THE NORTH FACE

TRAIL BRIEF

Research Report

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Executive Summary

Problem and Opportunity

This project is an effort to **create a product for the hiking community to access and add up-to-date information about hiking trails**. Currently, there is **no such community** that offers these features and other suggested features that hikers are looking for. **The North Face** is the suggested partner company, as they have a loyal customer base who are **described as "naturally adventurous"** and are likely to engage with this type of product. The suggested platform for this product is a **native iOS application** due to both The North Face using this platform for **existing products and target users using this platform** in attempts to access information similar to what this product would provide.

Key Research Takeaways

In order to validate and further understand problem areas and opportunities, **initial surveys and interviews of hikers** with various levels of experience were conducted. **Less experienced hikers struggle to find a central resource** that offers all of the information they are looking for, including how to prepare for a hike and **information about a specific trail's condition**. **Experienced hikers** are looking mainly for **up-to-date trail conditions** and they are also willing to **share their knowledge** with the hiking community. Generally, hikers are interested in **documenting their hikes through photos and sharing them** with others.

Feature Comparison
Layout Comparison
Individual Competitor Analysis
North Face Product Analysis

Competitive and Comparative Analysis

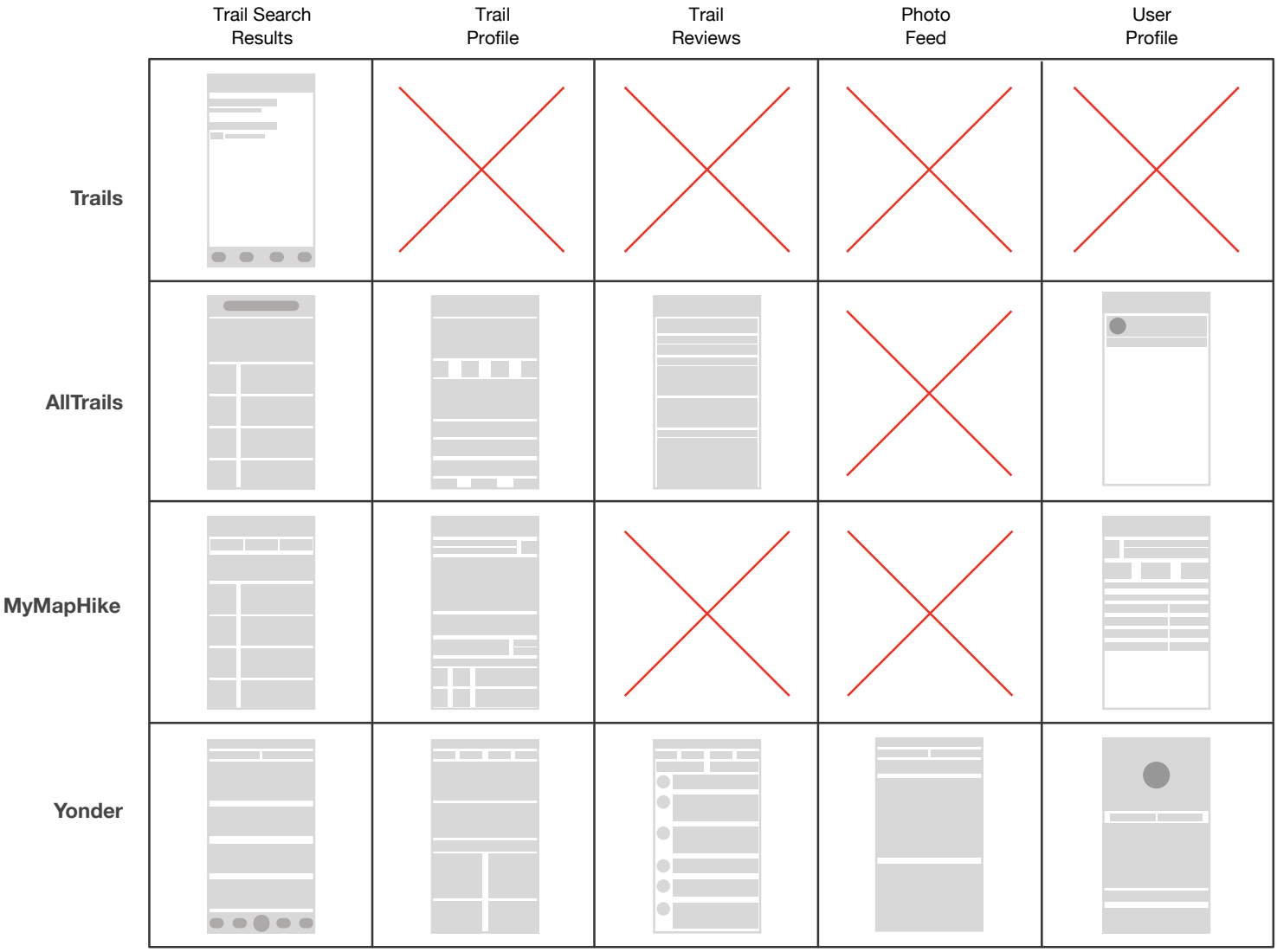
Feature Comparison

We looked at a handful of **comparable apps** and websites to **identify common features** and looked for **features that we expect to have in our design**. Takeaways include that **AllTrails** and **Yonder** cover many of the **basic features** that we would want to continue to reference as we go through our designs, but there was still a missing **gap of features** that we want to use to be able to **differentiate** our product.

