TRAVEL EXPERIENCE, INTERACTION, AND MEMORY
HOW DOES SOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND INTERACTION INFLUENCE
TRAVEL EXPERIENCE?

BY
LINYA HUANG

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Master’s Committee:
Professor Kevin Reeder, Chair
Professor David Weightman
Professor Matthew Peterson
Professor Karrie G Karahalios
ABSTRACT

Travel has always been a way to escape our day-to-day lives and experience something new and different. As the at-home realities evolve, the way we travel changes. Although the travel industry is slowly catching up to travelers’ changing needs, individuals are increasingly shaping the industry and bringing to the forefront what matters to them most: the experience achieved through the journey. Nowadays digital technology and social media enable us to construct our “travel memories” instantly and broadcast them globally or archive them forever: how does this alter our travel-narratives and memories? This project mainly focuses on the travel experience in our modern time, specifically to enrich and enhance travelers’ authentic travel memories.

As we assign memory to space, we redefine that place. As we review experience, we discover ourselves. Through a human centered design approach, I designed a mobile application to promote the joy of immersing oneself in different lifestyles and to bring back the unexpected, touching moments of journeys in the past. This design provides travelers a unique way to discover a place and to recall memories.
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 A process of self-discovery

What is a journey? A journey is not just a trip. It’s not just a vacation. It’s also a process, a discovery. It’s a process of self discovery. A journey brings us face to face with ourselves. A journey shows us not only the world but how we fit in.

As Strayed writes in her trail memoir, her life fell apart when her mother died while she was in her early 20s. Unable to deal with the grief, she first cheated on and then divorced her husband, took heroin, and went through some gut wrenching events while slowly trying to self destruct. But when she began to hike, her life began to change (Strayed 2012). Travel, gives one the power to look through the window for scenery, it also encourages one to look into the mirror to discover oneself.

However, with guided tours, planned excursions and sightseeing; the insulation of the tourist from the travel world; isolation from the landscape; provision of local atmosphere; tourist attractions; examples of local culture “collected and embalmed”; the democratizing of travel, the lowering cost, increased organization, and improved means of long-distance transportation; and superhighways, Daniel Boorstin had a negative attitude towards modern travel. He reminds us that, with the advent of such ease in travel, one thing is lacking: the true experience of travel. It has become more of what Boorstin calls: “pseudo adventure” (Boorstin 1961).

1.2 “Be a traveler, not a tourist.”

When people talk about the word traveler, they fantasize a label that is knowledge-expanding, thought-provoking and soul-enhancing. On the other hand, tourist is associate with fast-food consumption, so called diluted, contrived, prefabricated experience.

In the book Invisible City, Calvino talks about the transition between travelers’ first intense experiences of a city to those when they become familiar with the city. This, Calvino says, allows parts of it to eventually ‘disappear’. “When you arrive in [the city],
you rejoice in observing ... At every point the city offers surprises to your view ... But it so happens that you must stay in [the city] and spend the rest of your days there. Soon the city fades before your eyes…” (Calvino 1997).

In Calvino’s point of view, when people first arrive at their destination, they are “tentacle-like” “travelers”, eager to feel the surrounding atmosphere. As they spend more time there, the city “fades before their eyes”, they become insensitive “tourists”. Actually, it is hard to draw a clear line between these two terms, traveler and tourist. It is not hard to find that the majority people are a mixture of traveler and tourist. The key factor that decides a journey is good or not is the experience itself.

How to bring back the authentic exploring experience for both of “traveler” and “tourist” is the theme topic I explored in this project.
Chapter 2 – Travel in Modern time

2.1 International travel market overview

As wealth gradually expands and education levels rise, consumer-citizens throughout the world find basic needs relatively easier to meet. And so the pursuit of the exceptional grows: more delicious and varied cuisine, more fabulous fashions, higher expectations for one’s children and, naturally, more travel. Technology has its say in this context too. As travel exploits are endlessly traded on social networks, the experience economy is particularly vibrant in our modern time.

An increasing number of people will define “wellbeing” more in experiential terms rather than material aspects. Middle-classes will colonize societies and cultures, chasing for more opportunity for self-improvement and education; more ecologically responsible business models; more adventure and soulfulness in the journeys; more profound interactions with people and places; more positive conversations with me as an individual.

Following are some data collected from UNWTO Tourism Highlights 2015 edition (Figure 2.1):

- International tourist arrivals worldwide have increased from 527 million in 1995, to 1133 million in 2014.
- International tourist arrivals worldwide are expected to increase to reach 1.8 billion by 2030
- Between 2010 and 2030, arrivals in emerging destinations are expected to increase at twice the rate of those in advanced economies.
2.2 Travel trends in the new era

Based on the annual report from Tripadvisor (2015), which is one of the biggest user generated content websites, researchers asked more than 44,000 travelers and hoteliers about their plans and came up with the following trends:

**Trend #1 – Seeking new experiences**

- In the coming year, travelers of all ages will seek out things they haven’t tried before, from cruises to solo travel and more.
- Globally, 69% of travelers plan to try something new in 2016. 1 in 5 global travelers said they would try a cruise for the first time next year. 17% will try solo travel for the first time in 2016; 15% will try adventure travel for the first time.

**Trend #2 – Spending more because it’s “worth it”**

- Worldwide, travelers are open to spending more in 2016 than they have in the past—and not just because of rising costs.
- 1 in 3 travelers (33%) are planning to spend more on travel in 2016 than they did the previous year. Among those who plan to increase their travel budget, 49% said they will do so because “because I or my family deserve it.”
- 31% said they would spend more on travel because “it’s important for my health and well-being.”
**Trend #3 – Choosing destinations based on culture, special offers**

- Today’s travelers choose destinations for a number of reasons, including special offers from accommodations.
- Globally, 47% of travelers say they have visited a destination because of the culture and people of the specific country. 1 in 5 travelers (21%) have chosen a destination because a hotel had a special offer or package. “TV tourism” is on the rise: 1 in 5 global travelers have visited a destination because they saw it on a TV show.

**Trend #4 – Staying cool and connected**

- Among the amenities that travelers will look for when they book an accommodation in 2016, air conditioning and WiFi stand out.
- Globally, 46% said free in-room WiFi is a must-have amenity—meaning that, if an accommodation did not provide it, they would look elsewhere.
- 26% of travelers said that they require an accommodation that has super-fast WiFi; 11% are willing to pay extra for this service.

