

Website “Live Wildly” design report

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Introduction

“Live Wildly” is a website designed for popularize hiking as the lifestyle. The name “Live Wildly” means step into nature and enjoy outdoor life, as well as adventurous spirit. Base on this concept, I set two objectives for the website, the first is to provide hiking related information and secondly is to encourage visitors to truly get involved in hiking activities. As the website design is to get the points across and serve the purpose, the design thinking is used to find the needs of my target audience and design the appropriate solution in the website. In this report, the process of website design that assorting and linking the form and contents will be descripted. To learn about the usability of this website, several tests and interview were conducted, from a qualitative perspective. Meanwhile, as data is the direct reflect of how this website is used, it is collected with Google Analytics and this report will evaluate the website from a quantitative approach using these data.

Strategy and Scope Plane

1. Identify target users and the problem

As outdoor activities like hiking and climbing get more popular, people are more willing to consider hiking as a way to exercise and relax during weekend or holiday. Hong Kong has natural and historical advantages for growing this sport because it has hundreds of hills to explore and famous hiking trails with long history. Based on my own experience and the fact that students who are new here in Hong Kong have the needs to get more information and team up with people more familiar with the routes,

I firstly defined the target users in the proposal as international students on exchange or mainland students who are interested in hiking. However, to develop a problem-solution fit website that can meet the needs of target audience, I noticed that overseas students and mainland students have very different characteristics and various needs, making it difficult to find a way to provide information that caters to their needs at the same time with the website. With the help of feedback of my proposal and further segmentation, I redefined the target user that I can provide better solution.

Firstly, based on the fact that I'm from mainland China, I can reach more mainland students for testing and research compare to foreign students. Also, I'm more familiar with the context and needs of mainland students for using the website. secondly, as foreign students are more likely to visit website in English for information searching while Chinese students would use Chinese website, choose one language can be more cost-efficient. In addition, to know about the accurate characteristic of the target user segment, I further identified the target group. Here is the segmentation of mainland students.

Segments	gender	Program	Former hiking experience	Interest in hiking
1	Female	Undergraduate	Professional	No interests
2	Male	Master	Have some experience	Have interest
3		MPhil and PhD	Without any experience	

Table 1 consumer segmentation

With more detailed segmentation, I redefined the target users of the website as mainland students taking master's program that have interests in hiking and have some experience or do not have experience but willing to try.

This specific group of target audience have similar psychographic characteristics. They want to go out to explore the city of Hong Kong, where they probably will only stay for one year or even less on the weekends of school days. They would like to have some memorable trips as well as meet more friends. The attractions they would choose are not typical hot spots, they would rather go to some local highlights, hiking trails for example, where tourists are not able to visit in limited time.

However, for this group of people, they may consider hiking as an option but might be held back because of some similar problems. These problems and pain points that will be illustrated below.

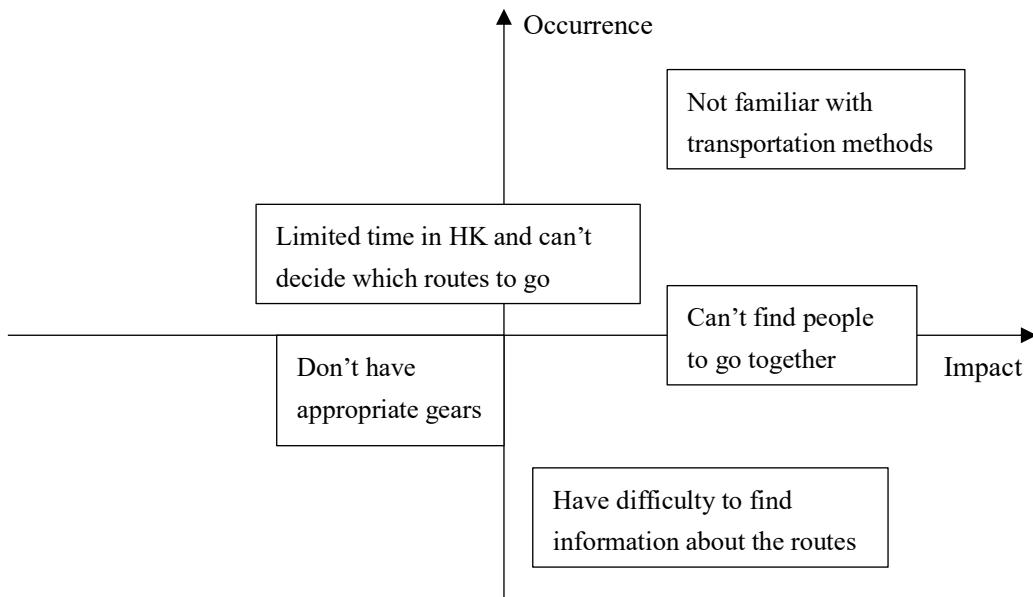


Table 2 pain mapping

Based on the analysis of target users and the design "Live wildly" will grab their

mentality and provide solution to their pain points, also cater to their needs.

2. Competitor analysis

To further decide the content and function of the website at the scope plane and differentiate the website from the competitors, I visited some Hong Kong hiking blogs. The first one worth to mention is *Walk On Hill* (www.walkonhill.com) which is a blog that provide information about almost all the hiking routes in Hong Kong, including routes, transportation and information like duration and distance. The strength of this website is the integrity of information. However, either the interface of this website or the content displayed is not very user friendly and aesthetically pleasant. With all these hiking trails, it is also overwhelming for people who want to choose some best routes to visit.



Figure 3 Homepage of Walk On Hill

Another one is the official website of The Hong Kong Tourism Board (www.discoverhongkong.com) which provide recommendations of top attractions in Hong Kong. “Great Outdoor” is a section in this site that listed out the most recommended hikes in Hong Kong. The strength is that it has very detailed description and information about each route. The weakness is that it isn’t a special

website for hiking and it takes more effort to find hiking related information in this website.