apps \ features	Offline Trail Maps	Trail Maps	Record GPS	Trail Info	Trail Conditions	Flora Info	Wildlife Alerts	Weather	Trail Reviews	Real Time Social Feed	Partner Brand
Trails	●	●	●								
AllTrails	●	●	●	●				●	●		●
FootPath			●								
MyMapHike			●								●
Gaia GPS	●	●	●								
Yonder				●					●	●	
Nat Geo Nat. Parks		●		●					●		
Strava			●								

Layout Comparison

We looked at a handful of **comparable apps** to get a **general sense** of the way that they **arrange blocks of elements** on the pages that are **most relevant** to our product. This made it **easier to visualize** ways that we could potentially **modularize content**.



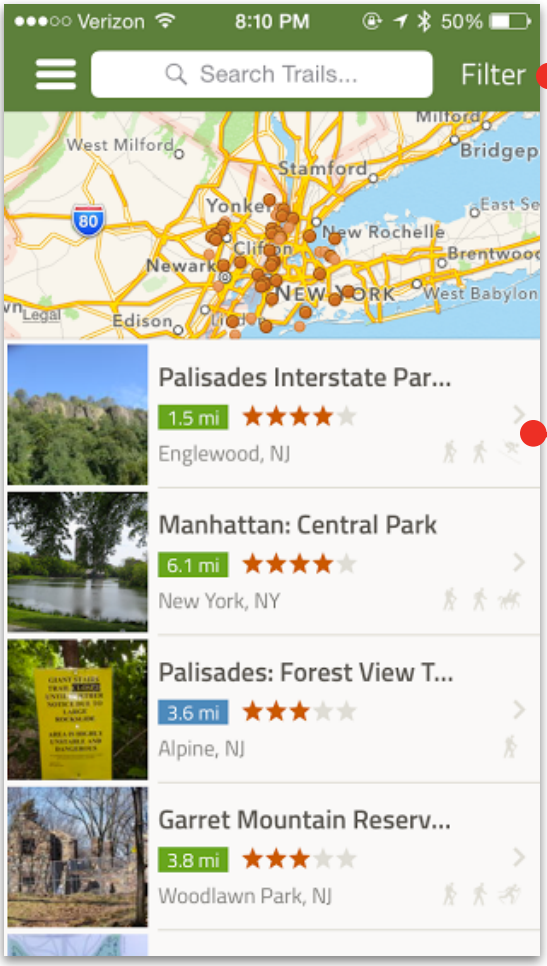
INDIVIDUAL COMPETITOR LAYOUT & ELEMENT ANALYSIS

When researching competitive and comparative products, we focused on **features that would become essential** parts of our product (**searching trails, viewing trail details, interacting with photos**) in order to get a better understanding of how the **elements** of those features **could be displayed**. We looked at the actual features, which **terms** (if any) were used as **icon labels**, what kind of **icons** were present, and **where these elements lived** on the page.