**Trend #5 – Managing reputations online**

- Online presence remains important: In 2016, businesses will be keeping a close eye on what people are saying about them on the web.
- 93% of hoteliers said that online traveler reviews are important for the future of their business. Online reputation management is still the biggest area of investment for accommodation owners in 2016, with 59% investing more in this area than they did the previous year.

**2.3 Digital tools and travel**

Back in 2008, 80% of consumers agreed that all they want a phone to do is make calls and send texts. Now, 80% of consumers worldwide own smartphones ("Future Traveler Tribes” 2012). Smartphones have revolutionized how people access information, spend their time, and relate to their environments. They have brought everything in the hand.
Logging devices provide travel archiving with exceptional ease, social networking presents users with endless user generated content. New technology in virtual reality enables us a peek of the future world. Other technical facilitating tools, like distribution services, sensing and identification devices, and choice management tools already exist in some form. Their potential lies in the migration from the drawing boards into hands, homes and hotels worldwide over the coming decades.

These technology and tools will no doubt shape the future of how we travel. Catching up with the “new things” enables me keep an open mind and provide endless inspirations.

2.4 Travel memory and social media

A number of social sites have become part of people’s daily life, Twitter, for example, with 288 million regular users at the end of 2014 (ibid.), symptomatic of how online networking has cemented itself as an integral part of modern life.

The inner demand of building memories along the trip

In his influential work The Past Is a Foreign Country, David Lowenthal remarks, “The past is integral to our sense of identity… Ability to recall and identify with our own past gives existence meaning, purpose, and value (page 41).”

Recording the journey along the trip has become the norm. More and more smart logging devices hit the market since last decade, each and every detail of the journey could be captured if travelers want to. Technology and network make recording practice both low-budget and convenient.

Pierre Nora famously observed “Modern memory is, above all, archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image” (Nora 1989).

However, by reading the same travel guides, doing the same things at the destinations, checking out the must-do lists, the trip is constructed and disseminated for travelers not
by travelers. As a result, it leads travelers to have homogenized experiences. This kind of travel experience can no longer fulfill modern travelers’ needs.

**Awaking of self-consciousness, archive fever and narcissism**

The selfie is a digital portrait of oneself, typically taken with a digital camera or camera phone held in the hand or supported by a selfie stick. It has captured the global public attention with great force over the last decade. Dinhopl and Gretzel (2016) analyze selfie culture using Urry’s (1990) concept of the tourist gaze. In their study they find that while the traditional tourist gaze was pointed outwards, the technological possibilities and social practices around the selfie have enabled a shift to a more reflective gaze that includes both the destination as well as the tourist’s relation to such a place.

Understanding how this new and ubiquitous digital cultural practice is contributing to the evolving cultures of travel is an important part of building better travel experience that can satisfy modern travelers’ social and mental needs.

**The role of social media**

Modern technology is a two-edged sword. It provides travelers with exceptional ease, but on the opposite side, the traditional sense of ritual is missing. In the past, the precious film for a meaningful moment that one wanted to capture and the limited memory space made travelers value the memories more. Recent research about digital amnesia confronted the problem to us: How can modern interactive technology help users to pick up the sense of ritual?

Experiencing social media as performance, exhibition, and personal archive, people experience the Facebook platform as consisting of three different functional regions: a performance region for managing recent data and impression management, an exhibition region for longer term presentation of self-image, and a personal region for archiving meaningful facets of life (Zhao et al. 2013).

This research suggests that digital traces left in social media contain great potential for stimulating and supporting self-reflection and reminiscing practice. Both the intentional use of social media as a “life logging” tool and the potential usefulness of digital traces
for memory and reflection highlight the importance of understanding how people balance the public functions and personal value of social media (3).

2.5 Conclusion
The last decade has witnessed the flourish of the travel industry. As more and more people are traveling, more diverse user needs emerge. With the help of the fast growing modern technology and social communication, more design opportunities become possible to improve the travel experience.
Chapter 3 – Research and Process

From general research and academic reading, this thesis transitioned to user research. The goal was to observe travelers’ behavior and figure out user needs and design opportunities. The research methodology is mainly advised from the book *Innovating for People* (LUMA Institute 2012). Some of the methodologies were inspired by *IDEO 51 Design Methods* (IDEO 2003).

### 3.1 Research methodology

*Innovating for People* introduced tools and methods in details for observing human experience such as observing physical traces, observing environmental behavior, contextual interviews, questionnaires and more. Systematically the methods can be divided into unobtrusive research and obtrusive research for getting valuable data and fresh insights.

### 3.2 Case studies from the literature

Since the flourish in travel industry in recent decades, a large number of travel relevant design emerged and fulfilled travelers’ experience. Three existing design solutions were studied in order to have a clear image of how other professionals address the problems and create the experience.

**Case #1 – The Tour shirt**

The tour shirt is an interaction design that lets travelers explore the city in an entirely new way: a way to have locals and tourists interact, and allow the tourist to experience everyday Roman life under the guidance of locals (Galloway et al. 2012).

At the computer travelers enter their wishes for the tour: they can input their specific preference and leave some open area to let the computer (and locals) surprise them. Travelers can not see the motifs printed on the back of the shirt. Wanting to start the tour, users have to stop someone to ask where to start the tour. Gesturing at the map on the
back, the local residents can recognize the picture of destination, and explain the way to the user.

Some of the pictures on the shirt show more generic items, in which case the user and locals have to decide what it means. Sometimes the picture is empty, which means that locals can design the tour on the spot (*Figure 3.1*).

![The Tour shirt](image)

**FIGURE 3.1** The Tour shirt

*From Bovine Horde to Urban Players: Multidisciplinary Interaction Design for Alternative City Tourisms*

**Note:**

1. It’s innovative to promote this kind of travel service.
2. It promotes the interaction between travelers and local residents.
3. Wearing a map t-shirt makes travelers intrusive and vulnerable.

**Case #2 – The Cube**

The cube is an interaction design that integrates tangible interface, game interactions and community communications. It is conducted to help travelers explore the city in a customized way (Galloway et al. 2012).