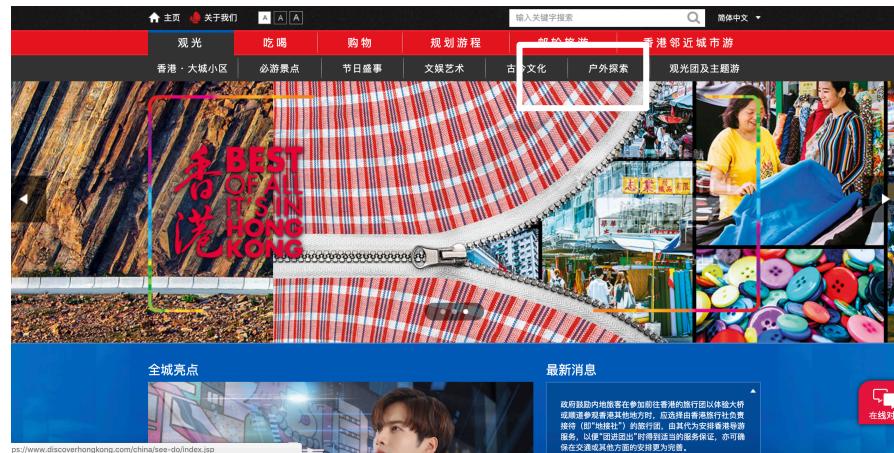


Figure 4 the outdoors is not an outstanding part of the website

3. Content and Scope

Compare these websites, as the target audience of “Live wildly” is young college students in CUHK, the content and function will be more customized for them.

3.1 Content Requirements

Firstly, as the objective of this website is to provide information that matches the needs of target users most, I will select most attractive hiking trails out among hundreds of routes. The criteria of these routes are with good sceneries that can satisfy the traveler's needs so that target users will be more willing to go visit as a travel option. To provide options for people with different preference, “Live Wildly” will choose routes with different views and puts them into different categories for visitors to choose from with ease. Another criteria of selecting routes is that there are some new hiker friendly routes, considering most of the visitors might not have much experience of hiking, and also several more adventurous routes for people who would have a more exiting experience.

Next, as visual elements are more powerful than text, all the routes will be presented in a gallery that displays attractive and “Instagrammable” pictures to persuade visitors to give it a try. To provide uniqueness to the website according to user needs, best spots for taking pictures are sorted out for each route, thus visitors can choose a route refer to these pictures.

Last but not least, basic guidebooks that are needed for a safe and easy hiking trip will be provided, including transportation information, duration and distance. As data about each route can offer valuable information for visitors to make decision, these data will be visualized with different type of charts and table. Since the website will specially designed for CUHK students, there will also be special information like the time it takes from CUHK travel to the hiking spot.

To explain the idea of the website and collect feedback from visitors, a contact page of personal information and contact method will be included.

3.2 Functional Specifications

There will be two major functions of this website, the first one as mentioned above is being informative for target users. The other function that designed to solve the problem of not having guide or friends to go hiking together, this website will play a role as a platform to organize outdoor activities among mainland students in Hong Kong.

The starting point of this function is that I learned about that there are several student organizations officially or unofficially organizing hiking trips in CUHK through WeChat groups. This shows that students are willing to team up and find an organization to go hiking together. However, using WeChat group to organize trips have

several shortcomings. For one thing is that WeChat group are not open to every student, people who are not in the same social circle may not able to find the organization. Another thing is that these groups organize 1 or 2 hikes every semester and these routes might not be the right destination for members. Also, the headcount of one team is limited if there's officially organized hikes. To solve this problem, one possible solution "Live Wildly" provides is ask students to subscribing the website and register a trip on a board on this website so that they can find a team who want to go to the same trail. Meanwhile, the platform can also help to allocate more experienced hikers into each team according to the information they registered. Form the website's point of view, subscriptions can increase the retention rate and return visit numbers.

Structure and skeleton

Based on the strategy and scope plane, I revised the structure and skeleton of the website in the proposal as below.

1. Structure

The information architecture of a website combines structuring, organizing, labeling, navigating and searching information space. The principle I used to build the structure is follow the user journey I expected visitors to perform, the structure follows a sequential structure with the user flow and also combine organic method to navigate through pages. The users flow I expected goes like this: 1) at the homepage, the title and slogan of this website helps user to learn about the content, and attractive multimedia elements generate their interest to explore more about the website. 2) next

page is the general hiking in Hong Kong information so that visitors can get to know that hiking is an activity that they can't miss in Hong Kong and the most recommended routes are marked out. 3) to learn more about the routes, here comes the gallery and guidebook section, which provide pictures and guides. 4) with enough knowledge and selected several routes that they want to try, visitors can sign up for a hike in the “activity” page. Here is a sitemap to illustrate information structure.

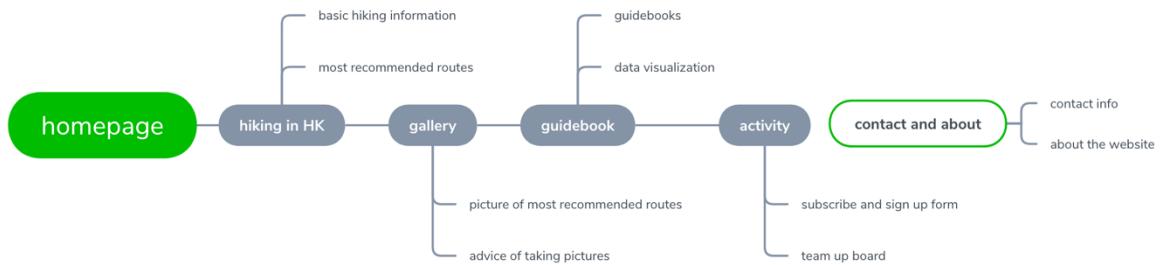


Figure 5 information structure

2. Website prototype

When it comes to prototype the website, several factors are considered. As the website is designed for student and advocate hiking as a trendy lifestyle, the visual design of the website must be pleasant. Meanwhile, as mobile phone can be the device most visitors use to view the website, it is very important to develop a responsive website. In addition, according to the HCI principles, the convention in web design and visual elements that works as signifier need to be considered. To find out the best way to categorize and structure content on the website and test out the navigation system, labeling system, the skeleton of the website is like sketched.

