



VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Elevating Aviation
Experiences One Space at a Time

Welcome to YVR

as a community based organization, YVR is committed to both the local community and the broader economy. Beyond its core mission of supporting economic growth and fostering accountability through community engagement, YVR aims for a productive collaboration with plane spotters, providing enthusiasts with opportunities for safe and responsible participation. Their commitment to innovation and safety ensures efficiency and sustainability that embraces both aviation and its local community.



Who are Planespotters?

plane spotters provide critical support to the airport community. They enhance security, promote aviation, and gather valuable data on aircraft movements. Their engagement with the community and participation in aviation events strengthens local ties and boosts airport operations.

Design Focus

problem statement

the designated physical plane spotting platforms at YVR lack a prominent visual presence, leading to concerns regarding a sense of community, inconsistencies, and an insufficiency of information for the plane spotting community. The disconnect between YVR and local aviation enthusiasts leads to underwhelming experiences, primarily due to poor communication and a limited understanding of YVR's capabilities

framing

we aim to surface the brand identity behind plane spotting locations in order to strengthen the connection between stakeholders and aviation enthusiasts, and immerse plane spotters in a more welcoming experience.

how might we...

effectively convey YVR's appreciation and hospitality to plane spotters, fostering a stronger meaningful and tangible connection between YVR and the aviation enthusiast community beyond social media.

Project Overview

stage 01

Informed Assumptions

focus on understanding company thorough background research to grasp YVR's history, operations, and community impact to lay an informed foundation.

stage 02

Onboarding & Refining Scope

by collaborating with champion we align our project with YVR's brand vision. Highlighting the opportunity to focus on bridging the gap between aviation enthusiasts and the airport.

stage 03

Onsite Research & Interviews

conducting interviews with plane spotters ethnographic research to enrich our understanding of the aviation community and its relationship with YVR to drive the project direction.

stage 04

Target Audience & Field Visits

we focus on the target audience by conducting interviews to craft personas, infusing our project with a strong user-centric and empathetic approach.

stage 05

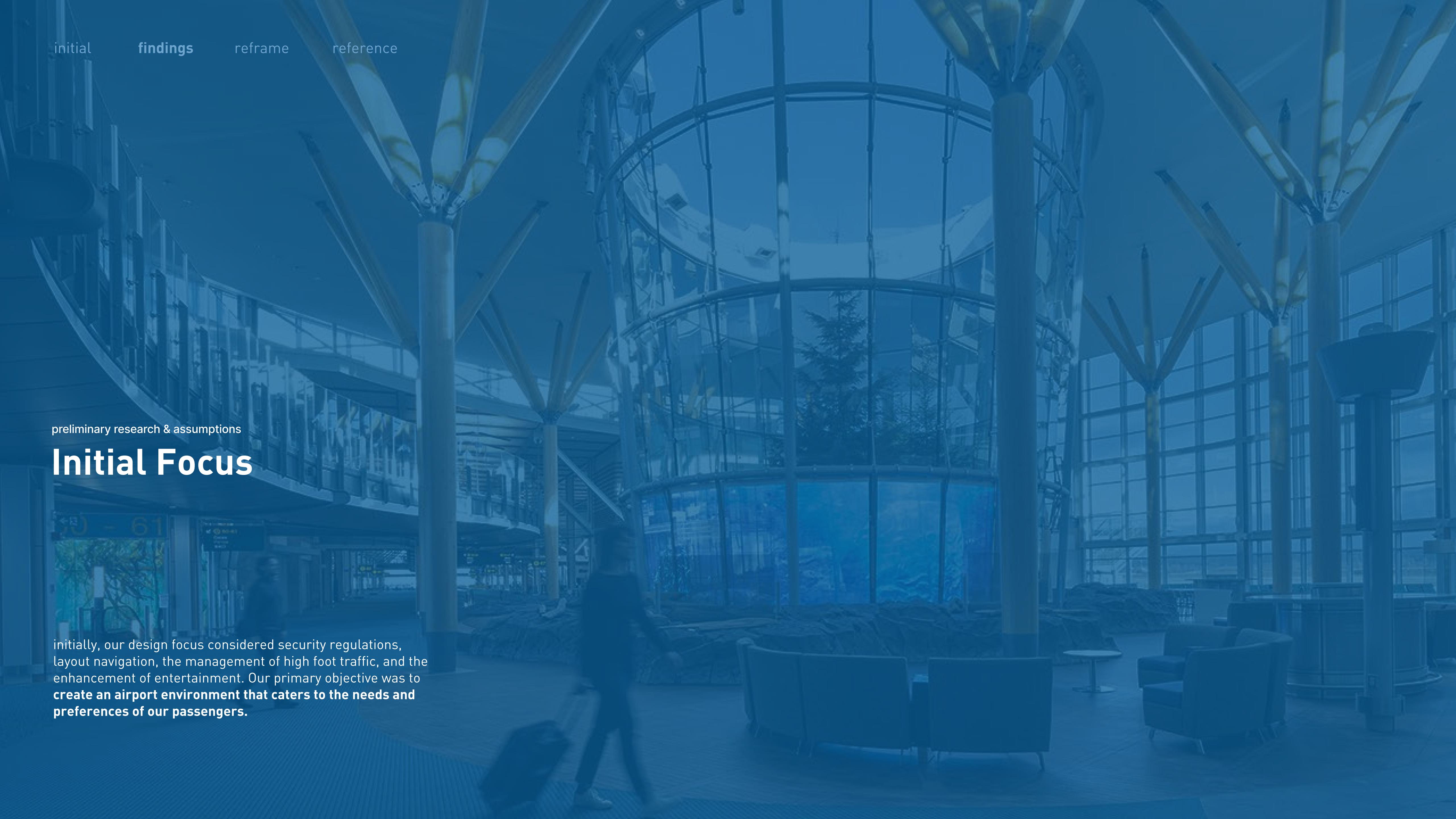
Discovering User Goals

field visits help us understand user journeys and refine them to create a more user-centered and identify areas of improvement.

stage 06

Narratives & Rationale

understanding future user goals through personas and interviews. Narrowing down towards functional design solutions.

