

Group 14 Project 5

Concepts and Early Prototype

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Abstract— The current mobile experience for the existing ToursByLocals.com site has a number of a major usability issues. The site is not optimized for mobile devices, and is difficult to read, navigate, and interact with while away from a desktop computer. A subsection of our interviewees mentioned they would use this type of website on the go, so while we have shown there is demand for this service, the existing leader could do more to maximize usability in the mobile market. We have focused our redesign on the usability of the portion of the site targeted at travelers looking for a guide. For enlarged figures, please see <http://bit.ly/1Pffg69>

I. CONCEPTS

A. Concept #1: Mobile App

Redesign the existing site into a native iOS/Android mobile app. This could allow users to search/filter available tours, research tours and tour guides, message guides, and book their trip from their smartphones.



Fig. 3. Example of a Google Glass Concept

B. Concept #2: Smart Watch App

Redesign the current web app into a native smart watch app. Our research indicated that users want to view information on the go, and a smart watch app will allow them to do this.

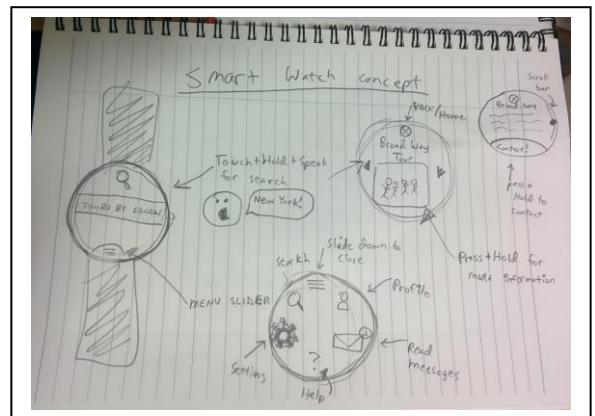


Fig. 2. Example of a smart watch app concept

C. Concept #3: Google Glass / Augmented Reality App

Redesign the current web app into an app for Google Glass. A Google Glass app would allow users to check tour information on the go, and could also have some of the tours themselves incorporated into the software.

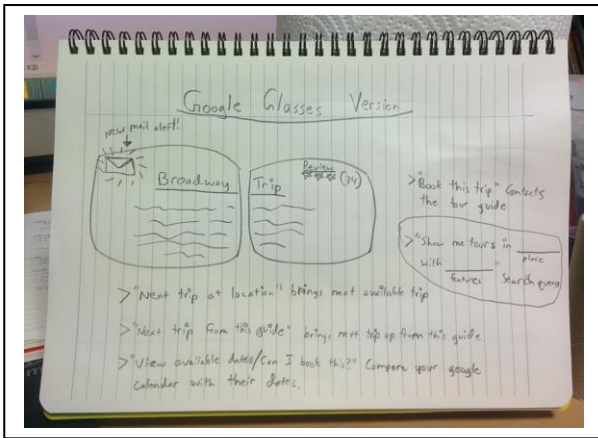


Fig. 3. Example of a Google Glass concept

II. STORYBOARD

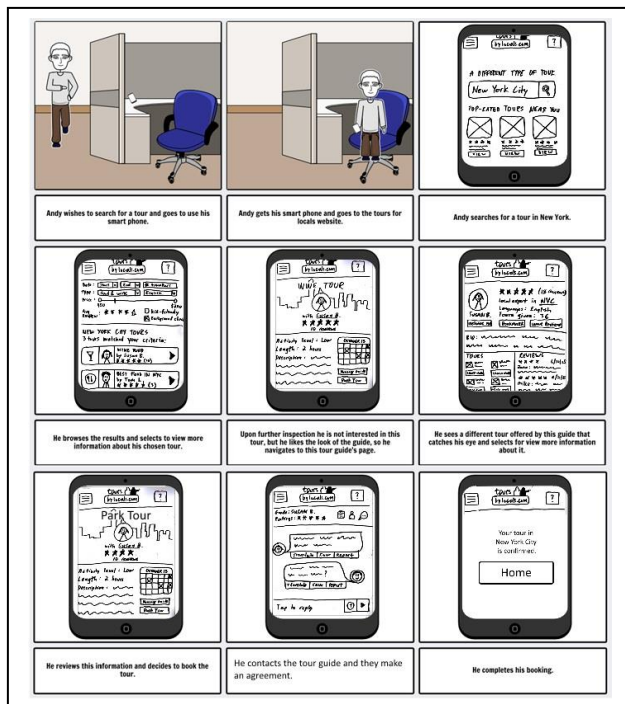


Fig. 4. A storyboard to show a potential use case

III. PROTOTYPE

The current home page from Toursbylocals.com on a smart phone is provided for reference in Fig. 5.