2.1 Head and Footer

First of all, to enhance the consistency of the website, the head which is the landing

screen of every page has the same layout and the navigation bar is fixed at the top. Also, when scroll down to the bottom, the footers are all the same and also works as a navigation back to top or to other pages.

2.2 Homepage

The head of homepage will show the website title and the slogan “live wildly as a lifestyle” at the head and the best trips will show as slides at the top, where can navigate to the activity page (figure 7).

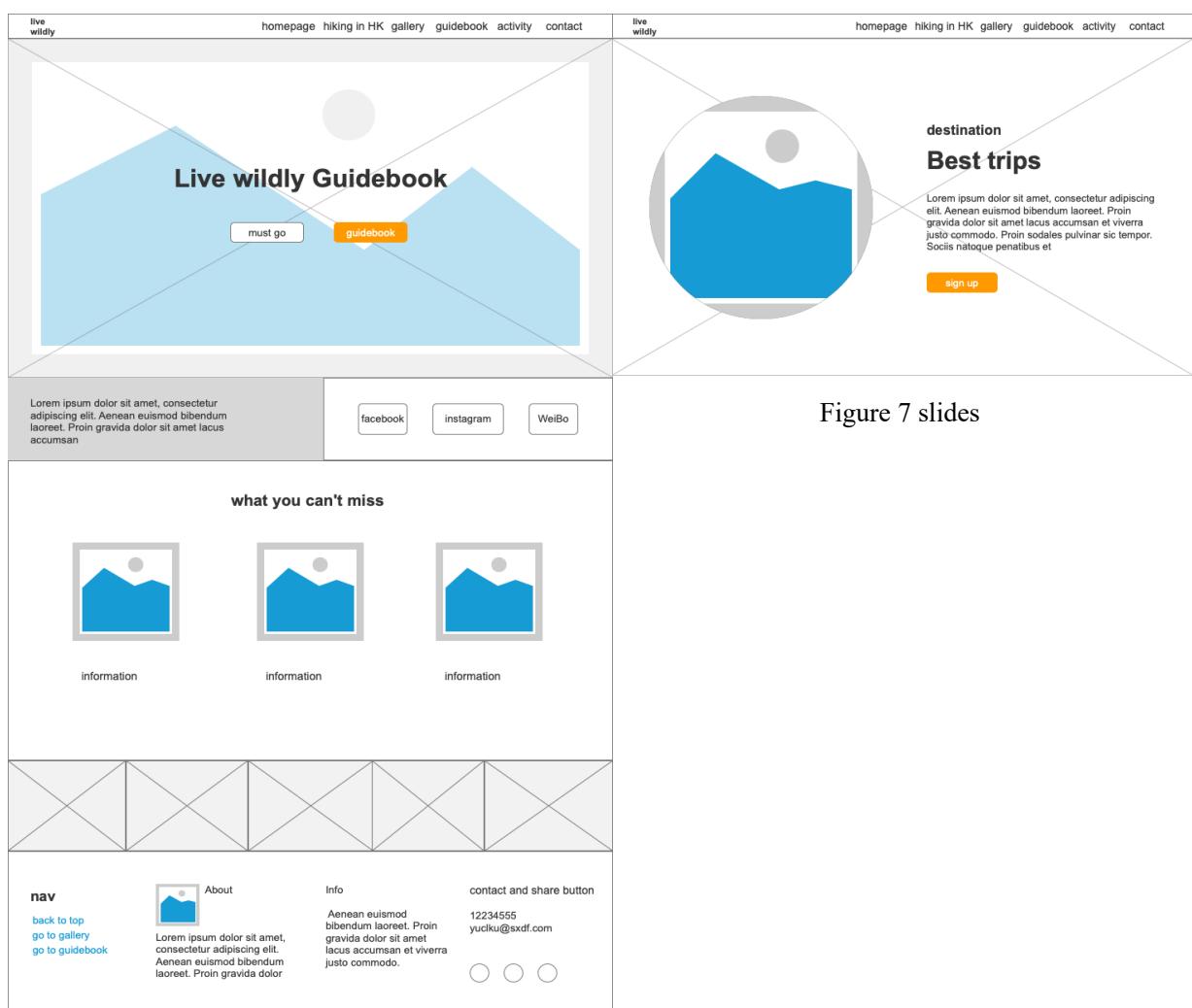


Figure 6 homepage prototype

Homepage will select the most attractive routes and mostly required routes to display

and it will keep updating. This section can link to the detailed guidebooks directly if visitors are interested. Also, there will be pictures taken by subscribers displayed and link to the gallery.

2.3 Information and Guidebook Page

These two pages are displaying useful information, so that the point is to be user-centered and give the content that they want. In these pages, the scope includes video, images and visualized data such as charts and tables that are interactive and provide the function to look for the information they needed most.

