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Final Project Report

Our project is focused on facilitating UCLA students' involvement in the natural environment and outdoor recreation opportunities of Los Angeles and Southern California. The main issue we decided to focus on is increasing awareness of outdoor activities because we believe that this issue presents some of the biggest barriers to students who want to engage in nature and the outdoors. In order to address these challenges, our team found it highly important to research the ways in which we could better cater to the needs and wants of our potential users. Using the results from our research, we also created design concepts and prototypes for the service or application we are planning to create.

Research Techniques and Process

In order to delve deeper into the domain of our project and begin thinking about ways to meet the needs of our target user base, we conducted a thorough research process that consisted of a literature review, interviews, and fieldwork.

Literature Review

As part of our research process, we created a literature review by finding online articles about relevant topics like outdoor recreation and community-building.

In regards to community-building, the article "Successful Community Building Using Social Media Platforms" by Emily Jones provided valuable information about the challenges of forming online communities by discussing successful social media companies and giving examples of successful groups formed on those platforms. For example, it is easy to form a Facebook Group because of the variety of engagement features and Facebook's enormous user base, so there are low barriers to entry for new members who want to explore their interests. One big takeaway from this article was that successful online communities focus heavily on finding new ways to engage users, and have several moderators that help monitor user engagement.

The research article “Beyond ‘Because It’s There’” by Alan Ewert, et al. described a study on motivations for pursuing adventure recreation activities that was conducted over a 6 year period. Through analyzing their findings, the authors discovered three main factors of motivation: social, sensation-seeking, and self-image. Out of these three factors, the social factor, relating to a sense of belonging, being part of a team, and friendship, was the strongest predictor of group membership. This means that most people are motivated to pursue outdoor recreation activities because of social factors, above both sensation-seeking and self-image. This conclusion provides us with further evidence that a community-building platform for UCLA undergraduates would be valuable in motivating them to pursue outdoor activities.

As for access to outdoor gear, “Creating Access to Outdoor Gear in Your Community” taken from Outdoor Sport Institute provides several solutions to tackle this challenge. Some strategies include gear libraries, rental and lease options, gear collectives, and donations. There are also other factors to consider such as storage, maintenance, gear repair, and sustainability. In order for this to be a functional and long term resource, many roles and partnerships should also be considered to enable and encourage outdoor recreation. This helps us with understanding how we can tackle finding the right solution for UCLA students, allowing them to benefit while also giving back, all while fulfilling their purposes of enjoying the outdoors.

Interviews

To better understand the needs of our target user base (UCLA undergraduate students), we conducted structured interviews via a Google Form sent to students in which we asked various questions about their experience with outdoor activities and apps for finding groups to do outdoor activities with. The survey was limited to UCLA students by requiring respondents to sign in using their UCLA email and included the following questions:

1. What types of outdoor activities do you enjoy, and how frequently do you participate in them? (Free response)
2. Have you ever used an app or platform for finding outdoor activity partners or renting outdoor gear? If yes, please specify which ones. (Free response)

3. How do you prefer to find/connect with potential outdoor activity communities?
(Select all that apply)
 - a. In app messaging
 - b. Group chats
 - c. User profiles with activity preferences
 - d. Matchmaking algorithms based on interests
 - e. Other:
4. Have you ever rented outdoor gear/equipment through an app? If you own outdoor gear/equipment, would you be willing to loan your equipment to another student through an app? (Free response)

We also conducted additional structured interviews as a part of our research in which we contacted several organizations at UCLA in order to ask them a set of questions we planned beforehand for efficiency as well as any unplanned questions that may arise depending on the unique circumstances of the organization. The organizations contacted include the Backpacking Club, Outdoor Adventure Club, LA Ski and Board Club, UCLA Recreation Marina Aquatic Center, and Peaks and Professors; we used a combination of email and Instagram messaging to reach out to these groups. The list of questions sent to the organizations are as follows:

Section 1: Role and Responsibilities

- 1.1. What is your role within the UCLA rental gear staff?
- 1.2. Can you describe the types of outdoor gear that are typically available for rent to students?

Section 2: User Demands and Trends

- 2.1. What types of outdoor activities are most popular among UCLA students, and what gear is most frequently rented for these activities?
- 2.2. Are there any complaints about the pricing of the gear rental?

Section 3: Challenges and Improvements

3.1. What are the primary challenges you encounter in managing and maintaining the rental gear inventory? Late return? Item damage?

3.2. Are there any specific improvements or changes that you believe could enhance the rental process or the user experience for students?

Section 4: User Safety and Education

4.1. How do you ensure that students are properly educated and informed about the correct use and safety of the rental gear they take?

4.2. Are there additional safety measures or educational resources you believe could be beneficial for students?

Section 5: Collaborations and Partnerships

5.1. Do you collaborate with any other departments, student organizations, or external partners to support outdoor activities and gear rental for students?