Individual Competitor Layout & Element Analysis

AllTrails

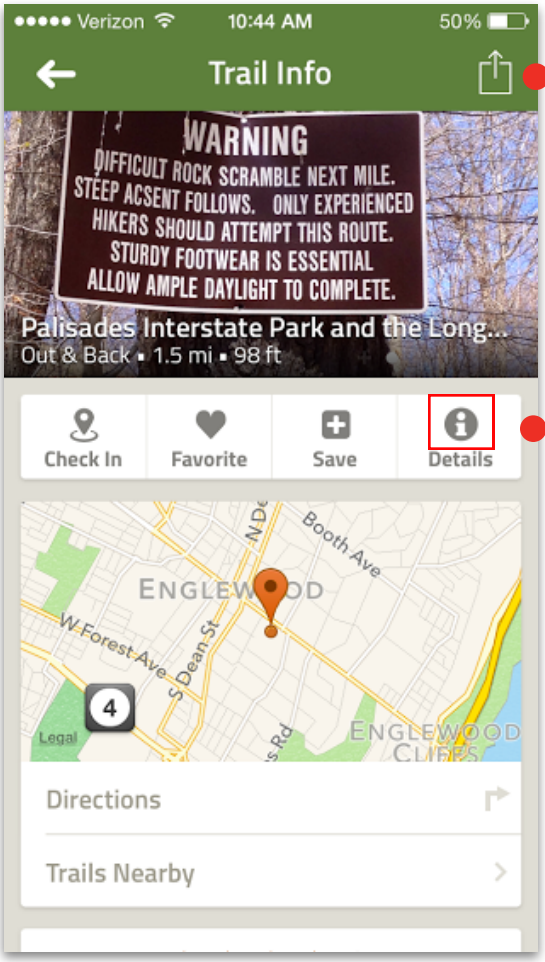
“Trail List” Page



Filtered search access

Park name, rating, miles away, location

“Trail Info” Page

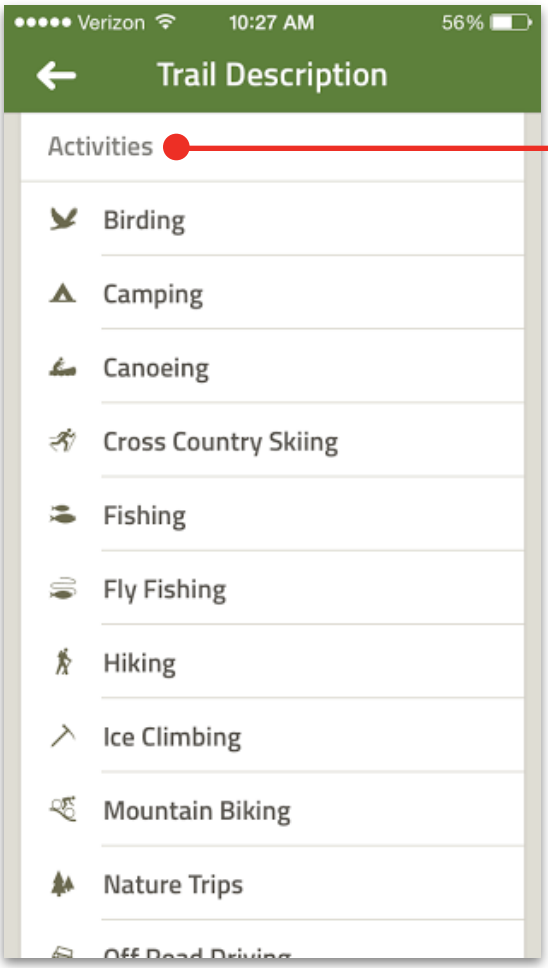


Share to third parties

Template-specific menu

AllTrails, Continued

“Trail Description” Page



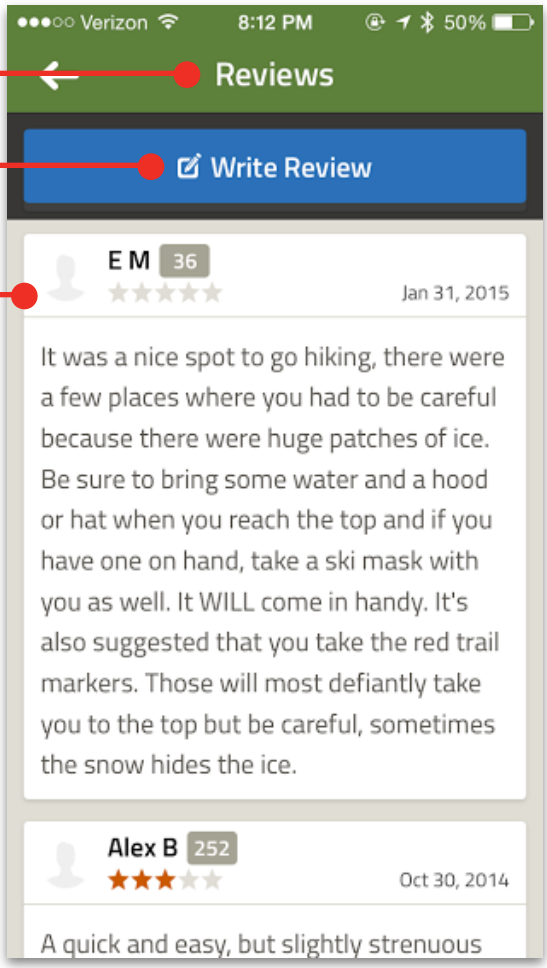
“Activities” vs “Features”