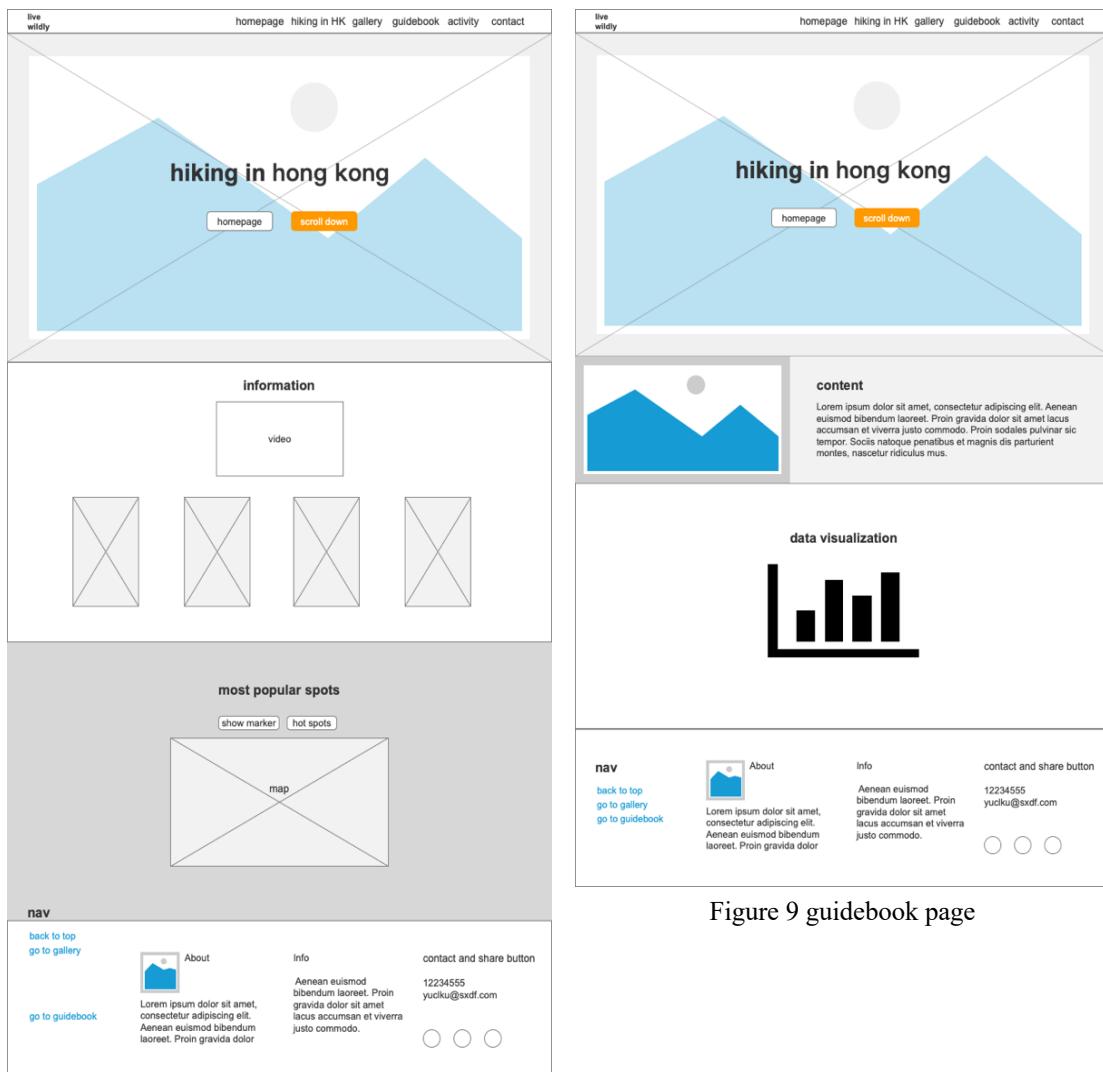


Figure 8 information page

Figure 9 guidebook page

2.4 Gallery Page

The main element in gallery page is image. The function of this page is to give a photo shooting guide.