The department we are collaborating are REC rental section,

5.2. Are there any potential collaborations or partnerships you would like to explore to enhance the rental gear services?

OpenAI. (2023, 10 28). Response from ChatGPT.

We used ChatGPT to generate a format of sample questions. We then took the format from Chat GPT generated questions and modified it to fit UCLA students. The questions for UCLA rental staff are also written in similar way to broaden the understanding of student needs and preferences.

Fieldwork

To conduct our field research, we are planning to visit websites of various stores that allow the renting and/or selling of gear for outdoor activities with the goal of simulating the actions UCLA students might take to seek out gear or outdoor activities. Since we are catering to the needs of UCLA students, we will mainly be visiting locations that are close to the UCLA campus to ensure our actions mirror those of our potential users. These locations include UCLA Recreation and REI in Santa Monica.

Competitor Analysis

In order to better understand the landscape of our project and strategize our approach to solving the problem of engaging UCLA students with the outdoors, we analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of several competitors: Meetup, AllTrails, iNaturalist, and Outdoor Project.

1. Meetup: Meetup is a social media platform that allows users to find and join groups related to their personal interests, as well as host events and activities.
 - a. Meetup's strengths are that it is easy to find events, groups, interests because they are filtered by location, distance, and category. Users can create social groups, career groups, and creative groups and can submit user reviews and ratings for events.
 - b. Meetup's weaknesses are that there are membership fees to organize events and create groups, which users may not be inclined to pay for. In addition, organizers play the most important role in a group so without organizers, the group falls apart. There may also be inconsistencies in event attendance.
2. AllTrails: AllTrails is a mobile app used for trail maps, including crowdsourced images, reviews, and difficulty ratings.
 - a. AllTrail's strengths are that it has a huge database of trails which makes it easy for beginners to find a manageable trail. It also provides detailed data about trails such as its elevation, difficulty, distance, routes, and reviews. Users can also create custom trails for their own adventures.
 - b. AllTrail's weaknesses are that it is limited to hiking and does not include other outdoor activities. It also lacks a feature that allows gear rentals and advanced

features (i.e. offline maps) require a subscription. The platform's trail database may also have limitations in terms of global/ local coverage.

3. iNaturalist: a platform in the naturalist and outdoor recreation space. It offers an online community for outdoor enthusiasts, focusing on environmental education and fostering a love for nature.
 - a. Some strengths include facilitating connections and group formation for outdoor enthusiasts, their Education Hub offering extensive resources on nature and sustainability, and providing access to outdoor equipment through a network of providers.
 - b. Its weaknesses include not catering specifically to UCLA or Southern California, there's potential for misclassification since it relies on user-generated content, and it must be connected to internet to access core features (may not be practical when out in nature)
4. Outdoor Project: A platform that offers information on outdoor activities and destinations. It provides details about outdoor adventures, such as hiking, biking, climbing.
 - a. Its strengths are being able to provide information and guides for a wide range of outdoor activities, and it contains user generated content, allowing users to contribute their own adventure reports, photos, and recommendations.
 - b. Some weaknesses include not having specific features catering to a single campus (club, campus popup events) such as UCLA or a highly localized user base, and not addressing the gear rental needs of students.

Results

From the research we have conducted thus far, we have gathered these findings regarding the domain and problem space of our project.

Interview Insights

We distributed the survey link to UCLA students starting from October 24th and continued to do so for about two weeks afterwards; at the end of the two week period, we

received responses from 16 unique respondents. From our survey results, we saw that a majority of our respondents engage in outdoor activity ranging from either a couple times a week to once a month, giving us a pretty active college student to base our findings and research off of. All of them have also never used an app or platform for finding outdoors activity partners or renting outdoor gear, but 80% of our interviewees communicate through group chats to do so. In addition to this, all respondents have never rented equipment from an app before, and would not feel as comfortable loaning other students their own equipment. This leads us to find a different resource for gear rentals amongst students, all while allowing them to enjoy recreational activities with peers.

Amongst the several organizations at UCLA we reached out to, only the Outdoor Adventure Club was able to respond to our request for an interview. The Outdoor Adventure Club at UCLA is a student club at the Anderson School of Management and organizes activities such as camping, hiking, kayaking, and more. We learned that the club does not utilize a gear rental system for members; rather, members are able to borrow gear such as sleeping bags and mats to use on club activities. The club also stated that members are required by the activity provider to sign a waiver before participating in any outdoor activities. Although they do not collaborate with other organizations for gear rental, they often partner with other student clubs at Anderson to support their outdoor activities. From the Outdoor Adventure Club's responses, we can infer that other outdoor clubs at UCLA might have similar systems when it comes to gear or outdoor activities.

