

How to Engage Ski Enthusiasts?

GXC challenge with the German Ski Federation (DSV)

Overview

The challenge for this project was proposed by the German Ski Federation e.V. (DSV). It is the national umbrella organization of German ski clubs and ski associations and includes 20 ski associations at a national level (regular members) as well as three associate member organizations. Overall, about 650,000 skiers are organized in the DSV. The posed challenge is relevant for the DSV because it matches their goal to find out more about their fans and non-organized ski enthusiasts, the typical customer journeys of different kinds of skiers as well as their ambition to collect data and create customer loyalty.

Problem

Currently, the winter sports community in Germany does not have a way to further engage and communicate with other stakeholders. Therefore, the German Ski Federation wants to connect the community in a digital way while adding value to all stakeholders. This concerns not only athletes or amateur skiers, but also families, ski schools, ski associations and winter sport fans. While the solution should be user-friendly for people of all ages and with different kinds of needs, it should also be fun to use and aim to create enthusiasm.

The challenge for the student teams was therefore: **How could we digitally connect/engage ski enthusiasts in a way that adds value to all stakeholders and leads to an active/interconnected ski community?**

Approach

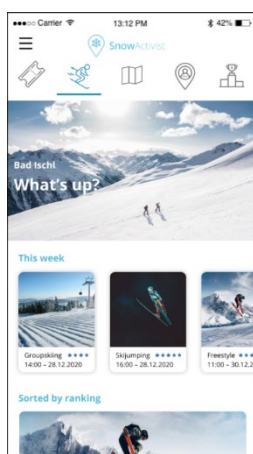
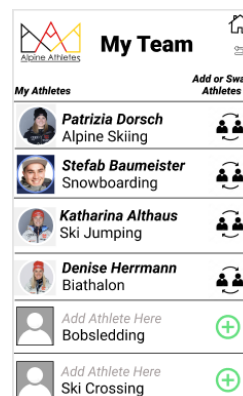
Video lectures and weekly live sessions for content input as well as individual team coaching sessions with experts accompanied the students during their project work for nine weeks. The three student teams followed an innovation process applied in the action-learning course format "Real Projects" from HM's entrepreneurship center SCE, starting by understanding the problem through general research about the DSV, sponsors, ski resorts and winter sports events. During a first meeting with the DSV team, the students were able to discuss the challenge in person and ask questions. Interviewing stakeholders also helped to better define the problem and collect rough ideas.

In the third week, with the support of Amazon Web Services and HM's Digital Transformation Lab, a two-part intensive workshop enabled the students to concretize first approaches of their problem solutions. A brainstorming exercise, the "Crazy Eight Ideation" method, helped them to come up with different kinds of initial ideas, which they then tried to structure. To apply a customer-centric focus the teams used the Amazon way of innovating, a method called "Working Backwards" during the workshop, which took into account the needs and wishes of the potential end-users, as well as those of the DSV. Using these techniques, the teams were able to decide on one final solution idea each. During the following six weeks, these ideas were then elaborated with the help of storyboards, fictional press releases, empathy maps, FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions), business model canvases and, ultimately, digital prototypes. To get an idea of how to prototype using digital technologies, the students were provided with detailed information about three different tools during one of the weekly live sessions: Figma, Bubble and Glide.

In a second online meeting with the challenge giver, the ideas and drafts of the prototypes were presented to the DSV for the first time. Valuable feedback helped the teams to further develop the prototypes and finalize them for the final presentation.

Prototypes

The team *Alpine Athletes* got inspired by the American Football Fantasy League. Their *AlpineAthletes* app, prototyped with Figma, connects winter sport enthusiasts in Germany in a competitive and fun way with the opportunities to win prizes via a fantasy winter sports league. The concept is that users create a virtual winter sport team and pick their favorite athlete from each type of winter sport. They then compete against and connect with fellow winter sport enthusiasts (fans & professionals). The results of real events affect the outcome of each fantasy team that was drafted at the beginning of the winter sport season. The higher the placement of the real athlete, the more points the user gets. These points contribute to the user's ability to redeem discounted lift tickets, merchandise or event access, making access to winter sports easier and cheaper.



The second team *SnowActivist* developed a prototype for an app, also using the tool Figma. Their app enables people to purchase any kind of ticket related to snow activities – from making a reservation in a restaurant to ski rental reservations. After doing research and conducting interviews, the students became aware of the problem that waiting in lines, unclear tariff lists, and a lack of community prevent people from having an overall wholesome experience while skiing. *SnowActivist* gives the possibility to efficiently buy a ski pass and share locations and interests with others. Through the help of a QR-Code directly placed at the entry of ski resorts, ski enthusiasts can have a decent experience on the slopes without worrying about how early one has to get up to be first in line. With the sharing option integrated into the app, people can share their location, experiences, and interests to engage with like-minded people and forming a community among themselves.

The third idea was created by a team called *G-Ski*, using the tool Glideapp. Their mobile app features are designed to not only support the enjoyment of skiing but also to provide an open networking platform for everyone who loves winter sports. The team focused on the problem of information overload: There is so much information available that it can be hard to find the relevant aspects, for example where to find the resources when wanting to learn how to ski. Also, because skiing is usually not a classic team sport, it can be harder to make friends in the skiing community and sometimes it might be difficult to find someone to ski with. With the *G-Ski* mobile app, ski enthusiasts can find and connect with other skiers who have a common passion for winter sports. Also, when ski enthusiasts download this app, they will have the opportunity to ask for advice from the ski community, find new friends to enjoy ski events and take trips together.



Next Steps

The final presentation to the DSV team took place on December 8, 2020. Following the presentation, the three student teams shared their presentations as well as a link to their prototypes with the DSV, who will use the ideas as input for future strategic planning activities. Impressed by the results and impulses received from these exchanges, the DSV has already confirmed that they will engage with the GXC International Virtual Innovation Challenge in the summer semester again. Furthermore, the teams were all invited to take part in the SCE Pitch Festival and compete with other student teams for a prize of €1,000.

Documents

The final documentation and prototypes developed by the three teams are available open access:

- [AlpineAthletes | Connect. Create. Compete.](#)
- [SnowActivist | Don't waste your time waiting in line!](#)
- [G-Ski! | Skiing is not simply a winter sport, but a community](#)

About GXC

This project was one of three challenges of the **GXC International Virtual Innovation Challenge**. This is a special edition of the [Real Projects](#) course format, which was offered for the first time in the winter semester 2020/21 as part of the "GlobalXChanges/Challenges (GXC)" project. In this virtual online course, public governmental and non-governmental organizations propose innovation challenges that can be solved through digital technologies. Next, students from HM Hochschule München University of Applied Sciences (HM) and its four strategic partner institutions dive into an international virtual action-learning course. The students are divided into international interdisciplinary teams and follow an innovation process to tackle the proposed challenges and prototype solutions. The course includes video lectures and dynamic weekly live sessions with a professor for content input and additional tutoring and team coaching sessions with industry experts to advise on prototyping and mentor students in the challenges of remote international teamwork.

The GlobalXChanges/Challenges project is funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) from funds of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). For more information on the GXC measures and the International Virtual Innovation Challenge visit hm.edu/gxc.