

**travelog: User Research Feedback**

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## **TLDR Description:**

A social media platform designed for travelers to log their journeys, review destinations, and share their experiences.

## **Longer Description:**

A social media platform designed for travelers to log their journeys, review destinations, and share their experiences. The app combines the personalization of a travel journal with interactive social features, allowing users to create and explore itineraries, engage with a community of like-minded travelers, and discover new destinations through reviews, photos, and shared experiences. This follows the model of specific-interest based apps such as Beli or Goodreads

## **Target Audience:**

The app is designed for travelers who love documenting and sharing their trips, primarily attracting Millennials and Gen Z users. This audience is typically tech-savvy, socially engaged, and values authentic travel experiences. Many are students or young professionals who seek budget-friendly, immersive, and culturally rich adventures. They enjoy visual storytelling through photos and videos, actively engage with social media, and rely on peer recommendations for travel planning. They prioritize personalization, community interaction, and seamless digital experiences that enhance their journeys.

## **Bias:**

Our team's predominantly US-based background may shape our perspective on travel culture, prioritizing destinations, experiences, and norms that align more with Western travel expectations. As native English speakers, the app may initially cater more to English-speaking travelers, limiting accessibility for non-English users. Additionally, our understanding of affordability is influenced by our own financial contexts, which may not fully represent the diverse budget constraints of travelers from different economic backgrounds.

## **Methodology:**

We have conducted semi-structured interviews with 5 participants. These participants were selected based on their answers to the following questions:

1. *Have you traveled outside your home in the past year?*
  - a. *Target: YES*
2. *How often do you travel per year?*
  - a. *Target: 1+ trips per year*
3. *Have you documented or shared a travel experience online in the past year?*

- a. Target: YES*
- 4. Do you use social media regularly (at least weekly)?
  - a. Target: YES*
- 5. What type of traveler are you? (Solo, Group, Business, Other)
  - a. Target: Solo or Group travelers*
- 6. How old are you?
  - a. Target: 18–35 years old (Millennials and Gen Z)*

## **Research and Corresponding Interview Questions:**

- 1. How do participants currently document and share their trips?**
  - a. What tools or platforms do you use to document your travels (e.g., Instagram, Google Maps, travel journals, blogs)?
  - b. How do you decide what aspects of your trip to document
  - c. Do you prefer to share your travel experiences in real time or after the trip? Why?
- 2. How often do you share your travel experiences online, and what motivates you to do so?**
  - a. What type of travel content do you usually share (e.g., photos, videos, itineraries, reviews, tips)?
  - b. Have you ever felt limited by current platforms when sharing your trips? If so, in what ways?
- 3. How important is peer-based recommendation (vs. professional reviews) in making travel decisions?**
  - a. When planning a trip, who do you usually seek recommendations from and why?
  - b. Have you ever followed a peer recommendation that significantly influenced your travel experience? Can you describe what happened?
  - c. In what situations do you trust published reviews more than peer recommendations, or vice versa?
- 4. How do you decide your itineraries when traveling?**
  - a. Do you prefer a structured itinerary or a more flexible, spontaneous approach? Why?
  - b. What tools or platforms do you use to research accommodations, restaurants, and activities when planning your itinerary, and how do they influence your choices?
  - c. What factors influence your itinerary planning the most (e.g., budget, time constraints, recommendations, personal interests)?

## **Participant Interviews:**

### **Participant 1:**

#### **Participant 1 Characteristics:**

Participant 1 is a 20 year old man who travels 2-3 times every year. He is a full time student and only travels with his family.

#### **Research Question 1: How do participants currently document and share their trips?**

1. Interview question 1: What tools or platforms do you use to document your travels (e.g., Instagram, Google Maps, travel journals, blogs)?
  - a. “I mainly post about my travels on Instagram or Snapchat”, the participant states. The participant points out that he uses popular social media apps to document his travels.
2. Interview question 2: How do you decide what aspects of your trip to document and share (e.g., photos, videos, written experiences)?
  - a. “Honestly if the picture looks cool”, the participant states.
3. Interview question 3: Do you prefer to share your travel experiences in real-time or after the trip? Why?
  - a. “A little bit of both”, the participant makes it clear that they enjoy posting their activities in real-time using apps such as Snapchat, but also posting them after their travels on apps such as Instagram.
  - b. “But I do it mainly in real-time.”