The background image shows a modern airport terminal interior. It features a large, curved glass wall that looks out onto a runway and some trees. The terminal has a high ceiling with a complex steel and glass structure. In the foreground, there are several rows of grey armchairs and small round tables, typical of a waiting area. The overall atmosphere is bright and airy due to the large windows.

initial

findings

reframe

reference

preliminary research & assumptions

Initial Focus

initially, our design focus considered security regulations, layout navigation, the management of high foot traffic, and the enhancement of entertainment. Our primary objective was to **create an airport environment that caters to the needs and preferences of our passengers.**

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Champion Onboarding & Refining Scope

Our Champion: Stephanie Taniguchi

Stephanie has been part of YVR's internal team for just over 5 years. As a designer, she is well established with the innerworkings at YVR, having worked with the Innovations team and is now part of the Communications team. (She is also a SIAT alumna)





Champion Onboarding & Refining Scope

Initial Meeting

introductory meeting allowed our team to familiarize ourselves with our champion, get an understanding of her experience at the airport, as well as re-evaluate our initial understanding of YVR's inner-workings. Our champion also provided us with possible areas of focus within YVR, this is where we were first introduced to the notion of the planespotting community. Post sit down discussion, we were then led on a pre-security tour around the airport.

Pre-Security Tour

our champion guided us on a **personal pre-security tour** of both the **international and domestic terminals of YVR**. Enabling us to observe people within the airport and their actions throughout the environments.

our experience at the Observation Platform, a planespotting area within the domestic departures area, led to further discourse from our champion about the **planespotting community as an area for further development**.

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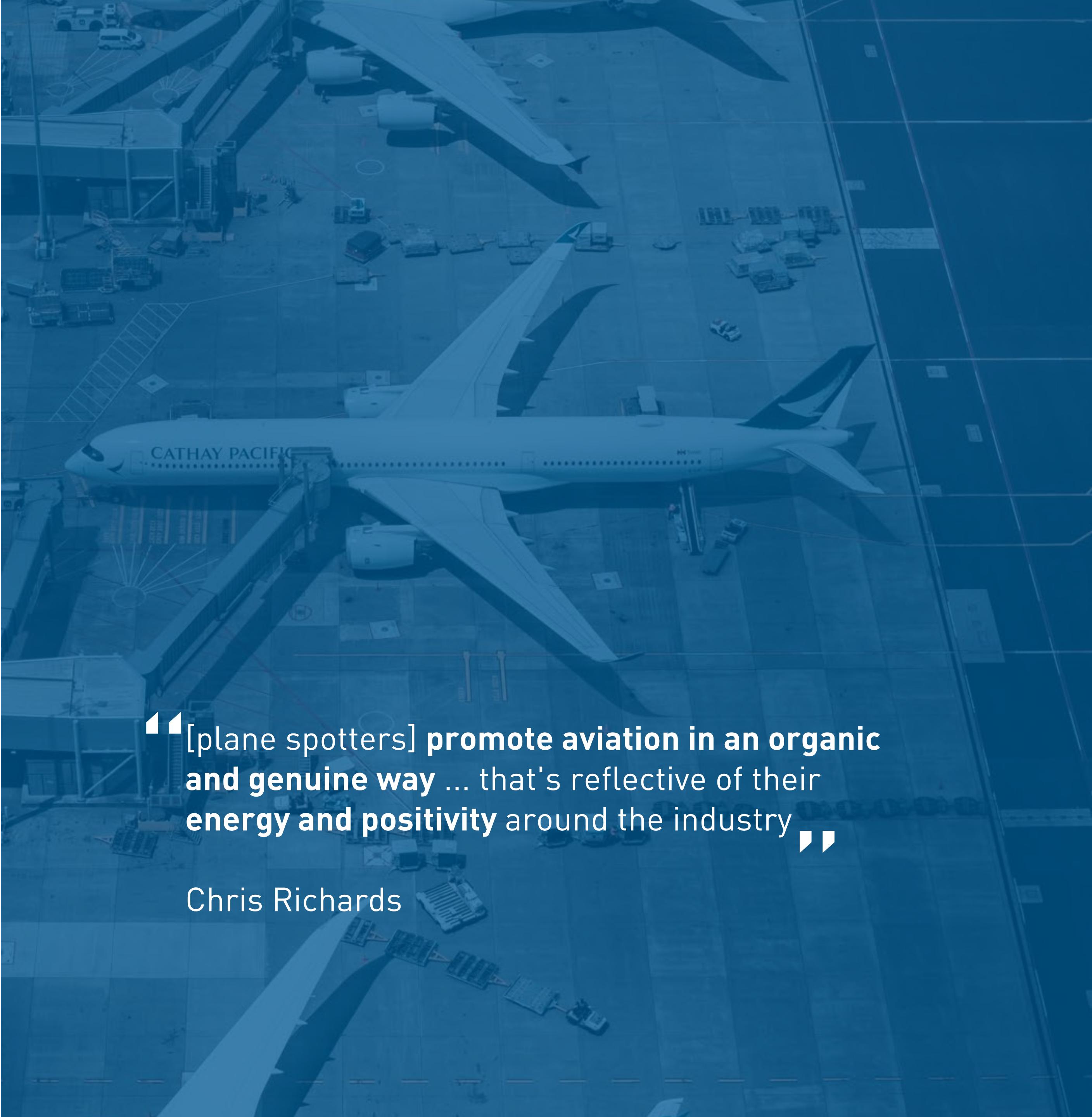
Champion Onboarding & Refining Scope

