

Nov 2024 – Jan 2025

Airport Dining Experience App

A research-led exploration of a **complex service system**.

Duration: 3 Months | **Team:** 5 Designers

Sector: Hospitality & Travel Services



The goal was not to design a finished product, but to clarify how information, context, and decision-making should work within a complex environment.

Meet the Team

Focus: framing complexity, guiding discovery, and enabling confident team decisions.



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Systems & Discovery



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Context & Intent

90%

Of Travelers have **SKIPPED** eating at an airport due to time, poor options, or inconvenience.

This behavior isn't just about food: **it's the result of fragmented information, time pressure, and unclear decision paths within a complex service system.**



Top Passenger Complaints

Reveal a Coordination Problem

Restaurant
Findability

Navigation &
Accessibility

Timing & Service
Transparency

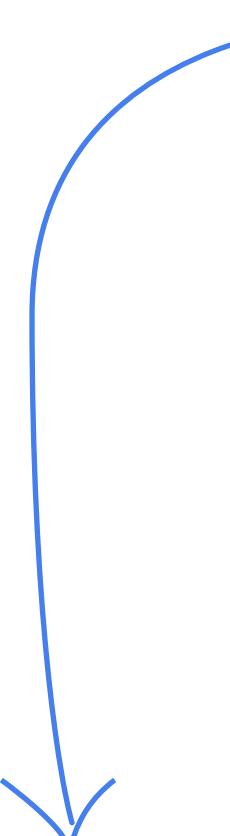
Pricing & Budget
Awareness

Food Choices &
Dietary Options

Passengers struggle not because of lack of options, but because **information and services aren't coordinated in real time.**

Framed Problem

Travelers struggle to make quick, confident dining decisions in airports due to **fragmented, generic information and lack of real-time context,** leading to confusion and a stressful experience.



System Complexity

Opportunity Areas

Opportunity Areas Identified Through Research

Effortless Wayfinding

Enable clear, step-by-step guidance that helps travelers quickly orient themselves and reach nearby dining options with minimal cognitive effort.