#### **Research Question 2: How often do you share your travel experiences online, and what motivates you to do so?**

1. Interview question 1: What type of travel content do you usually share (e.g., photos, videos, itineraries, reviews, tips)?
  - a. “Photos and videos.”
2. Interview question 2: Have you ever felt limited by current platforms when sharing your trips? If so, in what ways?
  - a. “No, not really.”

#### **Research Question 3: How important is peer-based recommendation (vs. professional reviews) in making travel decisions?**

1. Interview question 1: When planning a trip, who do you usually seek recommendations from and why?

- a. “Mainly just friends and family.”
- 2. Interview question 2: Have you ever followed a peer recommendation that significantly influenced your travel experience? Can you describe what happened?
  - a. “Yes, I watched a few of Rick Steves travel guide videos on YouTube and have read some of his books on cities I am planning to visit.”
- 3. Interview question 3: In what situations do you trust published reviews more than peer recommendations, or vice versa?
  - a. “I trust professional reviews for really only restaurants, not so much for monuments or other things of that nature.”

#### **Research Question 4: How do you decide your itineraries when traveling?**

- 1. Interview question 1: Do you prefer a structured itinerary or a more flexible, spontaneous approach? Why?
  - a. “Structured for sure, I want to make sure that I visit all the spots I had planned to visit.”
- 2. Interview question 2: What tools or platforms do you use to research accommodations, restaurants, and activities when planning your itinerary, and how do they influence your choices?
  - a. “Same thing as before, friends, family, etc.”
- 3. Interview question 3: What factors influence your itinerary planning the most (e.g., budget, time constraints, recommendations, personal interests)?
  - a. “Recommendations, or any places I really want to see in whichever city I am visiting.”

#### **Participant 1 Conclusion:**

Participant 1 is a 20 year old man who travels 2-3 times every year. He is a full time student and only travels with his family. He uses multiple platforms of social media daily. He documents travel experience on Instagram Snapchat and prefers real-time sharing indicating he prefers instant social engagement. He prefers to share photos and videos and doesn't feel limited by the platforms he currently uses. This suggests that in order for him to use travelog, it would need unique features that other platforms don't offer. He relies on friends for recommendations but also from popular travel writers such as Rick Steves. This highlights a split in trust, meaning travelog should try to incorporate professional reviews, along with peer reviews.

## **Participant 2:**

### **Participant 2 Characteristics:**

Participant 2 is a 20 year old man traveling more than 3+ times a year with both friends and family and is a full time student.

### **Research Question 1: How do participants currently document and share their trips?**

1. Interview question 1: What tools or platforms do you use to document your travels (e.g., Instagram, Google Maps, travel journals, blogs)?
  - a. "I use insta and the camera app and huji and instant camera app to document my travels."
2. Interview question 2: How do you decide what aspects of your trip to document and share (e.g., photos, videos, written experiences)?
  - a. "I decide my trips based on key experiences. Going to Dublin for the brew house then taking pics."
3. Interview question 3: Do you prefer to share your travel experiences in real-time or after the trip? Why?
  - a. "After, I prefer to enjoy the moment and sharing real time detracts from the moment."

### **Research Question 2: How often do you share your travel experiences online, and what motivates you to do so?**

1. Interview question 1: What type of travel content do you usually share (e.g., photos, videos, itineraries, reviews, tips)?
  - a. "Nice photos of myself or of scenery."
2. Interview question 2: Have you ever felt limited by current platforms when sharing your trips? If so, in what ways?
  - a. "Not really."

### **Research Question 3: How important is peer-based recommendation (vs. professional reviews) in making travel decisions?**

1. Interview question 1: When planning a trip, who do you usually seek recommendations from and why?
  - a. "My mom or my brother because they have more travel experience."
2. Interview question 2: Have you ever followed a peer recommendation that significantly influenced your travel experience? Can you describe what happened?
  - a. "Dog bar rec from my brother or St. James gate from my brother as well to understand the cultural importance of Guinness."
3. Interview question 3: In what situations do you trust published reviews more than peer recommendations, or vice versa?
  - a. "When it comes to tours, I prefer online recs but peer recs would be like things to do at a certain place to get a certain experience."

