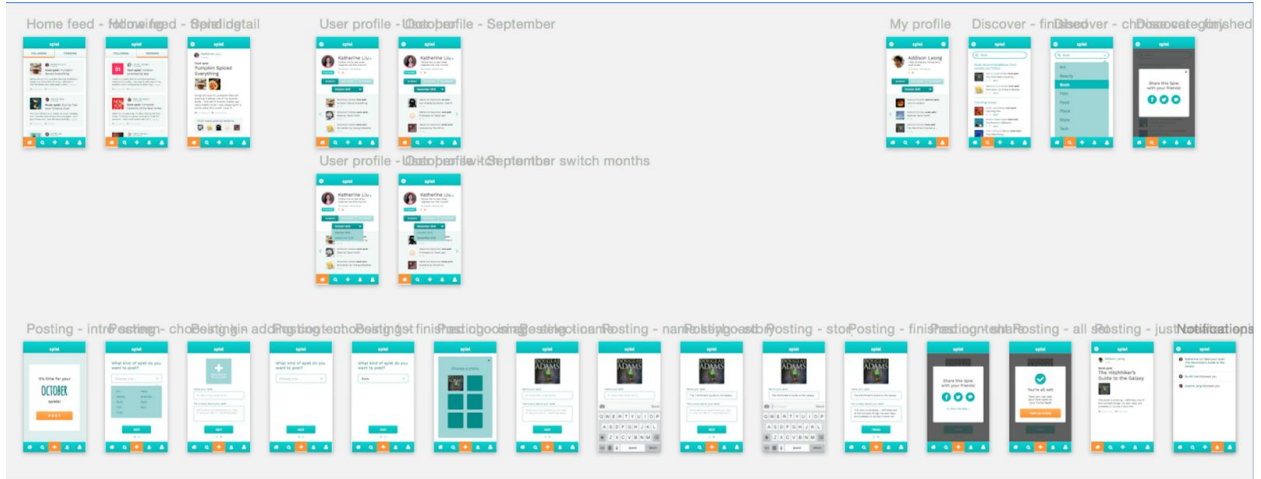
Design Evolution



Some of our initial sketches – as we came up with different ways to respond to our problem statements, we found that each team member had valuable ideas that eventually led us to keep iterating

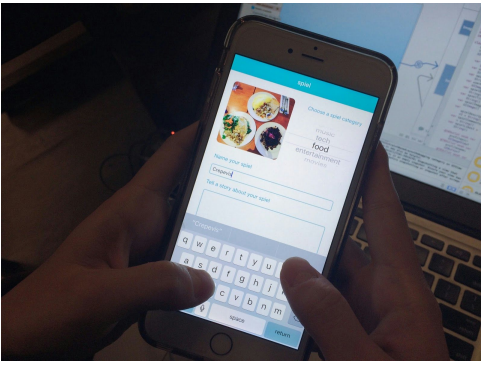


Our low-fidelity prototype – we used a paper prototype with various add-ons (ie: a paper keyboard) and tested with different users to see how they would interact with our prototype. We found that while users had a relatively easy time navigating the prototype because of standard interaction patterns, some of the terminology and icons proved to be consistently confusing. Some users also mentioned that our app felt very similar to existing apps like Pinterest, even though the content and layout was different, because of the organization of profiles.



A bird's-eye-view of our medium-fidelity prototype. We created this prototype through Sketch and InVision, and had other individuals in our studio evaluate the tasks and interactions. Their compiled feedback in the heuristic evaluation gave us valuable critique about areas of our application that could be improved – for instance, the length and flow of the posting process and readability of the home screen. We also realized that we had left out several key features, such as the option of deleting your own spiel, and needed to work on consistency in terms of helping our users navigate the application as they expected it to be. (Visit our prototype here: <http://bit.ly/10754sc>)

Before creating our high-fidelity prototype in code, we modified our medium-fidelity prototype to reflect the feedback we received in the heuristic evaluation. Then, throughout the building process for our high-fidelity prototype, we tested each part of the application ourselves to make sure the interactions were in line with our previous iterations. Although we had some trouble exactly recreating our medium-fidelity visuals in code, our implementation was a good reflection of our previous prototypes and allows for a tester to go through our three tasks.



