

Magnus Mo

Utilizing digital storytelling to promote sustainable tourism in Lower Mustang

Master's thesis in Industriell design

Supervisor: Martina Keitsch

Co-supervisor: Kari Nixon

June 2023

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Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Architecture and Design
Department of Design



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Master thesis for Magnus Petterteig Mo

Title Facilitating sustainable tourism through digital storytelling

Tittel Fasilitere bærekraftig turisme gjennom digital historiefortelling

This thesis will take part in the SAMAJ project, a transdisciplinary initiative focusing on sustainable development in Nepal.

Tourism is an important source of income for people in Nepal, but the tourists often travel to the same places, leading to over-tourism in some places, while other areas do not benefit economically from the tourists. Students have in previous projects identified the need for improved information in order to attract tourists to the less popular rural destinations. The goal of my project will be to increase interest, among tourists, in some specific villages in Lower Mustang. The focus of the project will be to explore different design narratives and communicate these narratives with techniques from digital and visual storytelling, in order to disseminate sustainable tourism and make it more attractive.

The project will follow a Human-centered design process but will be adjusted in order to fit the practical concerns regarding field work and conditions in Nepal. I will travel to Nepal in the middle of the semester, which means that the initial insights need to be conducted from Norway. Prior to the field trip, I want to do literature research, conduct Interviews and workshops and prototype solutions. During the field trip, I want to test the prototypes, iterate on the solutions and gather contextual insights. After the trip, I will continue working on the prototype, evaluate the solution and facilitate further student work within the SAMAJ project.

Oppgaven utføres etter ”Retningslinjer for masteroppgaver i Industriell design”.

Hovedveileder: Martina Keitsch

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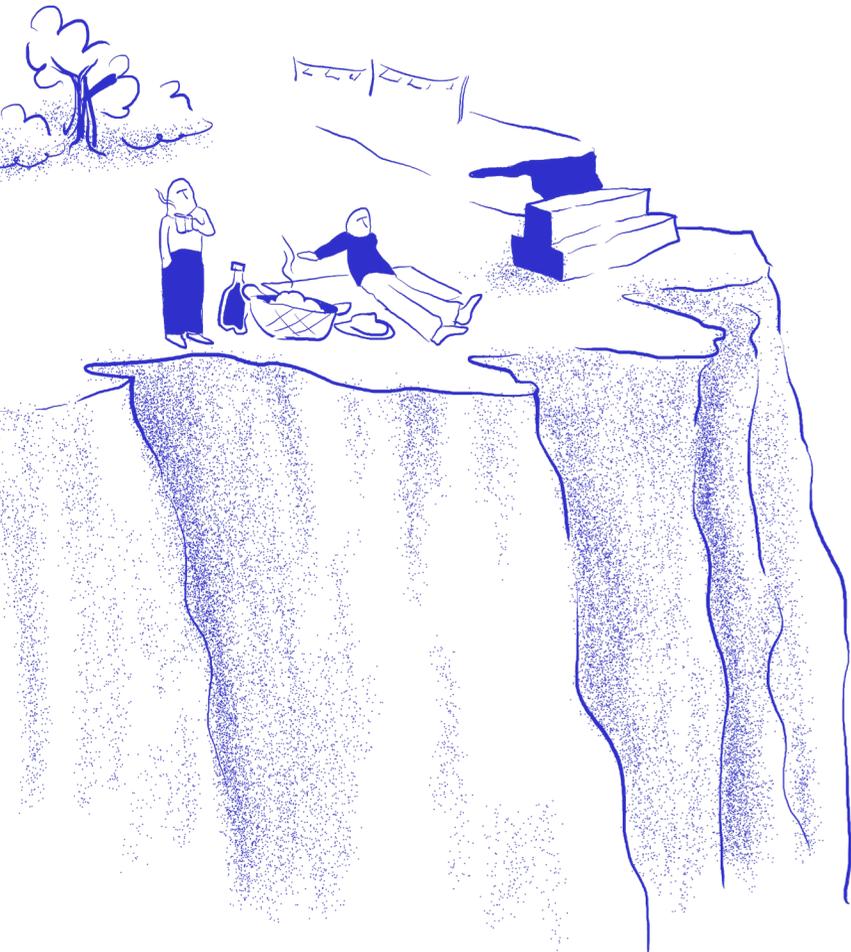
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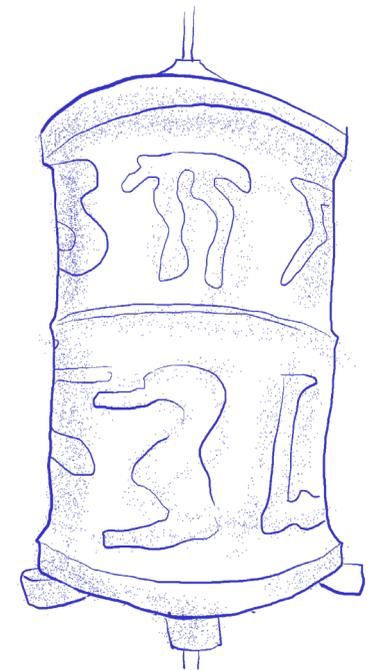
Preface

Acknowledgement



I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have offered their help during my time in Nepal. A special thank to all the people who welcomed us in their homes, and showed us around. I also want to thank my supervisors for their guidance and support throughout this thesis. Additionally, I would like to thank Nora Kastellet and Erle Drejer for their the great experiences we shared in Nepal.

Motivation



The motivation behind this project was to work with digital design and develop something that could be launched into the real world. Furthermore, I was interested in novel digital design and wanted to explore the topic of digital storytelling with a particular focus on playful interactive design. In a previous project, I researched the topic of design for curiosity and wanted to see if I could implement some of the lessons learned into this thesis.

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Glossary

Signifiers - Cues that are included in the design so the users can discover what to do

Abstract

This thesis aims to leverage digital storytelling to encourage sustainable tourism practices in Nepal, specifically by attracting more visitors to the smaller villages of Lower Mustang. The outcome of this thesis is a functional digital storytelling website. The thesis demonstrates promising results and highlights the potential impact of digital storytelling in attracting tourists to explore the villages of Lower Mustang.

The thesis employs a human-centered design (HCD) process, with the tourist as the primary user. The process is iterative and cyclical, ensuring continuous refinement and improvement of the solution. Initial insights were conducted, including interviews with the target user, user journey mapping, and touchpoint analysis. Furthermore, ideation was conducted, and various prototypes were tested in order to gain insight relating to digital storytelling interfaces. Furthermore, fieldwork in Nepal was conducted in order to narrate and materialize for the prototype and to gain an understanding of the context. Ultimately, a functioning prototype was developed through rapid iterations, and a final evaluation was conducted to assess the potential of digital storytelling for this purpose.

The primary delivery of this thesis is a functional prototype. It demonstrates various concepts, formats, and narratives that can be further iterated and evaluated. The website conveyed information through different formats, such as scrollytelling, sounds, hover interactions, and interactive illustrations. The final evaluation demonstrates promising results, with participants expressing excitement and engagement with the digital storytelling website. The narratives closely connected to the local culture, festivals, and rituals were particularly appreciated. Participants curiously explore the website's content and are emotionally invested in the things they find.

The findings suggest that digital storytelling has the potential to attract tourists to the villages of Lower Mustang, providing them with more authentic and immersive travel planning experiences. The research highlights the significance of enhancing visual representation, conveying the unique vibe of the villages in order to influence travelers' behavior. The study also identifies the need to further explore sustainable tourism narratives to encourage responsible tourism in the area.

Keywords: Digital storytelling, Sustainable tourism, Lower Mustang, Nepal, Design for curiosity, Interactive experiences

Sammendrag

Denne oppgaven har som mål å utnytte digital historiefortelling for å fremme bærekraftig turisme i Nepal, spesifikt ved å tiltrekke seg flere besøkende til de mindre landsbyene i Nedre Mustang. Resultatet av denne oppgaven er en fungerende nettside som utnytter seg av digital historiefortelling. Oppgaven viser lovende resultater og demonstrerer den potensielle kraften i digital historiefortelling til det gjeldende formålet.

Oppgaven benytter en brukersentrert designprosess, der turisten er den primære brukeren. Prosessen er iterativ og syklisk, hvor løsningen kontinuerlig forbedres og raffineres. Innsikt ble innhentet, inkludert intervjuer med potensielle brukere, kartlegging av brukerens reise og analyse av touchpoints. Videre ble det gjennomført idégenerering, og ulike prototyper ble testet for å få mer innsikt i digitale historiefortellingsgrensesnitt. I tillegg ble det gjennomført et 5 ukers feltarbeid i Nepal for å samle historier og materiale til prototypen, og for å få en forståelse av konteksten det designes for. Til slutt ble det utviklet en fungerende prototype gjennom raske iterasjoner, og en endelig evaluering ble gjennomført for å vurdere potensialet til digital historiefortelling for dette formålet.

Leveransen består hovedsakelig av den fungerende prototypen. Den demonstrerer ulike konsepter, formater og historier som kan videreutvikles og evalueres. Nettsiden formidler informasjon gjennom ulike formater, som skrollehistorier, lyder, hover-interaksjoner og interaktive illustrasjoner. Den endelige evalueringen viser lovende resultater, der deltakerne uttrykker entusiasme og engasjement for nettsiden. Historiene som er tett knyttet til den lokale kulturen, festivaler og ritualer ble spesielt verdsatt.

Resultatene antyder at digital historiefortelling har potensial til å tiltrekke turister til landsbyene i Nedre Mustang, samt gi de en mer engasjerende opplevelse i reise planleggingsfasen. Forskingen fremhever betydningen av å forbedre den visuelle representasjonen og formidle den unike atmosfæren i landsbyene for å påvirke reisendes adferd. Studien identifiserer også behovet for ytterligere utforskning av bærekraftige turismehistorier for å oppmuntre til mer ansvarlig turisme i området. Nøkkelord: Digital historiefortelling, Bærekraftig turisme, Nedre Mustang, Nepal, Design for nysgjerrighet, Interaktive opplevelser.

