

GOTHENTIC

Final Report 02809

Leonardo Rodovero
Technical University of Denmark
s240095@student.dtu.dk

Upasana Pattnaik
Technical University of Denmark
s190386@student.dtu.dk

Samer Bujana Escalona
Technical University of Denmark
s240033@student.dtu.dk

Jaya Priya Nagarajan
Technical University of Denmark
s246496@student.dtu.dk

Andras Kurucsai
Technical University of Denmark
s240067@student.dtu.dk

Mathias Elgaard Carlsen
Technical University of Denmark
s151754@student.dtu.dk

1 INTRODUCTION (ANDRAS)

The way most people plan their trips can be roughly split into two categories. We can either choose to go with a fully organized itinerary that a travel agency offers, or we can plan everything step-by-step by ourselves. Choosing the first option might be preferable, as we can spare the effort of planning and researching, however it takes away the flexibility to customize the trip to our specific needs, and the ability to experience local culture in a truly authentic way.

Nowadays, as technology provides more and more tools that make travel planning easier, a growing number of people tend to go with the second option. We can easily book flights or accommodation, and we can look up restaurants and read reviews of them. However, this requires time and energy as we have to research and plan every bit of the itinerary, and what is even worse, we might still not get what we would expect. As more and more people try to pursue true local culture and try to find the most authentic experiences, the places that were once truly that have become popular and viral online, therefore overcrowded with tourists, and scams and tourist traps appear. That of course completely defeats the purpose. On another note, planning a whole trip by ourselves also makes it difficult to verify that the places we are going to are safe, real, and they provide what they advertise.

Our motivation is to create a platform that solves these issues. We introduce an application that allows people to share their personal stories, inspiring others to create their perfect experience. It can be long and distant trips with traveling, accommodation, food, etc., or just a fun afternoon that you want to spend in your hometown, planning becomes easier, faster and more structured. The stories you read are always written by real, validated users, so you can explore the world in the best way possible.

In this assignment, we first introduce the scope of our application by defining the problem, proposing a solution and defining a unique value proposition as well as our target users. Following this, we mention some existing work in this specific area. Next, we briefly describe the iterations we went through while developing a prototype for our platform, followed by a discussion about our findings. Lastly, we conclude our learning and the experience we gained while developing our project.

2 SCOPE (JAYA)

As described above, the **problem** many of us face is the desire for authentic travel experiences that are engaging, connect us with local cultures, and create lasting memories. However, crafting such memorable journeys often requires meticulous planning, extensive

research, and insights from locals or those who have experienced them. To avoid these hassles, we often settle for simpler plans instead.

The **solution** is a platform that brings like-minded travelers together in a community, where every valuable information is documented, reviewed, enriched, and consolidated in a structured, simplified format. This platform leverages the collective knowledge base of the community, enabling effortless personalization and tailoring each journey to match your style, interests, and preferences.

The **unique value proposition** of the platform lies in curating authentic experiences by offering access to useful insights shared by passionate travelers, ensuring that each journey is meaningful and memorable. It simplifies the planning process, eliminating the need for extensive research and making enriching travel experiences more accessible. The platform also allows travelers to effortlessly tailor their trips to align with their preferences, interests, and travel style, while building a community of explorers who can connect to share knowledge and discover unique adventures.

Gothentic **targets** anyone who values authentic travel experiences and seek more than just a vacation, yet prefer not to invest excessive time in planning and research. It also appeals to passionate travelers who wish to exchange stories and insights with a community of like-minded individuals.

3 EXISTING WORK AND COMPETITIVE SOLUTION (UPASANA)

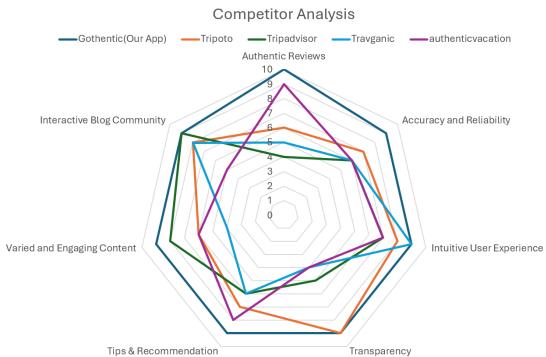


Figure 1: Competitor Analysis

Our app is based on user's blogs, community feedback, travel experiences, which create trust and reliability. We focus on user identification through the app login process, reviews and social media tools to ensure all the feedback users give is genuine and accurate. Apart from that, being a travel planning tool, the app provides and recommends clear insights into countries or cities, local attractions, cultural heritage, authentic food and different categories options to make user's travel journeys more user friendly.

To provide an intuitive and user-friendly design, the app and landing page include filter and search options that help users to make their plan faster and easy. Our app features a simple search option, allowing users to select destinations based on their preferences and access the best possible suggestions, including blogs and posts, offering authentic and reliable choices.

The interactive map provides an overview of personal blogs in a particular region, making it easier for users to find and follow them. This approach helps users plan their itineraries faster and more efficiently. Additionally, by providing AI features to improve suggestions with the best and most optimal information, according to user's needs. These features make the platform a robust and handy app that offers authentic suggestions and connects users with real people to share experiences and insights.

Users get detailed information about a particular location or activity of interest, with all relevant blogs or posts from real users sorted by the most likes and reviews. It is also linked to external websites that users can visit to read more and save for future reference. The app also provides the flexibility to write your own experiences as blogs and add pictures or videos to help other to finalize their trips. They can view their profiles, including travel activities and saved itineraries for future plans and share itineraries with their friends and relatives.