Planespotting

planespotting is a hobby for aviation enthusiasts (planespotters) who are interested in tracking, watching, documenting and experiencing different types of aircrafts. This documentation is typically captured through photography or videography.

Planespotters for YVR

planespotters, although an external group, is a **vital presence in YVR**. They provide **insight into going-ons at the airport facilities and promotion of YVR through consistent social media engagement**.



"[plane spotters] promote aviation in an organic and genuine way ... that's reflective of their energy and positivity around the industry"

Chris Richards

Champion Onboarding & Refining Scope

Revising Design Focus

through our research conducted within this week, we revised our focus from catering to passenger experience, to instead **focus on strengthening the connection between planespotters and YVR, through promoting activities and collaboration.**

viewpoint navigation

challenge of discovering planespotting sites without previous knowledge.

data miscommunication

lack of real-time information updates regarding aircraft movements results in tedious efforts for finding data, either through external sources and online communities.

cataloguing information

planespotters catalogue and share via social media, creating a dispersion of information across platforms.

stronger sense of community

YVR fosters community by resharing planespotter generated content, however meetups are coordinated by community members. Requiring planespotters to seek out and join these groups independently.



Onsite research & interviews

Interview Questions

probing led to supplemental findings in identifying the intended audience.
The questions used in all interviews covered the following topics:

01

routine activites within YVR's designated areas.

02

use of external resources to facilitate with itinerary planning.

03

contrasting experiences from competing airports.

04

concerns and hopes for the planespotting community.

05

involvement through community-based platforms.

06

site-specific features that influence the planespotting experience.

Onsite research & interviews

Findings & Analysis

comprehensive insight had been gathered to serve value to the iterative process through a synthesis of the conducted interviews, demonstrating overlying themes in:

obstruction of views

the presence of wired fences and obstructive buildings **limit opportunities for dynamic composition shots** within the designated area, **further constricting the space** provided to its planespotters.

operations of yvr

many planespotters were eager to express their interest in participating in guided tours and functions, granting them backstage **access to investigate the inner workings** of YVR.

word of mouth

planespotters commonly obtain relevant information through word-of-mouth from the community, **offering location-specific details and essential flight information through informal updates**.

viewing ports

possessing multiple viewing points is essential to hobbies, such as planespotting. allocating spaces offers its visitors with the **flexibility of exploring contrasting vantage points** when capturing photos.

target audience & field visits

Onsite-investigation

field research revealed contrasting differences in the planespotting experience across the allocated areas.

Larry Berg Flight Path Park

directly aligned to the end of the southern runway, a clear establishment of YVR branding is present within this site, as many landmarks and structures can be found by incoming visitors and planespotters.

from the conducted interviews, it was revealed that the site was unfavorable to many planespotters. **The provided angles comparatively fell short to other areas** due to the limited window of time, and the heat waves emitted by the aircraft.

South Terminal

a central hub to many local planespotters, this location contains an observation deck, providing a safe elevated platform to observe aircrafts. Its proximity to the runway, furthermore showcase the operations of YVR to visitors.

from on-site investigation, the team recognized a **strong level of community engagement at South Terminal despite the limited presence of YVR's branding** within the vicinity. These inconsistencies highlight YVR's failure to clearly articulate their efforts in serving the community.

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findings

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the objective of my platform builds off of **expanding the community's interest in aviation!**