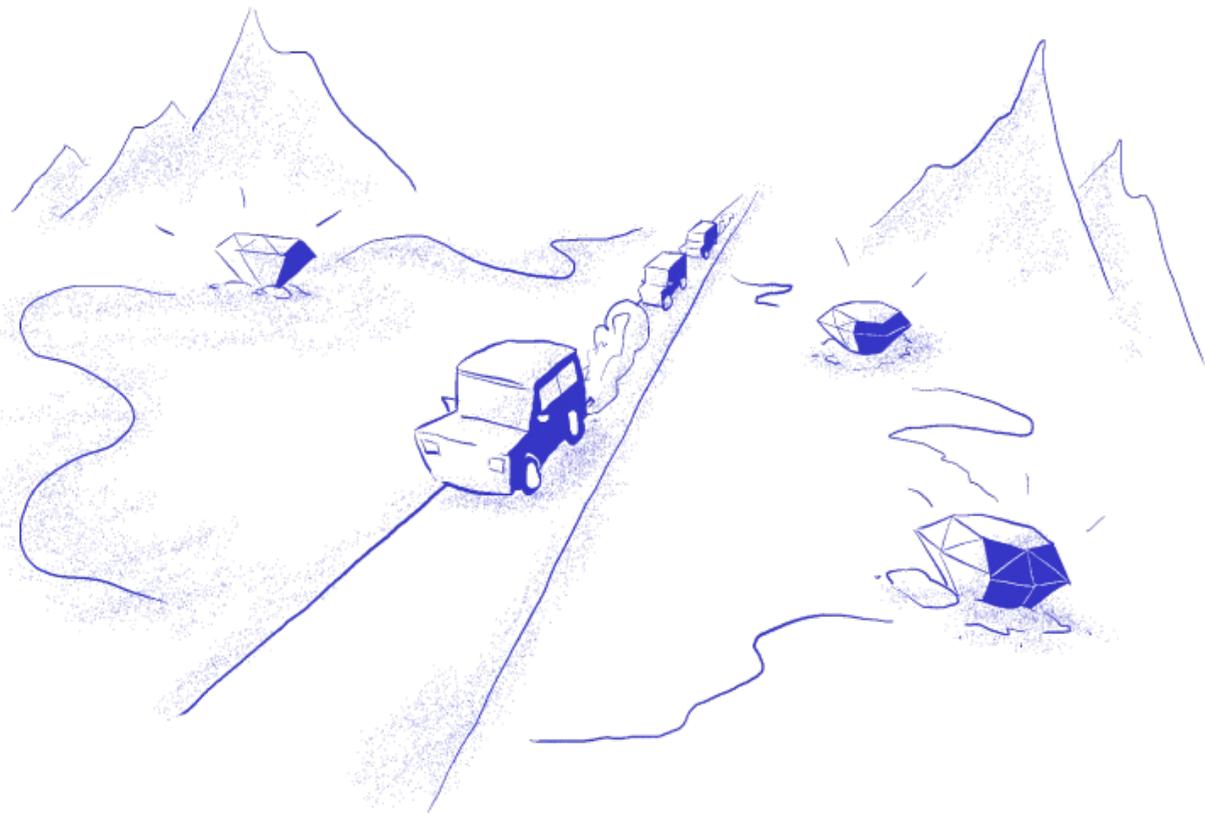
About the project

This thesis uses human-centered design to develop a high-fidelity prototype that utilizes digital storytelling to improve the economic situation in rural villages in Lower Mustang, Nepal. The thesis is a part of the SAMAJ project, a transdisciplinary collaboration between the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and The Institute of Engineering (IOE) at Tribhuvan University. The objective of the SAMAJ project is to implement the UN's Sustainable Development Goals into all educational and research activities at IOE by utilizing Nepal's socio-economic, environmental, and cultural potential (Keitsch, 2021). The initiative focuses on various sustainability goals, recognizing the need for development to balance social, economic, and environmental sustainability. This thesis builds upon previous research conducted by the SAMAJ group, responding to a call for further work in a report by Kasstellet and Kvasshems(2022). This thesis aims to ensure a fair distribution of both the economic benefits and the burden of tourism, primarily by making more tourists visit the smaller villages in the area.

This main goal of this thesis is to explore techniques and aspects of digital storytelling and examine their potential applications for tourism in Lower Mustang. The goal is to give the audience a new perspective on the location, highlight values they would not typically notice, and make them reflect upon their own traveling habits to promote a more responsible tourism practice. The thesis is practical, exploring various formats and narratives through rapid iterations. Ultimately, the desired outcome is to develop a functional prototype, allowing the project to generate insights for those interested in taking it further and hopefully make a difference for the people living in the smaller villages.

The final result of this thesis is a functioning prototype containing various narratives, presented using various digital storytelling techniques. The narratives presented in the solution include, among other things, personal experiences, local culture and history, and informative narratives regarding the challenges and opportunities of tourism in the area. In addition to the prototype, the thesis provides a strategy for how the prototype can be launched and how it can be adapted to fit other touch-points.





Background

This chapter provides the background for the project. The chapter begins by presenting the socio-economic situation in Nepal. Furthermore, it presents sustainable tourism practices as a mechanism for development, present challenges related to tourism and introduces the SAMAJ's ongoing project with sustainable tourism in Lower Mustang.

1.1 Socio-Economic Situation in Nepal

According to the United Nations (UN), Nepal is among the world's least-developed countries (UNCTAD, 2022). A report published by the National Planning Commission (2021) states that 4.9 million people, which accounts for 17.4% of the population in Nepal, are still considered multi-dimensionally poor.

Nepal's economy is heavily dependent on two sectors: tourism and agriculture. The agriculture sector employs around 75% of the population, while tourism accounts for 6.7 percent (Worldbank, 2019). The unemployment rate among youths in Nepal is high, at around 19% (Sharma, 2022). The high unemployment rate has led to a culture where it is widespread among youths to travel abroad to either study or work. According to UNESCO (2022), Nepali students going abroad to study nearly doubled from 44,255 in 2017 to 95,268 in 2022. Out of all students enrolling in higher education after finishing high school, 21.6% go abroad to study (UNESCO, 2022).

Nepal's economy heavily relies on tourism. According to the World Bank (2019), the tourism industry accounted for 6.7% of the national GDP, supporting over one million direct and indirect jobs. Furthermore, they state that 80% of these jobs were located in remote and resource-constrained areas. According to the Ministry of Culture, Tourism & Civil Aviation (2023), the country welcomed more than 1.1 million tourists in 2019, with an average stay of 12.7 days. The most common nationality among the tourists was India, China, the USA, the UK, and Sri Lanka, and the primary reasons for visiting ranged from holiday and pleasure to pilgrimage and mountaineering (Ministry Of Foreign Affairs, 2023).

1.2 Sustainable Tourism for Development

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing economic sectors, employing over 235 million people worldwide (UNWTO, 2012). The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2012) states that tourism has become an opportunity for less privileged people to enter the workforce, especially women and youths in developing countries. The UNEP (2012) has identified tourism as one of the ten sectors with the most significant potential to create employment and reduce poverty in developing countries. Tourism yields the potential to have both positive and negative impacts on a country. In order to maximize the positive effects and minimize the negative impacts of tourism in the country, it is essential to adopt sustainable tourism practices. The UN defines sustainable tourism as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities." (UNWTO, 2023) The UN environmental program (UNEP) furthermore states that in order to balance long-term sustainability, there should be established a balance between the economic, sociocultural, and environmental aspects of tourism (UNWTO, 2023). According to The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (2021), the negative impact of tourism includes, among other things: economic leakage, damage to the natural environment, and overcrowding. Furthermore, they acknowledge positive aspects of the tourism industry, including job creation, cultural heritage preservation, wildlife preservation, and landscape restoration. According to a report published by the Worldbank (2022) the environmental benefits of tourism in protected areas in Nepal are greater than the benefits gained only from managing those areas because parts of the economic benefits are invested into work with preservation of the area.

1.3 Responsible tourism

Travelers' behavior can affect the sustainability of the tourism practice. When travelers go to already popular destinations, it increases the pressure on the local environment and society. There are also certain behaviors that are more harmful than others. Cultural arrogance refers to a behavior where a tourist knowingly continues to follow their own cultural rules, discarding the local culture's norms and rules (Samson, 2015). This can, for example, be tourists that break religious, cultural, or social codes and can lead the locals to feel increased resentment towards the tourists (Samson, 2015). Responsible tourists are people who behave in a way that aligns with maximizing the positive impacts of tourism and minimizing the negative aspects (Global Sustainable Tourism Council, 2021). The following section presents the positive and negative effects of tourism.

“Responsible Travel is a term referring to the behavior and style of individual travelers. The behaviors align with making a positive impact to the destination rather than negative ones” (Global Sustainable Tourism Council, 2021).

Positive impacts of tourism

In addition to the direct economic benefits presented in section 1.2, there are a lot of other positive impacts of tourism. Facilities developed for tourism, like infrastructure, health care, and transportation, can also benefit the residents (Samson, 2015). Furthermore, when tourists are interested in local culture and customs, it can lead to increased interest among local government and residents in cultural preservation (Samson, 2015). Furthermore, the economic benefits generated by the tourism industry can also be invested in the preservation of the local environment and cultural heritage (Samson, 2015) (Worldbank, 2022). The jobs created by the tourism industry can also reduce depopulation in rural areas, strengthening local communities (Samson, 2015).

Negative impacts of tourism

In order to promote responsible tourism, it is important to have a foundational understanding of the negative impacts of tourism. The number of tourists should be seen in relation to the size of the host community in order to assess the possible negative impacts of tourism (Urry & Larsen, 2011), so when working with tourism in smaller villages with a low population, the number of tourists needed to cause negative impacts is lower. It is, important to stay within the carrying capacity of the places. The carrying capacity is the limit of acceptable change in the host community (Kennell, 2014). It relates to both the environment and the socio-cultural aspect of the place.

The environmental impact is the change made to the natural environment. Environmental impacts can be viewed at different scales, from the local to the global environment. Global environmental impacts related to tourism include, among other things, greenhouse gas emissions from aviation (Filho et al., 2023). Local environmental impacts include, among other things, waste management and degradation of the natural environment and wildlife (Lew et al., 2004).

The *socio-cultural impact* relates to the culture and the people living in the villages. Negative socio-cultural impacts include, among other things, The process of commodification, standardization, changes in cultural products and festivals, and the demonstration effect (Samson, 2015).

Commodification

Commodification is the process by which something is transformed into an object of trade or commodity (Samson, 2015). Tourism can make religious rituals, ethnic rites, or festivals into commercial experiences. These traditional festivals and special events are particularly vulnerable due to tourists' willingness to pay for entertainment (Theobald, 1994). Furthermore, sacred places may lose respect when commercial forces are introduced (Theobald, 1994). The process of commodification also relates to traditional crafts that are sold to tourists as souvenirs. Traditional craftsmen often alter their designs and processes to accommodate the rising demand (Theobald, 1994).

Standardization

Tourists' desire for familiarity might cause the destination to be standardized. The destination tries to adapt to the tourists' desire for familiar food, drinks, and facilities and ends up as a standard tourist destination (Samson, 2015).

Culture clash

The differences in cultural behavior between the residents and the tourists can sometimes be so significant that it is impossible to achieve mutual understanding, causing antipathy amongst both groups (Theobald, 1994). Furthermore, attitudes towards tourism among the residents may change as tourism develops (Samson, 2015). It often begins with a positive attitude developing into apathy and, finally, irritation as tourism grows.

Demonstrative effect

When less developed areas are exposed to tourism, it can cause the so-called Demonstrative effect (Samson, 2015). It causes the locals to focus on what they do not possess, leading them to work harder and strive for higher levels of education to emulate the living standard of the tourist (Theobald, 1994).

Changes in cultural products and festivals

When festivals and cultural products promote a destination, tourists are encouraged to penetrate the local happening. However, when commercial interests are introduced, it can lead to the local culture and customs changing to satisfy tourists' needs. (Theobald, 1994) Samson (2015) uses an example from Bali, where a traditional dance is taken out of its religious context, shortened, and performed daily for tourists to see.

The tourism industry in Nepal faces various challenges, including the issue of high influx of tourism in certain areas (Fyall, 2019). When too many tourists visit the same place at the same time it can lead to overcrowding, increased environmental pressure, and degradation of local culture and environment (Milano et al., 2018).

This challenge is particularly evident along the most popular trekking trails in Nepal. Along these well-trodden paths, waste management poses a significant concern (ACAP, n.d). Research conducted by the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP, n.d) states that an average trekking group of 15 people generates approximately 15 kilograms of non-degradable and non-burnable trash during a 10-day hike. This waste management problem is exacerbated by the limited infrastructure available in many places. Furthermore, tourists exert considerable pressure on forest resources, as their consumption exceeds that of the local population by more than double (ACAP, n.d).