Major Usability Problems Addressed

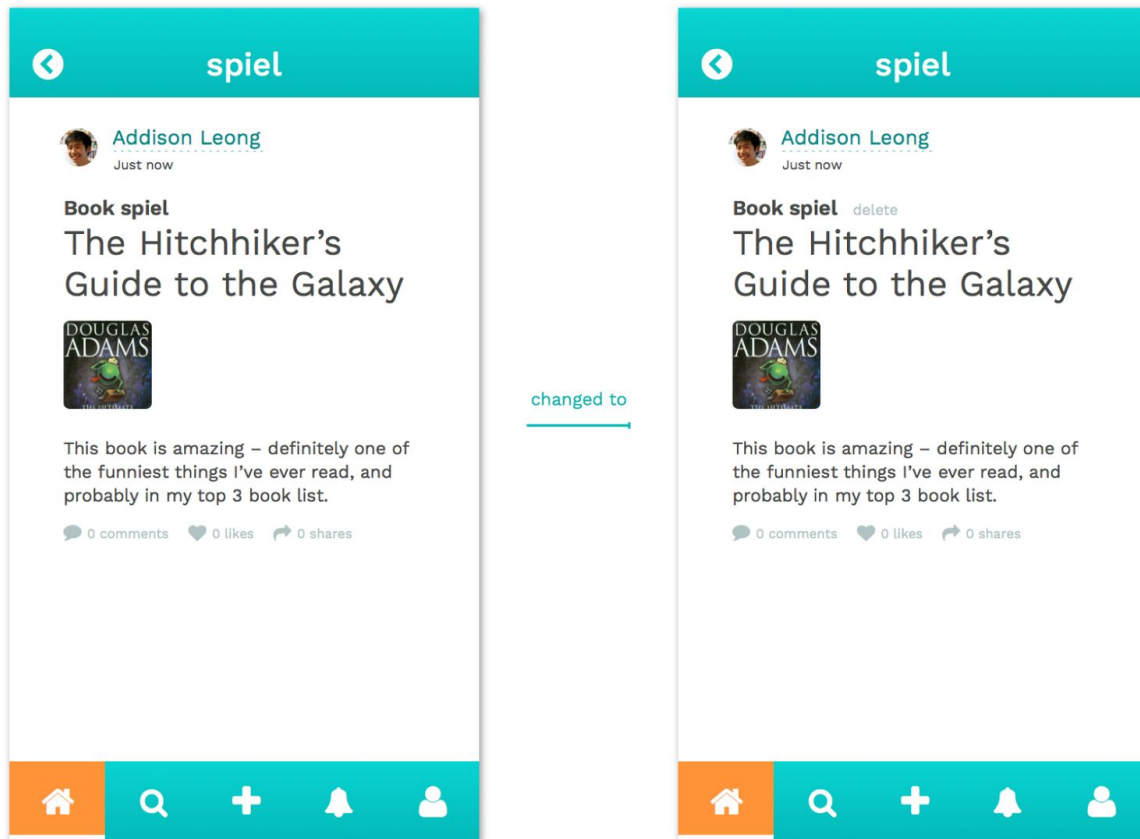
Level 3 & 4 Heuristic Violations Addressed

Allowing deletion of a spiel (Severity: 4)

[H2-3: User Control & Freedom]

“Once I’ve added a spiel, I see no option to delete a spiel. As a user, I am likely to make mistakes, or my preferences are likely to change and I might want to delete my older spiels. Include an option to delete a spiel on a page that displays a spiel you’ve created.”

The fix: To give users more freedom over content on their profiles, we added a delete option when viewing one of your own spiels. The delete option is styled to be visually unobtrusive, but a quickly learnable pattern should a user want to take away a spiel they previously posted. In a native application, one important consideration would be including a confirmation modal that pops up to prevent accidental deletions.