“Trail Review" Page

Terminology

Write button

Profile image, name, ‘user points, rating, date



Individual Competitor Layout & Element Analysis

Yonder

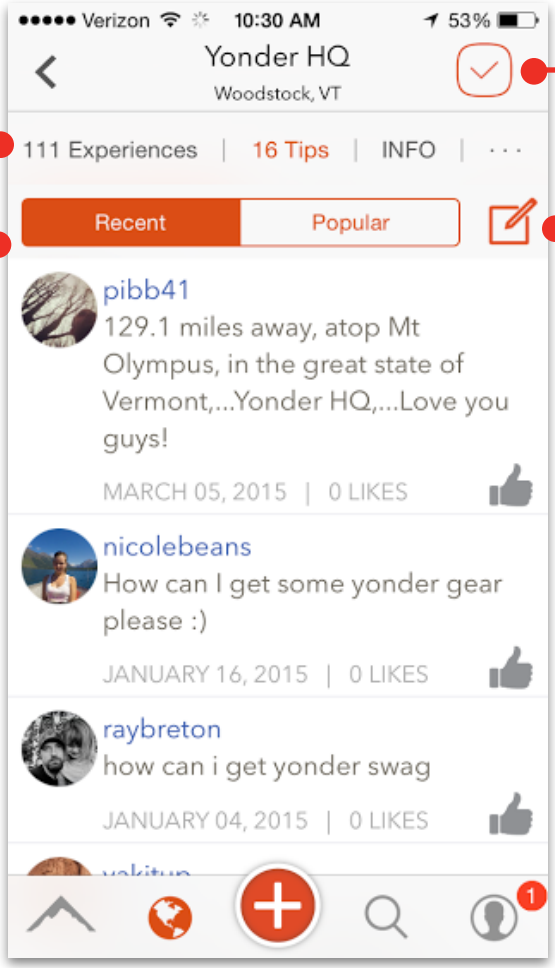
"Tips" Page

Template-specific menu options and terminology

Recent / Popular Terminology and tabs

"Add" Trail vs. "Save" Trail

"Add a tip" button

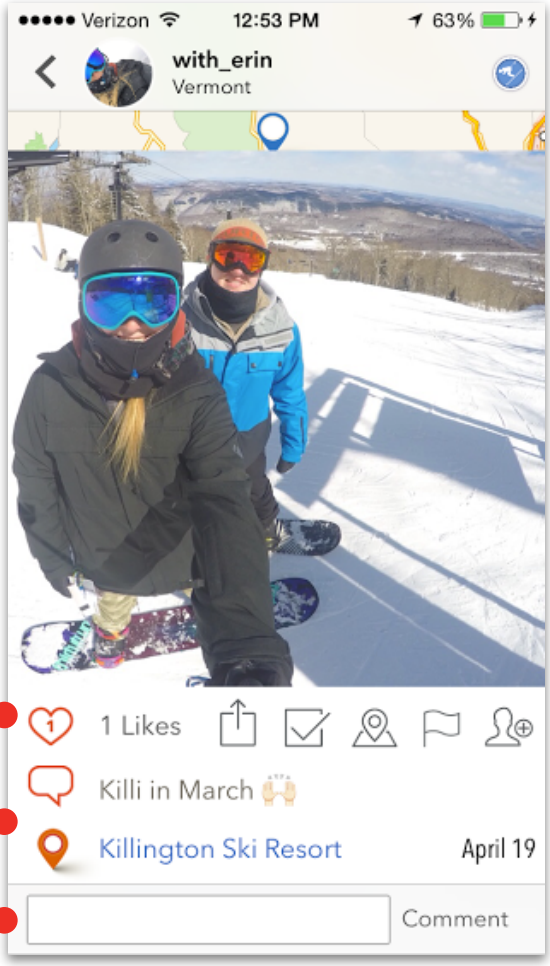


Individual Photo Page

Viewer interaction options (liking, sharing, etc)

Owner options (caption and location)

Comment feature



Element Analysis of Existing North Face Apps

We did an analysis of existing North Face apps to **prioritize elements** that should be included in our design to **remain consistent** with the North Face **style guide**.

We analysed the **‘Mountain Athletics’** and **‘Snow Report’** apps.