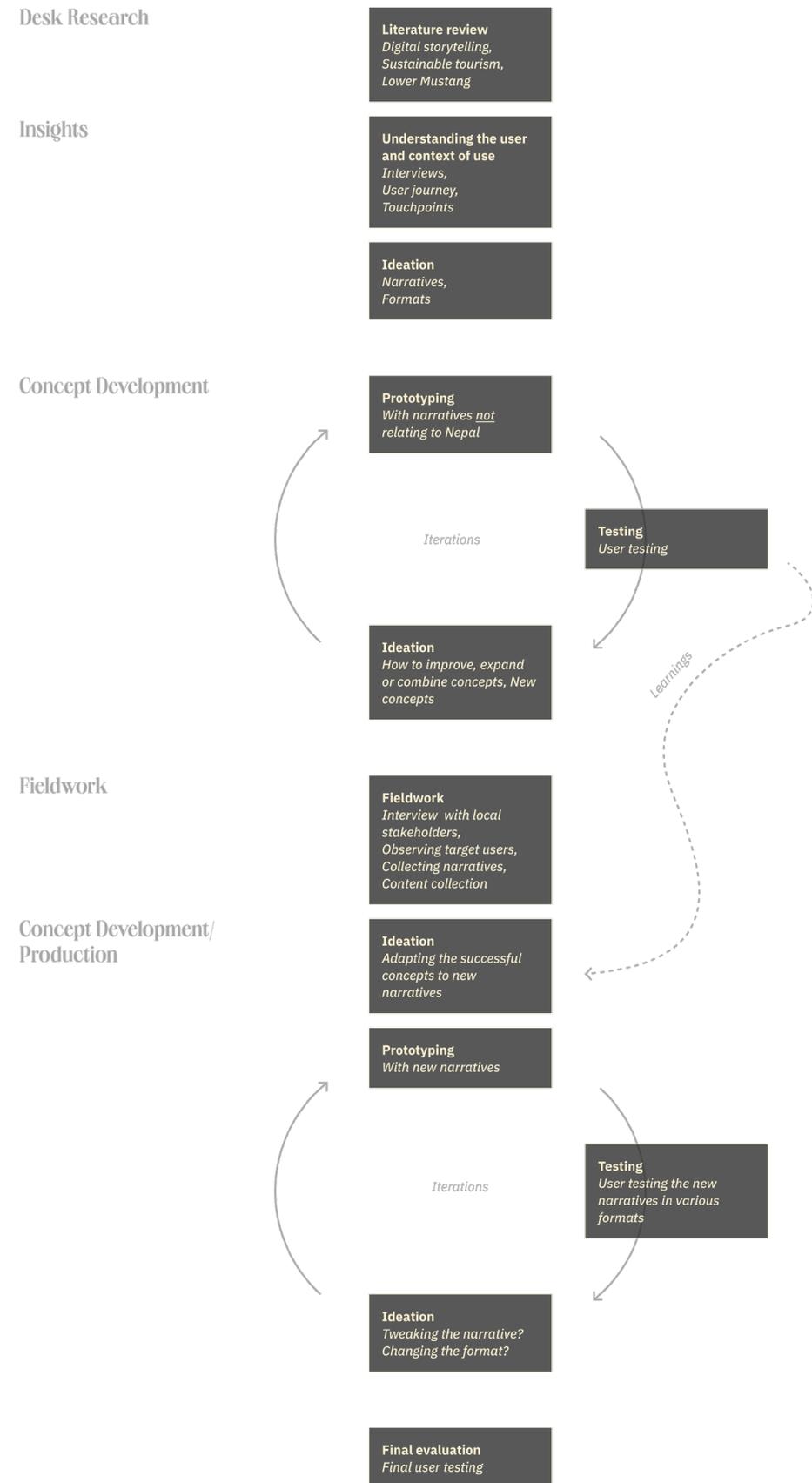
1.4 Sustainable tourism in Lower Mustang

SAMAJ has previously initiated a project in collaboration with local residents with the aim of establishing a sustainable tourism practice in Lower Mustang, a region in Nepal. They have conducted fieldwork in the area and concluded that the locals are eager to welcome tourists and are already working on projects to attract more tourists (Kastellet & Kvasheim, 2022). Furthermore, they state that the area has the potential to be an attractive destination for tourists, with scenic views and authentic culture. However, tourists struggle to obtain information about the area, causing them to pass by without knowing the possibility (Kastellet & Kvasheim, 2022). For this reason, Kastellet & Kvasheim (2022) suggested creating a web platform that shares information about the area. This thesis will work in collaboration with Kastellet and Drejer to provide tourists with information about the area. Kastellet and Drejer work in parallel with a project named Mustang Village Trail. Their project aims to establish a hiking trail between the smaller villages of Lower Mustang and create a website to promote the hiking trail. The website aims to provide practical information about the area, what to do there, and where to stay. This thesis will look at the potential of digital storytelling as an addition to the information they provide, and explore how digital storytelling can contribute to a more sustainable tourism practice in the area.

1.5 Design Process

This research project draws on prior studies and is based on a call for further action in Kastellet and Kvasshems's (2022) research report on tourism in Lower Mustang. This project uses a human-centered design approach, focusing on the traveler as the primary user. Human-centered design (HCD) is a process that helps meet the needs of the user, ensuring the solution is usable and understandable as well as positive and enjoyable (Norman, 2013). The HCD process consists of four steps, observe, ideate, prototype, and test. The Process is circular and is intended to be repeated (Norman, 2013).

In order to collect narratives and gather material for the prototype, fieldwork in Nepal was scheduled. Due to the harsh winter conditions in the mountains of Lower Mustang, the fieldwork had to be conducted in the later half of the project period. Since external factors defined the timing of the fieldwork, the design process was adapted to make time for the completion of the prototype. For this reason, the insights regarding the target user, ideation, and initial prototyping were scheduled before traveling. The intended approach was to learn as much as possible about digital storytelling through rapid iterations and a wide range of prototypes. The intention was to build interactive prototypes with other narratives that could be replaced with content related to Lower Mustang.



1.6 Metodology

This section explains the methods used in the project.

Semi-structured interviews

A semi-structured interview is a method of gathering insights where you ask questions based on a general theme. The phrasings and the order of the question are not rigidly determined but allow for flexibility(George, 2022).

User journey maps

A user journey map is a service design tool, which visualizes an experience over time (Stickdorn, 2018). It can be used to visualize an existing service or experience as well as a potential solution for a new experience. This could for example be the existing experience of planning and executing a travel, or a future scenario for how the travel experience could look with the intended solution. It helps to reveal gaps and opportunities in a potential solution, as well as communicating the value of the solution that is proposed(Stickdorn, 2018).

Desk research

In service design desk research refers to both preparatory research and secondary research. The preparatory research is about digging into and trying to understand the domain and the industry, the client, and their problems. Preparatory research is more targeted towards finding the questions to ask than the actual answers(Stickdorn, 2018). Secondary research uses existing secondary data, meaning qualitative and quantitative data regarding the topics, using online search engines and scientific data bases to investigate the topics(Stickdorn, 2018).

Self-ethnography

Is a process where the researcher explores an experience themselves and documents the process through field notes, photos, videos and audio recordings(Stickdorn, 2018).

User scenarios

User scenarios are detailed descriptions of realistic situations the user encounters relevant to the design solution(Interaction Design Foundation, 2019).

Stakeholder map

Stakeholder map is a representation of stakeholders involved in a project, intended to visualize the relationship between them. It can be complex or simple depending on the project and the needs of the project(Service Design Tools, 2018).

Participant observation

Is a method where the researchers observe the participants in order to understand how they really behave in a certain situation. When conducting participant observations it is important to note what they do as well as what they do not do (Stickdorn, 2018).

How might we statements

How might we statements are questions that help to reframe the insight from a project into actionable opportunities(Anderson, n.d.). It helps recognize users' needs and problems instead of thinking about solutions. Furthermore, they help frame the design challenge and are a helpful starting point for ideation.



Desk Research

First, the chapter presents the area of Lower Mustang, provides a brief contextual understanding of the place, presents the status quo of tourism in the area, and introduces relevant stakeholders related to the project. Secondly, it summarizes essential findings related to storytelling in tourism. Third, it defines digital storytelling and provides relevant related work. Fourth, it presents design principles for leveraging curiosity. At last, it provides necessary theoretical knowledge regarding software related to web design.

2.1 The current situation in Lower Mustang

This section aim to provide an understanding of the area of Lower Mustang and the stakeholders relating to tourism in the area.