Fieldwork Observations

Upon further research, we have found that both UCLA Rec and REI Santa Monica are currently unavailable for rentals. With this, we decided to explore their websites to find out about their usual rental process. With REI, you are able to choose a location from their website to rent from, which then lists the services available. REI's Tustin location provides rental services which include snowshoes, cycling, climbing, camping/hiking gear, and bear canisters. By selecting the dates, you are able to calculate the rental price for the duration needed. You are then able to check out and go pick up the equipment rented. For UCLA Rec, you have to visit the Rental Center in person, fill out the appropriate paperwork for the gear you want to rent, then pay the

rental fees. They also provide a pricing sheet for the equipment, along with replacement costs. It also looks like they only provide rental fees for 1-4 days, 5-8 days, and breaks (last week of classes until the beginning of the next quarter).

Research Conclusion

We hope that our preliminary research will reveal important insights on the challenges and needs of UCLA students and making connections to outdoor recreation and community-building. We have learned that many students are actively engaged in outdoor activities through existing UCLA outdoor interest clubs and groups. Most clubs lack centralized apps for finding outdoor activity partners or renting gear, or only allow access to club members.

We also learned that some clubs partner with others to support each other's outdoor activities. Through analyzing our interview responses, we have concluded that the most direct way to engage the undergraduate student population at UCLA with outdoor recreational activities is to provide access to groups and communities to do these activities with. Furthermore, given that both UCLA Recreation and REI Santa Monica are unavailable for rentals, and that most students were unwilling to rent out their own equipment, we have decided to just focus our design on finding and building groups to engage in outdoor activities with. This will also make our process more consistent when addressing design problems and corresponding solutions in the future.

Design Concept

To help with design decisions in the future and understand our users on a deeper level, we have defined our average users and their current experience journey. We also made low-fi sketches of our application which will serve as a starting point since we will be expanding upon these initial designs in the future.

Key Features

1. Groups: Users can create or join groups based on specific outdoor activities (ex. hiking, running, camping, rock climbing, biking). Each group has a feed/forum where users can post events, photos, have discussions, etc.

2. Events: Group leaders can create events for their group or for the general undergraduate community, and users can join and discover events of their liking.
3. User Profiles: Personalized profile that includes their name, profile picture, bio, and a list of the outdoor activities they are interested in. Showcase their achievements on their profiles.
4. Group chats: Members can have real-time conversations and plan activities within the group. Users can also send private messages to other group members.
5. Activity: Provide an overview of a user's outdoor adventures, including statistics about outdoor activity and progress to motivate users.

User Personas

1. *Name:* Bianca Rodriguez

Age: 19

Education: Second-year at UCLA majoring in Mathematics

Employment: Barista at local coffee shop

Tech literacy: High

Characteristics: Introvert, Adventurous, Eco-conscious, Planner

Background: Bianca is a second-year undergraduate student at UCLA who is passionate about the outdoors and sustainable living. Some of her hobbies include hiking, reading, camping, and going to concerts. She enjoys all outdoor activities and frequently plans solo backpacking and camping trips in the local area.

Core needs:

- Find a community who share her passion for the outdoors to go on trips with
- Organize groups and help others learn to appreciate the outdoors
- An app that fits her busy schedule, with an intuitive interface that allows her to find, create, and join groups easily

Frustrations:

- Current platforms don't support community building, especially within her age demographic

- Difficulty staying committed to on-campus organizations due to her busy schedule
- Groups she is a part of on other platforms (Facebook Groups) are too big, making it hard for her to form meaningful connections

2. *Name:* Cameron Chang

Age: 20

Education: Third-year at UCLA majoring in History

Employment: Unemployed

Tech literacy: High

Characteristics: Extrovert, Energetic, Beginner, Easy-going

Background: Cameron is a third-year undergraduate student at UCLA who is extremely extroverted and enjoys meeting new people. He is a part of numerous on-campus organizations, and spends most of his time hanging out with his friends. He was recently introduced to rock climbing through a friend, and is looking to find other beginners to rock climb with.

Core needs:

- Find a group of students who have a similar experience level.
- The ability to connect with a wide network of students, who can provide tips or help him along his journey.
- Join and form groups, and be able to easily refer friends to the platform and join groups together