Travelers simply rolling or throwing the cube causes it to display an image from the city. The images are all slightly ambiguous and users will almost certainly need to ask other people to find out what it might be. Each time the cube is rolled a new image is generated for users to track down, either on their own or with friends. Because the cube draws on a
huge variety of images it is suitable for both tourists and locals alike. The cube is for those who want to explore the many facets of the city, whether they have just arrived or lived there all their lives.

Furthermore, once the user finishes their tour, they can take the cube home with them as a souvenir. As they travel through the city it acts as their outboard memory, saving all of the images of the city that they have experienced en route. When back at home, they can re-live their trip by watching the cube cycle through a unique, personalized photo album of the city. They also become part of a growing global community of cubers, individuals committed to new ways of experiencing the urban environment and sharing their insights with other urban adventurers (Figure 3.2).

![Figure 3.2 The Cube](image_url)

From Bovine Horde to Urban Players: Multidisciplinary Interaction Design for Alternative City Tourisms,

Notes:

1. It’s a good combination of tangible and intangible design: it begins as a tour guide and at the end of the trip the cube becomes a souvenir.
2. It promotes the interaction between travelers and local residents.
3. It provides a community for users to recall their trip.
4. It employs a game element into the design, it’s playful for the people who engaged in it.
5. The result of each rolling is random, which means it might not be practical in reality.

Case #3 – Murmur

Murmur is a documentary oral history project that records stories and memories told about specific geographic locations. It enables travelers to explore the intangible part of the locations (Murmur 2012).

Designers collect and make accessible people's personal histories and anecdotes about the places in their neighborhoods that are important to them. In each of these locations a [murmur] sign is installed with a telephone number on it that anyone can call with a mobile phone to listen to that story while standing in that exact spot, and engaging in the physical experience of being right where the story takes place. Some stories suggest that the listener walk around, following a certain path through a place, while others allow a person to wander with both their feet and their gaze.

It's history from the ground up, told by the voices that are often overlooked when the stories of cities are told. We know about the skyscrapers, sports stadiums and landmarks, but [murmur] looks for the intimate, neighborhood-level voices that tell the day-to-day stories that make up a city. The smallest, greyest or most nondescript building can be transformed by the stories that live in it. Once heard, these stories can change the way people think about that place and the city at large (Figure 3.3).
Notes:

1. Rural life is also an important element of the city, the project helps users explore the destination in a different context, gaining a three dimensional experience.
2. Because of the location based mechanism, stories might vary when user choose different routes.
3. The project has some physical limitations: the visual sign installment; the accessibility of telecommunications service.

3.3 Contextual interview

In terms of getting direct information from my target group, 25 interviews were conducted with participants aged 19 to 70. They are either frequent travelers or freewheeling tourists. To make the result more diverse and cover as many aspects as possible, participants were selected from college students, junior professionals, senior professionals and retirees. People enjoy telling stories, the goal of this interview was to gain a better sense of travelers’ true feelings, desires, struggles and opinions. It is crucial to compare what they say and what they do in order to get a clear picture of user needs and design opportunities.
The research agenda has four stages:

1\textsuperscript{st}: Introduction  
This section was an ice-breaker activity, intended to put the participants at ease. The purpose was to familiarize the participants with the purpose of the interview: to study travel behavior and find out the pain points in the industry, in order to come up with design opportunities. Meanwhile, the basic information about participants was collected at this time, for instance, age, gender, occupation and frequency of travel.

2\textsuperscript{nd}: General reflection  
This part of the interviews mainly focused on participants’ basic impressions towards travel experience and expectations for future trips (Figure 3.4).

Example question list:
1. How often do you travel and what is the motivation?
2. What do you expect for traveling?
3. What is the biggest concern when you travel?
4. What could be improved for future trips?

\textbf{FIGURE 3.4} Interview notes
3rd: Study questionnaire

The third section of the contextual interview asked participants to go through the whole travel process and grade their experience, from the initial motivations, inquiry activities, to booking and planning, and finally the travel itself, as well as reminiscing activities (Figure 3.5).

4th: Story telling

The last part of the interview let participants recall a specific piece of their journey and reflect on their memorable moments. In the words of Gillis, “The past has become so distant and the future so uncertain that we can no longer be sure what to save so we save everything….” (Gillis 1994). The purpose was to find the core material of their memories from the trip and to determine what details are fading away from their mind (Figure 3.6).
Some quotes:

1. By nightfall we got to the top of volcano on Stromboli, the Aeolian island off Sicily's north coast. We sat and looked down into the caldera just a few feet away, watching it spew its fire into the night.

2. The water lit up with phosphorescence, which made it magic to night-swim in the hot spring water on Koh Samui.

3. I lost my watch, it is like there is nothing urgent to do. I would wander in the town and try out a nice vegetarian place for dinner. No one was upset about time, weather it is five minutes or an hour to be served: if it takes a while, they just play more rounds of card game while listening to the singers --- which was pure European magic.

4. We found a small hand-woven goods shop while we visited the Seimei shrine. We are very lucky, a friendly and talkative proprietor made us tea, and told us a lot about Japanese culture. I bought some delicate handicrafts, and surprisingly, he gave some tiny hand-woven earrings to me as a present for my mother.

5. I participated WWOOF in Japan. With a lot of interesting people, we helped out a farm in the amazingly beautiful countryside. In the spare time, we went to a river nearby, put head under water, saw the fish right there.
6. As I climb, I begin to rise above the clouds. To make it even better is when I look down the cliff, the clouds billow up at me.

7. Watching more than 1000 reindeers move through my camp when we were rafting in the tundra in Alaska. There is rarely any trace of people, other than the sound of 1 or 2 bush planes. We had amazingly peaceful time there.

8. We had a sea kayak trip outside of Juneau. Camping within sight and sound of a calving glacier, I saw the most splendid view in my life. We watched gigantic pieces of ice fall to the water from 5 or 10 stories up and crash into the ocean.

9. I was snorkeling around a small island in Fiji by myself. Surrounded by all the beautiful creatures, I believe it is the most elaborate fish tank from the God. Even though got the worst sunburn I've ever gotten, I would say it worth it!