Low-Stress Discovery

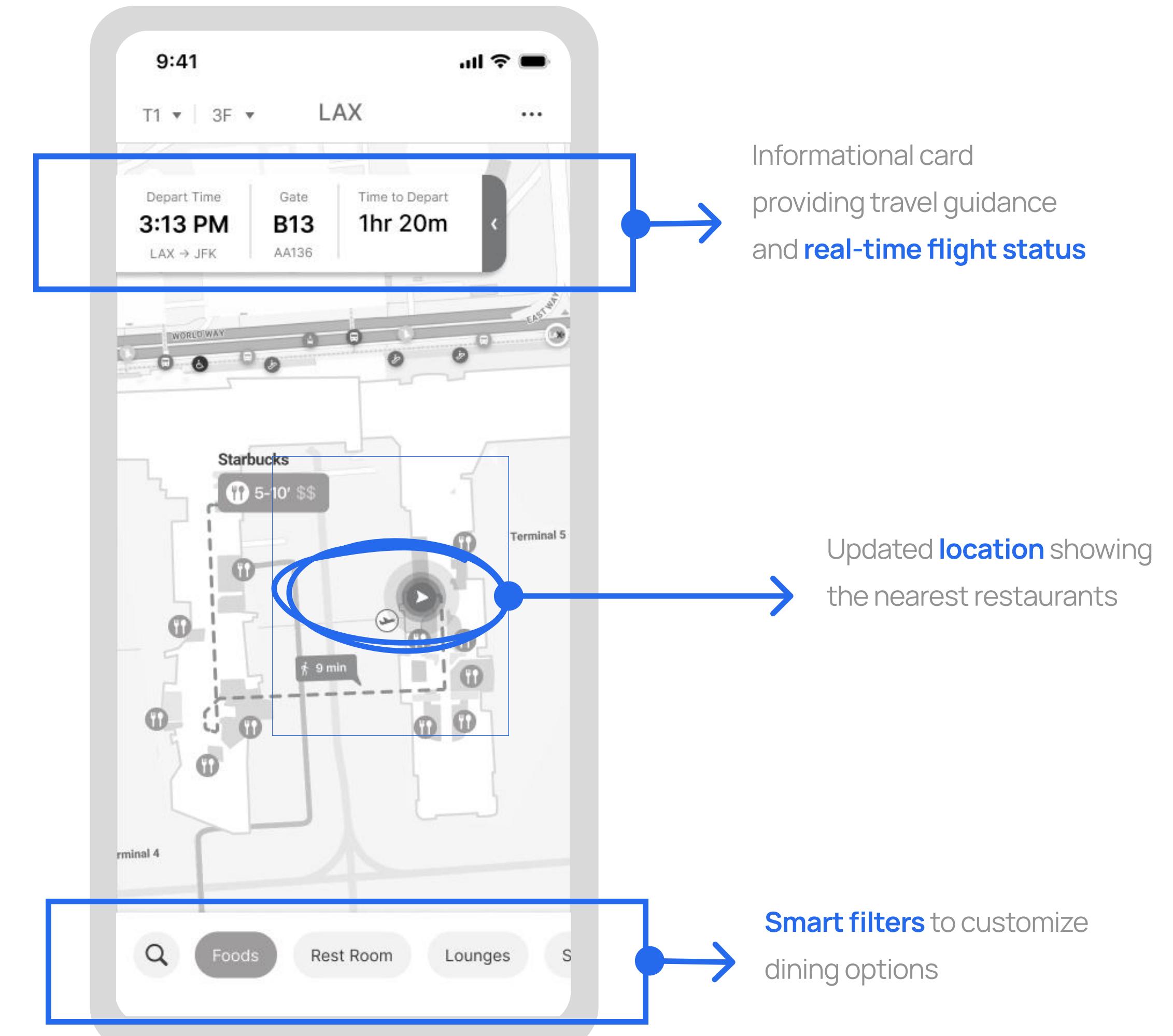
Support a calm, intuitive way for travelers to explore and compare dining options, reducing decision friction under time pressure.

Context-Aware Recommendations

Surface relevant dining options using real-time context such as location, flight timing, and individual preferences to support faster, more confident decisions.



Early concepts used to explore how **real-time context and personalization** could reduce decision friction.



Exploration & Validation

Testing was used to validate assumptions and inform next steps, not to finalize UI.