Adding a subtle way for users to delete their own spiels

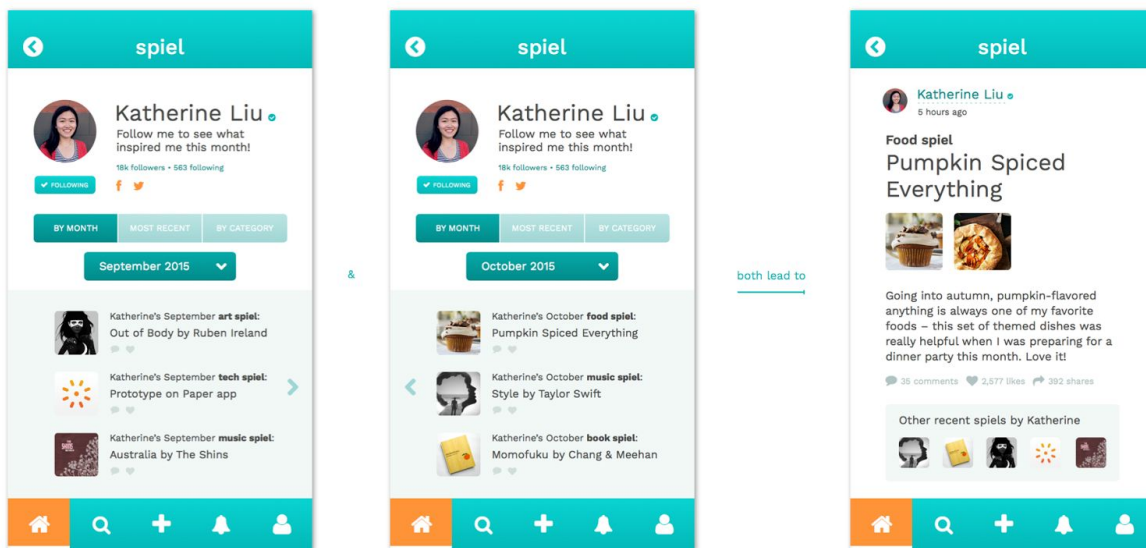
Adding consistency to back arrow buttons (Severity: 3)

[H2-6 Recognition rather than recall]

“I did not immediately realize what the arrow buttons on Katherine’s profile did. I think now that they’re tabs to move between months but they feel very connected to the 2nd spiel on that page.”

The fix: Part of the confusion here stemmed from the limitations of InVision as a prototyping tool – while we added the back button on the user profile to indicate in the flow that the user had reached that profile from the home feed, the back button was set to return to the previous screen viewed in the prototype. Thus, although it would seem to work seamlessly at first, at times, the back button would take them back to a previous screen that wasn’t really the “source” where they came from. For example, at some points switching between months might take them back to a screen with a previous month they had landed on, rather than the “source” screen they had come from, which could be the home feed or a spiel detail page. This heuristic evaluation very helpful in building our understanding the standard pattern of a “back button” pattern in apps that users expect. The fix here was therefore more in terms of understanding when we were building the native high-fidelity prototype – the screens themselves did not change, but our understanding of how the back button would function was altered to fit users’ expectations.

If you arrived from the spiel detail page, then the new prototype has these screens:



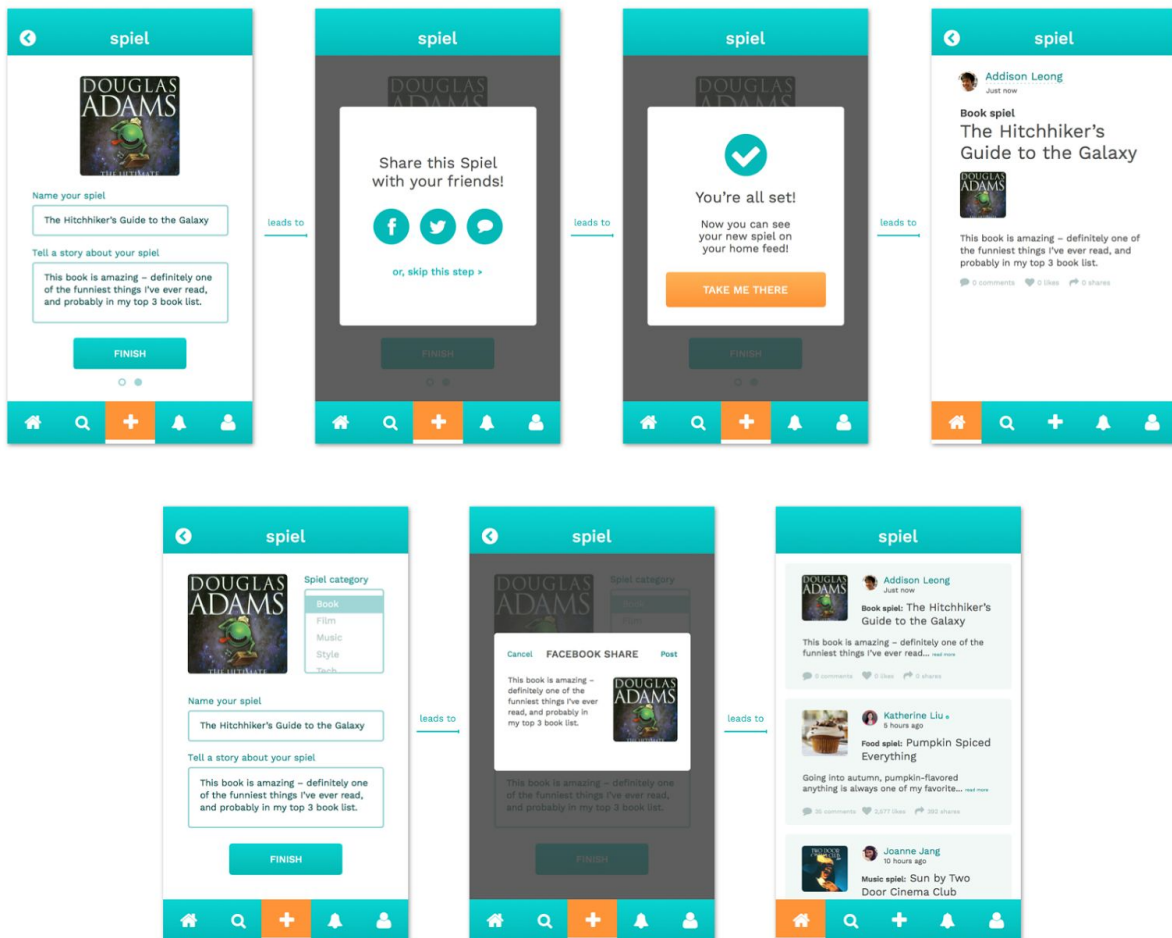
An example of month consistency – the old prototype would have the second screen “October” redirect from the first screen “September,” rather than going back to the spiel detail page. While we planned this design change, our actual code implementation does not include the month feature because it was not directly related to our three tasks. We decided to focus on our main tasks for now, but in the future this is an important consideration for us!

Confirming the posting of a spiel (Severity: 3)

[H2-4: Consistency & Standards]

“Right after adding a new spiel, I get a confirmation dialog that tells me I can see my new spiel on the home feed. Clicking next however takes me to a screen that shows me the new item, but looks nothing like my feed. This seems like a ‘dead state.’ This can be fixed by redirecting to the home feed and displaying the newly added spiel to the top of the feed.”

The fix: We took out the confirmation screen, which was an extra unnecessary step. Our original thinking was that the confirmation screen would help a user feel “safe” that their spiel had been posted correctly and tied up the posting process. However, from this feedback, we decided to make the confirmation natural to the application so that once a user posts a new spiel, they see that spiel displayed at the very top of their home feed.