4 1st ITERATION (MATHIAS/UPASANA)



Figure 2: Initial Design - Desktop Version

In the initial version, we created an interactive design with search, filter, categories, and relevant suggestions to test with users. The search option allows users to search according to their preferences. The filter option provides categorized, authentic options to help and motivate users to choose a genuine experience. After conducting user test and feedback, we created a user-friendly mobile app.

4.1 Testing perceptions of blog sharing navigation and system hierarchy (Mathias)

Regarding the feedback from the poster presentation, it was important that the system and frames communicated the concept of a

platform to share blogs, to provide users with inspiration to personalize and plan their authentic trip and provide an intuitive structure to do so. It was also important to assess how well key words and themes could help the user find blogs of interest.

4.2 How the testing was conducted (Upasana)

The test was performed through a low fidelity prototype, by designing a simple prototype that could perform the key features, such as search mechanism, map overview with attractions, thematic overview of personalized interests, theme ratings, and a personalized planning tool. The focus was on ease of use and quality of user experience. However, user observation was also applied, including the UX metric sheet to collect quantitative data. The baseline and target levels were set to be between 50-80 percent to accept a key feature in the system.

4.3 The results (Upasana)

Almost all the users found both the system structure and blog ratings useful and intuitive. However, very few found the travel planner tool useful, and raised the question of its complexity and need for constant updates. The map did also fail the test, since many users did not know how to use it and were confused by the color codes. But overall, the users were delighted by the opportunity to share blogs and information with each other.

The users liked the idea of a search mechanism based on categories and asked if these categories somehow could be illustrated through ratings and icons, to inspire the user to get more information.

4.4 Output and improvements from validation (Upasana)

With the trip price calculator deleted, the app should follow a similar hierarchy structure: search destination, find blogs of interest, and choose attractions and activities. Category icons/indicators should be included to inspire users to engage with the blogs. Key words should also be included but should rather be included in the user's profile. The attraction locations on a map should be eliminated, and instead be added in the blogs. Still, it mattered to the users to know price estimates of attractions.

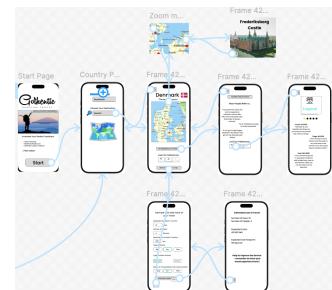


Figure 3: Design after first iteration-Mobile Version

5 2nd ITERATION (JAYA / MATHIAS)

5.1 Test (JAYA)

By having fundamental functions established and included in the system, based on this first iteration, the next user testing had to rely on configurations of those elements, including preferred user interactions. In the iteration, the following were tested:

- *Search function*: How the users would prefer to interact with the search and sort function to find relevant blogs of interest.
- *Interactions with quick tips*: Assessing its relevance and perceived value compared to reading the actual blog.
- *Perception of the indexes*: How well the users find the icons indexes to the blogs relevant and understandable.
- *External link connections*: Revealing if the feature was important to the users or could be redundant.

5.2 How testing was conducted (JAYA)

Due to time and planning, it mattered to get information fast and elaboratively, hence, both quantitative and qualitative data were important. It was important to observe and document how the users interacted with the different features, but also to hear and understand their perceptions of the system. To support this, the methods of ‘think aloud’ and semi-structured interview were used. The ‘think aloud’ method provided feedback on the user interaction, while the interview ensured every user would be asked the same questions (quantitative), but also to provide a framework to elaborate on important questions (qualitative).

5.3 Results (MATHIAS)

While the ‘quick tips’ and ‘external links’ offered high value to the users (80%), the search (60%) and icons (20%) feature did not perform that well. The users explained that ‘quick tips’ and ‘external links’ would reveal fast and important clarifications to confirm attractions. The search function did matter, but it suffered from the lack of hierarchy and intuition, since many users got stuck in the flow (40%). However, the icons were only valued by 20%. As many users complained, they found the icons unquantifiable, since a monetary and ecofriendly assessment depends on the individual blog-writer and user. E.g. that could result in the users being primed to think a trip is ecofriendly, when it is not.

5.4 Other feedback (MATHIAS)

An important take out of from the interviews was the general process steps a user will take before choosing attractions and activities for a trip. And as many users did clarify, it all depends on the type and duration of a trip. Either people will go for a weekend trip (one city), or a long trip (multiple cities), and that choice will impact on the type of attractions, expenditures and number of activities.

The ‘quick tips’ were great, but they should be sorted by time, so recent tips are shown at the top.

Also, the users expressed the need to make a travel list of attractions and activities to see, based on the blog of recommendations. This list should, ideally, include some kind of estimated expenses.

5.5 Output and improvements from validation (MATHIAS)

As confirmed, the external links and quick tips provided a lot of value to the users and should be fully integrated into the system. A webpage was added to the system, to demonstrate access to external webpage, and the quick tips were sorted by date instead of likes.

Additionally, the search function would be integrated to show country first, and then city. And, the opportunity to add attractions to a personalized trip list was embedded into the app. And those lists should be saved and include an editing feature.