3.4 Conclusion
Throughout the user research, a vast amount of information was collected from participants. On one hand, travelers show some similarities. On the other hand, individuals present diversity in their experience. The next step was to analysis both the observations and interviews, in order to find the hidden behavioral patterns from the data and address design opportunities.
Chapter 4 – Data Analysis

As *Innovating for People* (LUMA Institute 2012) points out, innovation only happens when you can understand a subject of area so well that you can transcend and sometimes even reinvent it. The goal of this section was taking all stakeholders, places, and objects into consideration, finding the behavioral pattern hidden behind the data, in order to come up with valuable insights and ideas. The methods used here included stakeholder mapping, persona profile and affinity clustering.

4.1 Stakeholder map

The travel process is more than just travel behavior itself, instead, it is a complex system. In this system there are various elements tangled together to build the travel experience. This stakeholder map sorted out the inner relationships in this system, focusing mainly on the people in the field, such as friend has been there, airline staff and other travelers. The analysis started from the earliest stage, when the travelers have not formed a strong desire to conduct the trip, to the trip accomplishment and finally when experience becomes their cherished memory. Throughout the flow in the map, travelers encountered different kinds of people, diverse physical objects and changes in their assessments of the travel experience. All of the participants should be taken into consideration for the next ideation stage. I listed all the participants and developed this stakeholder map (*Figure 4.1*).

![FIGURE 4.1 Stakeholder map](image)
As shown in the figure, I divided all stakeholders into three parts.

**Home**
This group of people are physically back home and geographically distant from the travelers. In this group, people are further divided into two parts: the first is the intimate group, including travelers’ family members, significant others and close friends. The remaining group is their colleagues, friends and relatives. Travelers’ interactions with these two groups of people are quite different.

**Away**
This section of the stakeholder map represents the touch points encountered once travel itself begins, including all the tourist-related services the travelers may have, for instance, on the plane, in the hotel, at attractions and in restaurants. Other than those professional services, they may also have interactions with local citizens, including ground transportation staff, shopping guides, grocery staff and local residents.

**Cloud**
This is the age of the Internet. We are getting a great deal of information from the Internet at an incredible speed. The interaction with on-line communities is happening not only throughout a trip, but also before you have the desire to plan a particular trip. This interaction will continue in the form of social networking once the traveler returns home.

There are a great number of opportunities hidden in this stakeholder map, by highlighting these specific interactions I could get a clear understanding of the travel system and develop innovative concepts.

**Conclusion:**
Throughout the interviews, several roles became apparent. Friends who have been there: they are the trustworthy consultants that travelers willingly to turn to. Other travelers: This is an interesting group of people but travelers usually ignore. They are the people who happened to appear at the place at the same time. Local residents: They are to some
extent already familiar with the place that fascinates travelers. They are the experts and know the inside rules (Figure 4.2).

FIGURE 4.2 Stakeholder map analysis

4.2 Build up personas
Travelers have different characteristics that make them suitable for different products, services and marketing messages. Similar sharing of travel-related needs groups travelers together. In “Future Traveler Tribes 2030”, travelers are grouped into different types. It is of great importance to study their values, behaviors and needs in order to investigate the design opportunities. Personas were built to illustrate different traveler types (“Future Traveler Tribes 2030” 2015).

Traveler type #1 - Simplicity Searchers
Simplicity Searchers value above everything else ease and transparency in their travel planning and holidaymaking, and are willing to outsource their decision-making to trusted parties to avoid having to go through extensive research themselves.

Persona 1: Arjun, 40, Indian
Occupation: Marketing Manager
Travel behavior: With a stressful and exhausting job and little holiday time, Arjun likes to splurge on two week holidays that don’t involve lengthy planning on his part. Bespoke holiday packages, which are exactly matched by his algorithm-informed travel agent,
appeal most to Arjun, as he can relax safe in the knowledge everything down to dinner reservations will be made for him. He keeps track of his itinerary through an intelligent mobile application.

**Traveler type #2 - Cultural Purists**

Cultural Purists treat their travel as an opportunity to break themselves entirely from their home lives and engage sincerely with a different way of living. Elements of this tribe are similar to cosmopolitan commuters.

**Persona 2:** John, 28, American

**Occupation:** Freelance Author

**Travel behavior:** John won’t travel to Mexico before completing an immersive Spanish course and reading as many books and articles as possible. He books his trip with no planned accommodation, so logs into a sofa-hopping network on arrival. He wears connected eyewear around Mexico City, giving him non-obtrusive flashes of information on his surroundings. Finding the city too filled with tourists, he heads north to a quiet village at the last minute, seeking the “true Mexico”.

**Traveler type #3 - Social Capital Seekers**

Social Capital Seekers understand that to be well-travelled is an enviable personal quality, and their choices are shaped by their desire to take maximal social reward from their travel. They will exploit the potential of digital media to enrich and inform their experiences, and structure their adventures with the fact of their being watched by online audiences ever present in their mind.

**Persona 3:** Fiona, 22, Irish

**Occupation:** College Student

**Travel behavior:** Fiona receives heavily discounted, personalized trip offers based on the data from her Instagram feed. Whilst away, she sets her wearable life-logging device to 24/7 record and gains followers of her Italian trip by the minute. She takes care to fill her days with beautiful sights and quirky attractions that will appeal to her social network. She meets a popular video logger in the area and snaps some selfies, before producing a daily v-log herself.
**Traveler type #4 - Travel Chillers**

Travel Chillers have no plans. They just go with the flow and see where they end up every day.

**Persona 4:** Chris, 36, German  
**Occupation:** PR Manager  
**Travel behavior:** Chris believes the most important part of a journey is the process. Whenever he decides the destination, he books a one-way ticket, and that’s all. Sometime he chats with the folks in the bar and gets some suggestions about what to do, sometime he meets a group of interesting people he will just join them.

**Traveler type #5 - Obligation Meeters**

Obligation Meeters have their travel choices restricted by the need to meet some bounded objective. Though they will arrange or improvise other activity around this purpose, their core needs and behaviors are mainly shaped by their need to be in a certain place, at a certain time.

**Persona 5:** Leo, 26, South Korean  
**Occupation:** Consultant  
**Travel behavior:** Leo decides to meet his new client in person, wanting to create a strong relationship from the start. He logs onto his mobile workplace app and communicates his plans with his colleagues – who are all currently scattered around Asia on business. He chooses to extend his trip to work in some leisure time, automatically updating his vacation allowance. When delays occur due to bad weather, he receives automatic contingency plans and an upgraded seat.