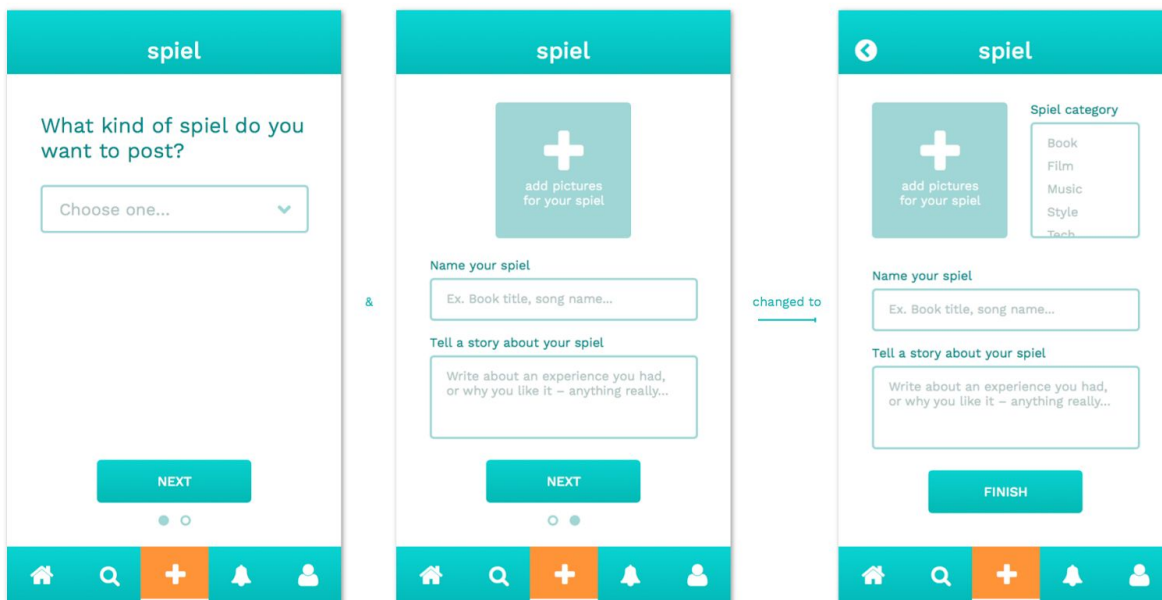
The old posting process (top) and the new posting process (bottom)

Condensed number of steps in posting process (Severity: 3)

[H2-3 User control and freedom]

“There’s no back/cancel button on the ‘create a spiel’ flow. If I realize I want to categorize my laptop case as ‘style’ instead of ‘tech,’ I’m stuck.”

The fix: Parts of the evaluation pointed out that the posting process was rather clumsy, due to the larger number of screens a user had to go through, as well as a spacing issue when no category had been chosen yet. After hearing this feedback as well as looking into implementation issues when writing the code for the posting task, we decided to shorten the posting process by integrating the categorization aspect into the main screen where the other content is added. Thus, there is no need to go “back” in the posting process because it has been condensed so that users can access all parts of the post on one screen. There are some tradeoffs in terms of adding more content to a single screen and thus risking adding clutter, but we felt that this change made the overall flow more understandable. For instance, a user may not think about category until they have already added a photo.



Changing the posting process from two screens, to one screen

Other notable changes from lower severity feedback

● Selecting multiple photos when posting a spiel

- Reasoning: In our medium-fidelity prototype, there were some screens that showed multiple photos per spiel, but our posting process only allowed the selection of one

photo. When revising our design, we wanted to maintain consistency, and our medium-fidelity prototype now shows a multiple selection field when choosing photos to post.

- **Sharing option on all spiel detail pages**

- *Reasoning:* While we showed the use of the “share” feature when searching for book recommendations, the task of “sharing interesting spiels with your other social networks” should be something that happens across the platform when seeing other people’s spiels or your own spiels. We added the sharing option to other screens for consistency in this task, such as when a user is on the home feed or on a spiel detail page.