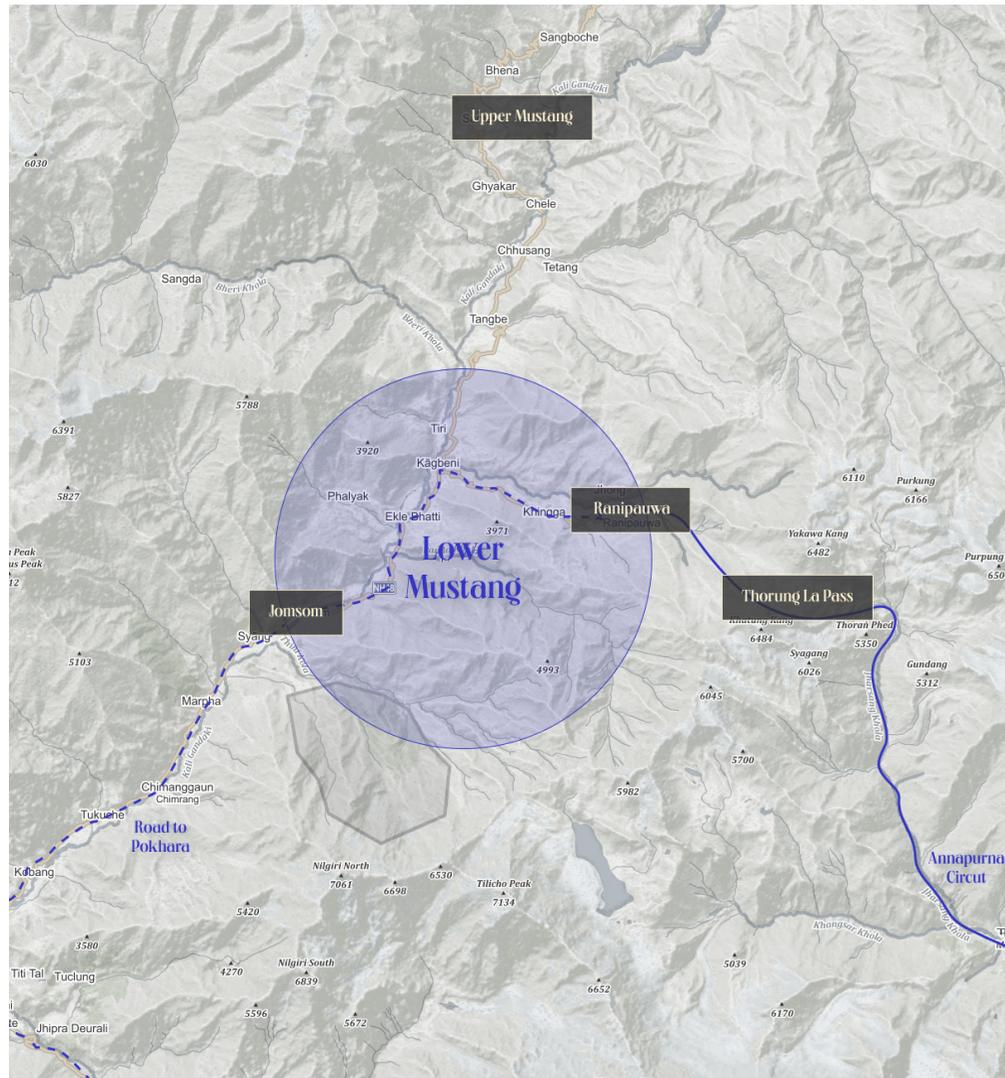


Figure 1 Area overview

2.1.1 The Area

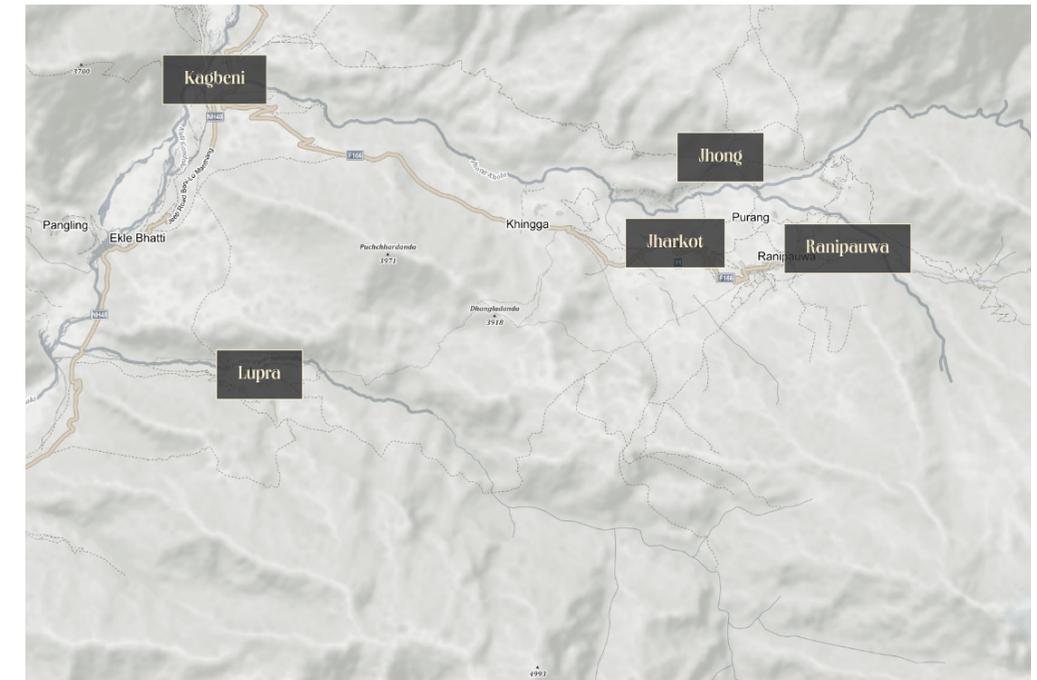


Figure 2 Village overview

Lower Mustang is a part of the Mustang region, located north of Nepal, connected to the Himalayas, and extending towards the Tibetan plateau (Office of the District Coordination Committee, n.d.). Lower Mustang is located within the Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA) and is a mountainous area with several small agricultural villages. West of Lower Mustang lays is the mountain pass Thorong La, the highest point of the Annapurna Circuit trek (e.g., Figure 1). North of Lower Mustang (e.g., Figure 1), lays Upper Mustang, “the last forbidden kingdom,” a place famous for the well-preserved traditional Tibetan culture (Fatland, 2020). There are several villages in the Lower Mustang (e.g., Figure 2), but this thesis focuses mainly on the villages; Jharkot, Jhong, Lupra, Kagbeni, and Ranipauwa (commonly referred to as Mukti-nath), since they are a part of the proposed hiking trail by Kastellet and Drejer.

The primary aim should be to ensure a fair distribution of both the economic benefits and the burden of tourism, primarily by making more tourists visit the smaller villages(Kastellet & Kvasheim, 2022).



Tourism in the area

According to Kastellet and Kvasheim(2022), tourism in Lower Mustang primarily gravitates towards two destinations: Ranipauwa and Jomsom. Ranipauwa, located at the end of the road and closest to Thorung La Pass(e.g, Figure 1), is an important pilgrimage site for Hindus and Buddhists and serves as the last stop for many trekkers trekking the Annapurna Circuit. On the other hand, Jomsom serves as the entry point to the area, housing an airport and a Jeep station, making it an ideal starting or ending point for travelers(Kastellet & Kvasheim, 2022). In addition to trekkers and pilgrims, the area is popular among bikers, often traveling in bigger groups led by a guide.

Measures for sustainable tourism in the area

In their 2022 study, Kastelle and Kvasheim carried out field research to map the current state of tourism in the region. They propose that the primary aim should be to ensure a fair distribution of both the economic benefits and the burden of tourism, primarily by making more tourists visit the smaller villages(Kastellet & Kvasheim, 2022). In order to strengthen tourism in these less visited villages, they proposed five unique design strategies

Information - *Providing tourists with details about the region's villages, landmarks, and attractions.*

Collaboration - *Formalizing cooperation among internal stakeholders and enhancing collaboration between internal and external entities.*

Ecotourism - *Utilizing the region's natural resources and biodiversity sustainably to minimize the negative impacts of tourism.*

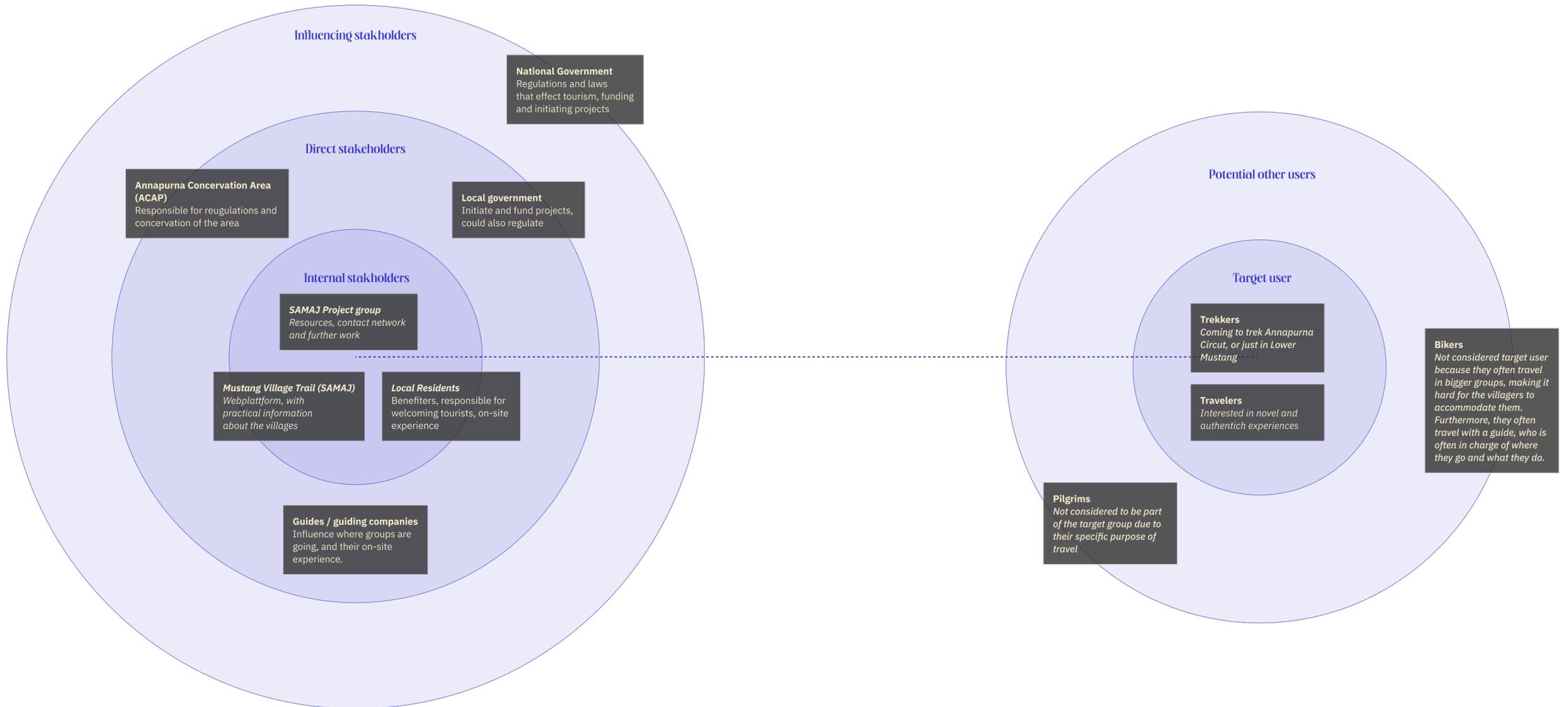
Hiking Routes - *Developing new hiking trails that incorporate the smaller villages.*

Web Platform - *Creating a digital platform providing all relevant information to tourists.*

Current tourism practice in the smaller villages

The following section is based on the report of Kastellet &Kvasheim(2022) and my interpretation of the situation based on the fieldwork conducted in Nepal(see § 5.1). The smaller villages have already initiated some projects to attract more visitors, including constructing a road to a nearby viewpoint. Since the tourist flow is not significant enough, some locals combine tourism and farming. They often operate by having their phone number on the door of the homestay and hotel so they can be reached by phone if they go out on the fields to work. However, this becomes a problem when the tourists arrive and assume the place is closed. When farming demands extra work, farmers may need to arrange for someone to fill in to host tourists. This requires them to get advance notice. If they cannot host the tourists, they often send them to other hotels or homestays in the village. This is often a mutual collaboration.

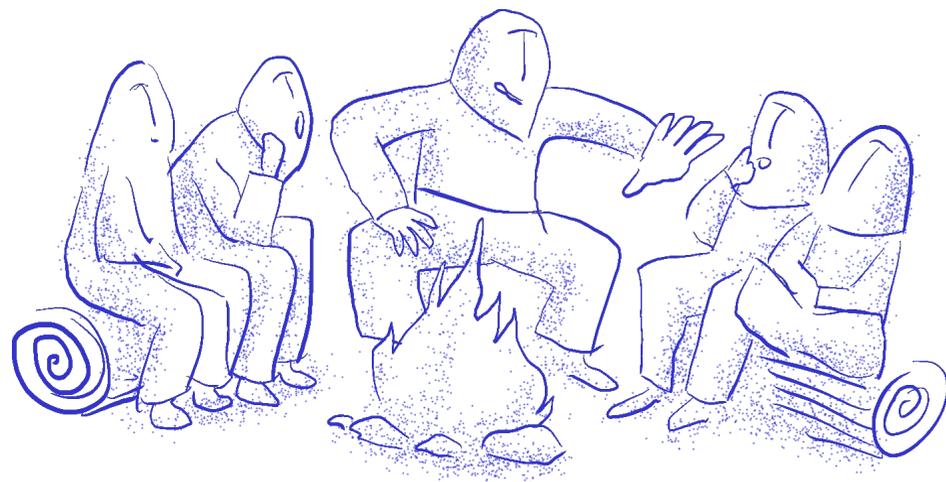
2.1.2 Stakeholders & target users



Visualization of the relevant stakeholders in the area.

2.2 Storytelling in Tourism

This introduces the concept of storytelling, highlights the potential for storytelling in tourism, and presents key insights regarding the practical use of storytelling in tourism.



“People are hardwired to listen to stories. Stories are the way human knowledge was passed down before the written word. Storytelling is hardwired into our brains. It’s the natural way our brains learn and process information” (Akash, 2015, s. 8–9).

What is storytelling?

Pachucki et al. (2022) define stories as narratives that place events and characters in a coherent sequence. Storytelling has not only been a tool for humans to convey information but also a way of creating an intense emotional connection with one another. (Walter og Parmenter, 2020, s. 63). It has become a more commonly used tool also in modern society and is now increasingly used in destination marketing to promote travel experiences. This section presents key insights extracted from a literature review on the topic of storytelling in tourism.

Key insights storytelling in tourism

In tourism, storytelling distinguishes between consumer narratives, personal experiences like travel blogs and social media posts, and organizational storytelling, narratives provided by an organization to promote a destination (Pachucki et al., 2022). Stories effectively trigger attention among humans, making them relevant for marketing purposes (Pachucki et al., 2022). Stories have some significant advantages compared to other ways of conveying information. Narratives are considered to be easier to understand than arguments (Pachucki et al., 2022). When presenting something as a story, compared to arguments, the message is received as more real, relevant, and personal (Pachucki et al., 2022). Furthermore, Pachucki et al. (2022), states that studies indicate people produce fewer counterarguments when exposed to narratives rather than arguments.