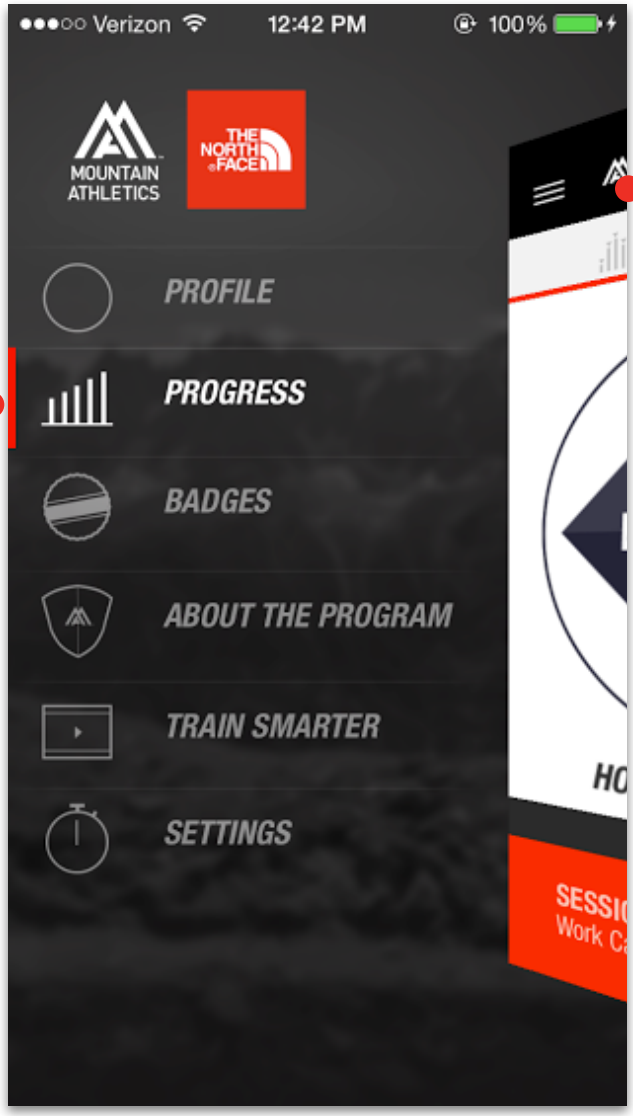
Element Analysis of Existing North Face Apps

Mountain Athletics

Hamburger Menu open state

Current page swings backward to reveal menu

Active page indicated by vertical bar on left-hand side



Element Analysis of Existing North Face Apps

Snow Report

Landing resort list page

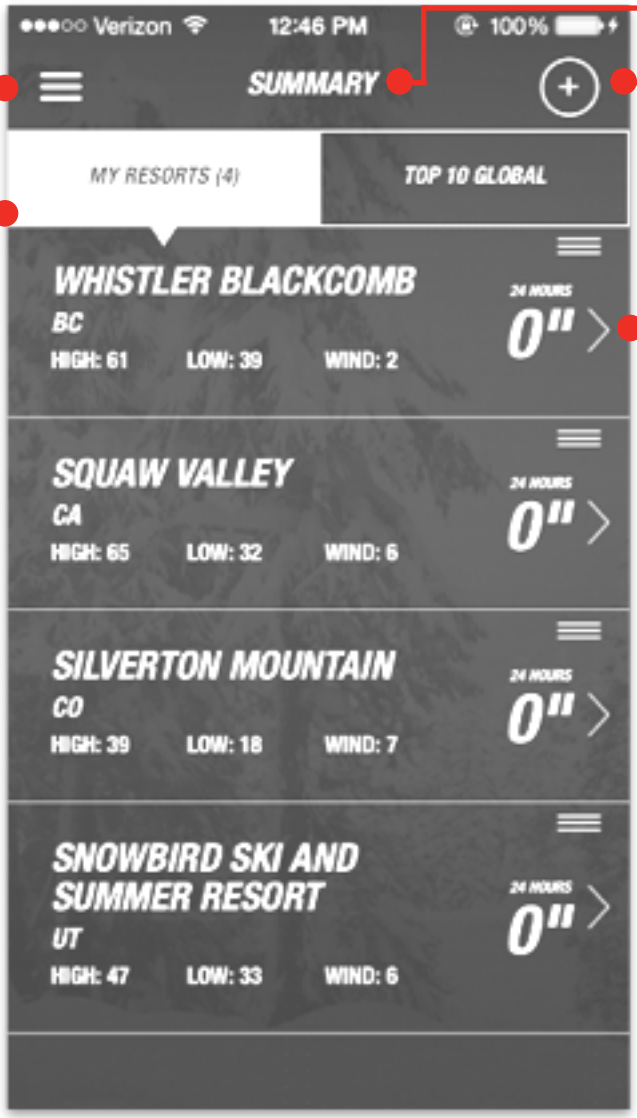
Title of page in top bar

Hamburger icon

"Save Item to List"

