

I approach every project with a simple process.

I start by researching the user to learn more about their desired outcomes. Then, I move into detailed sketches defining the product. Next, I wireframe and diagram my solution to the problem and then move into visual design. Throughout the process, I constantly prototype my designs to better understand their usability; whether it be through visual prototypes, motion design, or code.

Of course, this process sometimes changes depending on the project and timeline.

design, UX, motion

SPG APP

BDW frequently holds what they call “Design Sprints.” During these sprints, a client comes to the school and poses a business problem to the students. In teams of 3, we then have a day and a half to solve the problem and pitch our concepts and prototypes.

This project was one such occasion.

For this sprint, our client was Starwood Preferred Guests (SPG) – the premiere rewards program that owns luxury hotels such as the W, the St. Regis, the Sheraton, and more. The brief was simple: not enough people were using the SPG app, which is essentially a booking utility. Our goal was to get people using the app and to generate buzz around the app in general.



For this project, we luckily had detailed information on SPG members. From the beginning, we knew that roughly 75% of SPG users were brand loyalists and active on SPG digital touch points.

However, not on the mobile app. Why?

After interviewing 4 users of luxury rewards programs, we came to the conclusion that members didn't need a utility-driven booking app on their phone - the SPG desktop experience was fine for that. They needed an app that would help them track their points (and understand them), set goals for rewards, and browse SPG locations in a digestible way. We learned that the SPG iPad app was more exploration-based (but not by much) and seeing better traction for that reason alone.



SPG



MIKE GREINER 35 YEARS OLD

Mike is an oil industry consultant who frequently travels internationally - most often to Middle Eastern countries. He has a particularly high income for his age (200k+) and stays almost exclusively at upscale hotels within the SPG network when traveling for both business and recreational purposes.

While Mike is very comfortable with mobile apps, he doesn't frequently use the SPG app. He downloaded it, but never really came back to it, as he found little difference between the app and desktop experience. Mike claims booking on his phone is an arduous process and he feels it's less secure than on his desktop.

Mike uses his business rewards points from SPG to book recreational travel, but he feels like he hasn't fully embraced the rewards points fever like many of his friends. He feels like with very little incentive, he could become a point fanatic as well. However, whenever Mike does renew trips with rewards points, he feels proud and always (politely) boasts to his friends about it.

PAIN POINTS

"I feel like my points aren't adding up quickly enough."

"I don't understand what my points are really worth... does 10,000 points earn me a night?"

"I wish this app could help me plan a trip or find somewhere new to visit. I feel like I'm not fully utilizing the SPG system."

DESIRED OUTCOMES

"I feel like I gamed the system! I have so many points now."

"Hmm... I have enough points for that trip to Florida right now, but why not hold out for Indonesia instead?"

"I never would have thought to visit Morocco, but let's do it!"

MENTAL MODELS



NEEDS

Exploration-based interface to help find new trips

Tangible representation of point value

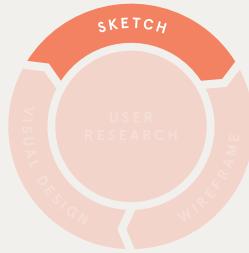
Gamified elements to get him (and keep him) excited about points

Less emphasis on booking utility function

Sharing abilities to tell friends about his trips

STRATEGY FOR MIKE

Mike doesn't engage with the SPG app because it offers nothing different than the SPG desktop experience. Mike needs an exploratory tool that will get him excited about booking new recreational trips with SPG in places he never would have imagined. At the same time, he needs to be educated on the value of his points and be able to tangibly stack them up against travel goals. Messaging and imagery revolving around luxury will capture Mike's attention.