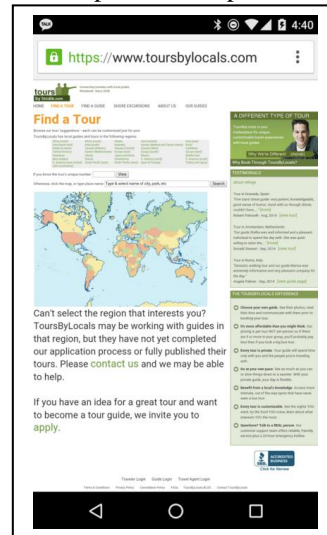


Fig. 5. A screenshot of the current mobile site

Prototype Page #1: Home Page

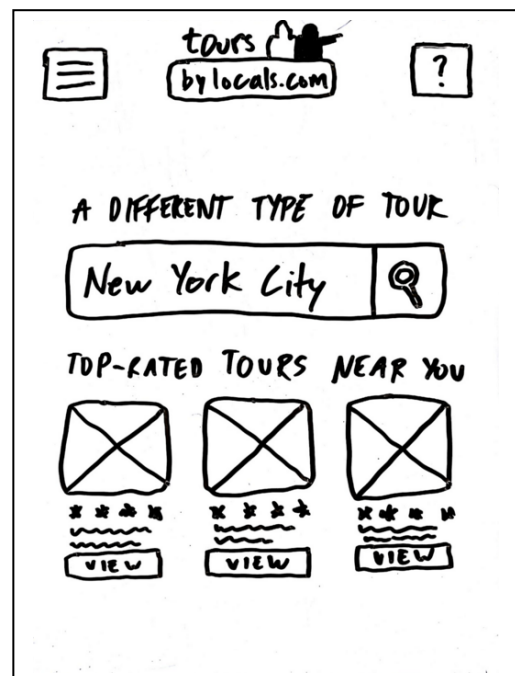


Fig. 6. A sketch of the prototype home page

A. Prototype Page #2: Search Result



Fig. 7. A sketch of the prototype search results page

B. Prototype Page #3: Tour Info Page



Fig. 8. A sketch of the prototype tour info page

C. Prototype Page #4: Guide Info Page



Fig. 9. A sketch of the prototype guide info page

D. Prototype Page #5: Contact Page



Fig. 10. A sketch of the prototype contact page

E. Prototype Page #6: Error Page

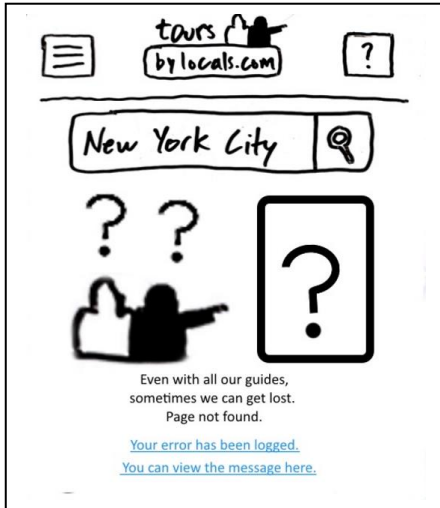


Fig. 11. A sketch of the prototype error page

F. Prototype Page #7: Hamburger Button Page

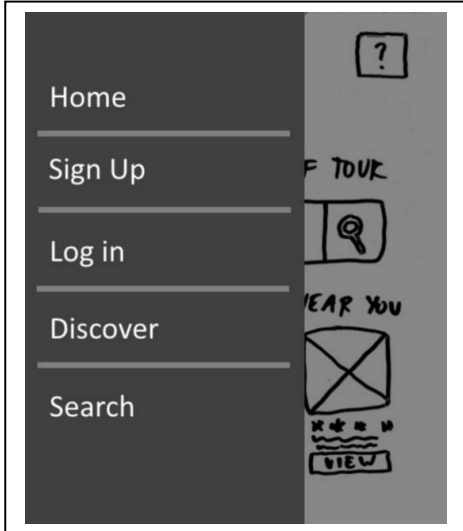


Fig. 12. A sketch of the prototype hamburger menu page

G. Prototype Page #8: [?] Help Button Page

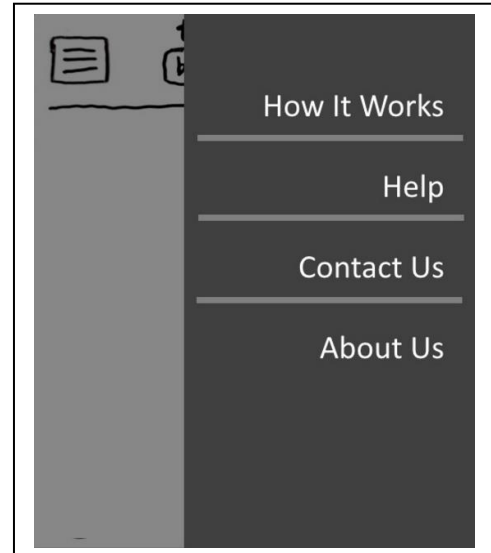


Fig. 13. A sketch of the prototype help menu page

IV. JUSTIFICATIONS

We decided to constrain our UI improvements to the mobile-version website. Our sole purpose for this redesign is to make ToursByLocals' mobile site more usable and attractive to allow the company greater market access.