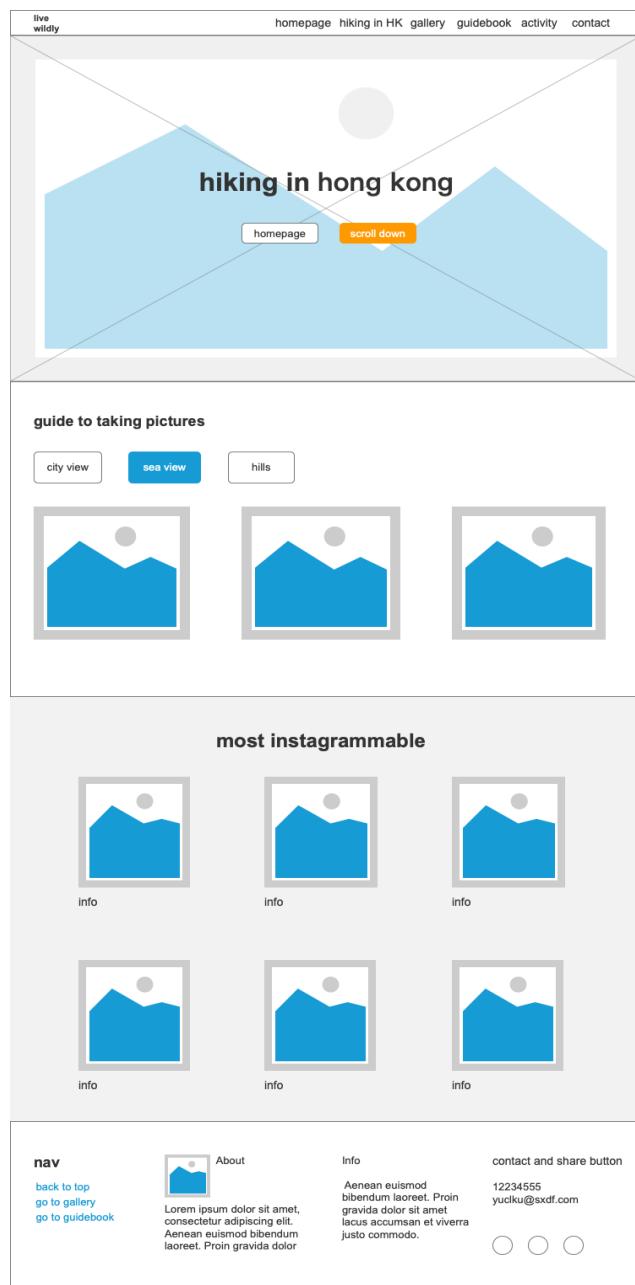


Figure 10 gallery page

2.5 Activity page

In this page, visitors can sign up for activities that organized through the platform and the information of the hiking team will be displayed on this page, which also serves

as a social function. The key information will be displayed, and sensitive personal information won't be shown.

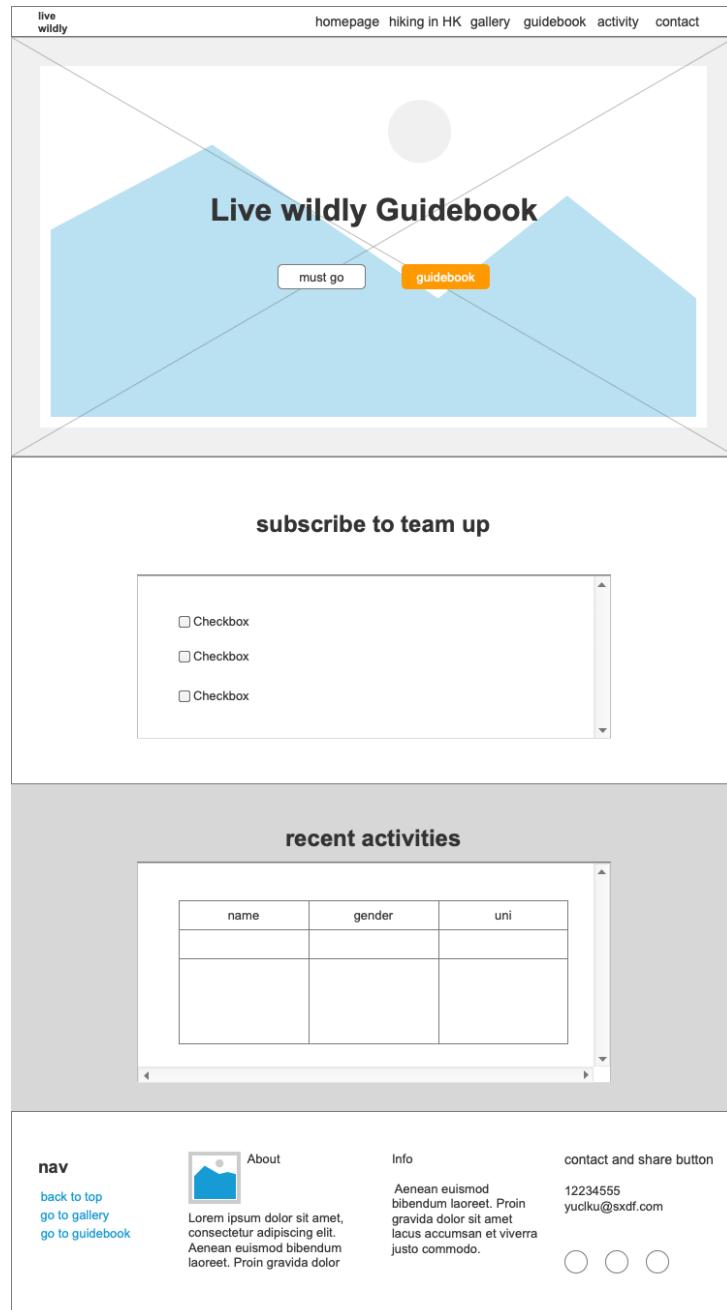


Figure 11 activity page

Interface Design

As I come to this stage, the thing I need to tackle is the visual design of the website. It is about how to make the website visually appealing to the target users, as well as the

visual and function can work in harmony.

Firstly, I set the tone of the website as fashion and young. I selected a black and white jQuery template to make responsive web design. The theme color black as the background color can perfectly enhance the image elements, which plays extreme important role in attracting visitors towards these natural sceneries. The earthy yellow color can not only contrast well with the black color, but also matches well with the natural color of the pictures and create a pleasant and elegant color scheme throughout the website.

The images are the most important content throughout the website so that it is significant to select pictures of similar style and tones and also appealing for young college students. Overall, I believe the black and earthy yellow color and stunning pictures can create great texture for this website and also improve the image and quality of this website.

As for the text, I used different text color and weight to create information hierarchy. Some different fonts are used to express the “wild” characteristics of an outdoor related website.



Figure 12 font, weight, size of text and the color scheme of "live wildly"

Website Performance Evaluation and Reflection

As in the digital world, data plays an increasingly important role in fields such as digital marketing, website optimizing, quantitative methods will be adopted to evaluate the performance of the website and show the way to optimize it. At the same time, qualitative methods like interview and usability test are also essential to get feedback from a perceptual perspective. Using these methods to collect data and feedback from users, I reflected on the website design and developed the future plan for “Live w

1. Website goal and conversion metrics

As mentioned at the beginning of introduction, the objective of “Live Wildly” is to popularize hiking as a lifestyle. Targeting at a group of postgraduate students that are not familiar with hiking, the strategy is to guide them to get into nature for once and make it memorable. The website also offers a social function where people can get to know new friends and go hiking together. Hence, the ultimate goal of this website is the number of visitors go to the activity page and sign up for a hiking trip.