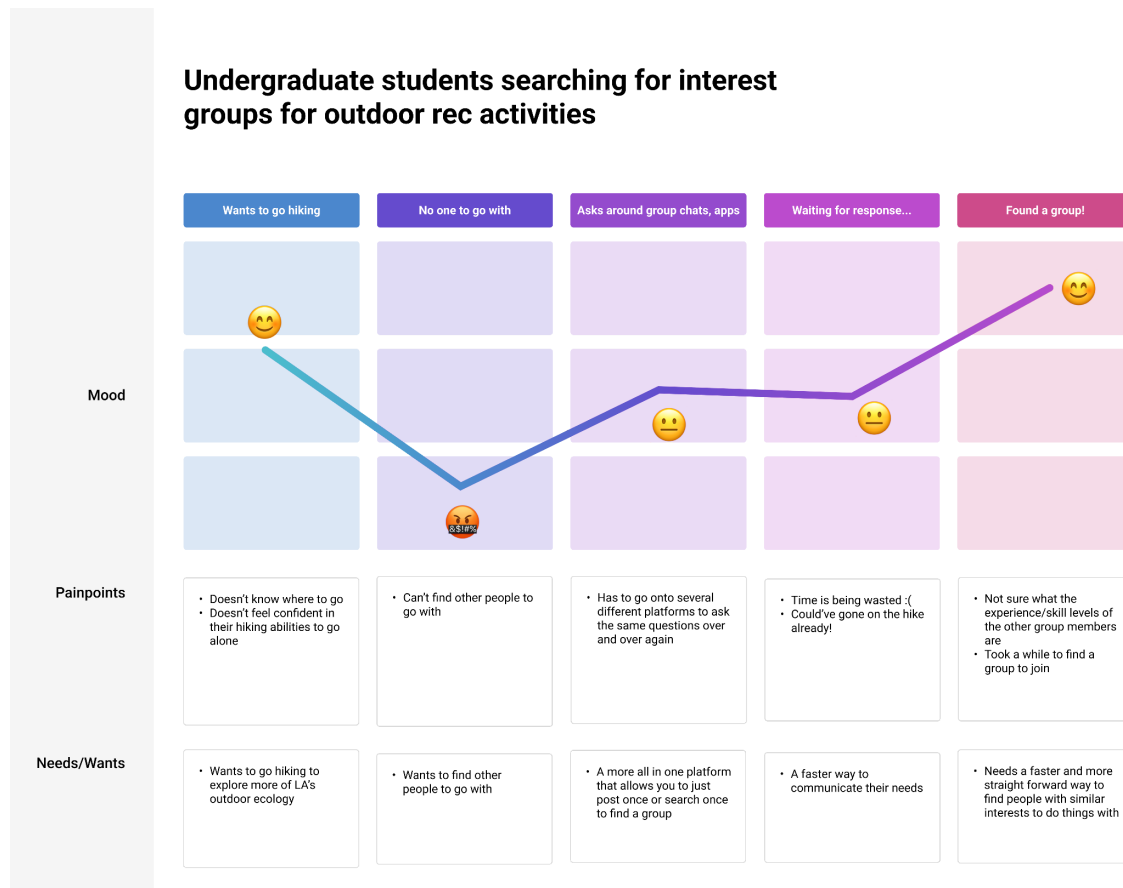
Frustrations:

- Wants to enjoy outdoor activities as a hobby, joining a club feels too high-commitment
- Hard to find groups on social media for niche activities like rock climbing
- Wants to explore other outdoor activities in a group setting

User Journey

After conducting our interviews, we created a journey map to help visualize the users pain points and emotions throughout their experience.

The user goes through the following stages (using hiking as an example):



From our visualization, we can see that the user experiences the most frustration because they have no one to go hiking with. Following are when the user asks around group chats, and when waiting for responses. Using these more negative emotions of the user, we have highlighted these as our main focus, being able to provide a more all in one platform which allows you to find and/or create groups of similar interests.

Low-fi Sketches

The sketches show a mobile app interface for a 'Hiking' app. The main components are:

- Home Screen:** A header with 'Hiking' and a search icon. Below is a grid of buttons: 'Hiking', 'Hiking', 'Hiking', 'Hiking', 'Hiking', and 'Hiking'.
- Search Screen:** A search bar with a magnifying glass icon. Below is a list of items, each with a checkbox and a text label.
- Group Feed Screen:** A header with 'Hiking'. Below is a list of items, each with a checkbox and a text label.
- Profile Screen:** A header with 'Hiking'. Below is a list of items, each with a checkbox and a text label.
- Trail Detail Screen:** A header with 'Hiking'. Below is a map showing a hiking trail. To the right of the map is a list of items, each with a checkbox and a text label.

From this point on, our team decided to narrow down the focus of our concept to beginner hikers at UCLA. We felt that this change would allow us to develop a more cohesive

app and address the lack of resources for this specific population. The following designs and design ideas will reflect this change.

Information Architecture

In terms of content, we plan to include a **homepage** that displays local hikes. The user can choose to organize the list of hikes based on various features of the hike which could be highly useful for beginner hikers because they often lack detailed information about hikes that more experienced hikers may already be aware of. The features we plan to include are as follows:

- Hike details including: duration/length of hike, difficulty of hike, elevation, etc.
- Location of hike from the user
- How crowded/popular the hike is
- Water/bathroom access
- Parking/public transportation
- Shade/forecast
- Accessibility
- Optimal time to go on the hike
- What to bring/what to wear