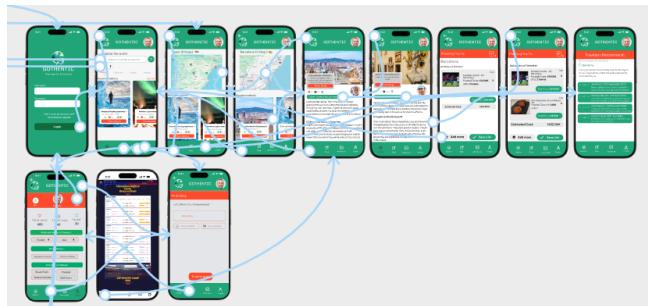


Figure 4: Design after second iteration.

6 3rd ITERATION (SAMER)

6.1 Test and feedback (SAMER)

At the end of the second iteration, a presentation was made in front of our colleagues, the teacher and the assistants of the teachers. For the third and last iteration, we took their diverse opinions and thoughts as input to know what had to be worked on and improved on. All this information was introduced on a platform facilitated by the teacher, and we could easily access it and read it whenever we need it. We collected all the information retrieved in this session, summarized it, and made a bullet point list of the highest priority changes.

These are the notes that we took on the critical feedback:

- Scope and target audience:
 - The target audience is too broad; needs a clearer focus on the niche and a tailored layout.
 - Some reviewers were unclear about the unique value of the app or its main purpose.
 - Mixing multiple features (e.g., blogs, prices, itineraries) dilutes focus.
- Design and Usability:
 - The screens are crowded with too much information, creating a busy layout.
 - A better visual hierarchy is needed for important text.
 - The font and color palette lack coherence in places.
 - Reading areas (e.g. blogs) are too constrained.
- General observations:
 - Misalignment between “authentic” positioning and some features (e.g. common activities).
 - Concern over bloggers possibly being paid advertisers.
 - Questions about AI’s role in generating content and the data it provides.

- The tagline could use rephrasing for clarity (e.g., "Meaningful" and "Authentic").

6.2 Improvements and changes (SAMER)

Some of the points collected from the feedback are more directed towards our presentation itself and how we sold our product. For example, what is the target audience; or the use of words like *authentic* and *meaningful*. To fix this we have to clarify and set a specific idea on what we want to sell and deliver. We agreed that the target audience are those travelers, without a specific age range, that just want to collect more information beforehand, and provided by other travelers that have visited their destination before them.

Other problems were better off by just deleting them, like for example all mentions of AI. The addition of AI to our product was just generating confusion to the end users and potential clients on how it was being used. Since we decided that our app was going to be a community based social media it did not make much sense adding an AI that did not have much purpose. At some point in the development process the idea of adding the possibility of estimating costs of the activities the user might want to realize during their trip. This feature only added an unnecessary complexity that faded the sense of social media of the app and shifting its purpose more to a trip planner, so the best solution was to get rid of the feature.

The remaining feedback was more related to design choices. We listened to the people's comments and we made a more simple, direct, and cohesive design, which we firmly believe improves the user experience.

In Appendix J can be seen the validation and the changes done for the last iteration.

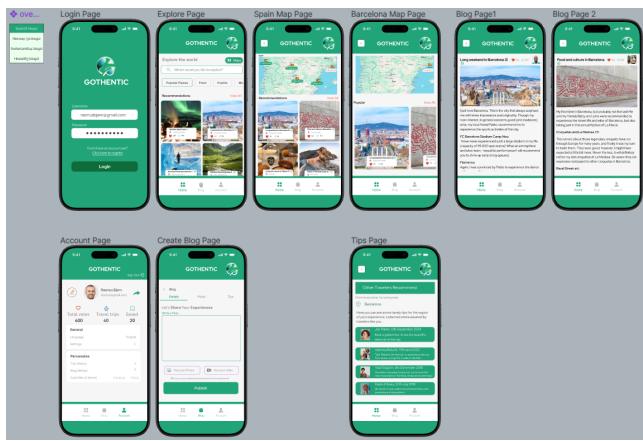


Figure 5: Design after third and last iteration.

7 DISCUSSION (LEONARDO)

These iterative stages of development have provided very insightful information about user needs, preferences, and pain points, which will eventually serve to improve functionality and design. From the originally proposed solution (see sec. 2), to finalizing the features in this platform we have been able to observe in usage that some functionalities helped users, such as the "quick tips" or external links (sec 5.3). At the same time, more complex elements, including

AI-based recommendations and detailed cost estimations, introduced confusion and diluted the platform's core appeal, prompting their removal in the final iteration (sec. 6.2). This iterative improvement is in line with the principle of steering clear from unnecessary complexity to maintain transparency and trust with users, a principle further supported by the prolific literature on user experience design [2]. Indeed, this approach would prevent the rise of "dark patterns" that might deceive or manipulate users [1], ensuring the platform continues operating as a community-driven, ethical tool.

Nevertheless, it should be understood that the process of validation has certain limitations. Although we did manage to obtain helpful feedback and insights through multiple rounds of testing (sec. 5.1 6.1), we had a limited user base, and the testing scenarios may not fully represent the wide range of travelers and experiences that this platform aims to serve. Moreover, aspects related to authenticity, in terms of ensuring contributors' genuineness in sharing their unbiased experiences rather than advertising, remain difficult to validate at this stage. As this is an evolving platform, much more testing with a broader and diverse audience is warranted to further generalize these findings and provide a solution that truly gives users meaningful and authentic travel experiences.