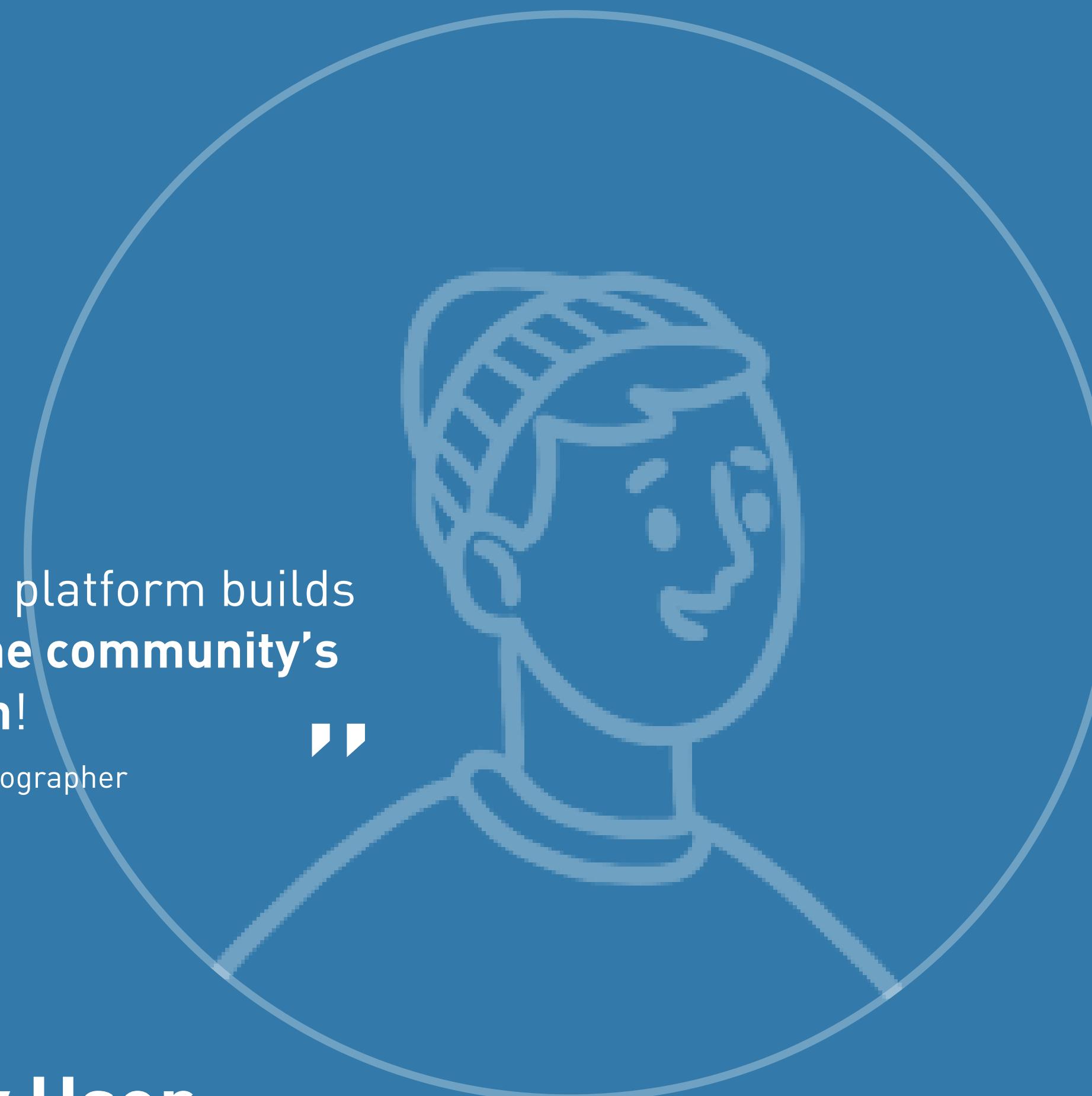
”

Dylan Santos | published photographer

Onsite research & interviews

The Primary User

identifying features representative of real user data highlighted primary goals, driving motivations, and pain points of the target audience. From constructing reliable representations, it provided contextualizing evidence of the audiences' needs within the domain.



context

Dylan indulges in daily plane spotting, where he observes and photographs aircrafts from multiple vantage spots.

he occasionally sets time aside to make planespotting a viable option throughout the day **to provide content for his audience and to further connect with brands and community members.**

motivations

to share camera specifications and information and use his platform as a digital album to showcase his work to those involved in the community.

frustrations

Dylan senses a distinct disconnection between the YVR identity due to the presence of wired fences, creating an unwelcoming atmosphere when juxtaposed to the lack of prominent signage and clear indications of YVR branding.

when unexpected flight delays occur, Dylan frequently experiences stress and difficulty in receiving notifications prior to his plane spotting trips.

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discovering goals of the intended audience

Defining Touchpoints

identifying and mapping out possible touch points for design opportunities through the planespotting experience.

from the field-research and conducted interviews, the team delved into the deviating paths of the local and travelling planespotter. Accounting for potential actions that diverge from the primary path, allowed the team to better define more site-specific needs for our specified audience.

opportunities

each trope established a variety of needs driven by their individual actions and goals. For instance, **local planespotters often pivot away from more conventional viewing areas** to showcase their work from multiple vantage points. Whereas, **the traveller is challenged with managing restricted transportation options and limited time.**

this process revealed distinct site preferences among local and traveling plane spotters at YVR.