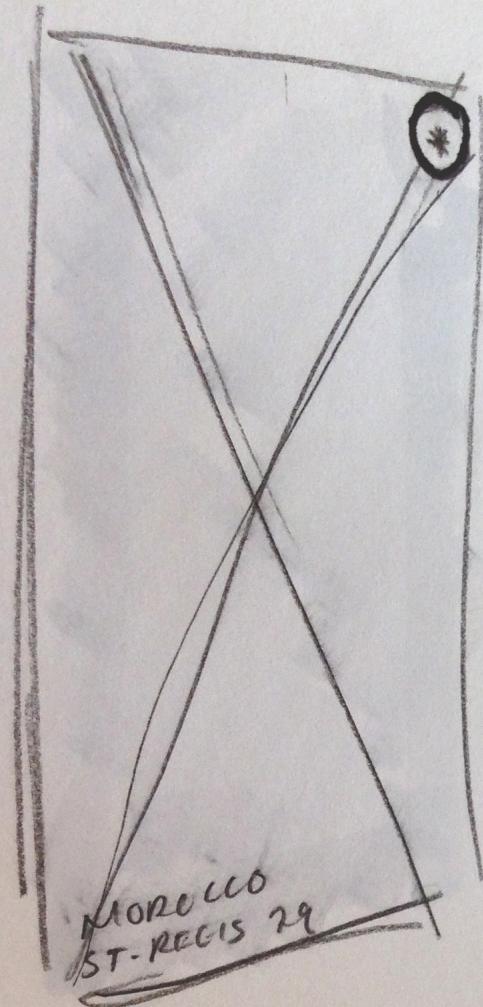
In sketching out the SPG app, I aimed to create a simple and digestible way to explore SPG's hotel locations. Given our very short timeline, I only focused on the portions of the app relevant to solving the brief.

In our interviews, we heard the term "hotel porn" frequently - referring to the immaculate hotel photography shared across SPG's social platforms. Members loved it. So, I decided to create a simple and constantly updating photography feed of SPG hotel photos through which users could scroll. At the same time, I would introduce a minimal interface for setting goals that wouldn't obstruct the photography.



SPG

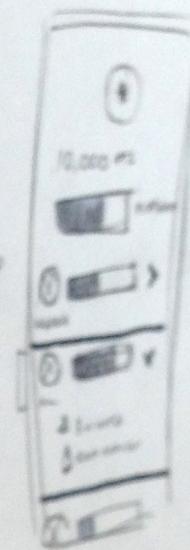
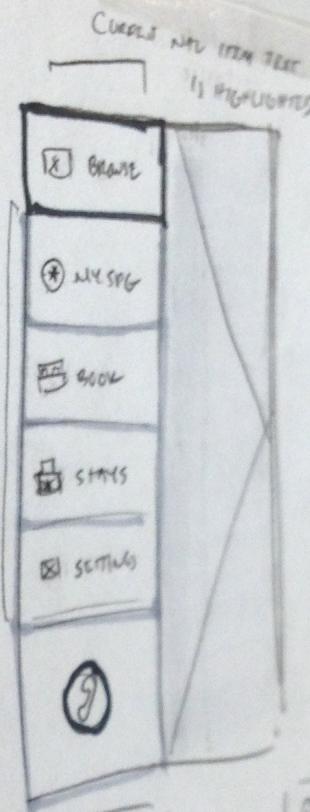
Screen mockup



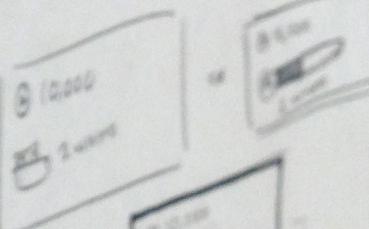
THE POINTS
OVERVIEW

DIFFERENT
GREY
SHADES

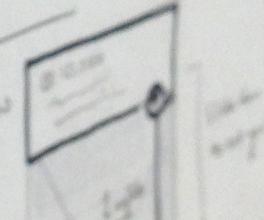
FULLSCREEN
SCROLLING IMAGES
AUTO UPDATE
TEXT AT BOTTOM
w/ NAME