Dionisio & Nisi (2021) states that stories can effectively communicate emotions and values, making them suitable for influencing peoples' behaviors and attitudes. Stories that emotionally touch the audiences have the potential to bring about positive social change, can educate and engage them on various issues, and even encourage them to take action (Dionisio & Nisi, 2021), making them highly relevant in the context of sustainable tourism.

Findings show that using a first-person storyteller (uses pronouns like I, we, us), compared to a third-person storyteller (uses pronouns like, He, She, It) significantly increases tourists' intention to visit a destination (Pachucki et al., 2022). Chiu et al. (2012) identify four key principles when designing stories in destination marketing; Authenticity, conciseness, reversal, and humor.

Authenticity can be achieved by collecting abundant, rich, and varied facts. For example, the story becomes more authentic by including names or specific information, like a location, a date, or something similar (Chiu et al., 2012). Conciseness can be achieved by reducing redundancy. When people see a longer text, it reduces their motivation to process the information. Therefore, it is crucial to tell a story with as few words as possible (Chiu et al., 2012).

A reversal in storytelling relates to a big reveal, a sudden change of events where the audience is given a new piece of information. The reversal creates tension and forces the audience to see what they know about the plot and the characters in a new light (Chiu et al., 2012).

Humor is important in order to get and hold the audience's attention, and commonly is one of the most commonly used communication strategies in advertisement (Chiu et al., 2012).

Key takeaways

Storytelling is effective for influencing attitudes and behaviour

The story should contain a reversal and use humor

Use as few words as possible to tell the story

Authenticity can be achieved by including names, dates, locations, or other specific facts

Using a first person storyteller (compared to third-person) can increase visitors intention to visit a destination



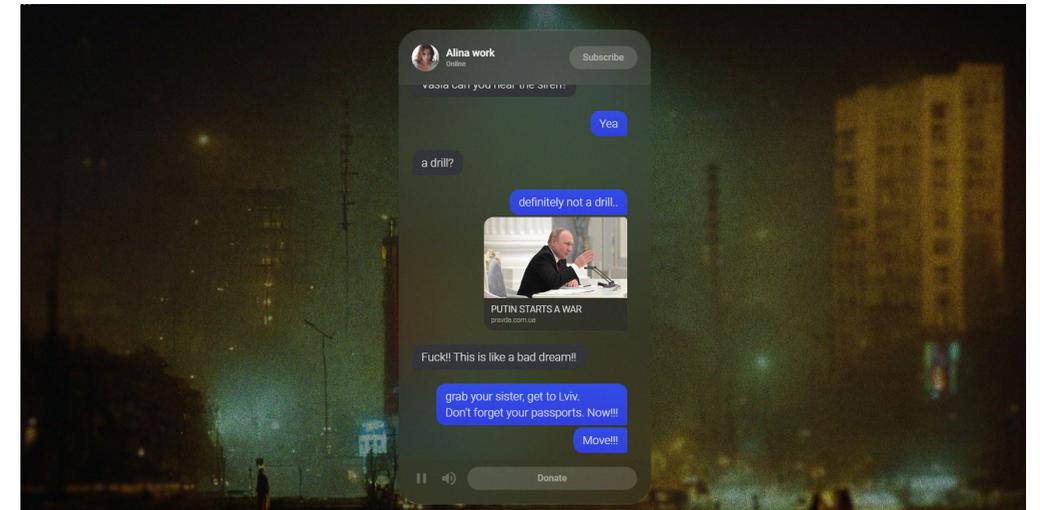
2.3 Digital Storytelling

This section introduces the concept of storytelling, highlights the potential for storytelling in tourism, and presents key insights regarding the practical use of storytelling in tourism. The term Digital Storytelling was been used in a wide range of context, including the film-making industry(Jager, 2017), and education(McLellan, 2007). More recently, the term relates to all kinds of stories created using digital tools(Sethi, 2021). The new era of digital storytelling often uses a wide range of media and compelling interactive formats(Sethi, 2021). In order to get an understanding in the range of possibilities, and to gain inspiration for the solution an extensive investigation and analazis of existing digital storytelling works was conducted. The following section provide some of the examples that were tested, and drawn inspiration from.

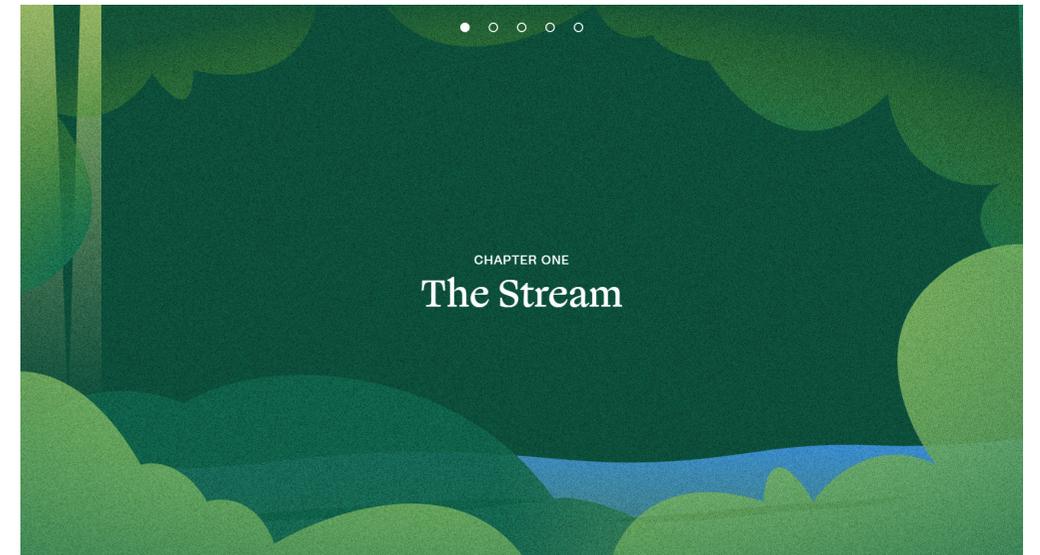
Relevant works of digital storytelling



The Scrollytelling page uses fullscreen images and videos to immerse the audience. The user interacts by scrolling down. The scrolling causes the background to change. (<https://www.nrk.no/jakten-pa-klimaendringene-1.14375177>)



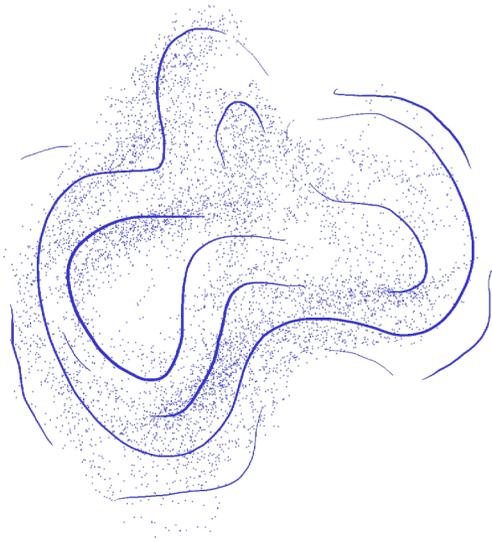
Uaid's website educates the audience about the war in Ukraine by telling a story through text messages between two fictional people, linking the conversation to real events. (<https://plus.u-aid.org/>)



Hearing Birdsong is an interactive hearing test that combines rich audio, beautiful illustrations, and animations to create a more enjoyable method for assessing individuals' hearing abilities. (<https://beta.hearingbirdsong.com/>)

2.4 Design for curiosity

Curiosity is a driving mechanism for behavior and can significantly influence people's behavior (Loewenstein, 1994). The project aims to use curiosity to leverage explorative behavior in the narratives and interactions. This section briefly introduces the theory relating to design for curiosity. Research on curiosity in interaction design has highlighted five basic principles relating to curiosity; novelty, complexity, uncertainty, partial exposure, and conflict. (Berlyne, 1960)(Vorst, 2007, as cited in Tieben et al., 2011).



Novelty

Novelty refers to how novel stimuli are (Berlyne, 1960). The degree of novelty depends on the frequency, how often a particular stimulus has been experienced, recency, how recently it has been experienced, and similarity, how similar it is to other things experienced in the past (Berlyne, 1960).

Complexity

Complexity can be described as the variation in a stimulus pattern. Mast et al. (2021) point to *layered complexity* as a potential strategy to leverage exploration in interactive installations. Furthermore, they state that the first action should be intuitive and obvious, therefore, not too complex. Then, complexity can increase when the user starts to get more comfortable.

Uncertainty

Curiosity evoked by uncertainty relates to humans' need to resolve uncertainty, as presented in Loewenstein's (1994) *Information Gap Theory*. A strategy proposed to instigate curiosity through uncertainty is to make the audience aware of gaps in their knowledge (Loewenstein, 1994).

Conflict

Curiosity can be leveraged by violating expectations (Loewenstein, 1994). A proposed strategy to achieve this effect is establishing a pattern and then breaking it. However, it is important to find the optimal level of incongruity, where the experience is pleasant and stimulating, not frustrating (Hebb, 1949).

Partial exposure

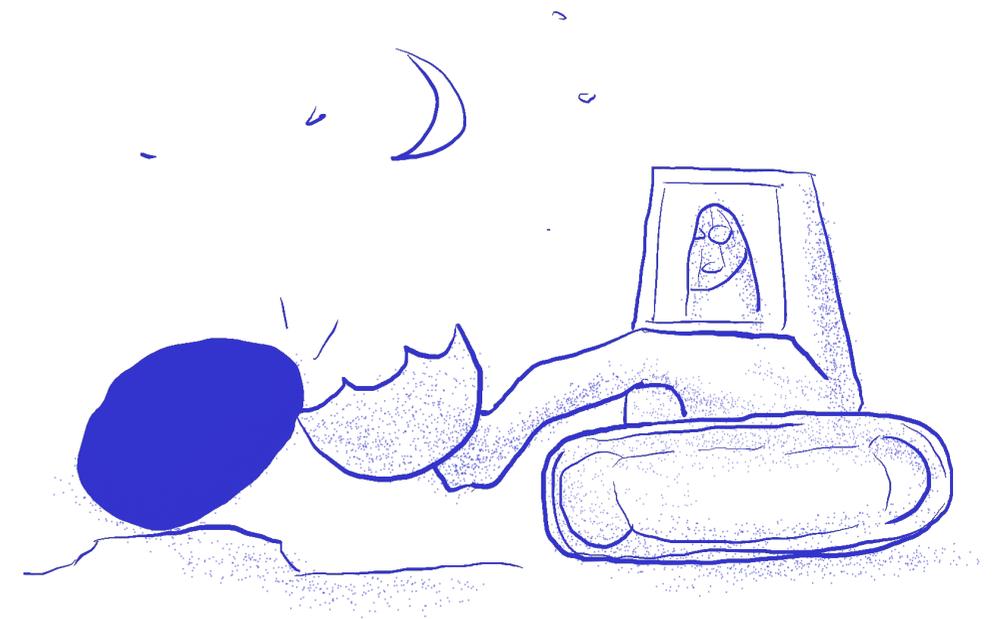
People can become curious if they are partially exposed to information or stimuli (Vorst, 2007, as cited by Tieben et al., 2011). Furthermore, people tend to be more curious about fragments of a bigger picture than individual pieces of information (Loewenstein, 1994).