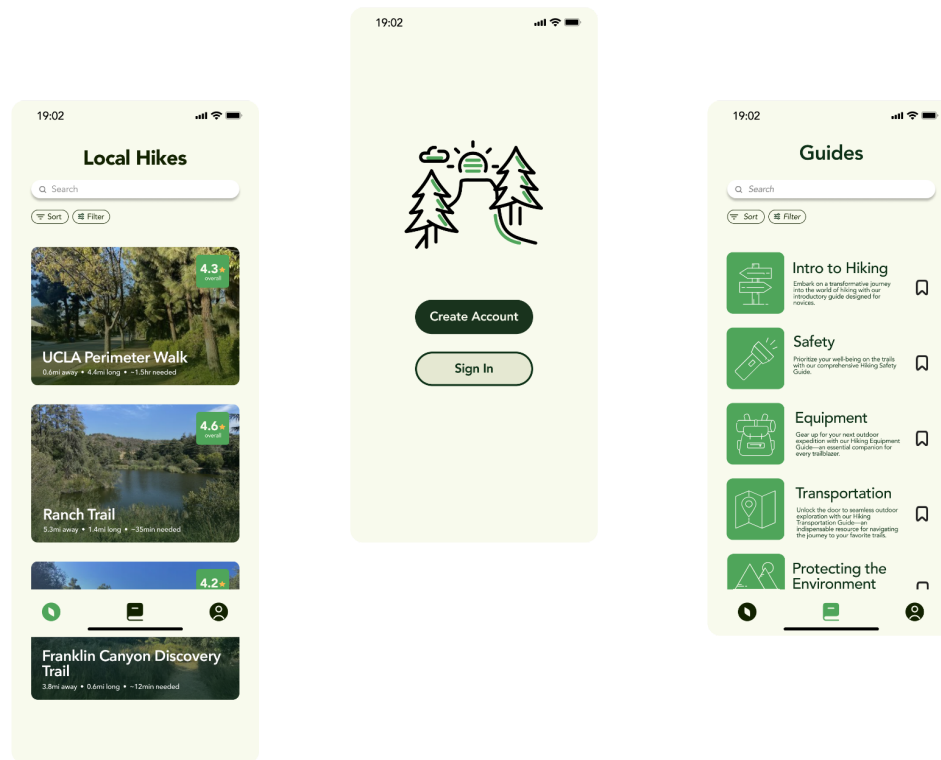
There will also be a **user profile** that displays the user's saved hikes, journal, experience level, and completed hikes. The experience level and completed hikes feature in particular will be especially important for beginners because it motivates users by showing their progress and growth over time. We will also include **guides** that will inform beginner hikers on relevant topics such as how to get started with hiking, safety, equipment, ways to protect the environment while hiking, and transportation. These guides will be in a blog style format and there will be an overall guide. The homepage, profile, and guides will all be on separate pages of the application. Users will also have a personal journal displayed on their profile page, where they can log their experiences on each hike, as well as add images of views and wildlife they took along the hike. Journal entries can also be shared to the public, allowing users to read first-hand experiences from other beginner hikers from their profile or on individual hike guides.

We plan to make the navigation for the application as simple as possible since it is geared towards beginner hikers. Upon using the application for the first time, users will be sent to the homepage where they will be able to view a list of local hikes. The user can filter the list of hikes according to feature or use a search option to search for specific hikes. When the user clicks on a hike, they will be able to access hike details. There will be a navigation bar that will be displayed on any page the user accesses for easy navigation between pages. The navigation bar will include the homepage, guides, and profile. Upon clicking any of the icons for these three features, they will be sent to the corresponding page. When the user clicks on the guides icon, they will be sent to a list of guides which also utilizes a search option to search for specific guides. When the user clicks on the profile icon, they will be sent to a page that displays their profile; from there, they can access their saved hikes, journal, experience level, and completed hikes.

Hi-fi Sketches

Upon solidifying our low fidelity sketches, we moved on to designing our high fidelity frames and prototyping. We first started out by deciding on our design system, including color palette and font to keep our interfaces consistent throughout the design process. You can find the frames

[here](#), and the prototype [here](#).



[Overview of our home page, launch screen, and guide page.]

Plans for Usability Testing :

Objective: We aim to evaluate the design concept of our outdoor activities app and ensure that it meets the needs and preferences of our target user.

Step 1: Planning for participant recruitment.

We aim to recruit 3-5 participants who match the following criteria.

- UCLA undergraduates
- Diverse in hiking experience
- Diverse in tech literacy
- Diverse in outdoor interest

Step 2: Designing of Usability Tests

We aim to have one on one meetings with each participant, showing each of them our app prototype to mimic an actual user interaction. Some use cases include creating a profile and finding a trail to hike on. We will observe participants' reaction to the app prototype closely, noting usability issues and/or hesitations. Once they are done, we will ask for their feedback, including honest thoughts and opinions and ways to improve our current prototype.

Step 3: Conduct data analysis

Using our collected data and observations, we will identify common pain points and usability issues of the users to iterate on for future improvements, and create a summary of our key findings.

Usability Testing

To conduct our usability testing, we will follow the script/protocol below.