Before this, the user journey includes the guidebook page and gallery page where information can be found. For the information pages, if visitors found it useful, they probably stay in these pages for longer and have more sessions when they visit. Therefore, the duration on the website and the pages users visited per session are the key metrics to evaluate the performance. Another data that is tracked for evaluation is the events on this website so that I can get to know which part is most popular among audience and where the conversion happens, so I included the conversion rate of some click events.

Another important data is the device the visitor used to view the page, which can help to decide how to optimize the website for users using different devices. To get visualized analysis report, the dashboard on Google analytics are created and attached below, which includes the metrics according to the website objective and some basic website tracking data such as bounce rate. I also add Non-bounce Session as one of the segments of evaluation because the behavior of these users are more valuable and it can also reflect is the website attractive enough for users to explore more.

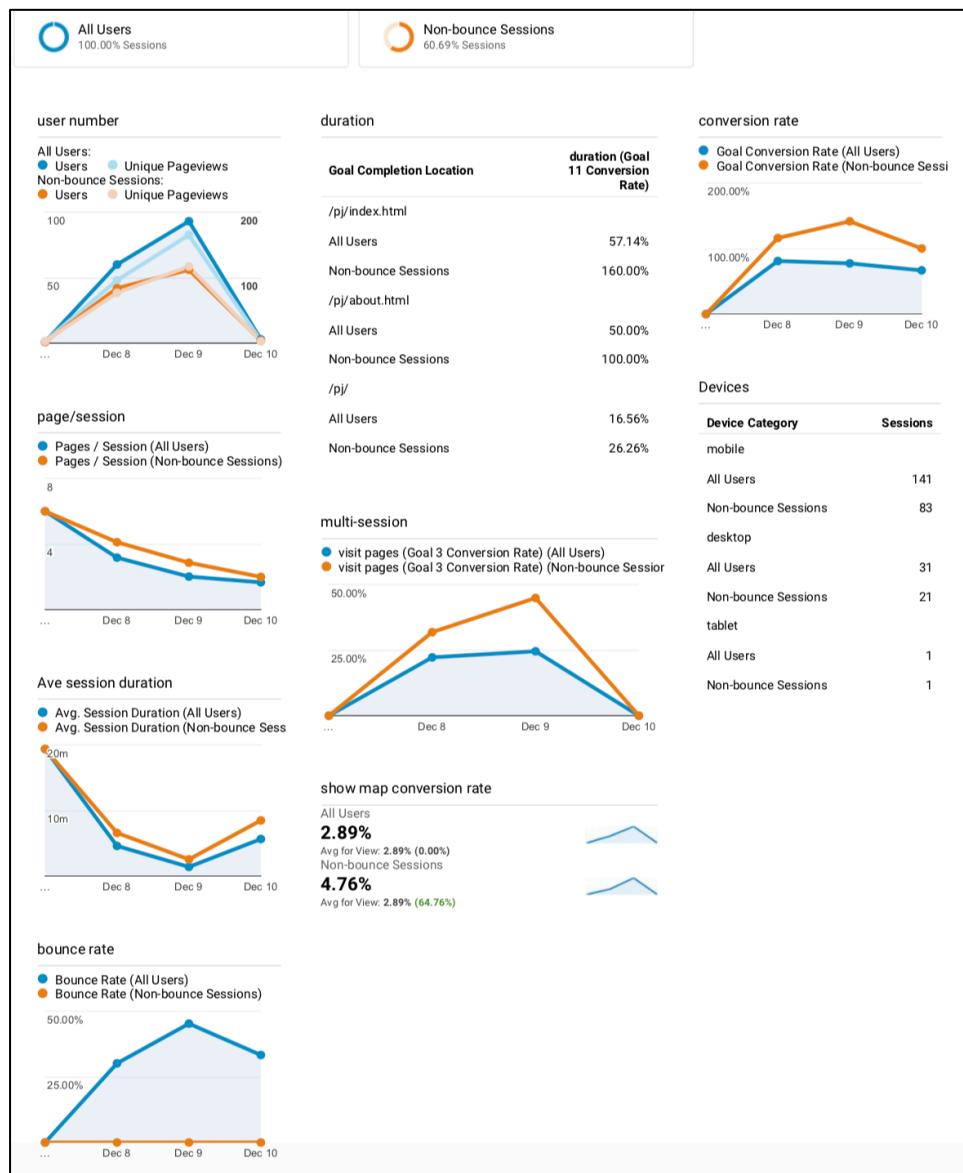


Figure 13 Google Analytics dashboard

Another metric that I would refer to is the events flow on Google analytics, which can reflect user journey on my website and where the traffic is lost. Furthermore, it can reflect does users are using the website as I expected, which can reflect if the information architecture of the website is clear.

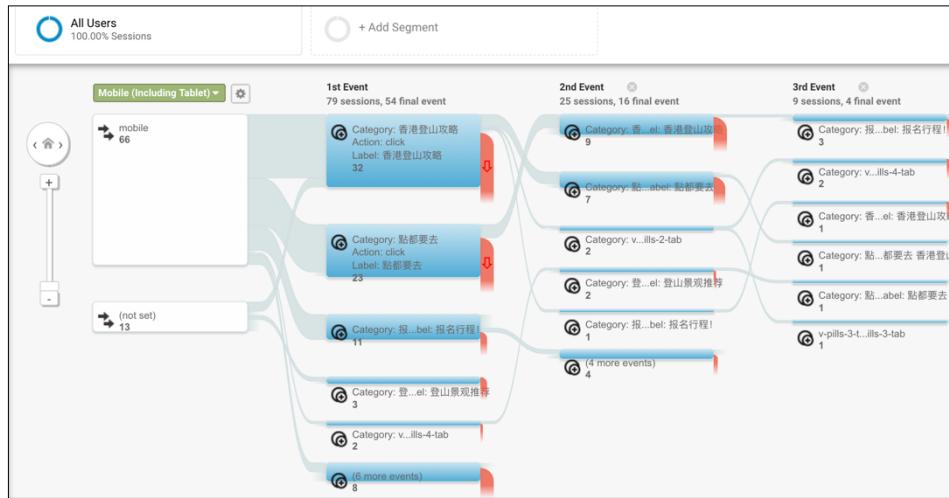


Figure 14 events flow

In addition to Google analytics, tag manager is also installed. Tags are added to the buttons and below is the events that are tracked. With tag manager, it can clearly show that the top events are the buttons at the head in homepage, which is the landing page of the website.

