



Voice of Norway

Dressed to the nines

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In the context of the *Web Documentary* course in spring 2022 at *Høgskulen i Volda*, each group was asked to choose either the *Hidden* or the *Voice of Norway* application and conduct a formative evaluation based upon three criteria: user interface, pedagogical functions, and the overall appeal. From this evaluation, a solution is to be drawn.

We chose to evaluate *Voice of Norway*.

Voice of Norway is an application you can download on any kind of smartphone. The app offers its users endless local stories and things to do and experience in Norway. Its purpose is to share information and stories about Norway and things you can do nearby, both outside and inside. Because you can download the app on your phone, you can use the app easily wherever you are or wherever you're going. You can let the app be a personal guide for you and go to the places where stories appear, or you can use it whenever you are in the mood or just want to learn or do something new.

When you first open the app, the very first thing you meet are stories and things to do nearby. The app also provides a map for the so-called "auto mode". With the auto mode, you discover the places and stories you pass by when on a road trip.

Detected through the evaluation, in our eyes, the two biggest problems are the structure and design of the app itself, as well as the mixture of language usage, as the app is neither completely in Norwegian nor English. We believe that the very idea of *Voice of Norway* is good and intriguing, and it is, hence, one of the main issues that the app is perceived as messy, old-fashioned, and confusing. We, therefore, decided to focus on changing how the app is displayed to the user, by rethinking its structure and design.

As the given task, we conducted a formative evaluation for *Voice of Norway*. To reach this goal, we have differentiated three different qualities to analyze: interface, pedagogical functions, and appeal. During this, we also tested the app in the field by walking one of the suggested routes here in Volda to figure out how well the stories are integrated into the app (not so much of the AR function as there were no stories with integrated AR nearby).

For the user interface we are using the “severity rating scale” to identify critical elements in the app, and classify them in different categories from 0 to 4. 0 being “perfect”, which means there are no problems with the app and 4 being a “catastrophe” that needs to be fixed immediately. 1 describes the minor cosmetic problems, 2 rates a minor usability problem, and 3 being a major usability problem that should be given high priority in fixing.

For the proposed solutions, we focused mainly on the development of a refreshed design for the application to make it more appealing, and practical for a new user. Furthermore, we have rethought the whole concept of the app and reorganized it to make it more intuitive.

The Structure

We as a group find the existing structure of the app very confusing. We all went through the app individually and this was the first concern we agreed on to take care of. We all like the main idea of the app but we feel it is neither attractive for the user nor practical. It has a lot of different functionalities but we all agreed that it needed to be reorganized.

The layout of the existing home page is somehow chaotic. It shows lots of suggested routes, classified in categories like “Nearest”, “Indoors” or “National tourism”, among others. But we all found it confusing, especially if you are a tourist who wants to discover the country. First of all, because the categories are written in Norwegian, you don’t have an option to change the language of the whole interface. If it’s the first time you are using the app, you have to take a bit of time to discover all the functionalities, it is not intuitive. It has a walkthrough guide but you have to walk through the app to see where to find it. Another point is that the “Nearest” category is not well developed, as you cannot choose what distance ratio you can move to. For example, the app shows Ålesund as a place nearby while being in Volda, but it is two hours away, by car. If you are an outsider, you might not know the actual distance between these two places. We thought that, at least, it should show the kilometers from one town to another.

We would rate the structure:

3/4

A Solution

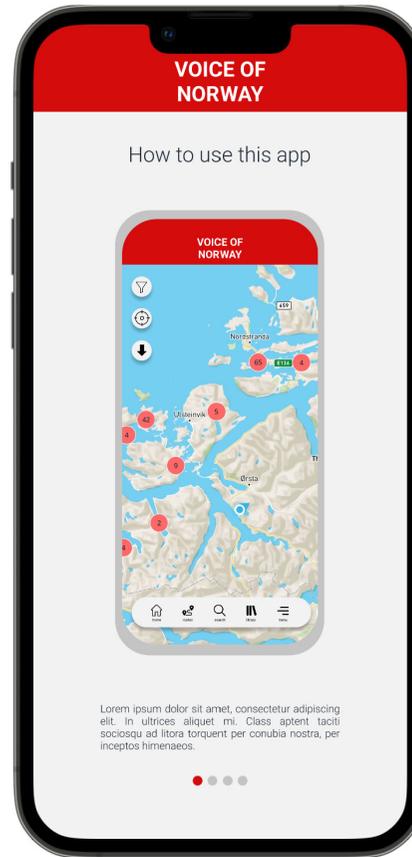
When you download the app, the first screen that pops out automatically is the walkthrough on how this app works. An introduction of the interface, all its functionalities, and where to find them in the app is an immediate way to make the user aware of what they are going to find and the usability of the Voice of Norway. This screen would only appear the first time you go into the app, but if the user feels the need to go through it again, it can be found in the menu.

