

Cocktail App Competitive Analysis

My Cocktail Bar

Competitor Overview

One of the most popular cocktail apps on the Android marketplace, My Cocktail Bar offers a practical way to display drinks you can make with ingredients you have on hand.

Key Objectives

Choose what ingredients you have on hand to view a list of cocktails you can make. You can also see items that are missing from recipes you might be close to making.

Additional features include:

- Creating shopping lists
- Searching by cocktail or ingredient
- Managing your bar

Overall Strategy

The app has a website that uses “My Bar App” as opposed to “My Cocktail Bar.” It seems disconnected from the app styles until you see the screenshots to know it’s the same. They do not have socials and instead offer a newsletter and an email for contact.

Bottom Line (as of 10/4/2022):

- The app has a 4.6 on the Google Play Store with over 1M downloads
- The developer is actively doing updates to the app and responds to customer reviews

Market Advantage

The app has a very high SEO ranking, both for the app and the corresponding website. Due to the high number of downloads and positive reviews, the app has great visibility.

Bottom Line (as of 10/4/2022):

- Great SEO ranking - A high number of downloads and reviews all contributing to excellent visibility
- In-app ads can be removed for \$1.99

Marketing Profile

Released in February 2012, My Cocktail Bar is one of the most popular Android apps based on visibility and accessibility. They market themselves as being “fast” and “practical,” with a simplistic layout. At release, they would have been competing directly with Cocktail Flow. There is one main developer, Roman Shuvaev, and it appears donations and pro memberships go directly to them. My Cocktail Bar is the only app attributed to Roman.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Simplistic - A clean interface with few frills gets the job done
- Meets user expectations with icons, things work and confirm as expected
- The ability to edit cocktail works well with robust options

Weaknesses

- The creation of ingredients or cocktails is not intuitive and menu changes unexpectedly
- The app doesn't utilize newer, more accepted navigational components
- Small icons and compact text

Opportunities

- Adding custom ingredients or cocktails is tucked away at the very bottom of long lists or in a 3-dot menu
- Replacing an item in a recipe replaces it across *all* recipes and isn't localized (this has been fixed, can't reproduce)
- Ability to change from oz to ml

Threats

- Cocktail Flow and Mixel are the main competitors, offering a free version of the product and the ability to pay for an upgrade or “pro” version

UX Analysis

Navigational Structure

- The navigational structure is simple but does not always work as anticipated. Once you start moving through recipes and ingredients, there isn't a clear way back to your bar shelf or “home”
- The 3-dot menu in the upper right-hand corner isn't consistent and changes content depending on where you are. This might be necessary, but also difficult to gauge what you are going to find

Compatibility

Supported on Android and has a simple web app. The developer has stated they didn't have time to create a version for iOS and hoped the web app would suffice in the meantime.

Cocktail Flow - Drink Recipes

Competitor Overview

Cocktail Flow is a recipe book with a modern layout with colorful images. Sections for ingredients, equipment, and preparation are easy to see at a glance for novices and bartenders alike.

Key Objectives

The app is a recipe book first. Many cocktail apps focus on the "My Bar" aspect by letting you know what drinks you can make with what you have on hand. Cocktail Flow prioritizes recipes and the discovery of new drinks.

Additional features include:

- A homepage with a card layout that contains featured collections, iconic cocktails, "Around the World," and a "Surprise Me!" option
- Sorting by base spirits and cocktail type at a glance
- A tips section. As applicable, tips are added to recipes. They are text-only and very verbose

Overall Strategy

Cocktail Flow/Team Distinction also has a web app to support their mobile apps. They have socials but have not been active since December 2019 (syncs up with the last app update). In October 2014, Skyscanner purchased the Budapest-based mobile developer and expanded employment to 600 within 18 months. Skyscanner has since been purchased by Chinese-owned Trip.com. The Budapest teams were one of the teams impacted by COVID layoffs in 2020.

Bottom Line (as of 10/4/2022):

- Original developers have gone through many changes in ownership, including layoffs
- The app does not appear to be getting updated anymore (The last update was on 12/23/2019)
- The app has a 4.2 on the Google Play Store with over 1M downloads

Market Advantage

Cocktail Flow prioritizes its recipe book and discovery, however, they offer “Premium” recipes that must be paid for and are mixed in with the free offerings. To create recipes, save notes, or unlock these recipes, you must pay a monthly fee of \$3.99, or an annual fee of \$19.99.