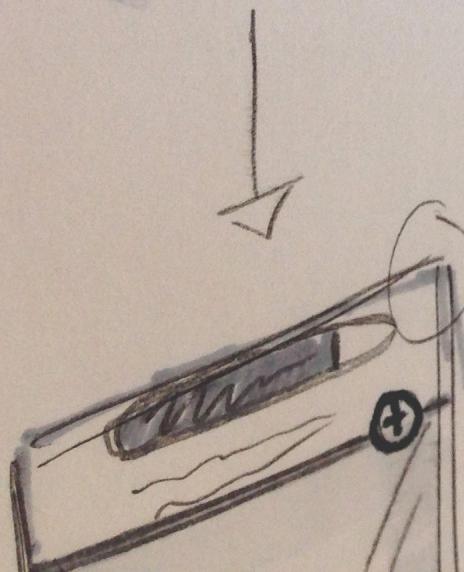
000 points



OR



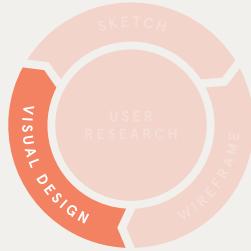
Unlocked



④ ADDS TO GONE
CHANCES TO ① ON ADD

POINTS BREAKDOWN

⑥ 75% is normal



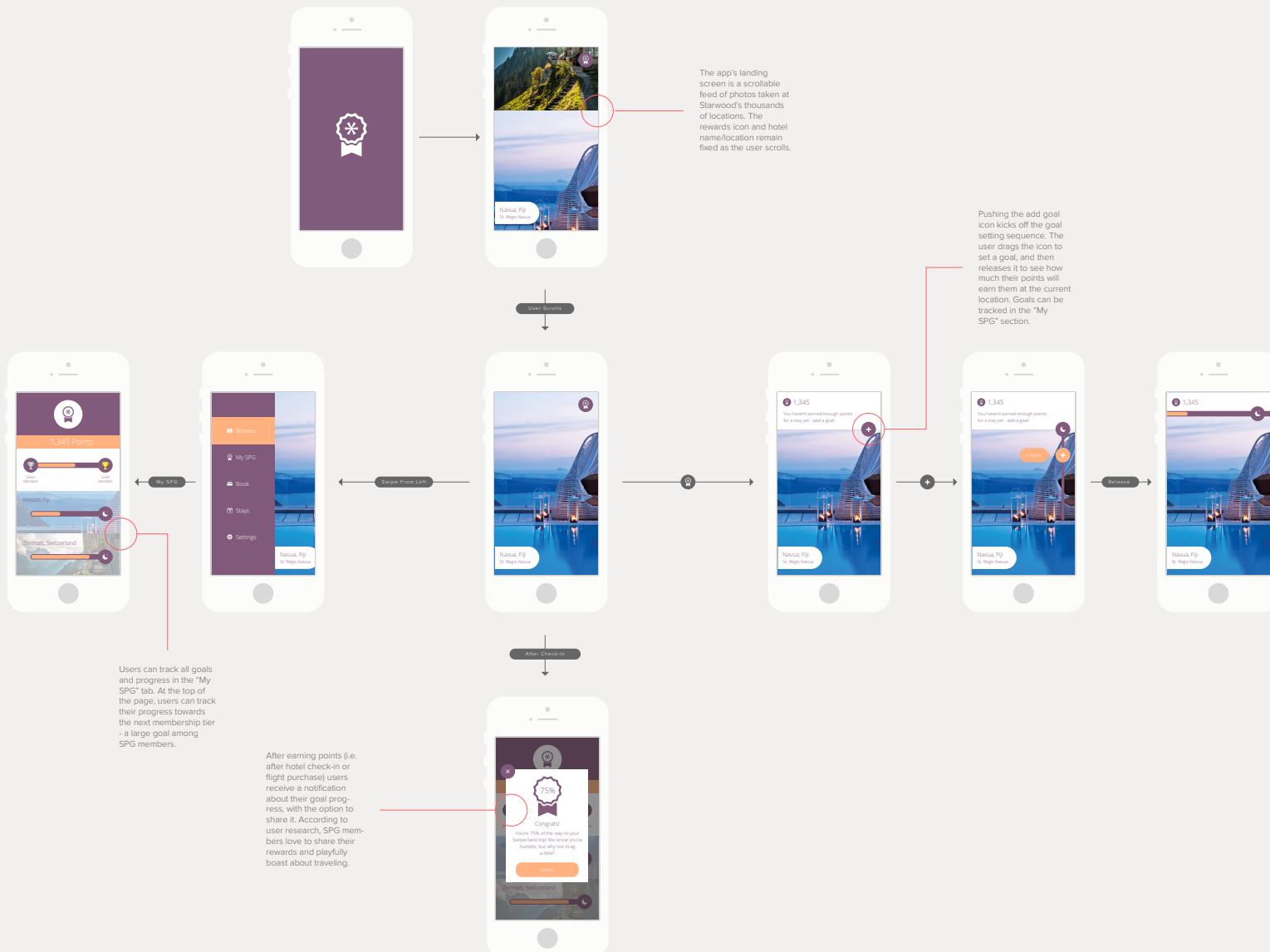
Given the tight timeline, I moved straight from sketching to visual design.