We first changed the default homepage to the map. As the app is location-based, we feel that it’s more practical for the user to have a map of the area, where you can see how many routes are near you, and at exactly what distance. Unlike the existing map, which only shows the stories you can hear passing by (Auto Mode), the one we are featuring in our new design is showing all the routes and stories available. There, you can filter your search to what you want to read or listen about.

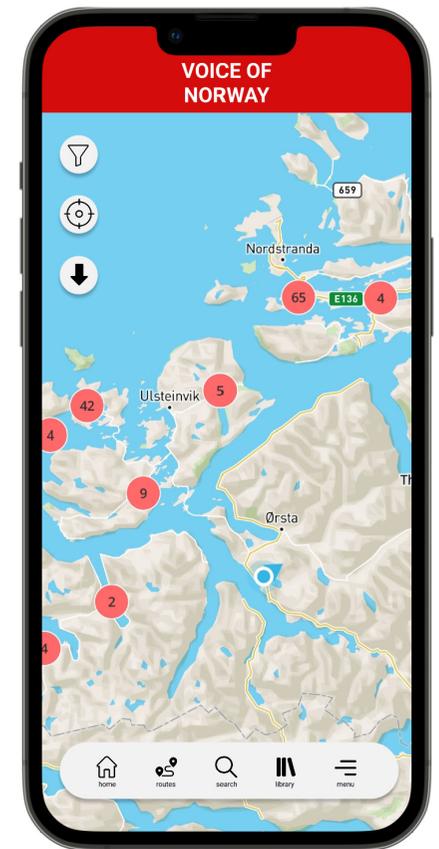
When you click on a red button on the map, a new window pops out with all the information about the different routes available in the area. If you click on one of them, it will lead you to the main page of the route.



Opener



Walkthrough



Home page

The Design

It was also a mutual concern of the need to change the design of the app, as none of the group members found it visually appealing nor practical for the user. We agreed that the design was quite dark compared to the gaudy logo and the webpage of Voice of Norway, which is quite well developed.

We would rate the structure:

3/4



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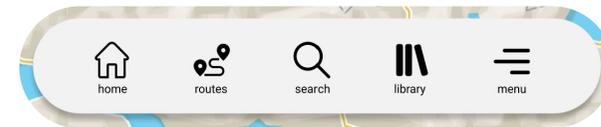


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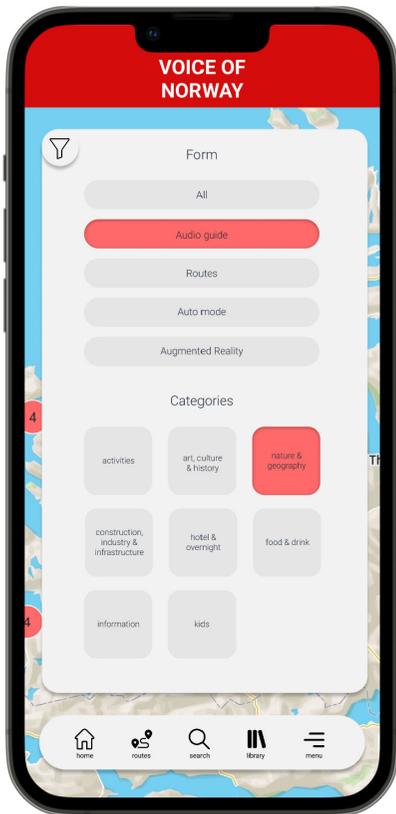
A Solution

We tried to take that aesthetic and bring it into the app and restructure it to make it more intuitive. To solve the first issue, we integrated the option to change between dark and light mode, depending on what you personally like or what looks more appealing to you. We thought that it could possibly be linked to the phone settings of the user, but also exchangeable inside the app.