#### **Research Question 4: How do you decide your itineraries when traveling?**

1. Interview question 1: Do you prefer a structured itinerary or a more flexible, spontaneous approach? Why?
  - a. "I prefer a structured itinerary because it prevents stagnant moments on vacation."
2. Interview question 2: What tools or platforms do you use to research accommodations, restaurants, and activities when planning your itinerary, and how do they influence your choices?
  - a. "Hostel world and then kiwi for flights."
3. Interview question 3: What factors influence your itinerary planning the most (e.g., budget, time constraints, recommendations, personal interests)?
  - a. "Recommendations because I feel that I place the most trust in recs and I want to experience something I know others had a good time doing."

#### **Participant 2 Conclusion:**

Participant 2 prefers a structured approach when traveling with a plan set in stone. He also prefers his plans coming from people that have already experienced them as well as people that he trusts so he knows it's while. He prefers to live in the moment and do his social media posting after the trip to stay present in the moment.

## **Participant 3:**

### **Participant 3 Characteristics:**

Participant 3 is a 26 year old woman who travels 5+ times every year. She is a full time worker who travels recreationally and for business purposes. She travels solo and with friends/family.

### **Research Question 1: How do participants currently document and share their trips?**

1. Interview question 1: What tools or platforms do you use to document your travels (e.g., Instagram, Google Maps, travel journals, blogs)?
  - a. **Polarsteps**
2. Interview question 2: How do you decide what aspects of your trip to document and share (e.g., photos, videos, written experiences)?
  - a. **Pick places that I enjoy spending time at and would take photos of them to keep as memories. Don't particularly like sharing it with lots of people.**
3. Interview question 3: Do you prefer to share your travel experiences in real-time or after the trip? Why?
  - a. **Definitely after the trip because I don't like people knowing where I currently am for personal security reasons**

### **Research Question 2: How often do you share your travel experiences online, and what motivates you to do so?**

1. Interview question 1: What type of travel content do you usually share (e.g., photos, videos, itineraries, reviews, tips)?
  - a. **Reviews, tips, and itineraries - depends on who the person is.**
2. Interview question 2: Have you ever felt limited by current platforms when sharing your trips? If so, in what ways?
  - a. **Yes, I'm disappointed that there is not a platform I can use to just tag where I've been or make an archive of trips I've been on, that is widely used by a lot of people. Polarsteps is too niche and not well-known.**

### **Research Question 3: How important is peer-based recommendation (vs. professional reviews) in making travel decisions?**

1. Interview question 2: Have you ever followed a peer recommendation that significantly influenced your travel experience? Can you describe what happened?
  - a. **Yes all the time. My friend has given me a list that I referenced throughout my whole trip in Prague.**
2. Interview question 1: When planning a trip, who do you usually seek recommendations from and why?
  - a. **Mostly reddit and friends.**
3. Interview question 3: In what situations do you trust published reviews more than peer recommendations, or vice versa?



- a. Never. 95% of the time I take peer recommendations and reddit over published reviews because my friends know me better than a reviewer does.

#### **Research Question 4: How do you decide your itineraries when traveling?**

- 4. Interview question 1: Do you prefer a structured itinerary or a more flexible, spontaneous approach? Why?
  - a. I like picking the location I go to but not booking any trips/excursions before I get there until I arrive. Structured spontaneity. If I am going to Paris, I am going to Paris but I am not going to plan my whole trip until I get there.
- 5. Interview question 2: What tools or platforms do you use to research accommodations, restaurants, and activities when planning your itinerary, and how do they influence your choices?
  - a. Reddit.
- 6. Interview question 3: What factors influence your itinerary planning the most (e.g., budget, time constraints, recommendations, personal interests)?
  - a. Budget and convenience/ease of booking.

#### **Participant 3 Conclusion:**

Unlike other participants, Participant 3 prefers minimal real-time sharing of her travel experiences, citing personal security concerns. Instead, she documents her travels primarily using niche platforms like Polarsteps and seeks a broader, more widely-used platform to archive and tag her trips.

Her travel planning is driven by peer recommendations from friends and Reddit, which she trusts far more than professional reviews. This highlights the importance of peer-generated content in influencing her decisions. She follows a "structured spontaneity" approach to itineraries - choosing destinations in advance but finalizing activities and bookings upon arrival.