Research Script/Protocol

Introduction

Welcome and thank you for agreeing to participate in our usability evaluation today. To give some context on our project, our team is currently working on an app designed for beginner hikers at UCLA. In order to test out our product and ensure it is user friendly, we have planned a usability evaluation with our target users, UCLA undergraduate students who are beginner hikers such as yourself. The usability evaluation will begin with a short interview session. We then ask you to perform some user tasks using a prototype of our app. We will then conclude with a final interview session. We predict that the usability evaluation will be relatively brief and take around 15 minutes. We would also like to let you know that this session will be recorded; however, the recording will not be made publicly available and will only be used for the purposes of our research. Do you have any questions before we begin?

To start off the usability evaluation, we'd like to ask you a few questions about hiking and hiking apps in general. Your honest responses will be highly appreciated.

Structured Interviews Part 1

General Questions

1. How do you typically discover new hiking trails or locations to explore?
2. Have you ever previously used an app or website to learn about hiking or find hiking trails? If so, which ones?
3. Would an app that contains detailed hiking guides and general beginner hiking tips motivate you to start hiking?

Thank you for your responses. We will now show you a prototype of the app we have designed that you will be able to interact with. We will also ask you to perform some user tasks so that we can get an understanding of how a user might use and navigate our app to accomplish their goals. While performing the tasks, please interact with the prototype in the manner that feels most natural to you and let us know if anything is unclear or if you run into any issues.

User Tasks

- Go through sign-up flow
- Click and explore hikes on home page
 - Scroll through hike guides
- Click and explore guides
 - Scroll through specific guides
- View profile page

Thank you for completing the user tasks. We will now ask you some questions about the app you just interacted with for our final interview session. Again, your honest responses will be highly appreciated.

Structured Interviews Part 2

Hikes Feature Questions

- What are your thoughts on how the information is laid out in the detailed hike guide? Is there anything you would change?
- Is there any information you think is missing or is unnecessary?

Guides Feature Questions

- What are your thoughts on how the information is laid out in the detailed hike guide? Is there anything you would change?
- Is there any information you think is missing or is unnecessary?

Profile Feature Questions

- How do you feel about how the information is laid out in the profiles page?
- Is there anything you would change or add/take away?

General Questions

1. How difficult did you think it was to navigate the app?
2. How likely are you to use this app to learn about hiking or find hiking trails?
3. How well do you think this app caters to beginner hikers?
4. How do you feel about the visual design and overall aesthetics of the app? Does it contribute to a positive user experience?
5. Do you have any other feedback for us?

Wrap-up

That concludes our usability evaluation. Thank you for participating and giving us your honest feedback. Your responses are highly valuable to us and will help us obtain a better understanding of the app we are designing so that we can improve our product.

Usability Evaluation / Feedback & design revisions

Using the script and protocol from the previous assignment, we sought out some prospective participants for our usability testing. We ended up gathering results from 5 UCLA undergraduates, all who are new to hiking. The testing was done mostly over Zoom. Here are the responses from our interviewees, organized by question:

Structured Interviews Part 1

General Questions

How do you typically discover new hiking trails or locations to explore?

Interviewee #1: TikTok or Youtube

Interviewee #2: Friends or Google search it up

Interviewee #3:

- Google or Apple maps, read their short instructions on what the hike is
- Other websites that has pictures of what they look like

Interviewee #4: Typically, I would go on Google

Interviewee #5: Usually my friends would share those locations with me, I really go hiking with all my friends. So basically, I get all of those locations from my friends. I barely search those myself on the internet, but sometimes I do by using Google Map and that's it.

Have you ever previously used an app or website to learn about hiking or find hiking trails? If so, which ones?

Interviewee #1: No, doesn't go hiking often/doesn't have a lot of interest in hiking

Interviewee #2: No

Interviewee #3: Nike running app to track hike, but not for finding new trails

Interviewee #4: No, I haven't. I've only used Google to find locations, and I'll go there to see it myself. I'm pretty new to hiking, and Google has always been my gateway into all sorts of stores and locations, and I use the ratings as well as reviews on Google as a sort of guideline. So I've never thought about getting or using another platform.

Interviewee #5: I have never actually used an app nor a website to learn about hiking stuff.

Would an app that contains detailed hiking guides and general beginner hiking tips motivate you to start hiking?

Interviewee #1: Probably not, is more motivated by videos of cool areas/nice views

Interviewee #2: If there was no, bc not an avid hiker

Interviewee #3: Yes

Interviewee #4: Yeah, I think hiking is a great form of exercise and is a great form of cardio, I think hiking sort of relaxes your mind and overall. I think it's a great activity to do in your spare time. so I would love to enroll in a platform that makes it more convenient for me to partake in this activity.

Interviewee #5: I think it definitely would, because to some extent, one of the reasons why I'm only hiking with my friends is because I don't really find myself interested in hiking alone. Doing research on my own about all of those scattered hiking places is confusing. An app that's only for hiking around UCLA will be really helpful for me to, at least, have more interest in hiking.

