Place: CRX-C526, uOttawa

Date: September 23th, 2024

Time: 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Participants:

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**Project Overview**

A platform designed for travelers who want to connect with others for companionship or support during their trips. Whether they’re looking for a travel buddy to explore a destination together or need local assistance when they arrive (such as a local guide or someone to show them around). It makes traveling safer, more social, and more enjoyable. It focuses on connecting like-minded people with shared interests or offering help from locals for a smoother travel experience.

Our platform serves as a digital bridge, connecting travelers from around the world based on their destination cities and, optionally, their cities of origin. At its core, we addresses two primary needs in the travel community:

Companion Matching: For those seeking a travel buddy, our platform pairs users heading to the same destination. Whether you're looking for someone to share adventures with, split costs, or simply enjoy companionship during your journey, our software helps you find your ideal travel partner.

Local Expertise: For travelers seeking authentic local experiences, our platform connects visitors with residents or experienced travelers in their destination city. This feature provides invaluable local insights, personalized recommendations, and potential meetups for a more immersive travel experience.

**Initial Requirements**   
1. User Registration and Profiles

REQ-1.1: Secure Sign-up and Login System

The system shall provide a secure sign-up and login process for users.

* The sign-up process shall require email verification.
* Passwords must meet industry-standard complexity requirements.

REQ-1.2: Detailed User Profiles

The system shall allow users to create and maintain detailed profiles.

Profiles shall include, at minimum:

* Basic personal information (name, age, gender)
* Travel preferences (e.g., budget, accommodation type, travel style)
* Interests and hobbies
* Languages spoken
* Users shall have the option to link their profile to social media accounts.
* Profile photos shall be required and subject to automated and manual review.

2. Trip Planning and Matching

REQ-2.1: Trip Plan Creation and Posting

The system shall allow users to create and post detailed trip plans.

* Trip plans shall include:
* Destination(s)
* Date range
* Preferred activities
* Number of companions sought
* Budget range
* Users shall be able to save draft trip plans and edit them before posting.

REQ-2.2: Trip and Companion Search Functionality

The system shall provide a comprehensive search function for finding trips or companions.

Users shall be able to search based on:

* Destination
* Date range
* Interests
* User characteristics (age, gender, languages spoken)
* The search function shall support filtering and sorting of results.
* Search results shall display key information about trips and potential companions.

3. Communication System

REQ-3.1: In-app Messaging

The system shall provide an in-app messaging system for users to connect and plan.

* Users shall have the ability to block other users from messaging them.

REQ-3.2: Group Chat Functionality

The system shall support group chats for multi-person trips.

* Users shall be able to create and name group chats.
* Group chats shall support adding and removing members.
* The system shall provide admin controls for the group creator.
* Group chats shall include a shared trip planning feature (e.g., itinerary, expense tracking).

**Questions for the Client**

* What is the primary target audience for this platform (e.g., age range, solo travelers, group travelers)?
* Are there specific regions or countries you want to focus on initially?
* Do you want to incorporate any monetization features (e.g., premium memberships, commission from local guide bookings)?
* How do you envision the verification process for users to ensure safety and trust?
* Are there any specific features you consider essential that haven't been mentioned?
* How do you plan to market and grow the user base for this platform?
* Do you want to integrate with any existing travel services or APIs (e.g., booking platforms, travel information)?
* What are your expectations for the MVP (Minimum Viable Product) and timeline for launch?
* What should we name our platform?

Meeting number 1 notes:

* Customer recommends to start with searching by destinations only for now
  + Find people and destinations
  + Suggested filters to add: gender, country of origin
* Customer recommends to design iteratively so that adding on to product is easier later on
  + We should focus on demonstrating feasibility right now
* Possible next steps:
  + Search social media to tell me who a potential travel buddy is
  + Travel buddy reviews
  + Find people for entire trips and plan out transportation in app (not just for meeting up at the destination, but for traveling between destinations together)
  + Season-sensitive tips: ex. If someone wants to visit a lake to swim, notify user if it may be frozen at the time of the trip
  + Game-ify
* Regarding using other apps for communication between travel buddies:
  + it’s good to use other apps to avoid responsibility and cost, but we lose the analytics part
* Regarding using open-source components:
  + Make sure to cite/refer
  + Make sure ok to use commercially, not just for personal use (if applicable)
  + The more reused components we use, the more we will need to deliver to impress people
* Regarding using our own authentication system:
  + Make sure customer data is not being exposed
* Regarding matching/suggesting people as travel buddies:
  + Comment-like structure under trip posts for manual selection:
    - What happens when many users? - need to read through thousands of comments to find a buddy? Conversation threads can be very long
    - Long comment thread makes it hard to find people
      * Maybe use AI or text mining (ex. Amy commented on your trips involving hiking - suggest Amy as travel buddy)
    - Keep comment threads forever? Until trip is over? Until trip deleted? Have an expiry date?
  + Travel buddy suggestions
    - Maybe based on preset preferences in your profile? Instead of filtering every time
  + Review other trips
    - “I liked X, but would have preferred to leave out activity Y”
  + Transient profile, not corporal profile
  + Perhaps we can differentiate things that a user is always interested in versus only occasionally
* Customer recommends writing down all ‘crazy’ ideas, keeping them in the backlog, and going through them once in a while
* Other recommendations:
  + Consider CI/CD pipeline
  + By mid December have at least 80% of product done
  + Prioritize the requirements
  + Even if we encounter bugs, continue to implement the core of the product (don’t focus on making every little detail perfect for now)
  + Consider a release branch
  + Architecture? (mentioned onion architecture)
  + Present something incomplete rather than postpone a client demo meeting
  + Design documents
  + Next steps:
    - Set up jira board
    - Plan sprints
    - Think about what we need from the client
    - Set up github for communicating with the client

**Action Items**

* Participants to continue brainstorming and refining the platform's requirements.
* Create a collaboration space for ongoing communication and updates.
* Prioritize foundational infrastructure and finalize initial requirements.
* Present any progress or outstanding issues promptly in future meetings.
* Explore and finalize the authentication mechanism, considering third-party options like Gmail.
* Initiate sprint planning utilizing a Kanban or Scrum board and collaborate efficiently using tools like Jira.

**Key Decisions**

* Authentication will initially leverage Gmail to streamline user identity verification.
* The initial focus will be on building a web-based platform before considering mobile applications due to development and resource challenges.
* The primary components for development are user registration, trip profile creation, and search functionalities.
* The communication feature will initially not retain in-app messaging to reduce responsibility and associated costs.
* Core milestones and sprint timelines emphasized, targeting a functional initial version by April.

**Notes and Observations**

* An interactive session took place discussing the potential components and functionalities of a travel companion platform.
* The platform aims to connect travellers with companions and local experts, enhancing travel experiences.
* Discussions revolved around core requirements like account setup, profile details, and trip planning.
* Automatic profile linking and verification processes were addressed, balancing user convenience and safety.
* The need for a sophisticated search function supporting various filters is explained.
* A lean approach to feature development using scalable and modular design principles is encouraged.
* Future business considerations such as monetization strategies and expansion plans mentioned.
* Emphasis is placed on early and consistent communication among team members to streamline progress.
* The meeting concluded with a focus on preparing for the phased delivery of the product using agile methodologies.