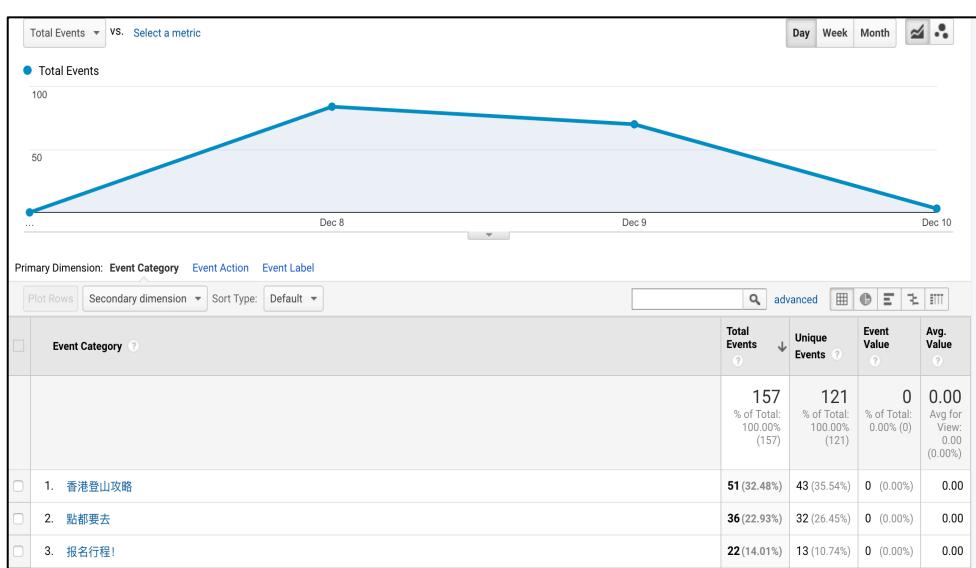


Figure 15 tag manager events

2. Data analysis

To collect useful data, I shared the website in some WeChat group of mainland students and a group of hiking lovers. From the data collected as above, although the data collection period is not long enough to draw a conclusion, it can still reflect some problems the website is facing.

As the events flow shows, the data shows that there are only around 30% users will continue to visit a third page, most of the users were lost after the second event. It tells that the biggest chance to grab the attention of visitors are the first screen they see. In addition, the duration time on the homepage is relatively longer referring to the conversion completion location. Also, the number of click events of buttons is very small and conversion rate is very low, which indicates that only few visitors are using the website as expected.

With these data, a conclusion can be drawn that it is hard to lead users to the activity page with the structure and content right now.

3. A/B test

To find the best surface design, a/b test is one of the most effective way to reflect what content displayed can increase the conversion and achieve the goal. For a/b test, I tried to create different version of the website using various variables like highlighting color, text and the location of buttons.

On the information page, I included an interactive map with which users can find out the most popular hiking trails. However, the map is located at the bottom of the page, which may be hard to notice for visitors. In the a/b test for this information page,

I changed the headline “hiking in Hong Kong” to “check out best hiking routes in HK”.

Compare to the original version, whose headline is a more general one and not related to the best hiking routes, the new version is clearer about the content.



Figure 16 original version

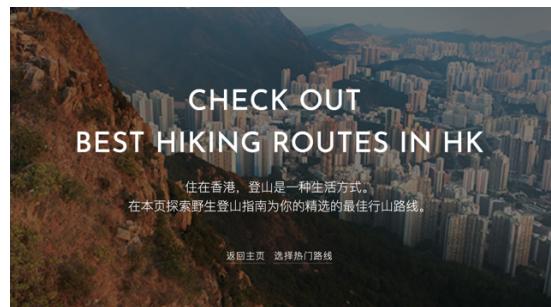


Figure 17 new version

The test result shows that mentioning the best routes in the headline can hint the content of this page better and lead visitors to scroll down and use the map function at the bottom of the page. The conversion rate of clicking the “show map” is higher than the original one.

However, as the sample are not big enough, these a/b tests still need a longer test period to increase the accuracy. But this test result reminded me to reconsider how to organize contents and deliver message clearer to audience.