8 CONCLUSION (LEONARDO)

In conclusion, the evolution of Gothentic has shown the importance of an iterative user-centered design process. Through improving the features of the platform, simplification of its visual hierarchy, and focus on real user-generated content, we have moved closer to a solution that more closely matches user expectations and the purpose of the platform itself, as outlined in sec 2 and sec. 3. Removing unnecessary complexity, such as AI-powered cost estimating, let us concentrate on our objective: to serve travelers by helping them uncover and contribute authentic experiences around a trusted, community-minded platform. Drawing on principles informed both by design research and ethical considerations in UX design [1] [2], our goal was to devise solutions that would satisfy user expectations but also respect their autonomy by avoiding manipulative design patterns.

However, as with any product at this level, further optimizations and verifications are needed. Future efforts will involve testing with a wider and more diverse user base, along with additional improvements to ensure that authenticity, simplicity, and community building remain at the core of the value the platform provides. Through ongoing feedback collection, user satisfaction monitoring, and adaptation to emerging travel trends, our goal is to establish Gothentic as a go-to source for travelers seeking authentic experiences.

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- [1] Jacob Aagaard, Miria Emma Clausen Knudsen, Per Bækgaard, and Kevin Doherty. 2022. A Game of Dark Patterns - Designing Healthy, Highly-Engaging Mobile Games. *Proceedings of 2022 Chi Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (2022), 438. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3491101.3519837>
- [2] Colin M. Gray, Yubo Kou, Bryan Battles, Joseph Hoggatt, and Austin L. Toombs. 2018. The Dark (Patterns) Side of UX Design. In *Proceedings of the 2018 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (Montreal QC, Canada) (CHI '18). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3173574.3174108>

A LANDING PAGE (FINAL)

The screenshot shows the final design of the Gothentic landing page. At the top, there's a header with the logo 'GOTHENTIC' and the tagline 'Meaningful & Authentic'. Below the header is a large banner featuring a person walking through a lush green forest. The banner has a search bar that says 'Search by Country/City'. To the right of the search bar are three icons: a magnifying glass, a location pin, and a user profile.

Built by travelers, for travelers

Welcome to Gothentic

Here we connect you with local stories, reviews, and tips for genuine travel experiences. Discover hidden gems, authentic flavors, and unique traditions with our curated blogs and insights. Travel is not just where you go it is how you experience.

Go Local. Go Real. Go Authentic.

Explore blogs, share experiences

Real tips and honest feedback from those who have been there, helping you explore with confidence.

Top Destinations

- ICELAND**
- NEW ZEALAND**
- ENGLAND**
- ITALY**

What customers say about us

“Best on the market” - Daniel C., Corporate Planner

“Insider Tips” - Leni P., Event Attendee

“Journey Smarter” - Tate P., Project engineer

“Read Reviews” - James T., Traveler

“Offbeat Travels” - Anna W., Traveler

“Best Authentic Spots” - Daniel O., World Traveler

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B LEAN BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS (FINAL)



Lean Canvas is adapted from The Business Model Canvas (<http://www.businessmodelgeneration.com>) and is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported License.

Figure 6: Lean Canvas

C USER STORY MAP (FINAL)