Her key motivations include maintaining flexibility, convenience, and staying within budget. She also shares reviews, tips, and itineraries selectively, depending on the audience. These insights suggest that a platform catering to both trip documentation and social sharing with privacy control, along with strong peer-based recommendations, would be particularly appealing to her and similar sample groups.

## **Participant 4:**

### **Participant 4 Characteristics:**

Participant 4 is a 20 year old woman who travels once every year with both friends and family and is a full time student.

### **Research Question 1: How do participants currently document and share their trips?**

4. Interview question 1: What tools or platforms do you use to document your travels (e.g., Instagram, Google Maps, travel journals, blogs)?
  - a. **Travel Blogs and Instagram**
5. Interview question 2: How do you decide what aspects of your trip to document and share (e.g., photos, videos, written experiences)?
  - a. **I want to document/share the things that capture the place in which i visited the most to those who don't know much about it**
6. Interview question 3: Do you prefer to share your travel experiences in real-time or after the trip? Why?
  - a. **After, so I can choose the best things from the trip to post**

### **Research Question 2: How often do you share your travel experiences online, and what motivates you to do so?**

3. Interview question 1: What type of travel content do you usually share (e.g., photos, videos, itineraries, reviews, tips)?
  - a. **Photos and descriptions**
4. Interview question 2: Have you ever felt limited by current platforms when sharing your trips? If so, in what ways?
  - a. **Yes, I feel limited to post a lot about my trips because I do not want to spam people's feeds**

### **Research Question 3: How important is peer-based recommendation (vs. professional reviews) in making travel decisions?**

4. Interview question 2: Have you ever followed a peer recommendation that significantly influenced your travel experience? Can you describe what happened?
  - a. **Yes! I have received recommendations for restaurants that were really good**
5. Interview question 1: When planning a trip, who do you usually seek recommendations from and why?
  - a. **Travel blogs because they have a lot of information and friends because they like the same things i do usually**
6. Interview question 3: In what situations do you trust published reviews more than peer recommendations, or vice versa?

- a. I would trust peer recommendations more than a published review if a friend has spent a lot of time at the destination, I would trust them over an influencer/platform.

**Research Question 4: How do you decide your itineraries when traveling?**

- 7. Interview question 1: Do you prefer a structured itinerary or a more flexible, spontaneous approach? Why?
  - a. Structured so that i can make sure I can get the most out of my trip
- 8. Interview question 2: What tools or platforms do you use to research accommodations, restaurants, and activities when planning your itinerary, and how do they influence your choices?
  - a. Yelp and travel bloggers, and I take their recommendations seriously
- 9. Interview question 3: What factors influence your itinerary planning the most (e.g., budget, time constraints, recommendations, personal interests)?
  - a. Personal interests, cultural importance, budget

**Participant 4 Conclusion:**

Participant 4 is a 20-year-old woman who travels once a year with friends and family while balancing full-time studies. She prefers a structured itinerary to maximize her travel experience and relies on personal interests, cultural significance, and budget when planning her trips. She documents her travels through travel blogs and Instagram, choosing to share content after the trip to highlight the most meaningful aspects of her journey. However, she feels limited by current platforms, as she does not want to overwhelm others with frequent posts. She heavily values peer recommendations and travel blogs for trip planning, particularly when it comes to restaurant choices. While she considers published reviews, she trusts peer recommendations more when they come from someone with extensive experience at the destination.

These insights suggest that Participant 4 would benefit from a travel platform that allows for curated post-trip sharing, integrates travel blogs for detailed documentation, and provides a balance between peer recommendations and professional reviews.

## **Participant 5:**

### **Participant 5 Characteristics:**

Participant 5 is a 20 year old woman who travels 3+ times every year. She is a full time student who travels recreationally and has a part-time job. She travels often with friends/family.