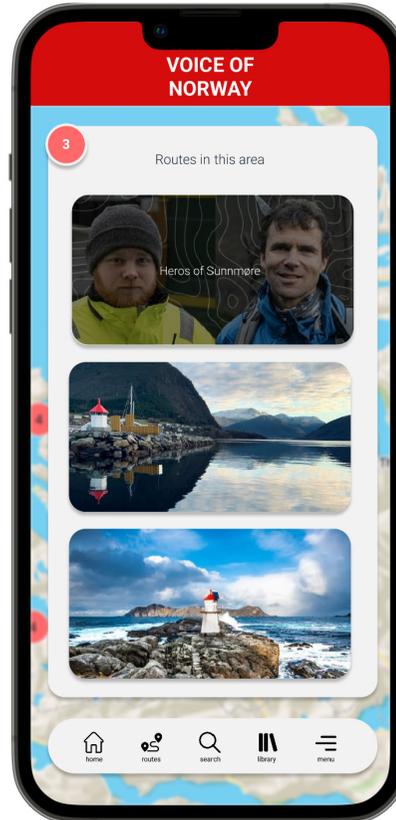
We changed the whole structure of the existing platform but kept all the existing parts, just reorganized them. We thought that the previous tap bar had some categories that did not belong there, as they were not as important as some others that were not there. We deleted the “providers” button from the bar, and we integrated it into the search section, so when the user goes to find some routes, they can choose a specific provider. It felt like it belonged there better than in the tap bar. We also added a “routes” button, which is the former homepage of the app, containing all the routes and categories that we mentioned in the “structure” part.



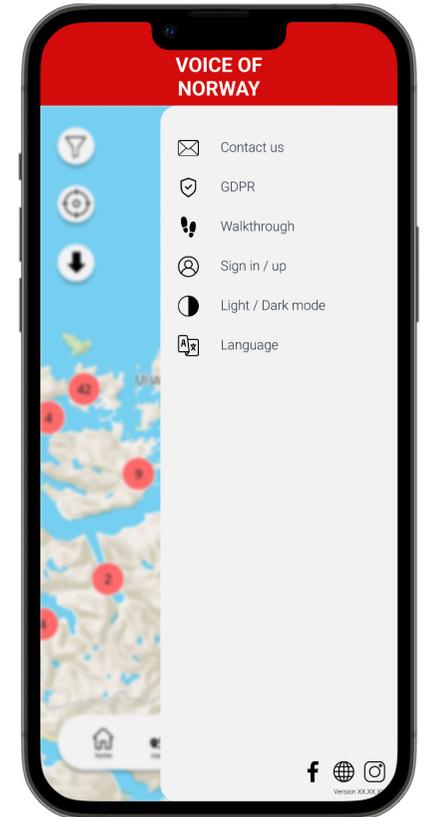
In addition, we incorporated the menu into the tap bar. On the previous design, it was located outside the bar, which we found confusing because if you have a tap bar, you don't usually look to other places. Logically, the menu is there. When you go into the menu, you can find some functionalities that were hard to find in the former design. For example, we added the “Contact us” button, where you find a form to report any issue with the app, contact them or simply write a review.



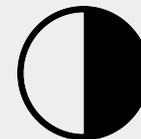
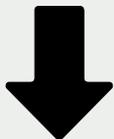
Map filter



Routes in this area



Menu



The Languages

One of the main issues with the app was how the language switched from English to Norwegian and the other way around. The interface is in Norwegian and you cannot change that, even though you can choose the language for some of the routes and stories available. Most of them have an option in English, but not all of them. You could choose to read the stories in English, but somehow the story went back to its original, native language. Also, sometimes the text is translated but the audio guides, links, and attached images or videos are still in Norwegian. We find that a bit problematic, especially when the app has an English title and is very appealing to tourists that want to learn more about Norway.

We would rate the structure:

2/4

Conclusion

Throughout this project, we have explored and evaluated the app *Voice of Norway*. During the process, we found various aspects which had improvement potential. We decided to focus mostly on the design and restructuring the whole interface of the app. We thought that these were the most important parts to develop for this app evaluation because we need to solve the basic issues before going further into more technical aspects.

We concluded that the app *Voice of Norway* would do better if the interface and some graphical elements were improved. We all found the design little aesthetically pleasing, and with a lot of content not well placed within the interface. In this report, we have given examples of how we think small changes could help solve these issues. We came up with solution proposals mainly focused on improving the design, the organization, and the categories in the former app.

Aside from creating a new design for the interface, we added some functions like "Language". We reorganized the tap bar and the menu to improve the user experience and make it suitable for people from all around the globe who want to visit Norway and learn some insights into this beautiful country.

We are really satisfied with our solution proposals and, even though there are still some minor details to take care of, we hope it contributes to the improvement of *Voice of Norway*.

A Solution

To fix this problem, we think the app should have a language setting. As simply explained in the previous section, the app already gives you the alternative between Norwegian and English. Although if you choose English, the story somehow changes back to its original language. Therefore we thought it would be interesting that the language of the interface is linked to your phone settings, but we also added a "Translate" button on the menu, so you can change it to your preferences. It would also be interesting to subtitle the videos and transcript the audios so they could be translated and understandable for people all around.