narratives & rationale

Meeting Stakeholders

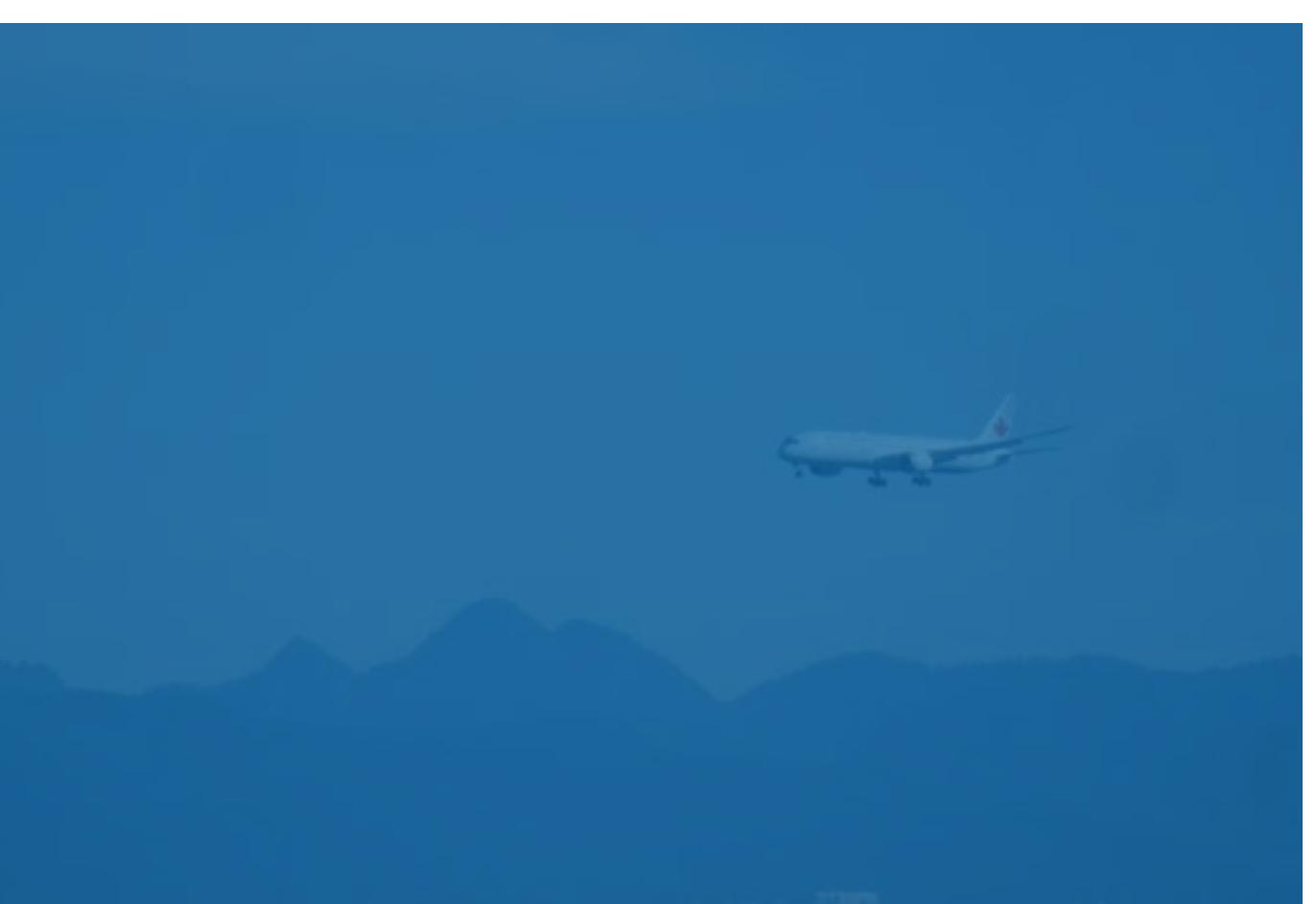
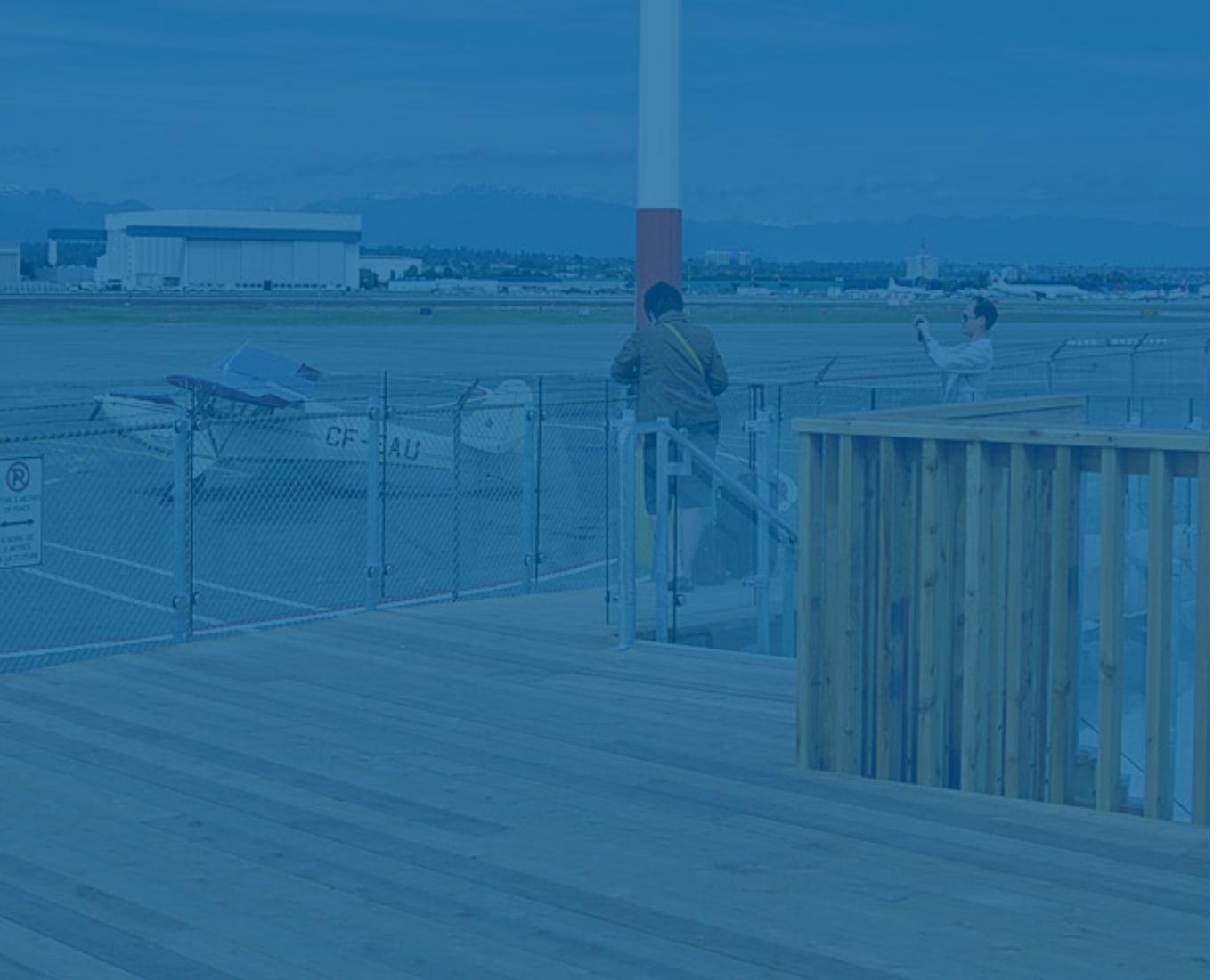
in a meeting with Chris and Stephanie, we were **encouraged to envision our concept without constraints**. They are open to incorporating elements of our proposal into future projects, provided we can justify its necessity, given YVR's discretion in disclosing information. Chris offered guidance on how to proceed, suggesting a focus on local plane spotters and **prioritizing the enhancement of a single location to elevate the core spotting experience**.