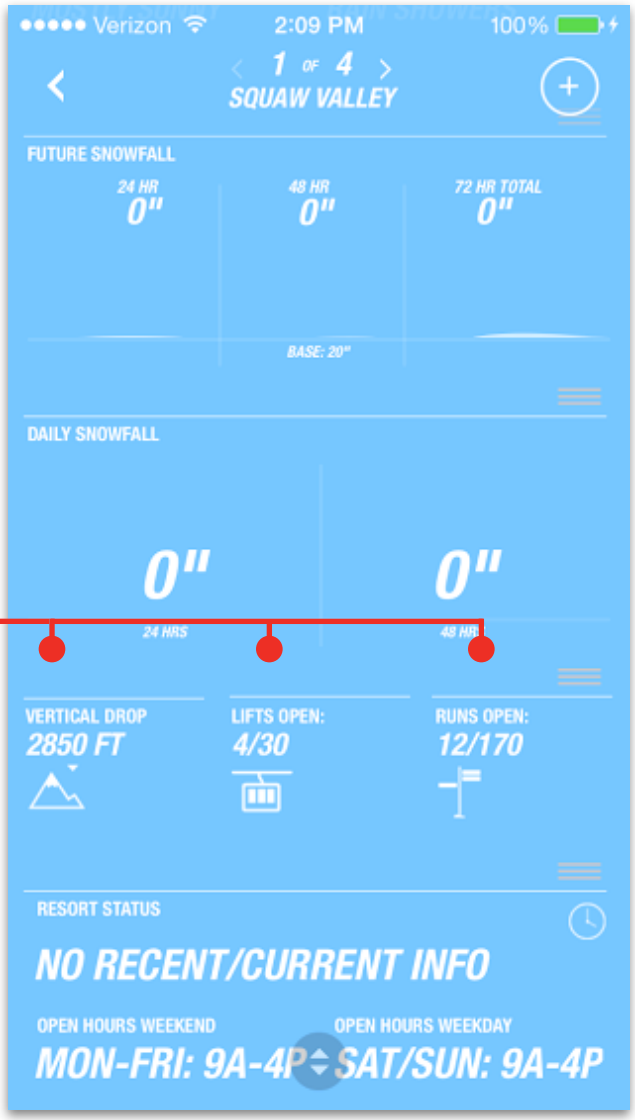
Tabbed, high-level list filters

Item name, location (state), current conditions



Snow Report, Continued

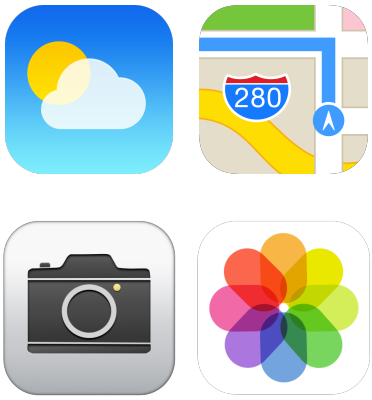
Individual resort page



Three-column grid with
Labels, stats, and icons

Technical Research

Platform Possibilities



Researched showed that hikers want up-to-date **weather**, accurate information about **trailhead locations**, and to be able to take and share **photos** that they take while out on a hike. By building a native **iOS application**, our product will be able to use iOS features and capabilities including weather, camera, photo library, and mapping.

APIs

The **trail API** will allow us to **gain access** to **thousands of** outdoor recreation points of interest including **8,743 trails**. We'll be able to **pull photos, ratings, and descriptions** into our app.

Platform Limitations

Information may be limited out on the trails due to **lack of service**, so we must take this into account because it will affect hikers. Research showed, however, that hikers **prefer not to rely on their phone** while hiking because they are out to **enjoy nature**. As long as they can **take photos** they are happy, but they may want to refer back to the information our app provides now and again.

Third Party Services

Sharing Options
iOS lets you **quickly share photos, videos, websites, and other content** with social sites like **Facebook** and **Twitter**. iOS 8 has **opened the sharing options** to all developers, which means that we can allow **hikers have more places to share hiking photos** that they find in our app.

Key Takeaways
Feature Prioritization
Personas
Content Prioritization of the Trail Profile

User Research Process & Takeaways

Key Takeaways

Surveys and interviews with hikers with a range of experience levels, from **beginners to experts**, were conducted in order to **discover their behaviors** while preparing for and during a hike and to gain insight into **pain and pleasure points** surrounding their hiking experience. The following **major takeaways** from the surveys and interviews were used to flesh out three **personas** for this product.

General Hiking Behaviors

People are **hiking multiple times a year**, so having to access hike information isn't generally a one-time thing

People are **finding out about trails** to hike by searching through **various online sources** including google and wikipedia, looking directly at **park websites or guidebooks**, and getting advice from **friends and/or family**

People **don't rely heavily on their phone while hiking**, but they **DO bring their phones with them** mainly for **taking pictures**, quick check-ins with their **map** (if GPS is working), and for listening to music or checking time

Preparing for a Hike

Hikers want information about **latest trail condition**s (including weather) or **features of a trail** (including parking access and hours of operation)

New hikers, particularly, want to find out **what to bring** with them and **what to wear**

After a Hike

Hikers enjoy **sharing photos** that they took while hiking

Hikers **share experiences** they had while hiking

Problems While Preparing for a Hike

Hikers are **not aware of up-to-date trail conditions** until they actually **arrive** at a trail

Sometimes trails **don't offer amenities** that hikers are looking for and they **struggle finding** that information

Information that people can manage to gather about a trail beforehand may turn out to be **inaccurate** once they arrive at a trail

Feature Prioritization

Based on the synthesis of our **interviews with hikers** and analyzation of similar products, we **prioritized the features** to make sure that we could **design the core product** that people are **interested** in.