Bottom Line (as of 10/4/2022):

- Profit generated from premium subscriptions
- Very high SEO, first populated for “Cocktail App”

Marketing Profile

Released in November 2011, Cocktail Flow is one of the oldest and most popular cocktail apps available. Due to previously mentioned issues with the developers being bought out, sold, and laid off, the app appears to no longer be supported. Comments on Facebook within the last year accuse the developers of “abandoning” the app and say they are canceling their subscriptions. While currently a high visibility app, they will most likely not be a significant player within the next few years.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Modern layout and flow with crisp, colorful imagery
- Tips section and included in recipes where applicable

Weaknesses

- A high percentage of recipes are locked behind a premium paywall
- Text-heavy sections with some grammatical errors

Opportunities

- Removing the number of taps/clicks to get to recipes
- Adding imagery or videos to Tips sections and cutting down on unnecessary text

Threats

- Soon after its release, the competition included My Cocktail Bar. Other competitors now include Mixel. My Cocktail Bar, while being an older interface, offers many of the same recipes with ads. You can remove ads for ~\$3, a much lower price point

UX Analysis

Usability

- There are extra taps/clicks involved when you want to make a recipe
- The “Fact Sheet” shows up as a title for each recipe with an information bubble, but this doesn’t contain any useful information
- The recipes that are locked behind the premium paywall are mixed in, so you have to scroll through them
- The filter options aren’t in the expected locations, however, it does work well

Navigational Structure

- Viewing “Newest Cocktails” takes you to a large list of cocktails that doesn’t necessarily feel current at that point
- Viewing “My Bar” and finding ingredients is all in a card layout, and this feels a bit overwhelming without the option to sort differently. You can search for individual ingredients, and add from there, which is a nice feature

Compatibility

Supported on both iOS and Android. Also has a simple web app.

Mixel, Cocktail Recipes

Competitor Overview

Mixel is a pixel-style cocktail app that focuses on allowing the user to input what ingredients they have on hand and provides recipes they can make.

Key Objectives

The app is stylized, fun, and unique. There is an overview of your bar and the ingredients you own, which also encourages the user to collect more. Ingredients can be searched and added, and you can view recipes you can make with them.

Additional features include:

- The ability to easily mark a recipe for later, check a recipe off (saying you made it/tried it), or favorite a recipe
- Can toggle from oz to ml
- A rating system from users. Must be a monthly or annual subscriber to write/post reviews

Overall Strategy

Mixel is under Cool Font - Cocktail Recipes and VR. The company currently has two apps, Mixel and Pocketstrafe - VR Locomotion. Mixel was released in December 2017 and received an update in July 2022.

Bottom Line (as of 10/4/2022):

- Active developers still making updates
- The app has a 4.6 on the Google Play Store with over 50k+ downloads

Market Advantage

Mixel has a robust library of recipe options and hides premium recipes until you subscribe. It offers other features with premium to incentivize the subscription, \$1.99/month or \$11.99/year. They also offer a 3-day free trial.

Bottom Line (as of 10/4/2022):

- Profit generated from premium subscriptions
- Extremely low SEO, only found in lists of apps but not directly. Does not have a web presence or socials

Marketing Profile

Released in December 2017, Mixel competed directly with My Cocktail Bar and Cocktail Flow. They differentiated themselves by being stylized, offering a free trial, and having a social aspect with peer reviews.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Intuitive, stylized, and fun to use
- Ability to check off recipes you have made before, along with favoriting them
- Peer reviews for subscribers incentivize subscription and engagement
- You can view a "simple/large text" version of a recipe

Weaknesses

- Searching through ingredients to add is difficult (perhaps sorted by popularity?) and it's easier to search the item individually through text
- Small icons with a small click area

Opportunities

- Adding more ways to sort/list/find ingredients and add them to your bar

- Preparation is all in one text block and could potentially be broken into steps
- The bar/home screen has some elements that are ripe for small, clickable easter eggs

Threats

- Mixel competes directly with My Cocktail Bar and Cocktail Flow. My Cocktail Bar, while being an older interface, offers many of the same recipes with ads. You can remove ads for ~\$2, a much lower price point

UX Analysis

Usability

- Any dialogs are black and can be difficult to see or dismiss on the home screen with a black background
- Sorting options for an ingredient list would be nice to have
- The recipe filter is intuitive, however, some options like “sort by alphabetical” could be on the actual results page as opposed to the initial search page

Layout

- Some elements are spaced tightly. An example would be the number of drinks and then the quantity of each ingredient right next to each other. While understanding the desire to get important information above the fold, it feels a bit cramped at times

Compatibility

Supported on both iOS and Android. Notes for tablet:

- The app scales up to tablets relatively well, however, some click areas are hard to tap and feel small
- Adding items to your bar feels difficult to do for the same reason. It's easier to click on the ingredient itself, which gives you a description of the item, then the add button isn't where the typical confirm location would be

Calls to Action (CTA)

Mixel has a “Unlock More Recipes” banner on the bottom of the screen that the user can minimize, encouraging them to subscribe. You can see an average rating a drink has, but the reviews seem partially disabled, again encouraging you to subscribe to “rate and comment.”

Make Me A Cocktail

Competitor Overview

This app was downloaded and reviewed for competitor analysis, but I decided it wasn't a good choice for reference. Being 17+ years old, the app is optimized poorly, not only for tablets but overall. Surprisingly, Make Me A Cocktail is still displayed second in the app store for "Cocktails," and has a 4.6-star rating out of 1.4k ratings.