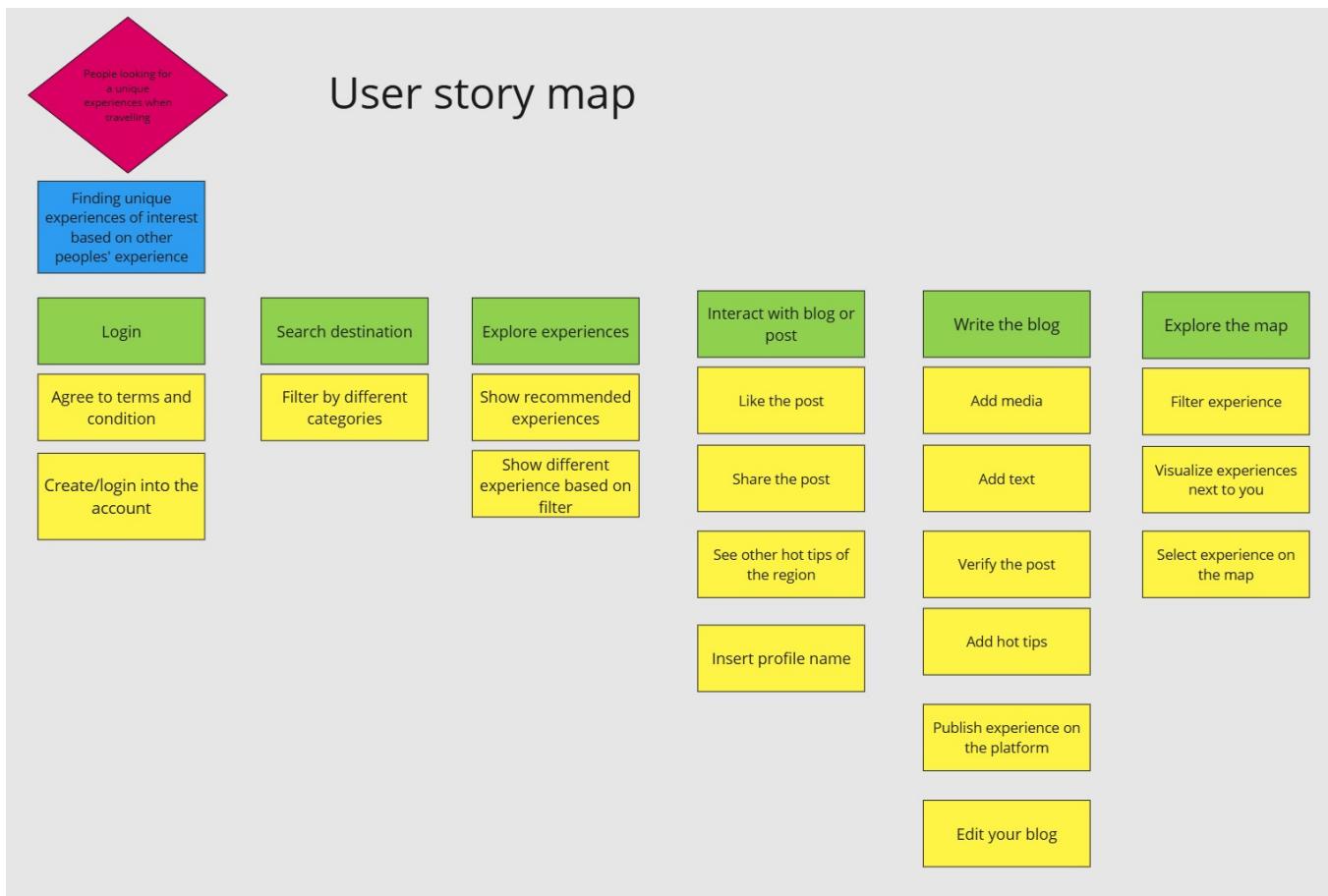


Figure 7: User story Map

D WIREFRAME (FINAL)

Annotated Wireframes

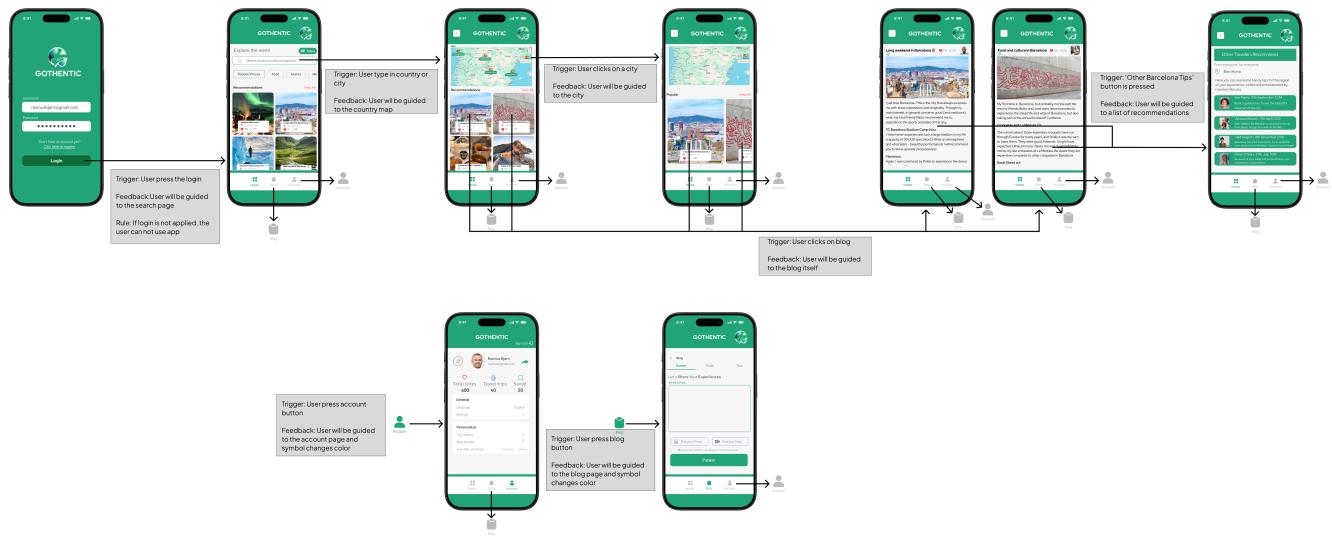


Figure 8: Wireframe after the last iteration.

E 1ST ITERATION USER TEST

1st iteration:

Work Role: User class	UX Goal	UX Measure	Measuring Instrument	UX Metric	Baseline Level	Target Level	Observed Results
Travelers (families and individuals who want to experience a unique and personalized vacation which also make users plan accordingly to their budget and ethics (carbon footprint)	Clarify considerations of 'cold start problem', that start page appeal to the users' expectations	Users' opinion to start-page according to system content, and unique value proposition.	Quantitative user feedback (yes or no) Qualitative feedback, semi structured interview	Assessing quotes and feedback from users.	No test person should be confused about the overall theme of the system based on start page. At least half of the test persons should be able to describe some UVP	All test persons should be able to correlate the start page to the UVP.	All test persons could confirm, that the system had to do with planning travel. But no test persons could describe the UVP based on the start page.
Travelers (families and individuals who want to experience a unique and personalized vacation which also make users plan accordingly to their budget and ethics (carbon footprint)	Testing whether design structure is adequate and appealing to the user (are intuitive to use, follow logical flow and hierarchy).	User's opinion to the system structure, and embedded opportunities.	Quantitative user feedback (yes or no) Qualitative feedback, semi structured interview	Assessing quotes and feedback from users	At least half of the test persons should not get stuck in the system.	80% of the users should be able to test all functions without the need to ask for help.	All test persons perceived the system to be intuitive and easy to use. The hierarchy in the steps made good sense to the users. However, one page (the map) confused many of the users.
Travelers (families and individuals who want to experience a unique and personalized vacation which also make users plan accordingly to their budget and ethics (carbon footprint)	Testing how well recommendations and ratings works and appeal to the users	User's opinion to get feedback on interest based on which country they want to visit.	Quantitative user feedback (yes or no) Qualitative feedback, semi structured interview	Assessing quotes and feedback from users	At least 50% of the users should find the rating and feedback useful for their own planning.	80% of the users should find the rating and feedback useful for their own planning.	All the users found the feedback and rating useful for their own planning.

