**Baba’s Toolbox**

CSCC10 Phase II: Gathering User Requirements

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**Tasks**

UTour is a social trip-planning application that is meant to assist adults in meeting other travellers with similar interests and plan trips as a group in a safe and secure environment. The task analysis consists of five tasks - travel agenda creation, connecting with travel companions, collaborating and finalizing trip plans, obtaining details about attractions while visiting them, and sharing travel experiences with the UTour community.

During travel agenda creation, users will input their tentative travelling goals; which includes travel destinations along with their respective dates and times, into UTour’s Personal Travel Agenda (PTA) feature. The PTA feature allows users to organize their travel goals and provides the UTour application with information to determine which individuals would be best suited to travel with them.

After creating their PTA and being recommended a list of potential travel companions, users will be able to connect with travel companions using the SMARTChat feature. This is where users will be given the opportunity to learn more about each other and their interests without having to worry about language differences. Users may also use the SMARTChat to narrow down and finalize their travel groups.

Once a user has decided on their group of travel companions, it is recommended that the group collaborates and finalizes their travel plans by continuing to use the SMARTChat feature. The group could produce a detailed itinerary of their travel plans consisting of information such as the attractions they want to see, hotels, food arrangements, emergency plans, and more.

While on their trip, users will be able to get details about cities and attractions they visit. This is done through the use of the Touring feature which follows the group’s itinerary and provides information in an accessible manner. This includes the ability for users to read or listen to facts about their destination in their preferred language.

Finally, after completing their trip, users may share their travel experience with the community. This will be done by using the Share Experience feature where users will be able to upload pictures, leave ratings, and write reviews on attractions, cities, restaurants, hotels, etc. that they visited on their trip.

**Techniques**

One of the easiest techniques for obtaining user requirements is by distributing a survey, which is what we’ve chosen to use for our data gathering technique. This technique allows anyone to submit their answers, without the need of supervision by an expert or interviewer. It can also be distributed to larger groups of people to minimize selection bias. The merits that a survey has is that it is easy to distribute and responses are received relatively quickly. The responses can then be collected into a database for analysis later on and because of this, the time it takes to analyze the data is reduced.

For our survey, we will use a variety of question formats such as the simple multiple choice question, yes/no checkboxes, rating scales, and checkboxes that allow for the selection of multiple answers. We will also include a few short open-ended response questions for the participants to describe their past travel experiences and to suggest extra features that they want to see included in the application. The survey is also designed so that the questions are clear and concise; as in the wording of the questions should not confuse and overload the participant with unnecessary information, so as to avoid a very long questionnaire. Additionally, we chose to word our questions carefully to avoid inducing bias in our participants; ensuring that we receive a fair judgement of our application.

We did not use any other techniques for gathering user requirements such as interviews and observations at this stage of the design process. This is because the setup, execution, and analysis phases of these techniques requires much more valuable time and effort while not returning enough data. Interviews are essentially verbally-conveyed surveys and since we are already planning to distribute online surveys to gather data, there would be no point in acquiring overlapping data. Performing observations would also be a wasted effort especially when there are not a lot of applications that people use on a daily basis similar to UTour. Additionally, watching how people use an application that is not ours would not give us relevant data. Thus, conducting online surveys is extremely cost-efficient and will be our only method for gathering user requirements.

**Users**

Regarding the participants of our survey, we decided on approximately two dozen people with varying characteristics to simulate the anticipated demographics of our application upon release. Given that UTour aims to assist users during their travels, one key trait that a portion of the chosen participants possess is that they are considerably avid travellers who have ventured outside their resident country within the past year. This will allow us to understand how much time and effort is typically spent on travel planning from people with the experience. We also surveyed individuals who do not travel very often to get input as to what might be preventing them from travelling. This is valuable information to us since it helps us determine whether or not our application can provide the necessary features to resolve the deterrents causing users to be unwilling to travel.

Ethnicity and background is another quality that varies between many of the participants chosen for the survey. This is because it is important to gauge the frequency and ability of users being able to articulate themselves when placed in an unfamiliar environment. Although most participants can speak English, some were chosen because of their ability to communicate effectively in another language. This helps us to get a better understanding of whether or not users tend to avoid people and places of a different culture and the reasoning behind it. Overall, the goal of acquiring data from people with varying backgrounds and cultures is what led us to carefully select the participants of the UTour survey.