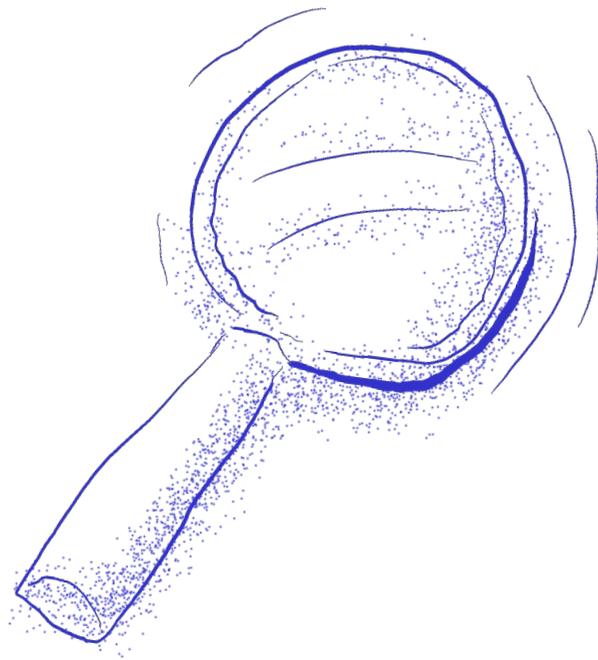
2.5 Prototyping tools

The choice of software plays an important role when planning to launch a functioning digital prototype with limited time and resources. Therefore, it is essential to understand the limitations and possibilities with different choices related to software for development. Several softwares were tested and considered, including, Webflow, Anima, VEV, square space, and WordPress. However, this chapter only focuses on the opportunities and limitations of Figma, which is utilized in the final design.

Figma

Figma offers a lot of design freedom and allows for rapid prototyping. The software is intended to be used for prototyping, not for publishing websites. However, the solution enables to share of web links to the prototypes that behave and act as a regular website. Limitations of Figma include; No support for responsive design, slow loading time, no support for custom domain names, limited interaction opportunities relating to scrolling animations, no support for user input, and no support for 3D objects. Furthermore, there is no logic handling in Figma, which sometimes leads to design compromises regarding usability. *Responsive design* is a common term in web design. Responsiveness in design relates to the ability of the solution to adapt to the users' needs and the devices they are using (Marcotte, 2011). For example, if the users use a phone, the content needs to be more vertically oriented than a user using a wide desktop screen. Furthermore, some functionality, like hover effects, does not work when using a phone, forcing the solution to adapt to the lacking interaction capability.



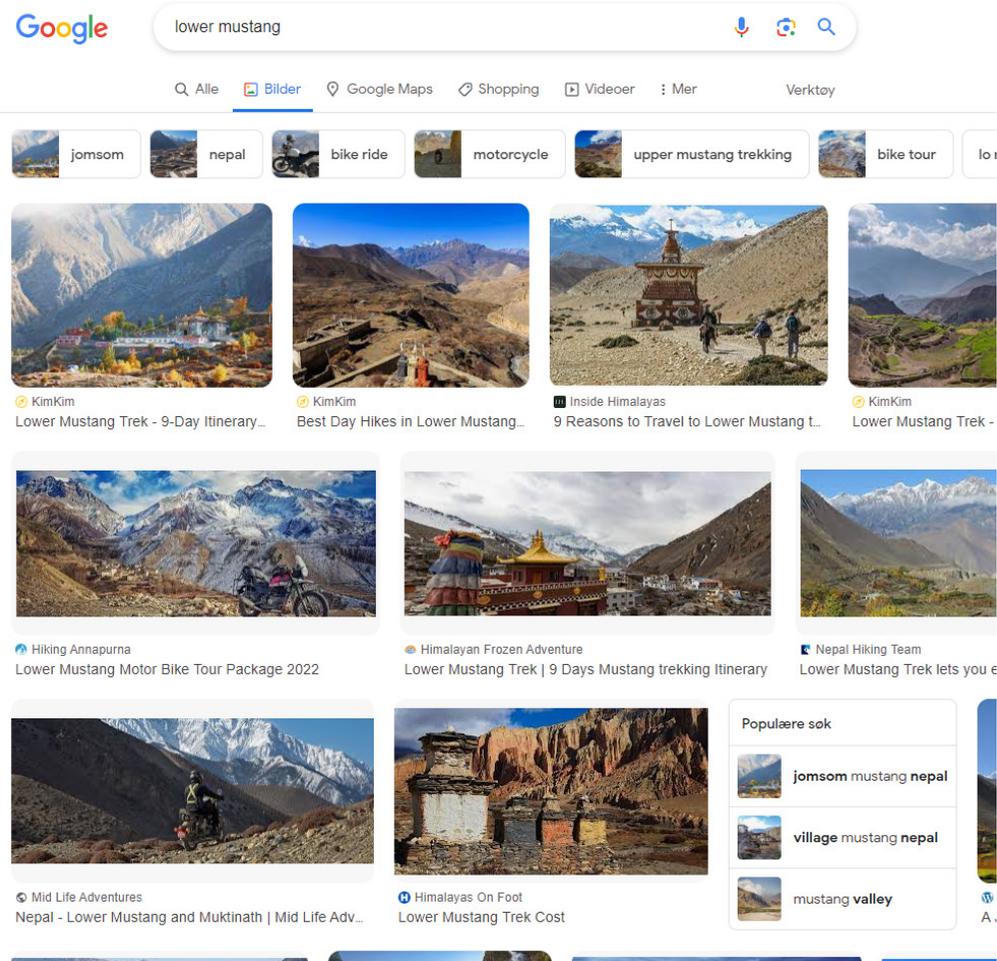


Insights

The following chapter presents insights from participant observations and interviews with the target users. Furthermore, it summarizes the insights through a user journey map and contextual scenarios. Ultimately, it presents a design brief and defines an intended approach that the solution aims to follow.

3.1 Available information about Lower Mustang

This chapter explores the currently available information online regarding Lower Mustang and investigates how the users perceive the information. The chapter aims to identify key insights that will be used to enhance the final solution.



Images retrieved from Google Search: "Lower Mustang"

Method

In order to understand what information is available through digital platforms today, self-testing and participant observations were utilized. In the self-testing process, a search engine was used to gather information about the place. Various searches were tried, and the information found on the websites was analyzed and documented. During the participant observation, they were given a scenario, where they were going to use digital media in order to obtain information about the area. Although the sample size was limited to only four participants, a distinct pattern emerged. The result of both methods is combined and documented as key insights.



Scenario

"You want to travel to Nepal. You have already explored the areas in Nepal, but you recently got a tip from a co-worker that you should check out the area Lower Mustang."

Key Insights

- Participants rely mainly on search engines as their initial point of reference.
- Most people begin their search by viewing pictures.
- Landscape photos dominate the images of Lower Mustang.
- Participant experience many of the photos as unappealing, flat, and grey.
- Participants are more drawn to images featuring white, snow-covered mountains.
- It is difficult to grasp the overall vibe and atmosphere of the place, as it appears a bit deserted and abandoned.
- There are very few pictures of people.
- The majority of information is sourced from blog posts and trekking itineraries.
- Textual content dominates the web pages.
- Jomsom, Muktinath, and Kagbeni are the most frequently mentioned places, although some pages mention Tiri and Lupra.
- After conducting their research, participants have little or no connection to the various village names.
- Participants rarely read big blocks of text



Key Takeaways

The solution could convey the unique vibe and atmosphere of the places.

Enhancing the visual representation with better and more diverse images would benefit the destination

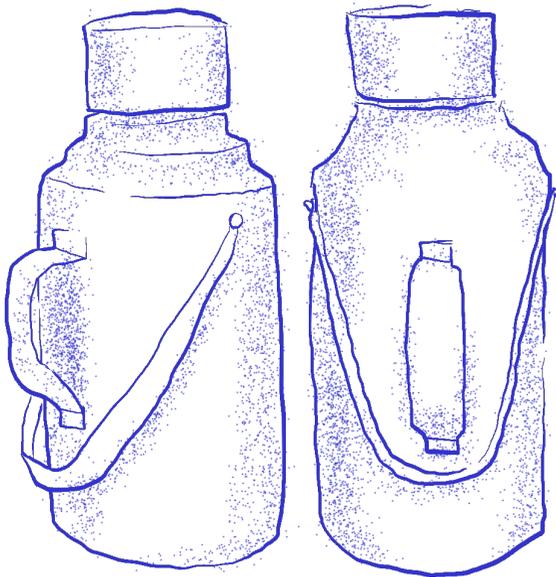
Recognizing the importance of search engines as a primary touchpoint for information is crucial.

The solution should increase the visibility of smaller villages.

Plain is not a good tool for communication in the context of traveling

3.2 Interviews

This chapter revolves around two topics, traveling and digital media. First, the topic of traveling investigates people's motivation, what they enjoy about traveling, what makes a good travel story, and factors that influence their travel experience. The second topic, digital media, investigates digital media's influence on people who intend to travel. It looks into different touchpoints and how they shape our understanding of destinations. This study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the target group and identify their needs.



Method

In order to understand why people travel, and which digital medias influenced them in the travel planing process, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The sample consisted of individuals who have previously traveled to a distant location, preferably for an extended period. The participants were prompted to tell stories about their where past travel experiences. They were asked follow-up questions, leading them to reflect on their travel habits. Furthermore, subjects were asked to reflect on the influence of digital media and how it has affected their past choices of travel destinations. In order to identify potential touchpoints, participants were given a list of different touchpoints and encouraged to contribute their suggestions. The insights from the participants were then integrated into the list. The sample consisted of all Norwegian people aged 20 - 35. The sample size was 8. The results were categorized according to various topics. Interview template is included in the Appendix 1

3.2.1 Topic : Traveling

Different purposes

Participants highlighted the fact that people travel with different intentions in mind. Sometimes, they travel to unwind or have a good time with friends; other times, they want to experience new cultures and do something they have never done before. Participants highlighted among other thing the desire for novel experiences and sights. It can relate to seeing new landscapes, like deserts or jungles, or trying new things like scuba diving or bungee jumping. Trying new food, immersing in different cultures and customs, and connecting with people are also valued aspects of traveling.

Self-realization

Participants highlight traveling as a means of self-realization. They experience that traveling can give new perspectives and valuable lessons. Participants also mention "going outside the comfort zone", as a motivation for traveling. Some participants also admitted that the desire to travel partly came from external pressure. They experience that traveling is a symbol of status and that one can appear more interesting by traveling.

To tell the story

Although the participants do not state it as a primary motivation for traveling, participants highlight that traveling generates fun, exciting stories and that they can be told in various situations. People tend to find pride in the more unique stories. The experiences often get shared in person and through photos and videos on social media.

Visiting friends

Several participants found visiting friends abroad to be the ideal way of traveling. They highlighted local knowledge as a contributing factor. Furthermore, they experienced that it changed their purpose of travel from visiting a place to visiting a person. When visiting a person, one tends not to feel the desire to visit the tourist sites and can rely on local knowledge, leading to better and more authentic experiences.

Finding the diamond in the rough

When asked what their most memorable travel experiences were, people often referred to experiences where they found a diamond in the rough. This included nice authentic restaurants in sketchy back neighborhoods and cozy Towns and villages in the middle of nowhere.

Discovering places

Participants enjoy discovering places for themselves. Several participants expressed that Google Maps served as a source of inspiration for them. They enjoyed exploring the map and discovering points of interest, such as lakes or parks in the city. In addition, discovering things themselves gives them a sense of pride and makes the experience more authentic.

Interacting with locals

Many of the most enjoyable travel memories people had revolved around locals in the area they visited. The interactions varied from observing the locals in their everyday life, talking to them, hearing about their life, or even getting invited to dinners or events. People tend to talk about these memories with pride since it is not an experience that can not be bought. The experiences are personal and nonreplicable and thereby become more cherished.

Authenticity

Several subjects use the word “Authenticity” when describing memorable travel experiences. Although many of the subjects cannot identify the characteristics of an authentic experience, they say it is more a subjective feeling. For example, one subject describes authenticity as seeing something that was not intended to be seen. Seeing ordinary people living an ordinary life is also mentioned as an authentic experience. In discussions on authentic experiences, the participants consistently highlight the significance of small towns and meaningful interactions

with locals. Furthermore, they express that the presence of commercial actors, like travel agencies, reduces the authenticity of places. The participants emphasize that a conversation with a local person becomes less authentic and loses value if the local person tries to sell them something. This feeling applies to guided experiences where financial transactions occur, as these encounters tend to feel more contrived and less authentic compared to being accompanied by a friend or a local individual encountered along the way.