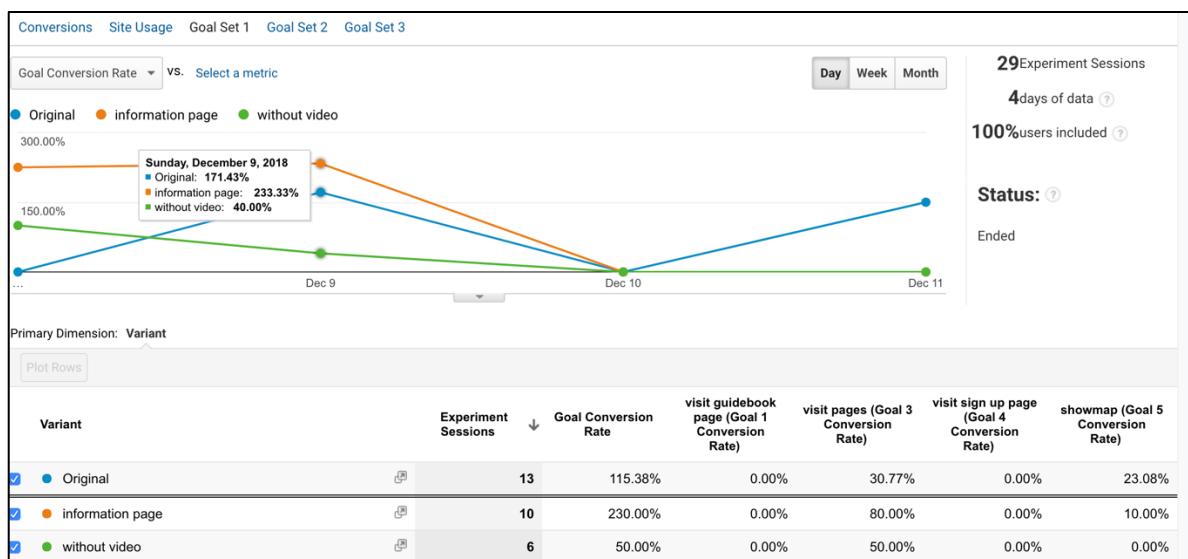


Figure 18 a/b test report

4. Interviews and Usability test

To collect more direct feedback in a qualitative way, I also interviewed several mainland students study in Hong Kong and conducted usability tests among 5 participants according to the theory that 5 participant can reveal 80% of the problems.

4.1 Interview result

To test if the homepage of website is clear and impressive enough at the first glance, I asked the interviewees the first impression of the website. I showed the website to them for several seconds and asked the impression of the first screen they saw. There are several common elements mentioned by them. Firstly, the color scheme is eye-catching, especially the yellow color contrast with the black background. The picture displayed in a circle shape also raised their interest. As for the information, the headline “香港野生登山指南” indicates that this website is a guidebook for hiking in Hong Kong, but they can barely imagine that they can also find a hiking-mates here. The hot destination displayed on the website are also attractive and they can get the information of where to go immediately.

After browsing through the website, when asked which part of the website they think need to improve, they gave me the feedback that the readability of text color in the body are not good enough. One interviewee also pointed out that several images need more careful selection. For example, the quality of background image is not high enough, and one picture in gallery page is obviously not a hill of Hong Kong and make it out of the context.



Figure 19 the body text is hard to read

As an observant, I also noticed that as I added link to every picture of in each page, users may frequently navigate through pages but as the content of this website is not abundant enough, they usually navigating to the same page and affect the user experience.

4.2 Usability test

As a new website for users, the general user goal is to find useful information that interest them. Hence, the main purpose of the usability test is to investigate if users can easily make use of the website and find interesting information. At the same time, as the activity organization is also a major conversion goal of the website, the test will also include if users can easily find the team up function and use it.

To make the context closer to the target users, participants are assigned with the tasks as well as scenario as below.

Scenario:

You are a postgraduate student in CUHK. In this weekend, you plan to hang out

with friend and explore somewhere you haven't been to in Hong Kong. You get to know the website "Live Wildly" recently and want to see if you can find any useful information here.

Tasks:

- 1) Find a route that interests you
- 2) Find information that can help you to plan the trip
- 3) Sign up for activities here

Test results

For the first task, most the participants choose to browse through the navigation bar and click into different pages to find information about each route. The mostly visited page are gallery, where they want to view the scenery of these hiking trails first, then the guidebook page to learn more about the routes.

In this task, there are several mistakes that participants made. One of the participants found the Por Lo Shan on the homepage interesting so that she directly clicked into the "sign up for trips" button. However, she expected more information of this route after clicking through. Another mistake is that one participant clicked "activity" page, which in Chinese is "行程" trying to find more about the hiking information. He think the Chinese is confusing because on other travel websites, "行程" is usually for trip planning and there will be more detailed guide and information.

In the second task, all the participants can locate the "guidebook" page to find more information. However, as I observed, they barely noticed that the charts and table in this page are interactive, only when they hover on certain areas can they notice that they

can click on some elements. Overall, they find it useful to have these data about hiking routes so that they can roughly give a plan of how to go on a hike with this information. One participant also pointed out that some of the data visualization method are not clear and easy to understand enough.

For the last task, since the participants have the experience of using the website, it is easy for them to navigate to the activity page on the menu bar and some of them clicked the button “sign up for trips” at the homepage directly. This indicates that the learnability of this website is good. This may because of the simple structure it has, but the content organization and expression still need to improve to enhance the learnability.

Through these tests, several severe problems are found. The first one is that according to the HCI principles, the website is not using signifiers in a clear way so that the important functions are hard to notice for visitors. Secondly, with the information structure and user flow are clear enough to lead users to the activity page in a reasonable way. Although there are drawbacks, participants all think it a visually pleasant website and it feels fluent to use and navigate through pages.

Future development

With my own reflection and the evaluation and feedbacks from the qualitative and quantitative aspects, I plan to redesign the website and enrich the content for future development.

I plan to redesign the website into a 3-page website with more concentrated information and a more outstanding activity page. These pages will be “guidebooks”,

“activities” and “blogs”. This will help to reduces redundancy and make the user flow more reasonable. Meanwhile, I will reconsider the headline and content and make it more like a platform for young people to step into nature and make it a social event. To improve the user retention and reuse rate, I would like to make use the “blog” page of this website as a platform for outdoor lovers and post some personal blogs on that because now the inventory of the website is limited. This can also make the website more plentiful and unique.

As for the evaluation, I would like to add some more buttons into the website and make the footprints of visitors more trackable.