BarSpoon - The Cocktail App

Competitor Overview

BarSpoon is a sleek recipe app with high-quality images. Unlike other apps on the market, BarSpoon sets itself apart by having a darker color scheme with a 1920s vibe.

Key Objectives

BarSpoon offers a variety of cocktail recipes that are categorized to allow the user to search and discover.

Additional features include:

- Ability to fill out a "What I'm Feeling" type of form, including drink strength or type, and have it give you a suggestion
- Option to add a drink to favorites
- Choose your ingredients option. This feature is a bit particular and will only populate drinks that meet the exact criteria and from the "Featured Cocktails" category

Overall Strategy

Developed by Dian Angelov, BarSpoon was released in May 2021, making it relatively new on the cocktail app scene. Dian Angelov has created and released another drink-related app called BarHopper, using similar styles and layout (BarHopper hasn't received updates since March 2020).

Bottom Line (as of 10/7/2022):

- The developer is releasing updates with new recipes as of August 2020
- The app has a 4.8 on the Apple Store but out of 32 reviews
- In July 2020, the developers posted thank you for 5k app downloads

Market Advantage

BarSpoon's advantage is its style, seemingly modern layout, and imagery. Additional recipes can be unlocked with a one-time payment of \$2.99. They don't tell you how many recipes will be unlocked, and no other features come along with this.

Bottom Line (as of 10/7/2022):

- Profit generated from a one-time premium payment of \$2.99
- Extremely low SEO. Has a website, FB and Instagram. Not active since July 2020

Marketing Profile

Released in July 2020, BarSpoon's direct competitor would have been Cocktail Flow as they have similar selling points and also take a recipe-first approach. They attempted to differentiate themselves by being stylized and having a lower, one-time payment price point.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Crisp bright images - Noting that many of these images are being used on other drink websites such as PUNCH or Diffords
- Unique darker style in a market filled with older or more common white layouts
- Ability to get a quick drink suggestion

Weaknesses

- The ability to input ingredients and search for recipes is restrictive and doesn't work as anticipated
- Icons and layout are not intuitive/don't match expectations
- Scrolling behavior and animations, while interesting, can result in delayed waiting or extra taps

Opportunities

- Having the "What Do You Feel Like Drinking" for a suggestion is a nice feature if implemented better
- There are large sections for bar tools, glassware, tips, and lingo. However, you must carousel through all items, there is no search or way to see what's available at a glance
- Dictionary sections have one nice image but are otherwise text-only

Threats

- BarSpoon competitor on release was Cocktail Flow as they have similar selling points and also take a recipe-first approach. They attempted to differentiate themselves by being stylized and having a lower, one-time payment price point.

UX Analysis

Usability

- The app is not responsive for a tablet device
- Animations are nice but can be intrusive
- The dark layout is pleasant and feels very “bar-like.” Noting that some of the headers are difficult to read, for example, “Golden Age 1850-1880”

Navigational Structure

The nav and icons are confusing and don't lead to expected results. Example: A new folder icon leading to the recipe suggestion function, with the title “Pick Your Cocktail Strength.”

Compatibility

Supported on iOS. The app scales up terribly and is not responsive, there is simply an icon in the lower right corner to make the mobile version larger. This is what was seen with the Make Me A Cocktail app, too.

Calls to Action (CTA)

There are no noticeable calls to action unless you attempt to view a premium recipe. At this point, you are prompted to unlock and pay the one-time fee. Even clicking on your account doesn't have an option to upgrade and instead offers a confusing “Restore Purchase” selection.

Overall Takeaways

Common Features

- “My Bar” or “Recipe Using Ingredients” functionality
- Ability to search recipes
- Save a recipe to “Favorites”
- Ability to change measurements from oz to ml (all except My Cocktail Bar allowed this)
- Apps have a pro/premium option in some form to unlock recipes, additional features, or remove ads
 - This feels most successful on Mixel where the subscription also unlocks a social ability to post reviews, collaborate on bars, and unlock themes

- Mixel has a lower monthly price point of \$1.99/mo or \$11.99/yr and has a 3-day free trial
- Cocktail Flow is the most expensive at \$3.99/mo or \$19.99/yr
- List source material

Opportunities

- A responsive app that works well on both mobile and tablet devices
- Increment the quantity/number of servings. Not all apps did this and the ones that did implemented it poorly with mathematical errors
- Edit and make notes on existing cocktails
- Ability to view a text-only version of a recipe
- Add new, custom cocktails (potentially copying and editing existing ones as well?)
 - Edited recipes can be notated as my version vs the original version (toggling my measurements vs the original measurements)
- Filter ingredients or ability to sort ingredient lists
- Similar to Mixel, mark recipes for later, as tried, or as favorites
- Ability to rate recipes
- Recipe cards are clear - ingredients and directions are not cramped and easy to read
- Any dictionary sections (tips, bar tools, or glassware) could be more than just text and a single vector image. More colorful example images or videos can be used to be more helpful and engaging
- There are currently no recipe options to make your own ingredients like Simple Syrup if needed

Requests

- Ability to customize drink showcase or categories on the home menu (page)