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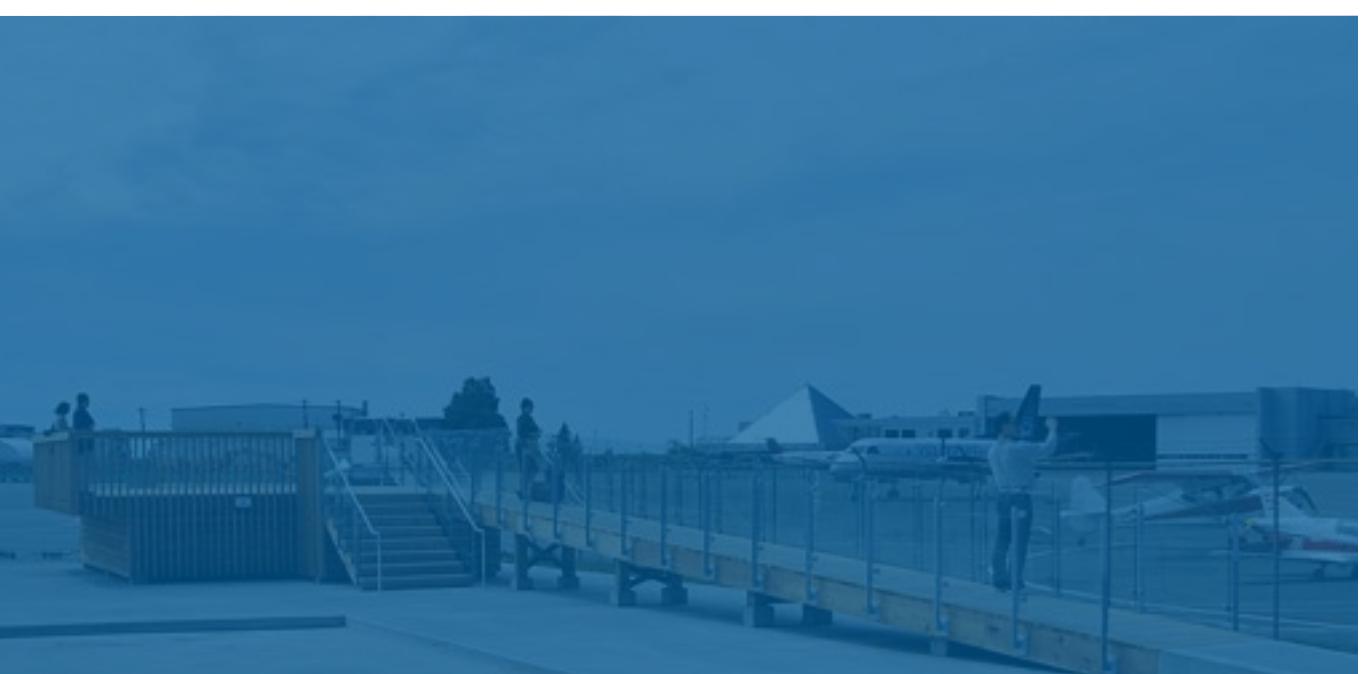
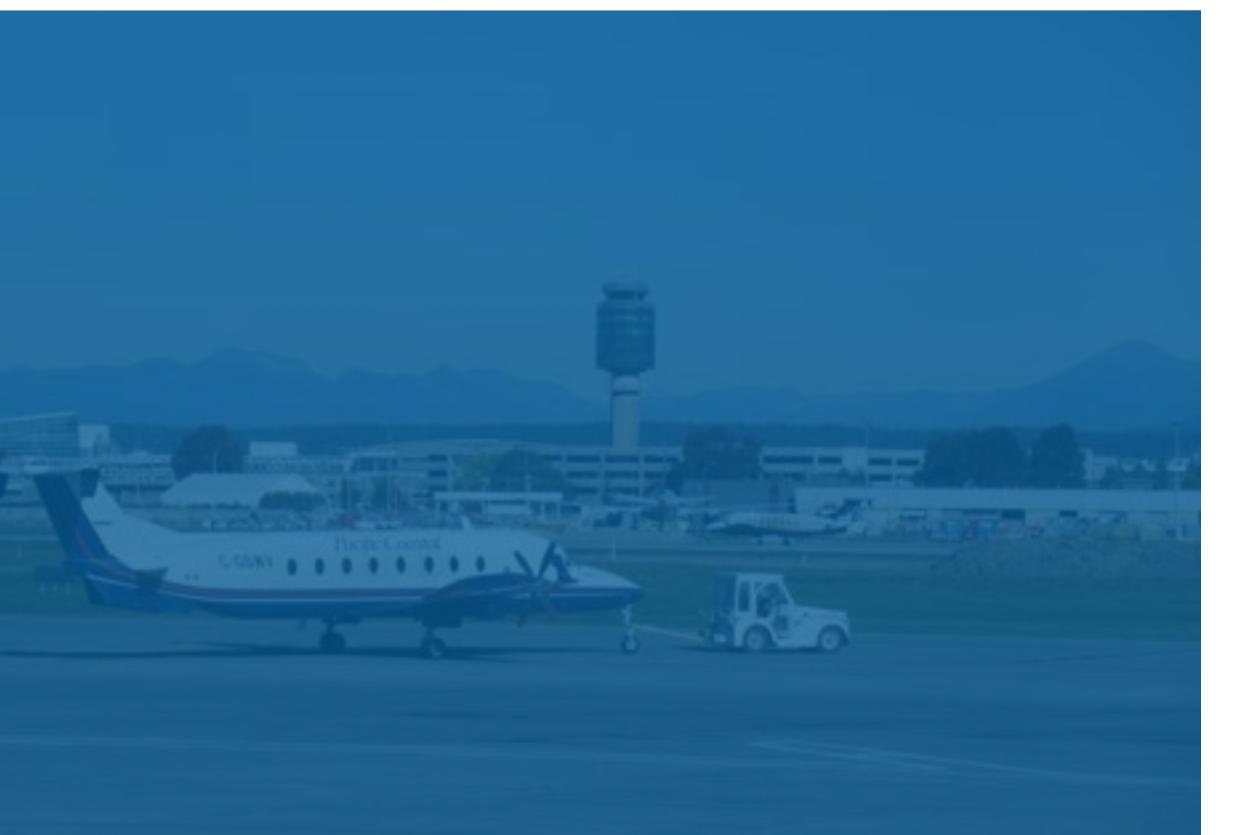