Testing Tool: Maze

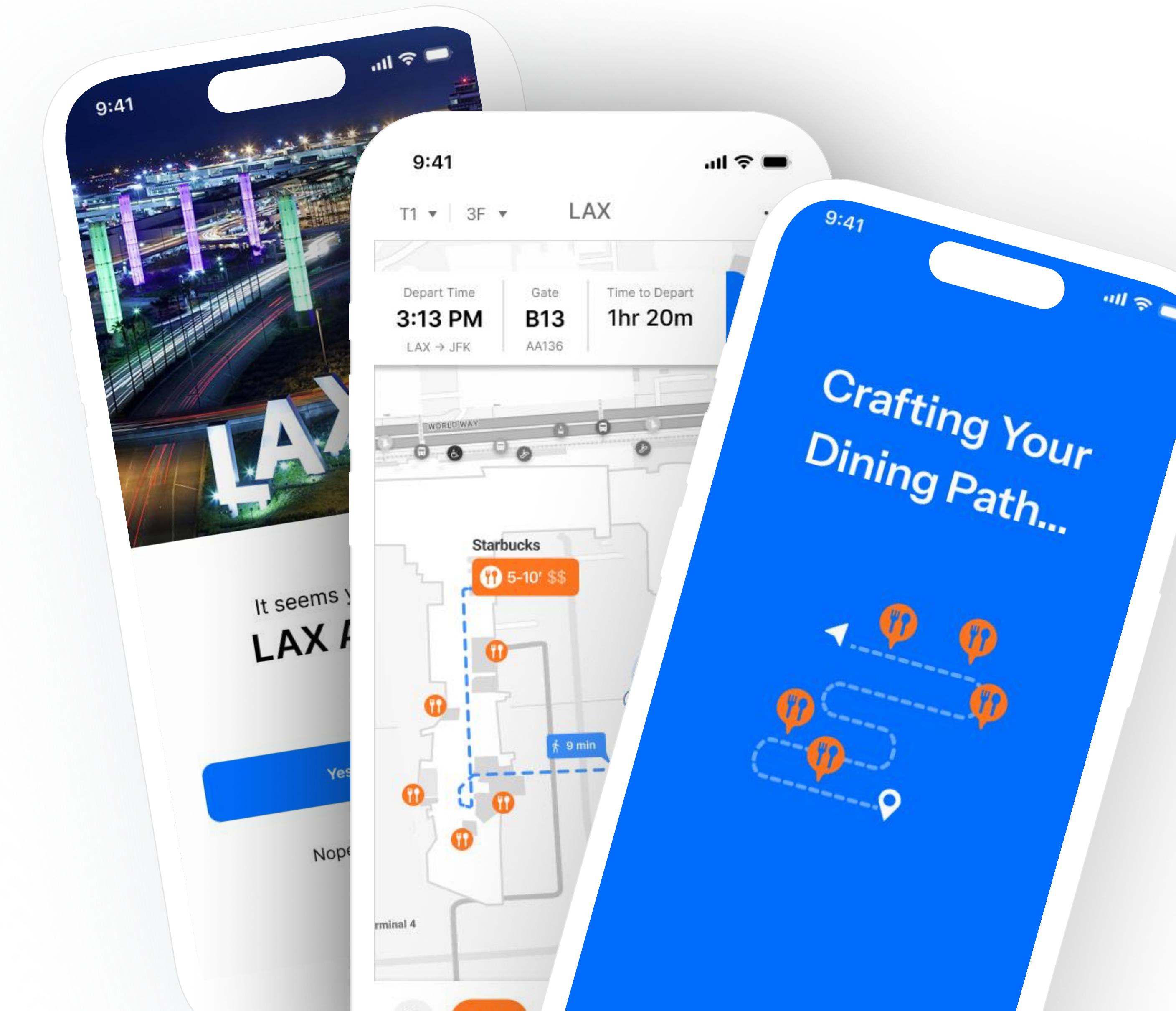
Duration: 1 week

Participants: Remote users from Europe, the USA, and Latin America.

Methodology: Unmoderated usability testing

Objective: Assess navigation, task efficiency, and overall usability.

Outcome: Identified pain points and improvement opportunities.



Exploration & Validation

Insights

Users validated the concept, but struggled with decision-making under time pressure.

Decision-making

Filtering and search needed clearer mental models to support quick choices.

Mental models

Context and interaction cues required refinement to reduce cognitive load.

Systems thinking

At this stage, the goal wasn't to finalize UI, but to understand where better coordination, timing, and context could meaningfully reduce cognitive load.

Reflections & Boundaries

Usability Testing

Usability testing surfaced areas for refinement while underscoring the limits of evaluating time-sensitive behaviors outside a real airport context.

1

Collaboration & Iteration

Ongoing collaboration and iteration were essential to balancing user needs with business and operational constraints.

2

Balancing Simplicity & Innovation

Prioritizing simplicity while selectively exploring new ideas helped preserve clarity in a high-pressure environment.

3

Scalability

The framework demonstrated potential to extend to other travel and service-based ecosystems facing similar coordination challenges.

4

Visual & UI Design

Visual refinement remains important, but only after validating the right problems and interaction models.

5

This project reinforced my belief that good systems design starts by **reducing cognitive load before introducing features.**

What comes next

This phase focused on **exploration and sense-making** rather than finalizing UI.

The work established a **strong foundation for informed product decisions** moving forward.

Next steps would include deeper in-context validation, refinement of interaction models, and further iteration once real-world constraints are tested.



Thanks for watching!

Happy to discuss how this approach applies to other complex, collaborative design systems.

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#SystemsThinking #Decision-Making #ServiceDesign #AirportExperience #Volunteering