**Conclusion:**

Different types of travelers have described their mindset throughout the journey. Based on their feedback, I drew a user journey map (*Figure 4.3*). Their mood has gone through ups and downs. The main differences among travelers happened on the period of planning the travel; travel itself; and reminiscence part.
4.3 Affinity diagramming

Philosopher Otto Weininger said, “All genius is a conquering of chaos and mystery.” At this stage in the midst of the project, an overwhelming amount of information was collected. Affinity diagramming was used to visually demonstrate observations and insights from previous research. The quotes/comments/pain points used in the affinity diagramming came from previous contextual interview, online research and different personas. Sticky notes were clustered together if they share a similar issue or have a common affinity (Figure 4.4).
4.4 Research conclusions and design guidelines

Five aspects were defined as design guidelines:

(Aspect 1) **Diversity** – Flexibility to satisfy different types of travelers (chiller, social capital, obligation meeters, simplicity travelers, cultural purists)

(Aspect 2) **Immersive** – Accessibility to local culture and urban events, promoting a unique experience

(Aspect 3) **Travel Archive** – Privacy vs Public, building a sharing platform that can satisfy the needs of different traveler types. An identity platform should be designed for both context-specific performance and long-term exhibition, for both others and self (Zhao et al. 2013).

(Aspect 4) **Self-reflection** – Inward questioning, provides something bigger than leisure and relaxation. It will be a great bonus if travelers can have positive changes through traveling.

(Aspect 5) **Engaging Community** – Promote collective efforts. It’s important to give individuals the chance to be a part of something bigger. In Bernie DeKoven’s words: if they (new games) are better, the community should teach others how to play. If they’re not better, the players should suggest ways to improve them, or start inventing their own new games to test (DeKoven 1975).
Chapter 5 – Design Process

5.1 Brainstorming

Brainstorming is an effective tool to mine ideas out of one’s mind. It helps to explore various and instantaneous ideas to find creative solutions. At this stage, with in-depth market research and sufficient inspirations from contextual interview, I went into the ideation stage. Based on the mind map I kept updating for the project (Figure 5.1), an individual brain storming (Figure 5.2) was conducted.

Over 60 concepts were generated after this ideation section. After clustering them on different areas, some key areas emerged, which are travel planning, activity and event options, sharing the trip and acknowledging local culture.
5.2 Focus group discussion

All of the concepts were valuable “sparks” for building an enriched and immersive travel experience. The main purpose of the next step was to sort out a clear and constant service thread from the “soup”. I conducted an academic discussion with participants who came from areas of memory study, computer science, library information and anthropology, some of them are phd students and some are graduate students. By holding this multi-discipline discussion, I gained some academic inspiration and at the same time, in depth critic. On this round table discussion, our key words included travel memory and amnesia; memory and identity; individual memory and collective memory; the presentation of self from Erving Goffman (1956) (Figure 5.3).

Key insights:
1. Regarding digital amnesia, the design should utilize digital technology as a facilitating tool and put the focus on authentic travel experience.
2. A better travel experience should be diverse and personal, people can pursue their own way of exploring a place and understanding the culture.
3. Sharing is a constant trigger for people to get an engaging experience, but difference platforms should be presented according to different goals, such as archiving, performing or exhibition of self.

![Figure 5.3 Academic discussion](image)

### 5.3 Initial concepts

Directed by the valuable critique and feedback, the concepts were eventually narrowed down to the following five potential directions. Storyboards and evaluation were used to articulate how the concepts may help increase traveler’s experience.

**Concept #1 - “Plan It Together”**

**Description:**

This idea is inspired by the two types of travelers I interviewed: simplicity searcher and cultural purist. For the simplicity searchers, they don’t have enough time to take care of the trip planning, usually they lead a “normal” trip, visiting the most “famous” places. On the other hand, the cultural purists take planning as a game, they like to find out the best deal from a vast amount of information. So “plan it together” is aiming at providing a platform for different types of travelers, organically integrating resources within the travel community. Busy travelers can post a travel request to the platform. A repository of travelers in the community will work on this mission to formulate a comprehensive plan *(Figure 5.4).*
Pros:
1. It integrates a lot existing resources.
2. It is a customized travel service.
3. Different types of travelers can benefit from the community: busy travelers can enjoy the planning service while travel planners can profit from their planning practice.
4. This concept can cater to the needs of simplicity searchers, obligation meeters and social capital seekers.

Cons:
1. It’s hard to compete with professional travel planning agency.
2. It’s a challenge to control the quality and build trust.

Concept #2 - “Playground”

Description:
The last decade witnessed a great growth of ARG (alternate reality game). This idea is to design an integrated system, including the rules, digital platform and physical facilitating tools, to help travelers engage in an alternate reality game during the journey. By accomplishing missions, travelers can find the footprints of previous travelers, discover facts about the place, connect with local residents, and solve puzzles. The city or destination is their playground, which invites travelers to explore the space from a different perspective. Under the rules or guidelines of the game, travelers can discover
something unique that usually is ignored in the traditional way of travel (Figure 5.5).

Pros:
1. Travelers may have an engaging and immersive experience.
2. Travelers can enjoy a very unique journey.
3. This concept can cater to the needs of travel chillers, cultural purists and social capital seekers.

Cons:
1. Travelers’ attention might be distracted.
2. It’s challenging to build an integrated system and lead the community into a virtuous circle.

Concept #3 - “Real-time Assistant”

Description:
Local residents are around you all along the trip, knowing the place more than any tourist agent, knowing your language and the local slangs. What if local residents get involved in travelers’ journey? Inspired by the fact that people tend to get suggestions from insiders, for instance, local residents, the idea is about constructing a platform to connect local residents and travelers (Figure 5.6).
FIGURE 5.6 Storyboard – “Real-time assistant”

Pros:
1. Travelers can get the immediate assistant from the community.
2. Travelers can enjoy up to date information.
3. Travelers can benefit from the insiders’ suggestions, acknowledge a deeper understanding towards local life and culture.
4. This concept can cater to the needs of simplicity searchers, travel chillers, obligation meters, cultural purists and social capital seekers.

Cons:
1. It’s hard to define the motivation for local residents to get involved in the community.
2. The outcomes might become fragmented information.

