CampAide Text

The idea behind CampAide

Status Quo

An increasing number of people, discover that their favorite type of spending their holidays or long weekends, is by traveling with a camper van to more or less remote places. At the moment of writing this, the Instagram # - count for "Vanlife" is scratching the mark of 6.3 million individual posts. What most of these people are looking for is a place to get back in contact with nature, live a simple life with only the necessary things surrounding them, getting relief from daily life by exploring new places and being open to try new things.

The problem

Going on exiting road trips stands and falls of course with having access to a camper van. Which the target audience of Vanlife – mainly younger people – who have more free time for travelling but mostly don't own the financial resources to buy a van themselves, simply don't have. On the other hand side, there are mid aged people who already own a camper van but don't have the time (anymore) to go for extensive trips. This results in fully equipped and functional camper vans, waiting to be used, but still continuously producing costs for their owners.
This is where CampAide comes in play. With CampAide, users will be able to rent their camper via a safe and trustful platform which will offer support for complete newbies to find their favorite camper but also give power search features for advanced users.

Project Phases
During the development of CampAide I ran through the 5-step design process
Head starting with the **Research** phase, which comprises the identification of a problem statement and a value proposition. Other important elements of the research phase are the competitor analysis of other camper rental platforms, as well as doing interviews and surveys to identify the problems users have with existing (similar) platforms. The main goal is to find out what things a newly developed platform can do better than other existing competitors in the marketplace to differentiate itself and create a successful user experience.
During the **Define** phase, the focus lies on developing user personas and user journeys to exemplify who this new platform is created for. During the whole design process it is important to not lose sight of the main focus group(s) the design team is creating this platform for. This will give it a more human touch.
In the step of **Ideation** all information gathered in the previous steps serves as a basis to create lean information architecture, user stories, and -flows as well as draw first sketches and wireframes.
During the **Building** and **Test** phase a first prototype is created and tested. Findings from tests serve as basis for iterations of the prototype.

01 Research

Who are CampAide's users?

CampAide is here for **owners** who want to let their idle campers to **renters** who want to make a camping trip but can't or won't buy their own camper.

Competitive analysis

I conducted a competitive analysis of two well established competitors within the camper rental market. The two competitors I analyzed were Germany based Paulcamper and North American based Outdoorsy. Main goal was to create an overview of both platforms market advantages, marketing profiles and SWOT profiles. This gave me an idea on what the main competitors had to offer in terms of features and usability.

Competitive analysis - Main learnings

The two competitors analyzed are very well designed and offer thorough insurance service for both sides: renter and hirer. What both platforms are missing is a feature to make it easier for camper newbies to find their preferred camper. Also the price range for rentals is rather high.

Deeper insights of the competitive analysis and more can be found here.

Online Survey

I conducted an online survey using Google Forms. The survey counted 19 participants. The survey questions were designed to give me a deeper understanding in the following points:

- in which context users use a camper rental platform: e.g. on the go on a mobile device or primarily at home on a desktop
- how users would prefer to rent a camper: e.g. rent it near to their home or rent it near the destination area they want to explore
- which reasons users would have to change from another camper rental platform to CampAide
- how users do search for campers: e.g. do the whole search on their own or get help from the platform
- how many users would spend for renting a camper per day
- what goals camper owners, who want to let their camper, have: e.g. cover running costs, earn a little side income, etc.

If you are curious about all survey data you can check it out here.

User Interviews

During the course of the research phase I conducted four user interviews. The interview research goals were to gain insights on users needs and pain points and to learn about users expectations regarding a camper rental platform.

Needs and Pain Points

- To find the right camper, perfect pictures are a must. People are driven by emotions that are transferred by good pictures.
- People hate it when they are charged more in the course of the checkout process. The prices have to be clear from the beginning on.
- A rating system should go in both ways: owners and renters should be rate-able.

- People would feel more secure when they have a verification that the camper they are about to book is in a proper technical condition.
- Some users would find it helpful if they would get access to a clustered information pool of links for services like campgrounds, bookings for ferries and trains – which corresponds to the countries they would want to visit.
- Pop ups with offers for additional insurance should not be too intrusive.
- Renters are expecting to get a camper specific manual for their camper which gives them insight into the specifics of the different equipment (fridge, heating, racks, cooking, etc.).

Expected features
- Especially people who are new to camping with a camper would like to get recommendations for appropriate vehicles based on the type of trip and the type of things they will be doing during their trip.
- Browsing for camper ads on a map is a must. This map should include tags for price (daily price and total price for the whole date range chosen).
- A bookmarking feature.
- It must be clear at a glance what equipment the camper has. This brought the idea of having a minimum equipment list which has to be fulfilled by the owner. Everything else would be additional and can be listed by the owners camper ad.
- People would want to get all mandatory, country specific, safety equipment (safety vests, special warning plates,....) included in their rental. This could be achieved by asking the renter where he/she plans to go during the trip and then get the safety equipment for example by the platform as a service.
- If there are no campers available with set filters, users would expect to get recommendations which get near to their filters.
- To compare campers a tabular overview of the top three to four ads side by side would be very practical.
- In order to build trust, users would like to see ratings, pictures and sort of super-host titles (gamification).

02 Define

Personas
With the insights gained from the research phase, I created three realistic personas. This helped me throughout the platform development to better keep in mind the main user types and their specific needs.

User Journeys
Based on the user personas, I defined key goals two personas - Anna and Melanie - might have. The process of achieving these goals is presented in the two user journeys shown bellow.

03 Ideation

User Flows

In order to better visualize users way through the platform I created three, simple but important, user flows.

Information Architecture
I based the information architecture of my platform on the creation of a sitemap. Version 1 showed a very deep hierarchy. With the first version I conducted a closed card sorting exercise with 9 test persons. This offered me very valuable insights which I used to create a revised version of the sitemap.

04 / 05 Building Testing Iterating

From Low to High Fidelity Prototype
The following screens show the evolution from the first sketches to mid fidelity and finally to high fidelity prototypes. In between these steps I conducted several user tests - which included moderated remote testing and A/B testing.

Design Documentation
In order to communicate the work done with potential teammates (other UX Designers and Developers) I created a design language system.

Prototype
If you are curious about how all the above described work looks & feels you can give my prototype bellow a try. You can also access the prototype with this external link.