Touristic places

The target user tends to avoid tourist places, which they describe as overcrowded. Souvenir stores, in particular, are viewed as inauthentic and detract from the experience. While some users acknowledge the feeling of safety and familiarity these places offer, their overall experience is often disappointing due to high expectations. Travel experiences commonly revolve around specific places, sights, or monuments. However, subjects frequently express their disappointment with these attractions, often describing them as overcrowded, underwhelming, and leaving them uncertain about what to do when they get there. However, despite their dislike for these tourist locations, the participants often find themselves at these tourist sites due to a lack of better alternatives.

Planing vs. Spontaneity

When it comes to planning a trip, individuals exhibit contrasting preferences. For example, some individuals enjoy planning and immersing themselves in research. On the other hand, some enjoy the surprise of arriving at a destination without any plans or prior knowledge. Those who preferred the surprise aspect mentioned that viewing pictures or knowing too much about a place beforehand could reduce the excitement of experiencing it firsthand.

Learning about the place

Several participants enjoy learning about the history and context of places before they travel. It makes them able to notice details they otherwise would have missed. In addition, the information often adds an extra layer of excitement upon arrival and sparks the imagination. Participants state that they can imagine past events and relate them to what they see, bridging the gap between imagination and real life. Some participants also read about the place while they are on-site.

3.2.2 Topic: Digital media

Key insights

- Digital media have varying influences on people's choice of travel destinations.
- When choosing a traveling destination, people mentioned: Hearing about a friend's travel experience, seeing pictures from friends on social media, and repeated exposure to pictures as the primary source of inspiration.
- Adventurous travelers want to avoid typical Instagram spots because these places often are crowded.
- People have different preferences; some people need to see pictures before traveling, and others enjoy the surprise of getting there without knowing.
- Adventurous travelers often disapprove of travel influencers. Surprisingly, the same people often have respect for travel photographers, although they cannot give a clear distinction between the groups. One subject tries to distinguish them by saying: "Travel photographer is good at capturing authentic moments with real people, while the typical travel influencers just capture popular destinations."
- People share content on social media because they are proud of what they are doing and enjoy sharing moments from their life with their friends and family.



Touchpoints – When planning a travel

Digital media

- Search engines: Mostly Google
- Traveling blogs
- Commercial pages promoting experiences or guided tours
- Online travel platforms: Platforms like TripAdvisor, Lonely Planet
- Travel videos and vlogs

Social media

- Instagram: *Travel influencers and travel photography*
- TikTok: *Travel-related videos*
- Facebook: *Travel-related groups, pages, and travel communities where people share their experiences and recommendations*
- YouTube: *Travel videos showcasing destinations, travel vlogs*
- Snapchat - *Friends sharing photos and videos from their travels.*

Peer Influence

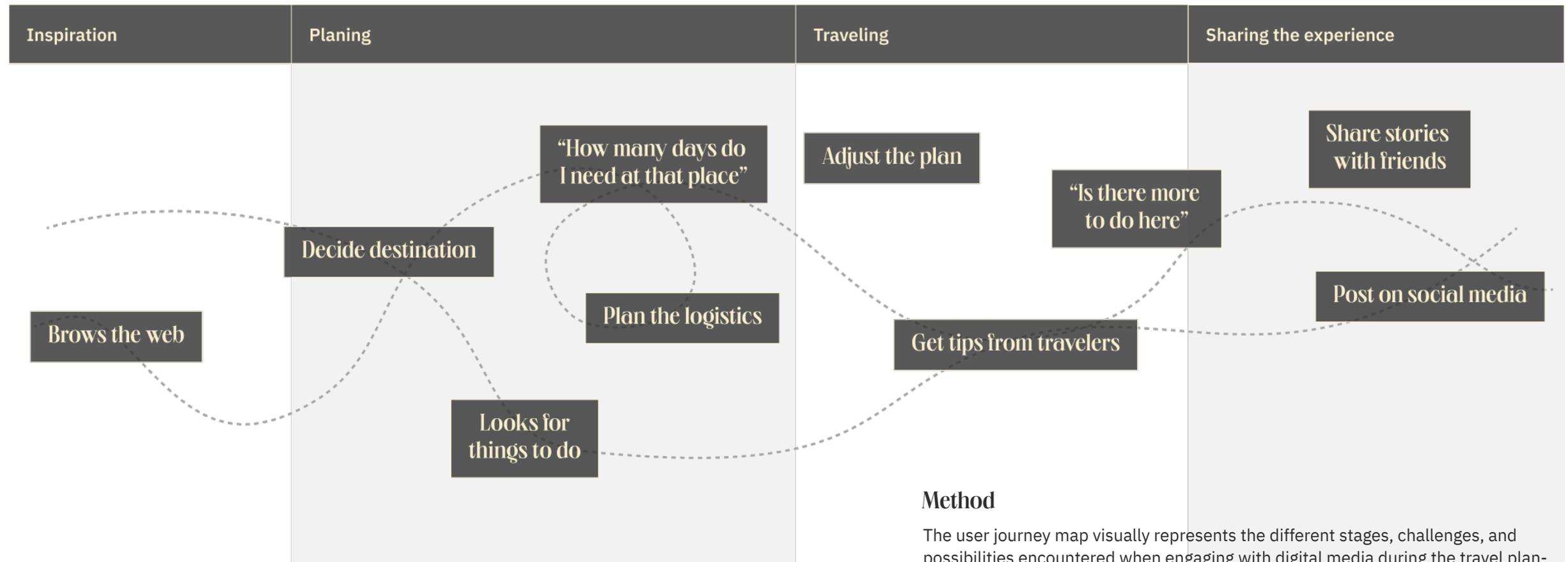
- Stories from friends and family
- Social media posts from friends and family
- Recommendations from people you meet while traveling
- Tips from locals

Physical media

- Tourist information centers
- Travel agencies
- Advertising posters
- Flyers and brochures
- Media
- Travel books
- Tv-series and movies
- Magazines and newspapers

3.3 User journey

To understand how people use digital media while traveling, a user journey was created. The following paragraph presents the user journey, starting from the pre-travel phase, progressing through the travel experience, and concluding with the post-travel phase.



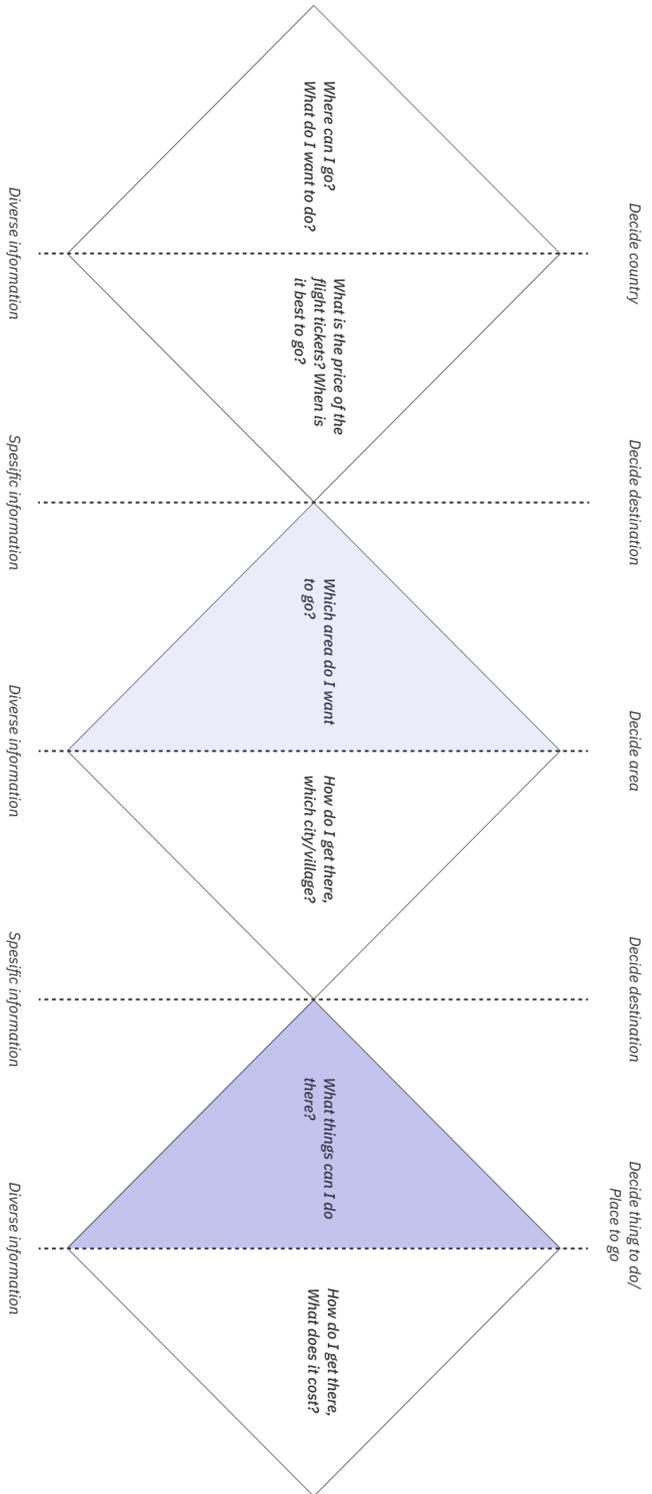
A simplification of the user journey, see full user journey map in Appendix 2

Method

The user journey map visually represents the different stages, challenges, and possibilities encountered when engaging with digital media during the travel planning process. First, an initial journey map was created based on the insights from the participant observations, the self-testing, and the interviews. Next, the journey map was shared with participants, who provided valuable feedback and insights. Finally, the suggestions were incorporated into the final user journey map. From the different participants, it became clear that the user journey was highly dependent on the user and that it could differ depending on the type of travel. Some users include more steps, skip steps, or experience them in a different order. The emotional experience also depends on the user. The user journey is not a defined journey, but it presents a general understanding of the process of traveling.

Specific vs. diverse information

People seek diverse and specific information according to where in the user journey they are. The blue areas highlight the point in the user journey the solution targets since the intended approach aims to deliver diverse information.

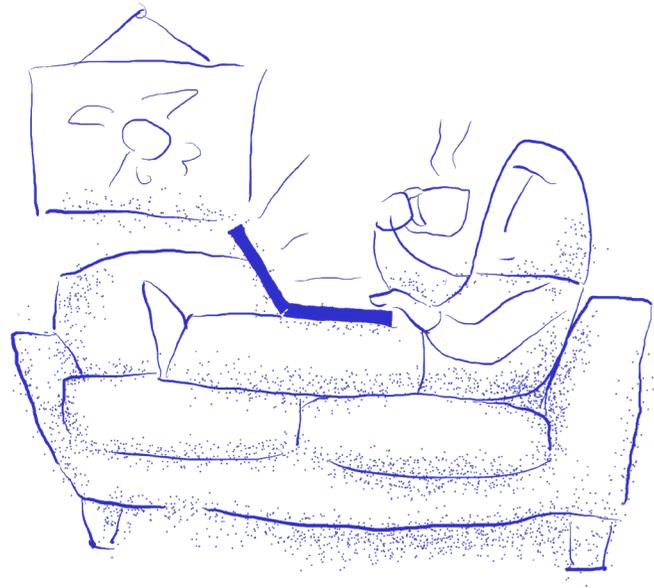


Key takeaways user journey

Many people find joy and excitement in travel planning process. People look for specific and diverse information in different phases. First people often look for diverse inspiration, some times around a certain area or a specific site. In this phase they are open minded and is often exposed to many different pages and platforms. However, they tend not to look to deep in the material, and are often reluctant to spend much time on each source. Visual design of the website play an important role in assesing wich sources is worth spending more time on. Then they often narrow down on the area, looking for more specific information. When they have found a destination, they often look for more diverse information again. After deciding a destination, they are more likly to spend more time doing extensive reasearch related to what they can do, the local history or culture. There are also different approaches among different people, some people like to plan extensively while others like a more spontaneous approach where they do not plan anything ahead. Different users find different things interesting, allowing the user to engage with the content they find interesting is important. People do not necessarily know what they are searching for in the beginning, providing them with inspiration is useful.