Concept #4 - “1+1>2”

Description:
Food is always an important social glue. But travelers, especially solo travelers have a concern: it is impossible for a solo traveler to try out a variety of foods on a small budget. The initial trigger of this idea is to help a solo traveler, or a tiny group of people to reach out to more people and form their own event(s) based on their interests (Figure 5.7).
Pros:
1. It can help to integrate the fragmented resources.
2. It provides travelers with a reason to reach out for interaction, not only with other travelers but also with the local residents.
3. This concept can cater to the needs of simplicity searchers, travel chillers, obligation meters, cultural purists and social capital seekers.

Cons:
1. Safety issues are a great concern when meeting strangers.
2. An algorithm is needed to pair up different people.

Concept #5 - “Information Station”

Description:
The heyday of internet communication service has witnessed the decay of traditional communication. Mail and telephone booths have the biggest distribution and take the best locations in the city, however imminent extinction seems to be inevitable. This idea is inspired by the news that the city of Shanghai, China has converted 500 former telephone booths into WiFi hotspots. With the help of iBeacon technology, travelers can interact with the locative devices, get the information, history-stories and culture of the place (*Figure 5.8*).
Pros:
1. This concept adds new value to traditional public facilities.
2. With widely distributed “information stations”, travelers can get continuous assistance along the journey.
3. It also reduces travelers’ burden of getting information before hand: when they get close to the “information station”, relevant information will automatically push to them.
4. This concept can cater to the needs of simplicity searchers, travel chillers, obligation meters, cultural purists and social capital seekers.

Cons:
1. Physical location on the other hand is a limitation. For places without telephone booths or mailboxes, it’s hard to implement this concept.

5.4 Design reconstruction
At this stage of the design process, in order to sort out the final direction, it was of great importance to go back through the initial design goal, which is to enrich travelers’ authentic travel experience and enhance their precious travel memories.

Three elements were taken into consideration when deciding the final direction:
1. Cohesiveness to the initial design goal
2. Feasibility of developing the concept
3. Innovativeness of the ideas
Through discussion with studio peers and feedback from project instructors, a refined direction emerged. The final direction focuses on the two aspects (*Figure 5.9)*:

1. Connect with local life: Provide more accessibility to local culture and urban life, in order to build unique experience. This addresses (Aspect 1) Diversity and (Aspect 2) Immersive in section 4.4.

2. Expand the vivid memories: promote the reflection towards both inner and outside world; encourage the interaction with, not only longitudinal with oneself in different time but also transversely with other travelers. This addresses (Aspect 3) Travel Archive, (Aspect 4) Self–reflection and (Aspect 5) Engaging Community.

*FIGURE 5.9* Design reconstruction: direction summary
Chapter 6 – Design Improvement

6.1 Concept storyboard

Started from those refined design directions, I moved forward to develop the concepts. The power of storyboards lies in its ability to capture people’s imagination, and take them into the scenario I build with my design. In Innovation for People, author says “Stories give action to ideas and place them in a context of use. Therefore, storyboarding is an ideal way to visualize people experiencing your new idea in action (LUMA Institute 2012).”

A series of images were used to show the key elements and possible interactions of different scenarios, hence to form some solid ideas.

The goals here include:

1. Show what the concepts look like in action.
2. Construct a blueprint of the general work flow
3. Help people imagine the context
4. Build a shared understanding

Storyboards:

Episode 1: Apr. 2nd, 8:00 pm, Hotel, Tokyo

Arjun (40, Indian, Simplicity Searcher) is traveling alone in Japan and he does not have a plan for tomorrow morning. Using “Events”, he finds a post made by Mr. Yasosado whose family is going to a shrine for worship. According to the post, Mr. Yasosado wants to invite a foreigner to join because he wants to build a multi-cultural experience for his young daughter. Arjun adores Japanese culture so he contacts Mr. Yasosado and explores the Japanese shrine under the guidance of this local family (Figure 6.1).
**Figure 6.1** Episode 1: Apr. 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 8:00 pm, Hotel, Tokyo

**Episode 2: Apr. 3rd, 11:30 am, street, Tokyo**

Chris (36, German, Travel Chiller) is a foodie and he believes food is an important part of culture. However, it is impossible for him to try out a wide variety of food on a small budget. This time, he is making a post via “Events” to invite other travelers to join him for this food adventure. After about 10 minutes, a couple replies to Chris's post. This couple is about two blocks away from Chris’s location and they also want to save money. They get together, enjoy some delicious food and share their travel stories (*Figure 6.2*).
Episode 3: Apr. 4th, 5:00 pm, Art School, Tokyo

Chris (36, German, Travel Chiller) is a free-lance artist. He is curious about the art industry in Japan. He sets “art” as a keyword in “Events” and finds a post regarding a MFA show in the area. This is a post made by Yomiko, a graduate student in Art, who wants to share her work with more people. Chris visits her gallery and is fascinated by all those young artists and their pioneering work. Chris and these young artists also engage in some insightful conversations during the show (Figure 6.3).
Fiona (22, Irish, Social Capital Seeker) is wandering on the street. She sets up a "friend's affair" alert on “Memories”. A notification is sent to her. It says that Fiona’s friend, Jason, was here before and he had left a note for new travelers. In this note, Jason recommends a nearby café and leaves a coupon for new travelers to redeem. Fiona is surprised by this. She visits the café and sends Jason a picture of himself sipping the coffee that Jason had recommended (Figure 6.4).
Leo (26, South Korean, Obligation Meeter) receives another notification from “Memories” while he is enjoying the beautiful sunset at a beach. It is an image left by an anonymous traveler. Leo figures out that the group of people in the image is his friend Grace and her family. It’s so harmonious and beautiful. Leo is astonished that he and his friend are savoring the same beauty so he pushes the image to Grace (Figure 6.5).