Structured Interviews Part 2

Hikes Feature Questions

What are your thoughts on how the information is laid out in the detailed hike guide? Is there anything you would change?

Interviewee #1:

- Could add info on parking
- Could add warnings for specific hikes (e.g. bear warning, rockslide warning, snake warning)

Interviewee #2:

- Prefer to understand how it's initially sorted, usually would tell if sorted by recommendation, ratings, etc.

Interviewee #3:

- Layout is clear, aesthetic, naturey, will appeal to people who enjoy hiking
- Symbols and logos are useful and easy to spot
- A lot of introduction information that's necessary and important, for very beginner hikers
- Text can be less dense to read through

Interviewee #4:

- I think the UI is pretty clean. It's pretty straightforward. I think the style is pretty minimalistic overall.
- Good impressions

Interviewee #5:

- I really like how the information is being laid out
- I really like how you can get everything within a page
- Really liked the rating system

Is there any information you think is missing or is unnecessary?

Interviewee #1:

- What to wear/bring section might not be necessary? Could be added in guides section instead
 - Or could make it customizable
- Could add review system where users submit reviews of hikes
 - Isn't sure where the ratings for the hikes are coming from

Interviewee #2:

- Estimated time for one way vs whole duration?
- Would be nice to know why I need different things to bring for different trails (i.e. is there something special about that trail?)

Interviewee #3:

- N/A, all suitable

Interviewee #4:

- All of the information presented to me seems to be essential
- I don't see any information that I consider to be excessive, as I am aware that there are many guidelines that the platform has to follow as well.

Interviewee #5:

- More detailed description about whether it's safe, or whether it's suitable for hikers to go hiking on that specific day
 - I don't really know how to differentiate whether it's too hot or cold to go hiking

Guides Feature Questions

What are your thoughts on how the information is laid out in the general hiking guide? Is there anything you would change?

Interviewee #1:

- Guides are too wordy - make it as simple & easy to digest as possible
 - Same for guide description in preview
 - Thinks that guide description in preview might not be necessary to include & thinks it sounds like its marketing a product rather than explaining/giving short preview to guide content
- Add more images/visual aspects in guide content
- Could change icons for guides - give more contrast between the different icons

- Could make them different colors?

Interviewee #2:

- Just word dense
- Make the descriptions on guide page shorter and straightforward

Interviewee #3:

- Based on first review, a lot of information → good and bad
 - For people in a rush, reduce the text

Interviewee #4:

- Not really. I think all of them are pretty compact
- All of the key information that I need is there at a glance. It's pretty accessible.

Interviewee #5:

- Way too wordy
- Not convenient for internationals/ non native speakers who want quick access.
 - I feel like I will not have the interest to finish reading all this stuff. There aren't enough images to provide or maintain my interest to finish reading this text.
- I would say if you guys could delete some of the words or delete some of the information, or try to simplify that will probably be the best solution.

Is there any information you think is missing or is unnecessary?

Interviewee #1:

- Sort & filter options for guides section might not be necessary

Interviewee #2: N/A

Interviewee #3: All good

Interviewee #4:

- There nothing that I would remove but at the same time nothing I want to have

Interviewee #5:

- I feel like they should all be there. But again, it's just too much.
- Maybe get rid of some bullet points

Profile Feature Questions

How do you feel about how the information is laid out in the profiles page?

Interviewee #1: Could combine completed trails & journal (add journal into completed trails option so that users can add notes/pics to hikes they finished)

Interviewee #2:

- I don't know what journal is, I'm assuming it's to take notes on trails

Interviewee #3:

- Journal (personal preference), other apps would say "my journey" or "my history", but also there's a completed trails tab

Interviewee #4:

- I think it's pretty good. I think it's pretty clean. There isn't that much information for me to put in the profile page, so it's pretty normal I'd say.

Interviewee #5:

- I like how the information is laid out
- Likes freedom to customize their own profile

Is there anything you would change or add/take away?

Interviewee #1: N/A

Interviewee #2: N/A

Interviewee #3: For profile, can create a task bar from 0-100 how far user has gone, personal rewarding experience

Interviewee #4: No

Interviewee #5: Add a login as guest feature

General Questions

How difficult did you think it was to navigate the app?

Interviewee #1: Not difficult at all

Interviewee #2: Not hard

Interviewee #3: Not difficult at all

Interviewee #4: It wasn't very difficult like I've said it's pretty straightforward. Everything you'd expect to be there is there.

Interviewee #5: Really easy, app is well-structured and well-designed

How likely are you to use this app to learn about hiking or find hiking trails?

Interviewee #1:

- Somewhat likely
- Would rather use this one app than try to spend a lot of time researching and using many different websites/material
- However, thinks that guides are too wordy, would rather watch short videos/something more engaging

Interviewee #2:

- If I was a hiker and this app held a lot of trails, then yes

Interviewee #3:

- I would use it and recommend to friends

Interviewee #4: I would give this app a shot and use it to hike. It's very useful, provides lots of information and has a lot of utilities.