Search for trails

View specific trail

Save trails

Add and view trail tips

Trail difficulty

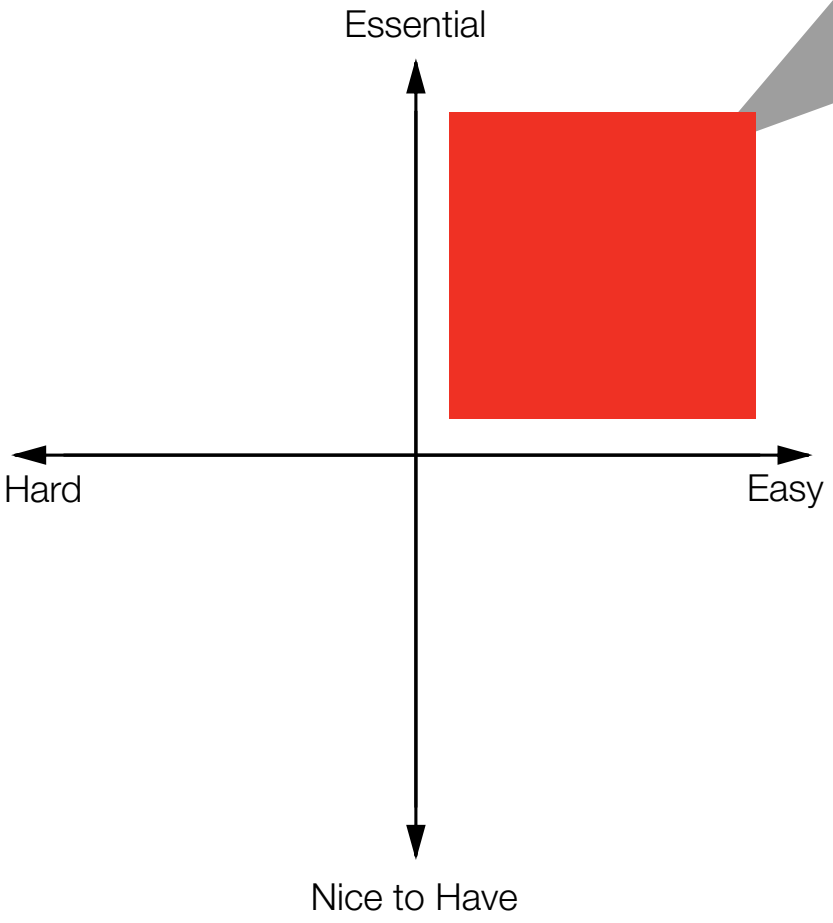
Hike duration

Upload photos

Add advice for new hikers

Weather

Trailhead locator



Personas

Megan Warren

"There's no way to know the trail conditions with absolute certainty."

Bio & Demographics
Age: 27
Location: New York City
Relationship Status: In a relationship
Tech Empathy (1-10): 7
Hiking Experience Level: Advanced
Device: iPhone 6

Behaviors & Habits
Why do they hike: Megan likes to get out of the city and explore challenging and new places.

What type of trail: She likes trails that include rock scrambling and other obstacles. Megan enjoys the satisfaction of completing something difficult

Social Media: She likes to post photos to instagram after she finishes a hike.

Preparation: Megan wants to feel like she knows what she's getting into before going on a hike. She looks for various factors such as how long a hike should take and its difficulty level.

Other Hobbies: Running, Tennis, Rock climbing

Goals & Needs
- Share and view photos with the hiking community as well as her friends
- Discover new trails she hasn't hiked yet and information about them
- Be able to plan for weather conditions

Pain Points
- Hard to gauge current trail and weather conditions ahead of time
- Available information from reviews is subjective

Favorite Brands
- CamelBak
- Colombia
- Merrell

Favorite Hike
The Lemon Squeeze Trail in the Mohonk Mountains

Jacob Rodriguez

"We look for trails that have cool attractions to see along the way."

Bio & Demographics
Age: 32
Location: Rancho Bernardo, San Diego
Relationship Status: Single
Tech Empathy (1-10): 9
Hiking Experience Level: Casual
Device: iPhone

Behaviors & Habits
Why do they hike: Likes hiking in a big group with their friends

What type of trail: He likes medium-level trails that allow for conversation with his friends.

Social Media: Likes to feel connected to his phone while on a hike and post a lot of pictures to his facebook with hiking

Preparation: Often times over packs how much food and water to bring

Other Hobbies: Going to museums, soccer

Goals & Needs
- Access to accurate trail map information
- Access to a "starters-guide" to help him learn what to pack
- Access to current trail conditions, specifically how crowded a trail is expected to be

Pain Points
- When lost Jacob will use google maps to get back on the trail but a lack of service canprevent him from accurately positioninghimself.
- Is frustrated when trails are crowded when hiking with his friends.
- Has a hard time knowing what shoes to wear based on the type of trail.