**Episode 5: Apr. 6th, 6:00 pm, Beach, Tokyo**

Leo (26, South Korean, Obligation Meeter) receives another notification from “Memories” while he is enjoying the beautiful sunset at a beach. It is an image left by an anonymous traveler. Leo figures out that the group of people in the image is his friend Grace and her family. It’s so harmonious and beautiful. Leo is astonished that he and his friend are savoring the same beauty so he pushes the image to Grace (Figure 6.5).
Episode 6: May. 8th, 5:00 pm, National park, Kenya

John (28, American, Cultural Purist) is traveling through Kenya in an adventure tour, immersing himself in the animal kingdom. He meets an elephant keeper along the journey. To his astonishment, he learnt the fact that there are tens of thousands of elephants killed for ivory trade. John post a note to “Memories”, hoping more people can know about this tragedy and do something to stop the slaughter (Figure 6.6).
6.2 Content structure

Service blueprints are a way to specify and detail each individual aspect of a service. This usually involves creating a visual schematic incorporating the perspectives of both the user, the service provider and other relevant parties that may be involved, detailing everything from the point of customer contact to behind-the-scenes processes. Service blueprints are able to show the processes that lie behind the critical service elements around which user experience is defined.

– Stickdorn and Schneider. *This is Service Design Thinking*. 2011
In order to get a comprehensive content structure, a service blueprint was drawn to simplify the service model, including stakeholders, operation procedure and backend information. It visually articulated the skeleton of the service system, providing a structure for content enrichment in the later design stage (Figure 6.7).

**FIGURE 6.7 Service blueprint**

Based on the service blueprint, content structure was illustrated to lead the user go through the overall structure of the application, from one section to another.

The primary navigation will direct users to switch between the two primary functions: events and memories. The secondary navigation of the application was mainly about the supporting content, such as account info, user preferences and settings (Figure 6.8).
FIGURE 6.8 Content structure
Chapter 7 – User Experience Design

7.1 Interface patterns

Nested Doll

The nested doll pattern leads users in a linear structure to more detailed content. It is a quick and easy method of navigation for users in difficult conditions. It also provides a strong sense of where they are in the structure of the content due to the perception of moving forward and then back.

In *The Mobile Frontier: A Guide for Designing Mobile Experiences*, Rachel Hinman described nested doll design pattern like this: “Mobile experiences that employ the nested doll pattern are all about funneling users to detailed content…It’s a pattern that has a strong sense of forward/back movement” (Hinman, 2012).

A great example of this pattern in action is iPhone’s Mail App (*Figure 7.1*):

![FIGURE 7.1 Nested doll interface pattern](http://www.google.com)

I borrowed this particular pattern in my design, for instance, the destination section, providing user a clear and direct guidance to detail information.
Gallery

The Gallery pattern presents individual pieces of content for navigation. Sometimes the content will be grouped for easier browsing. Content is usually individual articles, cards, photos, or products, arranged in a carousel, grid, or slideshow order (Figure 7.2).

7.2 Prototype and usability

Martin and Hanington said “Prototyping is the tangible creation of artifacts at various levels of resolution, for development and testing of ideas within design teams and with clients and users” (Martin and Hanington 2012).

The level of fidelity defines design prototypes. A common process of building a prototype starts from low fidelity to medium fidelity and ends with high fidelity deliverables.

Low fidelity prototyping

After sorting out the content bullet points, doodle sketches were used to prototype the work flow. First round sketch was very rough, just lines and blocks. At this point, quick sketch was a great way to test out the content structure. The challenge here was to present
all the information by pages and make sure the work flow went smoothly (Figure 7.3).

In second round sketch, more effort was put on the aesthetics aspect. Based on the refined structure of first round sketch, the key point of second round sketch was organizing the information in a visual appealing way: more interface patterns, graphics and icons.

By recruiting potential users to walk through the process, several arrangements were tested (Figure 7.4).

FIGURE 7.3 First round sketch
Medium fidelity prototyping

With the defined content structure and visual pattern, medium fidelity prototyping was used to test out the work flow.

Black and white shapes of ovals and blocks were converted to digital versions to illustrate the major content. A clickable medium-fidelity prototype was made by linking all the digitalized interfaces in Flinto (a live prototyping tool). Based on interface context, different interactive transitions between each page was assigned, including tapping, swiping, or scrolling. The medium fidelity prototypes were sized for phone devices and downloaded onto the phone, ready for testing (Figure 7.5). Following presents the login page, preference page, events management page, events page, city package page and memory detail page.
The medium fidelity prototype was tested with classmates, experienced travelers, amateur travelers, and also people who work in the travel industry. Through user testing, a lot of valuable feedback was gathered from participants. Their feedback and suggestions touched upon different aspects, assisting me in building a better work flow as well as modify some features of the application (Figure 7.6).
7.3 Visual language

As an inseparable aspect of user experience, visual language can help to render the overall scenario and also express the emotional sense of the design.

The visual language mood board contained inspiring and creative branding works from other designers, which illustrates the visual and mental tones of the design (Figure 7.7).
Meanwhile, a collection of a few successful and ubiquitous applications were gathered, including the trendy design patterns from mobile iOS UI elements, and Google Material Design. From the operational perspective, my work shared similarities with the sampling applications, I believed the UI elements could be borrowed as my design development continued (Figure 7.8).
7.4 Motion design

In *Motion Design for iOS*, Mike Rundle says: “There were animations in apps before iOS 7, what has changed is how important and significant motion design now is when crafting apps’ user experience. What used to be an afterthought is now front-and-center and a key facet of the overall way that customers experience an app. Animations are no longer tacked on at the end, they’re now designed and thought of throughout the entire design process” (Rundle, 2014).

Some basic principles are squash and stretch, follow-through and overlapping action, slow-in and slow-out, secondary action, timing and more.

The challenge here is to build the proper amount of animation and choose the suitable type of animation for my design. Exotic animation is not the purpose, motion design should be subtle and help users understand the features and content.
7.5 Semantic building

Semantics are the implied meaning of a subject, like a word or sentence. It aids how users interpret subject matter. A proper semantics use can help users understand not only the function of certain UI elements, but also the meaning and spirit behind the action. By observing the nature and everyday life, I was trying to find out a cohesive match to express the inner logic between events/experience and memories/reflection. Finally, I decided to go with the water metaphor, using “drop” and “ripple” to express the two key function of the application (Figure 7.9).