- **Decreased text content on home feed**

- *Reasoning:* Our feedback from the heuristic evaluation showed us that while it was nice to have some of the stories written for each spiel, many people thought that the amount of text on the main home feed was overwhelming. To help with this issue, we decreased the amount of small text in the story and included just the beginning of the text as a “hook,” using the “read more” button to let users know that there may be more content in the detail page.

- **Did a size check and increased readability**

- *Reasoning:* Another issue that people found when browsing the home feed was that the text was sometimes very small – not impossible to decipher, but small enough to read easily. To increase readability, we increased the size of different elements and emphasized important parts of the spiels, like the title of each spiel. We also did a size check against other popular mobile apps to make sure that the sizing of elements like comments, likes, and shares, was large enough to be useful.

- **Fixed small consistency errors in terminology**

- *Reasoning:* Our group’s heuristic evaluation showed us that in some areas, there was inconsistency in the use of terms like “picks” vs. “spiels,” and “favorites” vs. “likes.” In our revisions, we unified our terminology so users would not become confused when seeing different terms that performed the same action.

- **Simplified home feed**

- *Reasoning:* Our home feed was a bit cluttered, and some feedback mentioned that the top navigation was taking up a lot of screen real estate. To help alleviate this issue and others encountered while we were implementing the prototype for the iOS platform, we combined the two “halves” of the old home feed – following and trending – into one home feed, opening up a large part of the screen.

Prototype Implementation

Tools

To implement our high-fidelity prototype of Spiel, we used several tools – mainly XCode and Parse, as well as existing documentation and other open source information sources.

XCode

- *Helped:* Storyboard feature allowed a visual way to see UI and provided native environment for iOS app development
- *Did not help:* Difficult to pick up and learn; relatively new language, so hard to find fixes to errors online

Parse

- *Helped:* Made backend creation easier
- *Did not help:* Difficult to connect with XCode

Wizard of Oz Techniques

- **Number of likes and followers for each user**
 - All the users featured in the home feed have 18k followers and are following 563 others, and all the Spiels have 10 comments, 30 likes, and 0 shares by default.
- **Login**
 - The user interacting with the prototype is already logged in, and can post, search for, and share Spiels from his/her perspective.
 - The user is also following other users in the database.
- **Homefeed**
 - The home feed is populated with spiels of others that the user is “following” to make it seem like there are other users, but we are simply loading data from parse

Hard-coded Data

- **Spiels**
 - Title, photo, category, and description for each spiel that the user can view
- **User Information**
 - Name, username, photo, and a list of people each user is following

Missing Features & Future Additions

- **Notifications**
 - Users will be notified of new followers or likes, comments, or shares on a Spiel.

- **Profile Enhancements**
 - On each user profile, Spiels will be sorted by month in which they were posted or category to which they belong.
- **User Profile Modifications**
 - Users will be able to change their profile photo, one-line Spiel about themselves, and more.
- **Managing Followers**
 - Users will be able to view who is following them and block certain users.
- **Login & User Authentication**
 - Users will be able to create accounts through a Facebook integration and log in to post and view Spiels.
- **Onboarding Help**
 - Users will get a walkthrough of how the app works and what spiels usually look like.
- **Updating Numbers for Likes, Shares, and Comments**
 - The number of likes, shares, and comments will be incremented for each addition.

Summary

People are searching for a better way to learn about the lifestyles of the people they like, admire, and respect. Spiel provides a simpler and more elegant platform for users to tell stories about their favorite discoveries, and helps them explore new interests through people-centric product recommendations. More so than a social network, Spiel is a medium that enables people to express themselves through the discoveries that have impacted their lifestyle.

Developed through many weeks of needfinding, testing, and prototyping, our final product is currently a high-fidelity prototype that allows users to perform the three main tasks of posting, discovering or following, and sharing. We hope to continue our exploration of Spiel in the future and keep iterating to improve our application that will include features beyond our main tasks.

Link to our website: https://hci.stanford.edu/courses/cs147/2015/au/projects/crowd_power/spiel