Favorte Brands
- Nike
- North Face
- REI

Favorite Hike
Grand Canyon

Lisa Richards

"I take information with a grain of salt and apply my past experience to it."

Bio & Demographics
Age: 39
Location: North Adams, Ma
Relationship Status: Married
Tech Empathy (1-10): 6
Hiking Experience Level: Expert
Device: iPhone

Behaviors & Habits
Why do they hike: Lisa likes to get away from it at and enjoy the solitude of being in the outdoors

What type of trail: She seeks out adventurous trails that challenge her endurance and allow her to deviate from the beaten path.

Social Media: Lisa will often text photos of her hike to her friends and family after the hike.

Preparation: She likes to plan her hikes by pulling together information from trail guides, the internet, and by speaking with other hiking friends.

On the Hike: Lisa will often pick up trash along the hike. She doesn't feel like she can rely on her phone while hiking, especially in more remote areas.

Other Hobbies: Skiing, Yoga, Biking

Goals & Needs
- Leave no trace when on a hike
- Learn where trash cans are along a trail
- Distribute her knowledge of hiking to other members of the community
- Access to extended weather forecast

Pain Points
- Sometimes it can be hard locating and accessing trailheads.
- When on a long hike it is hard to tell if the weather is about to change
- Hard to find up-to-date information about any changes along a trail

Brands
- Patagonia
- Black Diamond
- Eastern Mountain Sports

Favorite Hike
- Tongariro Crossing Australia

User Story - Megan

Megan is **looking for a new challenging rock scrambling experience** for the weekend to get away from the city. Due to the intense nature of a rock scramble she needs to know **current conditions** of the trail so she can properly equip herself. Along the way, Megan wants to **capture photos** of her experience and **upload them after** she has completed the rock scramble. **After** she completes the hike Megan wants to **leave a quick tip** to help other hikers who may try to do the same hike as her.

Task Analysis

Research and Prepare

- Search: Hudson Valley (A location outside of the city)
- Filter Search: (Type/ Length/ Difficulty) Filters by Rock Scramble, Hard and 5 Star
- Views a hike she's interested in
- Skim through photos for more in depth view to verify her selection
- View current conditions/weather: She wants to properly equip herself for the hike
- Saves the hike for later

Hike

- Check trail conditions before she leaves her apartment
- Starts hike: She is loving the hike and challenge
- Takes photos: Takes cool photos of scenery and a few selfies along the trail
- Finishes Hike: The rock scramble turned out better than she expected

Share and Inform

- Shares her favorite photos: Goes back to her saved trail (hike) and posts the best photo to the trail profile
- She leaves a tip about the the broken water fountain

User Story - Jacob

Jacob is **looking to get** a bunch of his **friends together** for a hike over the weekend. Jacob and his friends have gone on basic trails in the past and is **looking for a slightly harder trail** that will require a little more preparation. He wants as much **information about the trail as possible ahead of time** without having to do much research.

Task Analysis

Research and Prepare

- Search for trails around San Diego
- Checks out a couple of popular results
- He know's he's been on easy trails so he scans for something more difficult that has a cool photo
- He sees a medium level trail that catches his eye
- He checks out reviews to confirm that this is the hike he wants
- Since Jacob is going with a larger group, he wants to find the best time to avoid crowds
- He looks through trail tips
- He likes this trail
- Jacob shares this trail with his friends to start planning the trip
- His friend wants to know how much water to bring
- He's not sure
- He looks for the answer
- When he finds the tip he shares it with his friend

Hike

- He takes photos during the hike
- He then posts them to instagram and to the trail profile

Share and Inform

- After the hike he gives the hike a 5 star rating because he really enjoyed the experience

Content Prioritizing of the Trail Profile

Through **viewing competitors** and gaining **insight from hikers of all levels**, we compiled a **list of content** that should be included in a trail's profile. In order to **begin the design** for this section of the app, we had **hikers sort each item in the list** in order of **most important** (what they would want or expect to see when they first view a trail). This is the **final list** after synthesizing the results of a handful of sorts.

1. **Name of trail**
2. **Trail Type**
3. **Difficulty**
4. **Save trail**
5. **Request update**
6. **Photos**
7. **Weather**
8. **Park Contact**
9. **Park / Trail Hours**
10. **Map**
11. **Trailhead location**
12. **Step-by-step guide**
13. **General description**
14. **Features / Activities**
15. **Length (mileage)**
16. **Latest Conditions**
17. **Elevation**
18. **Length (time)**
19. **Rating**
20. **Popular Tips / reviews**
21. **recent tips / reviews**
22. **who recently completed**
23. **write tips / review**
24. **Share**
25. **Save**