narratives & rationale

Refined Project Directions

our chosen destination is the South Terminal, which currently offers an up-close and personal view of planes. However, it suffers from **challenges such as poor navigation and a lack of recognition among potential visitors** due to its unknown location. The site can also appear unwelcoming due to its outdated platform and limited amenities.

as an established plane-spotting location, South Terminal is recognized by YVR and eliminates any concerns regarding the legality of using the space. This **existing infrastructure provides a solid foundation for developing and enhancing the plane-spotting experience**.





HOW MIGHT WE effectively convey an appreciation and hospitality to plane spotters, fostering a stronger meaningful and tangible connection between YVR and the aviation enthusiast community beyond social media hashtags

what's in it for YVR?

YVR is a gateway that connects British Columbia's history and its people. It is a destination for our community – a place to work, eat, play, gather, learn and share.

culture & belonging

our culture is 'how we show up', working together to build a strong culture of belonging. YVR aims to create a trusting environment where people feel engaged and recognized.

the core

YVR actively engages with the local community and focuses on the ability to drive greater value from existing infrastructure through more efficient operations and repurposing assets

value proposition

YVR's Perspective

through online research and interviews, we gathered YVR's thoughts on the plane spotting community through the stakeholders eyes.

- Stephanie | in-house designer
- Katie | graphic designer
- Clayton | social media department
- Nate | air service development manager
- Christopher Richards | marketing manager



there have been talks here and there over the years in improving some of the plane spotting areas for example, Flight Path park, south runway observation deck, public observation deck, and the north runway gravel area. If your team explores ways to integrate these physical areas let me know!

-Stephanie, designer



there are many of us in the YVR team who are part of the Plane Spotter Facebook Group and/or plane spotters ourselves

-Nate, YVR's air service development manager



plane spotters promote aviation in an organic and genuine way, that's reflective of their energy and positivity around the industry. They express a really accessible, fun, wholesome, way to experience the magic of flight.

-Christopher Richards, marketing manager

value proposition

The Public View

"not all plane watchers are necessarily aviation enthusiasts. Some do it to see their relatives taking off or just enjoy the scenery with a date or with families. Others want to feel vicariously connected to the planes, passengers and the far-off places they'll likely never visit. It's a way to kind of consume the world."

- Mindaugas Kavaliauskas, executive director of the Lithuanian Aviation Museum



i recall being young and my father taking me to grab a happy meal and parking on the side of the runway to watch them come and go. I've always been fascinated by flight

-a local resident from richmond



i love it! Always fun to see a picture of a plane I've flown. I had a planespotter take a picture of my aircraft at an event. It's probably the best photo I have of my plane.