Figure 9: 1st iteration

F 1ST ITERATION USER TEST ANALYSIS

User Test – Project 1st iteration :

a) – Testing Start page, system structure, and user-share design:

- To inhibit the cold start problem, the start page/landing page had to be describing due to the unique value propositions of the system.
- It was important to test how well the first design made sense to the users (whether hierarchy and functions added value and sense as intended)
- Assessing how well the function to provide ratings and feedback to other users worked, and whether this feature was appealing to the users.

b) – How the testing was structured:

The testing was performed through qualitative methods, by using semi-structured interviews. But also, through 'thinking out loud' method. Since this iteration concern the first design, it was important to get fundamental feedback on the system, to reveal whether users would find the functions useful and interactive.

Thinking out loud and semi-structured interview were good tools to gather feedback on the system, since the users would reveal their thoughts, but also the opportunity to add sub-questions to their answers, if they needed more clarification.

c) – The results:

Cold start problem:

The users were now well aligned that the system dealt with travel planning, but still, many users were not quite sure about the UVP of using the system. They could confirm they could save money and track carbon footprint, but not in the sense they could explain of how the system worked, and to what extend it would benefit them.

System Structure:

All the users expressed good structure, hierarchy, and intuitive to use. However, the map slide provided some confusion. Many were not aware that you could interact with the map, and many users were not aware of the difference between the different colors on the map (what the attractions symbolized).

Sharing travel experience:

Many users were very amused by this feature, because you could find quotes to reveal your concerns to a certain matter (e.g. likelihood of rain on a summer day in Denmark) and validate your choice of country based on the ratings according to your personal interests.

d) Additional observations:

The users liked the opportunity for categories and scoring indexes, however, they preferred more categories to make it even more personalized. Though the hierarchy made good sense to all the users, some users expressed the need to design their trip based on interest (and let the system recommend countries for them), or include both opportunities. The users also mentioned, what if you want to visit 2 or more countries in the same trip? And on the interactive map, it should be possible to see the different prize tags on the activities and sight you could see in the countries.

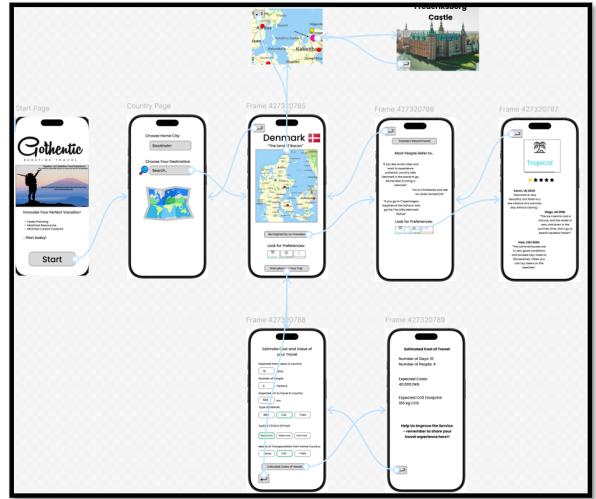


Figure 10: 1st iteration analysis

G 2ND ITERATION USER TEST

Work Role: User class	UX Goal	UX Measure	Measuring Instrument	UX Metric	Baseline Level	Target Level	Observed Results
Travelers (families and individuals who want to experience a unique and personalized vacation)	Testing user interaction with search and sort functions	Test whether the search and sort function help users access to unique travel experiences (blogs)	Quantitative user feedback (yes or no) Qualitative feedback, semi structured interview	Assessing quotes and feedback from users.	50% of the users find the search/sort function relevant to find blogs to personalize their travel	75% of the users find the search/sort function relevant to find blogs to personalize their travel	The system still suffered from not being intuitive in the search function. Only 60% of the test persons knew how to type in (as intended)
Travelers (families and individuals who want to experience a unique and personalized vacation)	User interaction with the quick tips function feature	Assessing how useful this feature are compared to the corresponding blog	Quantitative user feedback (yes or no) Qualitative feedback, semi structured interview	Assessing quotes and feedback from users	More than 50% prefer the quick tip feature function	More than 75% prefer the quick tip feature function	80% of the users found the quick tip feature just as important as the blog info. The reasons are described as speed and validation (users wish to be confirmed in their concerns about a destination)
Travelers (families and individuals who want to experience a unique and personalized vacation)	Testing user perception of blog rating score, price index, and sustainable index (and how to make it quantifiable).	Reveal how parameters belonging to the blog, can make be helpful and provide quantifiable info to the user	Quantitative user feedback (yes or no) Qualitative feedback, semi structured interview	Assessing quotes and feedback from users	More than 50% understand meaning of the symbols. Only 30% request more symbol clarification	More than 75% understand meaning of symbol. More than 50% request more symbol clarification	Only 20% found the symbols useful. As many users pointed out, the symbolic value is unclear. And they might disturb the user experience. Consider adding likes to blogs instead of ratings.
Travelers (families and individuals who want to experience a unique and personalized vacation)	Validating user need for connection/link to external web pages	Reveal how relevant this feature is or whether it could be redundant	Quantitative user feedback (yes or no) Qualitative feedback, semi structured interview	Assessing quotes and feedback from users	30% will find the link to external page relevant	More than 50% will find the link to external page relevant	80% preferred this feature, because this way the users could get more information (validation), make actual bookings, and review recent updates.