Interviewee #5: High possibility that I'm gonna use this app for hiking trails. Because again, it was really easy for me to look up the information in the app instead of googling every single part of it

How well do you think this app caters to beginner hikers?

Interviewee #1: Thinks it caters well to beginner hikers, especially because it has guides

Interviewee #2: Pretty good, a lot of beginner guides

Interviewee #3: User friendly, layout is appealing and peaceful, geared towards beginner hikers, they'd enjoy using it too

Interviewee #4: I think as a beginner hiker myself, this seems to be quite accommodating, so I would say that it is pretty friendly towards new hikers.

Interviewee #5: Suitable for beginner hikers because the information is being laid out very specifically

How do you feel about the visual design and overall aesthetics of the app? Does it contribute to a positive user experience?

Interviewee #1:

- Overall, likes the design of the app
 - Likes the green
 - Likes how simple it is

Interviewee #2:

- Overall yes
- Information architecture is laid out well
- Drop shadow on search bar should be more blurred out
- Text, capitalization is inconsistent for titles and subheadings
- These days brands just do "Abc def ghi" vs "Abc Def Ghi"
- The way pages are displayed is inconsistent with visual treatment (icons vs pics vs overlay)

Interviewee #3: Agree

Interviewee #4: Yeah, the color scheme is very natural, very comfortable. The layout is pretty clean overall. It suits the theme of hiking. The size of the fonts are acceptable, I think maybe an option to turn off the size of the font would be nice.

Interviewee #5: Way too many words in the guides section, otherwise well-designed.

Do you have any other feedback for us?

Interviewee #1: No

Interviewee #2:

- Make profile picture a face - was confused and thought maple tree was the name of the app
- Make typography more consistent (big and bold vs big and not bold) and with sizing

Interviewee #3: No

Interviewee #4: No

Interviewee #5: Well-designed, perfect for beginners

[SUMMARY OF FINDINGS]

To start off our interviews, we asked some general questions about the participants' experiences with hiking and hiking apps. We found that most of them don't really use a hiking specific platform to discover new trails or locations to explore, they either search on Google, TikTok, Youtube, or hear from friends. All of them have never used an app or website to learn about hiking or trails as well. When asked if they would use such platform that also contains detailed hike guides, those who are actually interested in hiking said yes. Having an app like this would make it easier for them, as "doing research on my own and all of those scattered hiking places are confusing. An app that's only for hiking around UCLA will be really helpful... to have more interest in hiking." The participants would love to engage in this platform since it would be "more convenient to partake in this activity" as well.

Next, we asked the participants to interact with our prototype and provided some user tasks for them to perform to gain an understanding of the general flow. These tasks included signing up, exploring hikes in the home page, exploring the general hiking guides, and viewing the profile page. We followed up with the participants by asking questions specifically about the hikes, guides, and profiles pages. Through their answers, we were able to gain valuable insight on ways to improve our app.

For the hikes page, there were mostly positive reactions on how the information was laid out and how detailed it was. One small suggestion was to add wildlife warnings (bears, snakes, etc.) and more detail on whether the weather is suitable for hiking (too hot or too cold).

For the guides page, the overall consensus was that the guides were way too dense, making it hard to read, especially for international or non-native speaker users. One possible solution would be to just cut down on the text, and only convey basic information. Another solution would be to break up the text with images or interactive elements.

For the profile page, most of the participants liked how the information was presented, and appreciated the ability to customize the profile section with saved hikes. One participant raised a valid point that the journal was confusing, as it wasn't made clear what it was used for. A solution that another participant suggested that would solve this issue would be to combine the completed hikes section with the journal section, and allow users to optionally add notes and images to their completed hikes.

After the participants interacted with our prototype, we again asked them some general questions concerning their experiences. They all thought that the app was very easy to navigate, as it was well structured and had an appealing layout. This led us to find that they themselves would use this app to discover new hikes as it contains all the information in one platform already, and since it contains the guides, it is very accommodating to beginner hikers.

Concerning the visual design and overall aesthetics of the app, the participants all liked how it is very simple, comfortable, and clean. One concern was the dense wording of the guides, and how text heavy it was. They would've liked to have images or short videos, something more engaging rather than having to read such a long article.

More feedback

After making the revisions, we then sought out another round of opinions to improve our designs. One of the main critiques was that the warnings/suggestions icon at the top of the page was a bit confusing, whether it was a button that users could input their own data or if it was just an icon for visual display. It also was found to be unnecessary unless it popped up in real time, so we ended up taking the icon away, and just leaving it as a *Warning* section in the trail information. We also decided to expand upon the Journal feature by adding a button to the hike details page that opens up a journal entry that can

be filled out by users once they complete a trail. A user-inputted rating system was also implemented within the journal entry and will be the source of the ratings shown on the hike details page.

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