A. Prototype Page #1: Home Page

The home page (Fig. 6) has a single call-to-action to initiate the user experience: a search input that asks the user for the destination they are travelling to. Other navigation options are initially hidden in a collapsed "hamburger"-style menu. This menu is consistent across the site, a standard that eases usability by providing the user with a standardized way to access the site's functions, though in our storyboard and prototype this functionality is not used.

The original home page does not allow a user to immediately search for trips, which according to our interviews, is the first action most users would like to take on the site. This is minimalistic design, which draws the user to the most important interaction he or she will have with the site - searching for and reading about tours and guides.

B. Prototype Page #2: Search Results

The original search results of the mobile site display a large iconic photo, followed by a write-up informing the user of the location. Then, tours are displayed. Tours are not immediately visible and require the user to scroll down significantly. Overall, there is too much unnecessary information given to a user. We sought to streamline this.

The search results page (Fig. 7) includes expanded and revised search criteria. It allows users to refine the current search using criteria related to the guide and the tour. The potential users we interviewed identified language, price, review, and safety as important factors in their tour guide decisions, so these search options are built in to the default filters.

Since the user has already input their location of choice, including a detailed description of the location is unnecessary. The results are given greater prominence and are more clearly distinguished, with the most relevant information displayed for each result (including tour name, tour guide name, rating, and rating count).

C. Prototype Page #3: Tour Info Page

The current tour info page is largely text-based with large blocks of black text on white backgrounds. Visuals, such as the tour guide's photo and photos of the tour are hidden behind hyperlinks. Our design (Fig. 8) features photos of the two most salient parts of a tour: the location and the tour guide, with a cleaner design highlighting the relevant information.

In the original site, tours were rated with stars. Our interviews indicated that it was important for users to feel safe and feel that they were choosing someone trustworthy. In order to show clearly the location and the guide, we have highlighted those pictures in our design. Further, ratings are shown as an average of stars, with the number of reviews in parenthesis nearby (there is a difference between a tour with one five-star review and one hundred five-star reviews).

The original site does not have clear pricing information at the top of the tour info page. Information about pricing is clearly visible in our design, without scrolling. As we are aware that our customers may be physically challenged or be interested in high or low levels of activity in their tours, we have included these "tags" above the fold.

D. Prototype Page #4: Guide Info Page

The current guide info page features a large block of black text on white background which extends along the entire right half of the screen, which is followed by a contact button, and then the guide's tours. While this is a minimal design, it misses chances to build confidence in the user and provide important visual information about the guide.

Our design (Fig. 9) makes the tour guide page more attractive and interesting for the user by adding reviews, suggesting similar guides, and placing the aforementioned sections above the fold. A user will have clicked on the guide's page to learn more about some specific aspect-whether it be to read reviews, or to find other tours offered by that same guide. Also, photos and design features are added to make the mobile site more visually appealing. The biography section was kept, but shortened in length.

Our research indicated that the most common concern travellers was safety and security. Particularly knowing the gender and social approval of the guide should increase comfort and engagement from our users.

E. Prototype Page #5: Contact Page

The conceptual model used by the existing site does not correspond to most users' mental model of how a messaging interaction works. For example, this existing "contact guide" form is only to be used for the first communication with a guide. After the first communication, the user is instructed to use standard email. Since this is not explained in detail, it could contribute to a problematic gulf of execution.

This new design (Fig. 10) makes use of a conceptual model and a user interface that is more in line with common messaging systems that most users are familiar with (e.g. text messaging). It includes a navigation bar that easily allows the user to go back to the tour info and guide info pages quickly. It introduces "Translate" and "Save", and "Report" buttons for each message, making it easy to have interactions with guides, and save any important trip or itinerary info that happens to be exchanged via message. The help system is available via a button click, but is kept out of the way and does not clutter the interface, like on the existing site.

F. Prototype Page #6: Error Page

The error page takes (Fig. 11) modern design cues by offering a large image, which informs the user that something wrong has happened. The accompanying text adds humor to the screen, to calm any sense of anxiety caused by a sudden error.

By automatically submitting an error, the new design is more efficient, and alleviates the burden on a new user to describe their error. An available link present allows any user to view what the error message contains. This gives the user freedom to either disregard the error, or investigate it further.

G. Prototype Page #7: Hamburger Button Page

The hamburger button in the upper left-hand corner of every page activates a side menu (Fig. 12), which overlaps onto the main screen. Inside is relevant information for the user, with quick access to go home, search, login, or register an account. The menu is light and clean, with a minimalistic design. Further, it illustrates the importance of consistency across the UX - from anywhere, a user has access to these site functions.

H. Prototype Page #8: [?] Help Button Page

An always-present help button provides a menu (Fig. 13) that gives access to necessary help and documentation to the user. In the real world, when a person is confronted with

something they don't know, they will ask questions or search for information. Therefore we present an option to ask a question via a question mark box which allows the user freedom to access information on how to use ToursbyLocals whenever necessary.