Figure 11: 2nd iteration - user test

H 2ND ITERATION USER TEST ANALYSIS

User Test – Project 2nd iteration :

a) Testing out key features of the app:

Search Function: Testing user interaction with search and sort function, and whether the search and sort function help users access unique travel experiences (blogs).

Interaction with Quick Tips: User interaction with the quick tips function feature and assessing how useful this feature is compared to the corresponding blogs.

Understanding of indexes: Testing user perception of blog rating score, price index, and sustainable index (and how to make it quantifiable). Testing how relevant they are to the users

External Link Connection: Validating user need for connection/link to external web pages, and if this feature is relevant or could be redundant

b) How the testing was structured:

Because many key elements had to be evaluated, time and user interactions had to be carefully considered. Therefore, it was important that the users got hand-on experience with the app, to test the functions and features. Perceptions and preferences should emerge, hence, the user testing was structured through semi-structured interview and speaking out loud method. Each test person would briefly be introduced to the purpose of the app (unique value proposition). This helped identify and note the users' actual interaction and perceptions of the features, but it also helped the group to ask for extra clarifications/confirmation or elaborate on answers of interest.

c) The results:

Search Function: The search function did not provide adequate logic and intuitive sense to the users, and many users got stuck at this part. Key words of personal interest are of course important in a search, but only relevant in few circumstances. As users expressed, interests and activities all depend on their type of vacation, e.g., summer vacation or weekend trip. As elaborated, long vacations typically require a country search, while a weekend trip only involves one city. But both functions are important. But it is still important with personal key words (e.g. in profile settings) to ensure that most relevant blogs ends up in the top of the feed.

Interaction with Quick Tips: Users found the quick search just as relevant as the blogs. As many expressed, it is a key element to gather relevant information fast about a destination. And since these destinations are validated by many users, the user will quickly be inspired to read blogs or validate/confirm whether a destination should be chosen for a trip.

Understanding of indexes: The icons did not provide adequate information to the users and were, in fact, a disturbing/deceptive element to many users. Money and sustainable index are assessed differently and could mislead users to get wrong perception of activities. Also, key words of interest are individual, meaning a niche blog could provide high quality, though minimal audience.

External Link Connection:

This was very relevant to almost all users, since it provides the users with the opportunity to seek external validation, or an access to do an actual purchase of an activity.

d) Additional observations:

The performances and hierarchy should still be improved. Also, there is a lot of icons remaining that does not provide any tasks and feedback. To choose tasks, it matters that people have an idea of the embedded cost before deciding on a trip, and convenient if these activities somehow could be grouped.