### **Research Question 1: How do participants currently document and share their trips?**

7. Interview question 1: What tools or platforms do you use to document your travels (e.g., Instagram, Google Maps, travel journals, blogs)?
  - a. **Instagram, personal blog**
8. Interview question 2: How do you decide what aspects of your trip to document and share (e.g., photos, videos, written experiences)?
  - a. **I choose to share the pictures that make me happy and that others may have not seen before.**
9. Interview question 3: Do you prefer to share your travel experiences in real-time or after the trip? Why?
  - a. **Both, because it feels more real sharing it as I experience it, but also after because I can reflect on my experiences.**

### **Research Question 2: How often do you share your travel experiences online, and what motivates you to do so?**

5. Interview question 1: What type of travel content do you usually share (e.g., photos, videos, itineraries, reviews, tips)?
  - a. **Photos, videos, reviews, tips through a variety of different apps. I share the majority of my photos and videos on Instagram, restaurant reviews on the app Beli, and my itineraries, reviews, and tips on my travel blog.**
6. Interview question 2: Have you ever felt limited by current platforms when sharing your trips? If so, in what ways?
  - a. **Yes, I wish there was a more structured way for me to document my trips on a single platform so that I can share more details about the itinerary with people who may want to travel to that same city.**

### **Research Question 3: How important is peer-based recommendation (vs. professional reviews) in making travel decisions?**

7. Interview question 2: Have you ever followed a peer recommendation that significantly influenced your travel experience? Can you describe what happened?
  - a. **Yes, almost every time I travel I ask my friends who I know that have visited or lived there. For example, when traveling to Valencia I called my friend who lived there for several years and created my entire itinerary based on her recommendations.**

8. Interview question 1: When planning a trip, who do you usually seek recommendations from and why?
  - a. My friends and family, because I know that they will probably like similar places or plans as me.
9. Interview question 3: In what situations do you trust published reviews more than peer recommendations, or vice versa?
  - a. I would trust both, but peer recommendations are very important to me. If a friend or family member says they enjoyed a hotel they stayed at or had fun on a bike tour they booked, I would probably do the same one.

#### **Research Question 4: How do you decide your itineraries when traveling?**

10. Interview question 1: Do you prefer a structured itinerary or a more flexible, spontaneous approach? Why?
  - a. I prefer a more structured itinerary to be able to make the most of my trips and see/do as much as possible. I leave a little bit of wiggle room for the spontaneous plans that come up, but I definitely like having a clear idea of what I'll be doing on a trip.
11. Interview question 2: What tools or platforms do you use to research accommodations, restaurants, and activities when planning your itinerary, and how do they influence your choices?
  - a. I use Tiktok the most, but also Instagram, Beli, Trip Advisor, and other travel blogs. They influence my choices the most because they are all from people who have recently been to a place or done an activity and their review.
12. Interview question 3: What factors influence your itinerary planning the most (e.g., budget, time constraints, recommendations, personal interests)?
  - a. All of these influence my itinerary, it is a combination of budget, time constraints, the recommendations I receive, and my interests. However, the most significant one would probably be the budget when considering day plans that are free or cost money, the housing accommodation I select, restaurants I choose to go to, etc.

#### **Participant 5 Conclusion:**

Participant 5 is a 20-year-old woman who travels 3+ times every year with her friends and family, balancing her travel interests alongside her full-time studies and part-time job. She prefers a structured approach to her travel itineraries but allows flexibility for spontaneous plans. Her documentation and sharing of trips are spread across Instagram, her personal blog, and other platforms like Beli, where she shares photos, videos, restaurant reviews, and travel tips.

Participant 5 enjoys sharing travel content both in real-time and post-trip for reflection, though she finds current platforms limiting in how she can organize and share detailed itineraries on a single platform. She relies heavily on peer recommendations for planning her trips, often trusting the insights of friends and family over professional reviews, especially when it comes to

accommodations and activities. Budget plays a significant role in her decision-making, with convenience and recommendations also influencing her travel choices. This suggests that Participant 5 would benefit from a travel platform that integrates both social sharing and trip documentation features, enabling more structured itinerary sharing and emphasizing peer reviews for a comprehensive travel and sharing experience.

## **Overall Conclusion**

- There is demand in the market for travel focused social media, but it would need to offer unique features that differentiate travelog from other platforms. Adding features such as allowing users to tag locations, or create lists of locations they visited.
- Participants appear to arbitrarily rely on peer recommendations for some things and professional recommendations for other things. This is something that we will need to consider when designing the platform and should aim for incorporating both.
- Participants seem to rely heavily on and deeply value peer recommendations. We can account for this user need by adding a social aspect to the application. Travelog should allow users to “friend” others on the platform and be able to see their posts and reviews/ratings from the cities they traveled to.
- Current travel planning is fragmented across multiple platforms. The participants listed multiple different platforms they use for everything travel related, this could indicate an opportunity for a centralized platform that combines everything.