**Artifacts**

The following link contains the survey we created to gather user requirements for our application: <https://forms.gle/5XwxHEEYFaEzqYoUA>

The survey begins with a brief description of the UTour application to provide participants with some context. This is followed by the purpose of the survey as well as a promise of anonymity of the participant.

The first set of questions addresses the demographics of the participants such as age, gender, and familiarity with mobile technology. This opens up some opportunities for us to observe potential correlations between participants’ backgrounds and their answers. Next, we evaluate the participants’ travel behaviours and habits before asking about their travel experiences. When asking the participants about their travel experiences, we target the issues that UTour strives to address in an effective manner. This includes trip planning, effective communication with locals and other travellers, and accessible assistance during travelling. Participants are then asked to provide their interest in features that are related to a few proposed features that we have in mind for UTour. Lastly, we allow the participants to provide suggestions for features they would like to see in the UTour application. This is because we do not want to bias the design of UTour towards only our concept of how to solve the problem. We wish to get as much user engagement in the design process as possible and the only way to do that is to be inclusive of their opinions and ideas. This will allow us to produce a better prototype as we move forward in the design phase since it will be better suited towards users’ wants and needs.

**Summary**

When participants were asked about their travel behaviour within the past 12 months, the results from the survey showed that 46% of our participants have not travelled to a new location while 71% have not travelled overseas (see Figure 2). When questioned further about why this was the case, 50% of the participants stated that they had no one else to travel with (Figure 3) and 67% said that they would consider travelling with other tourists to overcome this problem (Figure 4). With UTour’s PTA and SMARTChat features, we can connect users with other tourists having similar travel interests so that they will not have to travel alone. Furthermore, 83% of participants said that they often take customer reviews into careful consideration in order to make informed decisions on trying something new, whether it was visiting a restaurant or purchasing goods (Figure 1). By giving users the ability to leave ratings and reviews for places they have visited, UTour can help users with their decisions and increase their chances of being satisfied with their trip. Additionally, 87% of the participants agreed that being able to read or listen to details about locations would enhance their travelling experience (Figure 5). UTour does exactly that with its Touring feature, which allows users to read or listen to descriptions about locations they are either planning to visit or are currently at. Therefore, the results of the UTour survey validates the necessity of these features, which are our proposed solutions to the problems originating from trip planning, travellers with accessibility needs, and communication difficulties with locals and other travellers.

**Moving Forward**

The responses we have gathered from our survey informed us of the participants’ behaviours and habits while travelling abroad. Although half of the responses are coming from participants who have not travelled recently (Figure 2), we did learn more about the reasoning behind their decisions. Furthermore, the more frequent travellers among the participants have provided insightful responses which detail their travelling experiences, potential improvements for the proposed UTour features, and new features they wish to see in our application. The responses we have gathered from this phase will be helpful in influencing the finer details of our application, as well as making it more useful and accessible for as many users as possible.

The main purpose of our application is to make trips more accessible, comfortable, and fun for our users. However, we realized that many of the issues preventing people from travelling are also hindrances to what we want to achieve for our application’s users. For example, nearly 70% of our survey’s respondents replied that they have not travelled recently due to financial issues (Figure 3). Money is a major concern for anyone who wishes to travel, thus causing it to be a big factor while planning a trip. Due to this, we have taken into consideration the suggestions given to us by our survey takers (Figure 6), and decided that the PTA should be more flexible for users during the planning phase. Users will be able to jot down any details of the trip if they want, most notably they would be able to take note of the costs of restaurants, airlines, hotels, and more. This should give the users a much easier time while comparing prices and deciding on which accommodation suits them the best.

As we have learned from the survey results, the majority of participants were receptive of the proposed features that we want to include in UTour (Figure 1 and Figure 5). With this in mind, we will proceed with implementing the Attractions and Reviews features. The Attractions feature will showcase the attractions near the user, and the Reviews feature is where users can leave a review for a store or restaurant that other users can read. However, since the Reviews feature had more support than the Attractions feature, we will be prioritizing the implementation of this feature’s finer details in the prototyping phase. This could lead to the Reviews feature being more prominent and detailed in our prototypes. As a result of this, we may consider designing the feature in such a way that it is quick and easy to access by the user while also playing a greater role in the way our application functions.

Overall, the survey was designed to gather as much data and feedback as possible from potential users of UTour. From the feedback received, we will continue making adjustments to our prototypes until users would be completely satisfied from using our application during their travels.

**Appendix**

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