In my designs, I created a tangible visualization of the worth of points, which had previously confused users. I also added a layer of gamification with integrated sharing features to achieve the client's goal of creating buzz for the app and driving downloads. In our interviews, we learned that members loved to post about their travel and rewards, so they would certainly utilize a sharing feature.



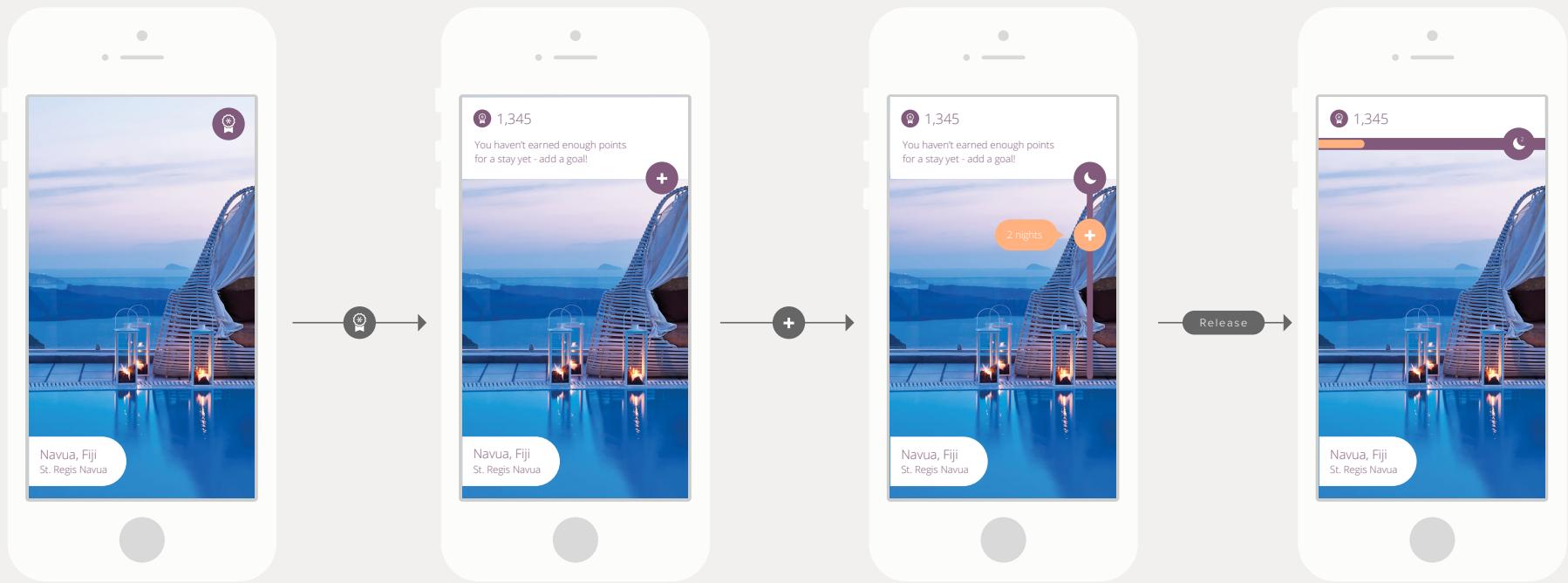
SPG

Hi-fi prototype: <http://bit.ly/1svP9Oc>





SPG

Animation: <http://bit.ly/1mpFKjd>

The app's goal slider was a quick way to see the actual worth of points. When over an image of a hotel that they liked, a user could tap the rewards icon to see what their points were worth at that location.

If users had enough points for a reward, they would see a visualization of it in the drop-down drawer. Regardless, the user could then set a goal for that location with the add icon.

By pushing the add icon and dragging down, they could quickly set a goal for a stay and then release the icon.

After releasing, a progress bar would visualize their distance from the goal, which they would then be able to check at any time in the "My SPG" tab.



C O N T A C T

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