-a local private pilot





value proposition

Value to YVR

community attraction

"**more than 100 people gather** together at Frankfurt airport's plane spotting deck to watch Boeing or Airbus taking off every weekend. From families to couples, from babies to grandparents. **Aviation photography is like a great performance.**"

-aerotime hub

appreciative culture

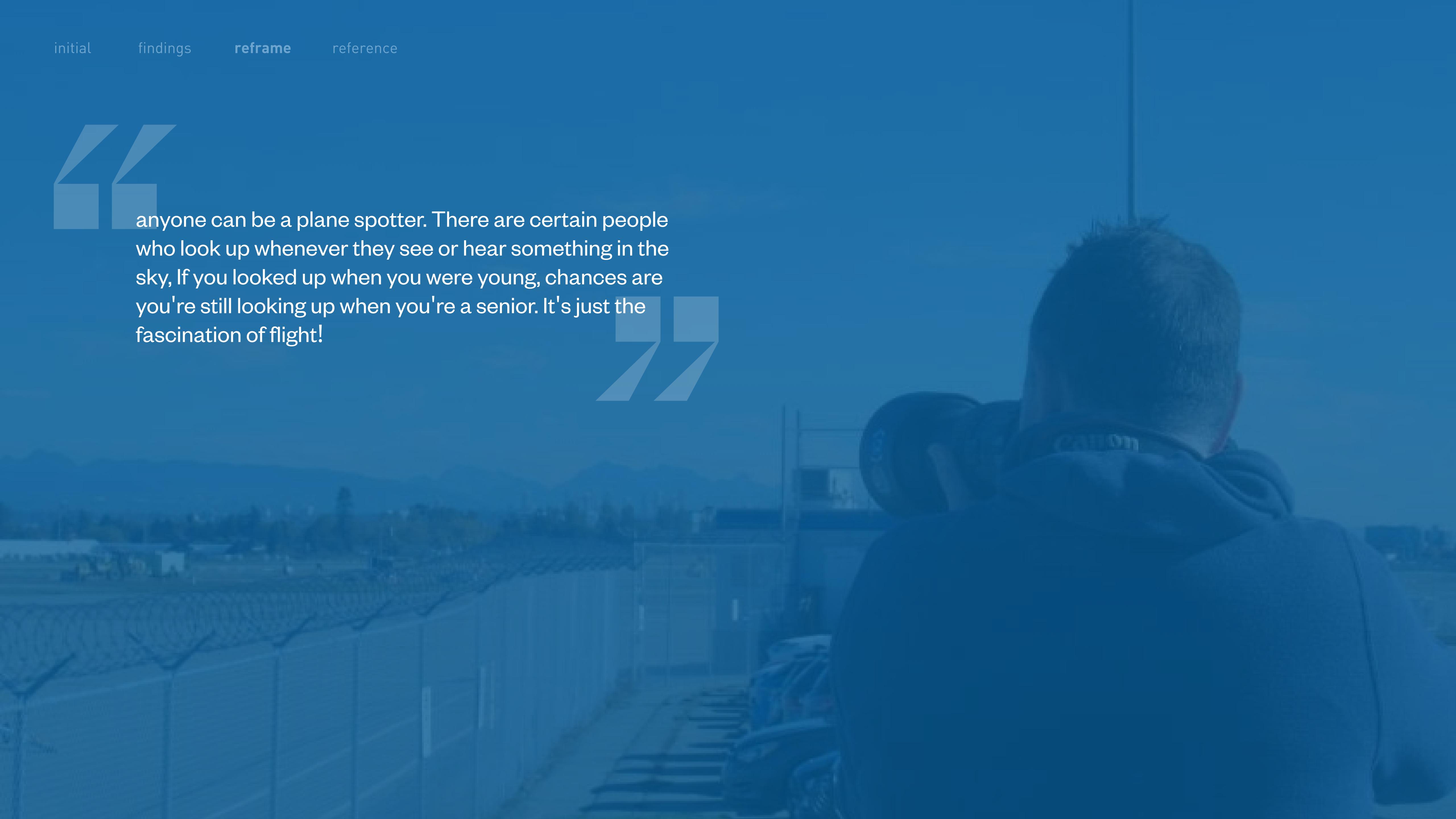
"spotting in locations such as Singapore where the **hobby is less understood, the biggest challenge is posed by the security**. Thankfully, there are many airports in Japan, **Canada**, Australia, and some U.S. cities such as Los Angeles where **aviation spotting and photography are well accepted**. "

-cnn news

in comparison

"**having designated areas** created for convenient, safe spotting for the community has been a great success and **sets us apart from other airports in North America**"

-Christopher Richards YVR Marketing Manager

A photograph of a man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a blue hoodie, sitting on a train and looking upwards towards the sky. The background shows a blurred landscape of fields and mountains through the window.

anyone can be a plane spotter. There are certain people who look up whenever they see or hear something in the sky. If you looked up when you were young, chances are you're still looking up when you're a senior. It's just the fascination of flight!



value proposition

Plane Spotters Key Insights

knowledge & archive

can be an educational opportunity to learn about various aircraft models, airlines, and trends in the aviation industry. Moreover, their documentation preserves aviation history and aircraft evolution for future generations.

sense of community

connecting with like-minded individuals allows for information exchange, camaraderie, and building a global network through shared experiences and photos on social media.

immersive performance

a creative pursuit involving the real-time enjoyment of observing diverse aircraft and capturing their beauty and distinctiveness through the documentation of various photographic compositions.

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findings

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as an amateur spotter, I love seeing your content! It gives me more motivation to go spotting. You're one of the people that convinced me to start spotting. I'm loving it so far, keep it up!

-comments to Alvin Man @onemoreweektogo

credited works

connecting with the aviation industry on a deeper level and making a career out of the hobby, plane spotters photos have been showcased and used in YVR guidebooks and social media platforms. Pilots and airlines have taken notice and reached out to request specific aircraft model shots.



reframe

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