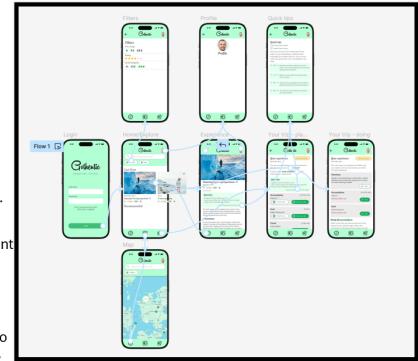


Figure 12: 2nd iteration analysis

I USER SURVEY

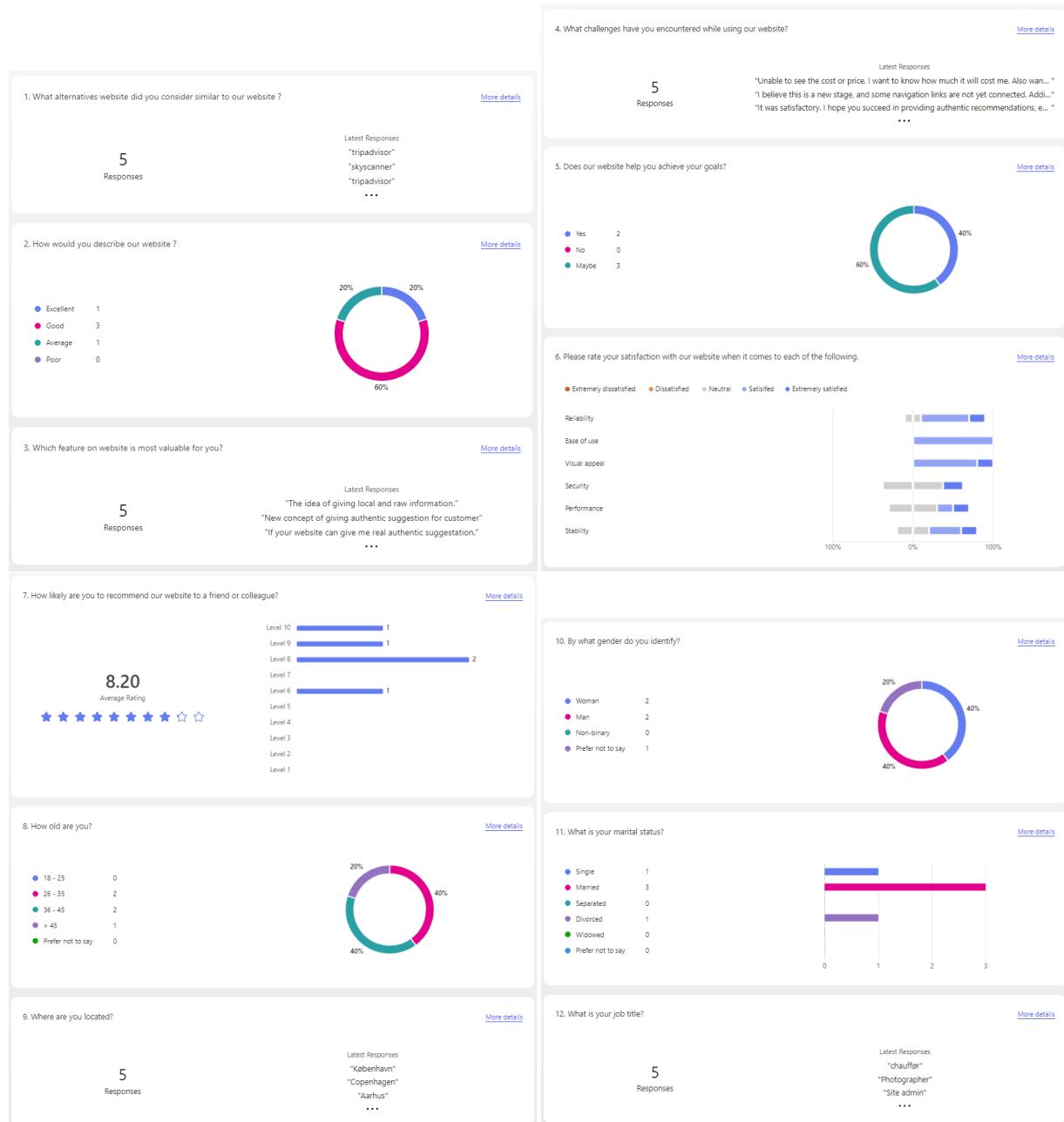


Figure 13: User Survey (Quantitative Research)

J VALIDATION OF THE LAST ITERATION (SAMER / LEONARDO)

Feedback / Statement	Validation & Interpretation	Action Taken / Status
“Cool prototype with a lot of useful features.”	Valid. The breadth of functionalities was appreciated.	Accepted. Retained core features.
“There is a lot of information and different options/buttons, stored within a small space, this may create confusion.”	Valid. The interface was perceived as crowded and complex.	Reduced visual clutter, improved spacing, and reorganized layout.
“Prototype has cool functionalities, simplify the landing page a bit.”	Valid. The landing page needed simplification for better clarity.	Streamlined the landing page, reduced elements and complexity.
“Good scoping and MVP. Great potential.”	Valid. Concept and fundamental approach acknowledged.	Continued with current approach, no immediate changes necessary.
“Not very specific scoping, reading blogs etc. is a bit like Googling. How is this less time-consuming?”	Partially valid. Differentiation from standard search methods was unclear.	Clarified unique value proposition, emphasizing trust, user verification, and curated local insights.
“Might be prone to bloggers who are paid advertisers.”	Valid concern. Ensuring authenticity is critical.	Future work: implement stricter verification of contributors and community moderation tools.
“Screens are cramped, making it hard to read during presentation.”	Valid. High information density hindered readability.	Increased font sizes, improved font consistency, and applied better visual hierarchy.
“A lot of known solutions exist. Hard to show unique value.”	Valid. Distinguishability from competitors needs emphasis.	Highlighted community-driven content, authentic stories, and direct external links for validation.
“Search bar should be visible immediately.”	Valid. Discoverability of core functions is essential.	Placed the search bar in a prominent, easily accessible location on the landing page.
“Color palette could be improved.”	Valid. Visual coherence and readability can be enhanced by color adjustments.	Adjusted colors to improve contrast and readability.
“Better visual hierarchy and focus on niche target group.”	Valid. Broad targeting may cause confusion.	Refined target audience definition and tailored layout and content accordingly.
“Unclear what problem the app is solving—just a travel blog?”	Valid. Problem statement needed reinforcing.	Emphasized authenticity and community validation in the final description, distinguishing it from generic travel blogs.
“Reading area in blog pages is too low.”	Valid. Limited reading space reduced usability.	Implemented scrolling and larger reading areas for improved text visibility.
“Consider removing AI if it confuses users.”	Valid. AI references were unclear and not adding value.	Removed AI references, focusing on community-driven content.
“Design can be improved, screens too busy.”	Valid. Non-adherence to some design heuristics noted.	Reduced content density, unified fonts and colors, and ensured consistent layout.
“Scope down for MVP, currently too broad.”	Valid. Too many features for a minimal viable product.	Prioritized essential functionalities and postponed more complex features for future development.
“Tagline should be ‘Meaningful and Authentic’ rather than ‘Meaningfully’.”	Valid. Language clarity is crucial.	Revised tagline for clarity and correctness.

Table 1: Validation results of the final iteration of the Gothentic prototype.

K FINAL PROTOTYPE

[Link to final prototype.](#)