![Semantic: water metaphor, drop and ripple](image)

FIGURE 7.9 Semantic: water metaphor, drop and ripple
Original image from http://www.google.com, modified by author

7.6 User testing

A second round of user testing is conducted. The prototype used for the testing was a high-fidelity mock up that shows what the actual product would be like. This time I integrated as many elements as possible, endeavor to approach the real working version: color palette, font use, motion design and semantic (Figure 7.10).
Feedback ranged from the most important function-changes to interface pattern, as well as the tiny details, such as date format and word use. All of this feedback helped me polish the design (Figure 7.11).
Chapter 8 – Final Design

8.1 Branding

Title: Drippple

The name of my final design is “Drippple”. A water metaphor is used to render the overall mindset: when we connect with the surrounding world, simple action will become meaningful and altogether we can affect more. Three Ps are used here to visually emphasise the ripple effect.

Slogan: Collect “drops” of life and evoke “ripples” in the inner world.

Events function: Drops.

Memories function: Ripples.

(Figure 8.1)

8.2 Visual elements

Iconography

Icon is of great importance to the user experience, it’s an interpretation of the content and function. I choose a series of most universal icons on the market, in order to reduce the learning time and explain the design better (Figure 8.2).
Typefaces
For font use, Grand Hotel was used for big titles: Drippple, drops and ripples. Gotham Bold was used for subtitles and Myriad Pro was used for main content. In order to outline the content hierarchy, different font sizes and styles are applied (Figure 8.3).

Color palette
For color palette, I choose light blue and dusty violet as primary colors. Light blue is reliable and responsible color, represents all the events on the platform in my design. Dusty violet is a metaphor to memories, which blurred but still fabulous (Figure 8.4).
8.3 Functions

Launching process

1. sign in/log in
2. preference setting
3. launching page

(Figure 8.5)
Drops

In the Drops section, event information is presented based on users' preset preference. Travelers can also sort out events by location, date and event type. This addresses (Aspect 1) Diversity and (Aspect 2) Immersive. In event detail page, they can find out detailed information about the event, for instance, time, address, fee, host and participants. They can step further to contact the host for more information or directly inform the host they will join. If they fail to find the desired events, they can host their own events and meet more people (Figure 8.6).

FIGURE 8.6 Drops

1. Search for events (Figure 8.7)
2. Host an event and Events Management (Figure 8.8)
FIGURE 8.7 Search for events
Events list view (left); events map view (middle); event detail page (right)

FIGURE 8.8 Host an event and events management
In the Ripples section, it's all about memories and reflection. At any point of your trip, you can leave your memory to record that moment: add a photo, write some words and tag the location. This addresses (Aspect 3) Travel Archive. It's temporarily private, and you don't know when it will be discovered and who will discover it. Meanwhile, you can always be the one to discover other's memories and help to evoke their ripples (Figure 8.9). This addresses (Aspect 4) Self-reflection and (Aspect 5) Engaging community.

FIGURE 8.9 Memory card
Function illustration, leave memories and search for other travelers’ memories

1. Leave a Memory card (Figure 8.10)
2. Search for Memory (Figure 8.11)
3. Messages

Messages is the place that captures all your interesting interactions with other travelers: how other travelers reply to your moments, how you respond to them, and
how you two reflect on the same destination. The more messages you get the more ripples you have \textit{(Figure 8.12)}. This addresses (Aspect 5) Engaging Community.
4. Destinations

Destinations is your travel "shoe box", your travel memories package. It records all your activities along the trip. You can review the journey day by day, what memory is discovered, what memory is still waiting to be discovered, or what you found during the trip (Figure 8.13). This addresses (Aspect 3) Travel Archive and (Aspect 4) Self-reflection.

FIGURE 8.13 Destination
City packages (top); memories you left (bottom left); memories you found (bottom right)
Side Menu

Users can open the menu from the left side hamburger icon. In the menu, they can access other pages in the application, for instance, “Interests settings”, “Friends list”, “Privacy settings” and “Notifications settings”. Users can also view or edit their profile by touching their profile pictures (Figure 8.14).

8.4 Exhibition

My thesis work was presented in the MFA Exhibition at Krannert Art Museum from Apr 9th to Apr 23rd, 2016 (Figure 8.15). The title of my work is “Drippple, New Travel Experience – Collect “drops” of life and evoke “ripples” in the inner world”.
The exhibition contained five parts (Figure 8.16):

2. Project Website: drippple.net. It contains two parts: Final design outcome and Project process diary.
3. Interactive prototype: a clickable demo on cellphone to showcase the final design.
4. Storyboard Frames: scenario stories to explain the key features of the design.
5. Other elements: projected icon video; Travel accessories in shadow box;

FIGURE 8.16 Exhibition details
Chapter 9 – Conclusion

My thesis focuses on how digital technology enables travelers to have an authentic travel experience and at the same time, enrich their travel memories. Through the exploratory research, contextual interviews and academic study, I investigated the user needs of modern travelers. After several rounds of ideation and design development, I designed a practical and innovative service model, which can help travelers enjoy unique experience and expand their travel memories.

Through the application, travelers can search through events posted by local residents, exploring the place in a more immersive way. On the other hand, travelers can leave snapshots of their moments along the journey for new travelers to discover their footprints and to evoke their memories.

This project clearly demonstrates how the application Drippple can help travelers enjoy an immersive travel experience and recall memories in a unique way. However, as the design is in the prototype phase, some limitations still need to be tackled in the future.

1. Filter system
   The events board caters users’ needs of searching for interesting and unique activities, connecting with local life, but to make it appealing in the reality, some improvements should be made to its filter system, pushing the most relevant information to individual users.

2. Endorsement system
   Since the interaction between travelers and other stakeholders is a major aspect of this application, trust issue becomes another concern. Inspired by Linkedin endorsement system, a trust endorsement model build on established trust relationships should be considered, in order to provide a stronger basis for the interaction in this community.

3. Leveling up system
   In Reality Is Broken, Jane McGonigal has stated the importance of proper feedback. “Leveling up is one of the most satisfying kinds of feedback ever designed. Watching your avatar profile get more powerful and skillful with each chore makes the process
feel personally satisfying.” (McGonigal 2011) A well developed Avatar leveling up system should be considered for the user adhesiveness of the application.

Through the project I gained a deeper understanding of travel and the meaning of memories to a person. Traveling leaves one speechless and then turns one into a storyteller. The core of travel is the one-the-road experience and joy when one recalls the memories afterwards. Enjoy life and always be on the road, whether mentally or physically.
Works Cited