Contextual scenarios

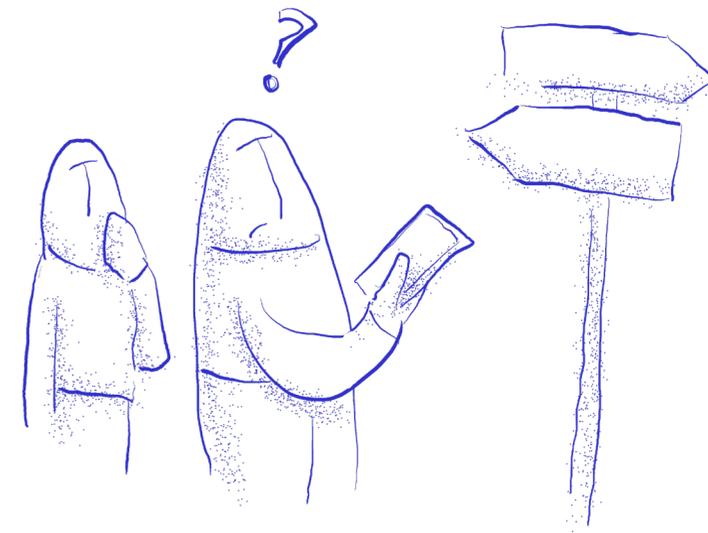
People might want different information or want to have it presented differently according to the context.



Scenario 1 *The user sits comfortably on the sofa/ hotel bed/armchair. The user has time to kill, feels understimulated, and seeks new input.*



Scenario 2 *The user sits at a desk and is set to do a task. The user has a lot of information and wants structure and order to make an informed decision.*



Scenario 3 *The user is in the field, need answers right away. Time is of the essence.*

3.4 Design brief

Based on the insights three question was developed to be used for ideation.

“How might we use digital media to showcase everyday experiences, the unique atmosphere of a place, and other authentic experiences rarely highlighted on current travel platforms?”

“How might we use novel interactions, and visually striking content to make the destination stand out and stick to memory, in the mass of information available online.”

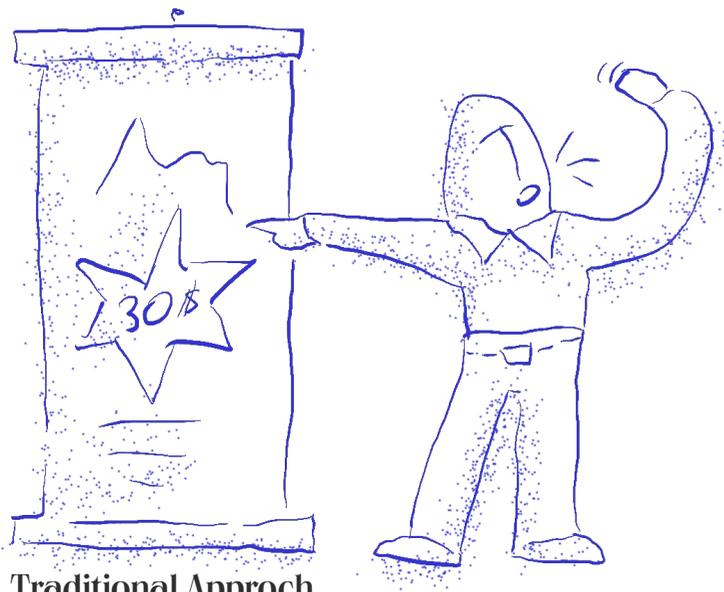
“How can we showcase the hidden gems, activities, and accommodations in the area without it appearing commercial or touristic?”

“How might we encourage people to tell their story”

Intended Approach

In order to counteract the process of standardization, accommodate the need for authenticity and cultivate the potential of personal narratives, the solution seek to have a novel approach, compared to traditional traveling websites.





Traditional Approach

Analogy: Walking by a tourist agency avoiding eye contact, while the tourist agent speak loud and fast in order to convince you to join a tour.

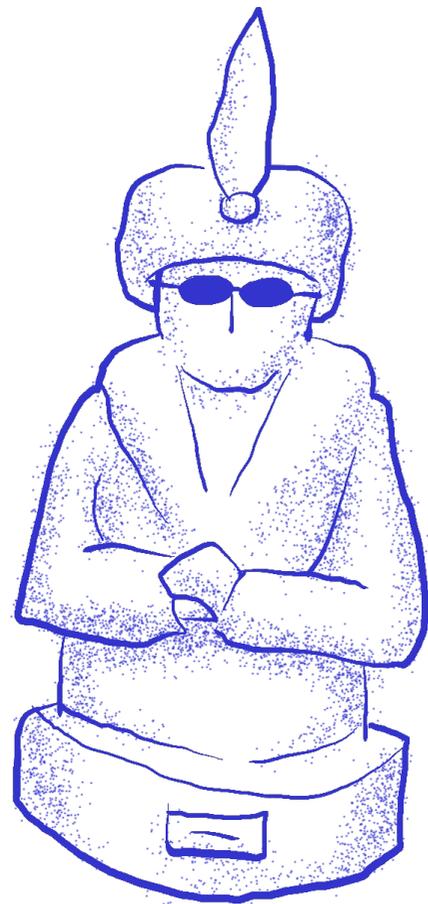
Feels: *Commercial, streamlined, and efficient.* Presents a popular sight, provides information about what it costs and how you will get there. It is often very convenient and available. The user often recognize that it is touristic, but in lack of better alternatives they often fall for it.



Intended Approach

Analogy: Feels like a local sharing about their hometown, or a fellow traveler talking about a place they just visited

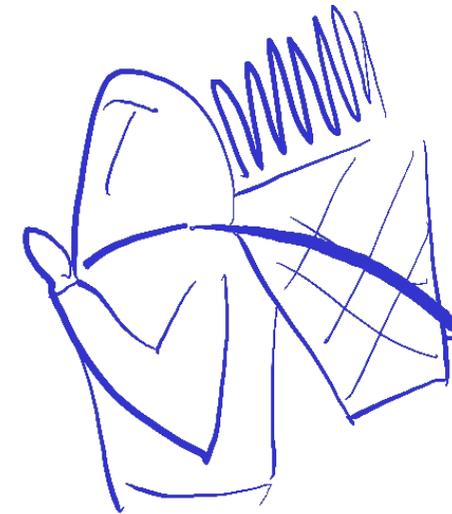
Feels: *Authentic, personal.* The approach do not intend to sell anything or convince anyone to do something. It feels like the person speak out of fascination and wants to share something that is close to them. It should feel like the they only offering to help you without any self interest.



Concept development

This chapter describes the concept development phase. It includes the method for ideation, presents various ideas for different digital storytelling formats and narratives, and the first round of prototyping. Furthermore, it includes lessons learned from user testing the various prototypes.

4.1 Ideation



Method

The ideation in this project has occurred in parallel with the rest of the project. Ideas have emerged through various sources, including drawing inspiration from related projects, participant suggestions during interviews and observations, dedicated ideation sessions, and experimentation with prototypes. Some of the ideas were based on initial thoughts and intuition, while other ideas are based on the key findings, the user journey, and other insights. Specific ideation exercises was also conducted, including sourcing inspiration from an extensive range of disciplines, including digital storytelling in journalism, game design, marketing, entertainment, media, art, digital design, branding, and related fields.

Ideas

The section below presents some of the concepts which can be combined or further developed to stand on their own. The ideas range from conceptual to specific ways of arranging content on a webpage. Some of the ideas are ways of tying pieces of information together, while other ideas are ways of presenting the information. The ideas are presented in relation to the How might we statements that it tries to answer.

“How might we use digital media to showcase everyday experiences, the unique atmosphere of a place, and other authentic experiences rarely highlighted on current travel platforms?”

Sound exploration [format] [narrative]

A webpage that allow the user to explore different audio clips. Each audio clip could represent a different travel moment. By only providing a sound clip and abstract illustration and text the user is forced to imagine the situation. It is unusual for the tourist domain to rely on sound making it a novel experience.

Slow video [format]

Display the fascinating in the non spectacular. Inspired by NRK “sakte TV”. It can display long cut videos of everyday scenes, in order to make the user dwell upon the moment. It could “force” the user, by redjecting them the possibility to close the page.

Present unconventional authentic situations [narrative]

Focus on unique situations, rather than attractions. This could be a strange or unusual situation that occurred, a person, family, or community you encounter or something totally different.

Passion stories [narrative]

The content could revolve around, one or several people with a passion for what they do. This could be for example; craftsmen, chefs or even farmers.

Community stories [narrative]

The story could revolve around a community and some specific tradition or practice that display a sense of unity.

A day in the life of... [narrative]

Present the day in the life of a person, or a profession. For example the day in the life of a Monk, A day in the life of a Shepard.

“How might we use novel interactions, and visually striking content to make the destination stand out and stick to memory, in the mass of information available online.”

Present the wildlife, geology, or flora as an informational page [narrative]

Make people aware of the fascinating aspects of the place, whether it is geology, wildlife, flora, or something else.

Interactive plate of food [narrative] [format]

Present spark an interest towards local food or cuisine with an interactive photo displaying the traditional dal bhat, where you can explore the different secrets to the different elements that make up the dish.

Present culture, history, traditions, or food through scrollytelling [narrative]

Use scrollytelling to communicate interesting facts in a visual way.

Interactive map [format]

A map that allow the user to explore videos, images and other media.

Emotional Journey map [format] [narrative]

Track different subjective parameters during the travel. Let the user explore a journey based on emotions. Example: Tranquility, Surprise, Excitement, Fun, Joy, curious, Connected, Grateful, Anxious, stressed, tired, sad. Let the user explore a map, choose an emotion, and see how it changed from place to place

Interactive illustrations [format]

Let the user explore an illustration or image. Make the elements on the illustration interactable, so they can explore different stories relating to the things displayed in the image.

Point and click story [format]

A interactive story wich presents you with coices, for instance by choosing between two roads. The story then gives information, shows pictures, sound clips or something else along the journey.

The viewing glasses [format]

See the same picture through the eyes of different people. If you click the histori-an it might highlight something related to history. The geologist might highlight a mountain or a river, with a text explaining why it is fascinating.

“How can we showcase the hidden gems, activities, and accommodations in the area without it appearing commercial or touristic?”

Present it a personal journey [narrative]

Present the information as a personal journey rather than an informational page about the place.

Personal life stories of the locals [narrative]

Inspired by Chef's Table. Connect it to something you can travel to experience, for instance, a personal story about a chef, or a weaver, or maybe a bow shooter.

Village personas [narrative] [format]

Create a village persona, a representation of the village as it would appear if it was a human being. A quiet, beautiful village could be represented as a laid back and relaxed. A busy village can be a chatty social person.

“How might we encourage people to tell their story”

Guest book

Allows travelers to share photos, videos, or text in the format of a digital guest book. Could be related to the area, homestay, or hotel.

Storytelling templates

Allow the user to generate content in a certain format. This could be anything from a sound recording app, a TikTok template, or for example, a webpage that allow you to create scrollytelling pages you can share with friends and family.

4.2 Prototyping

Method

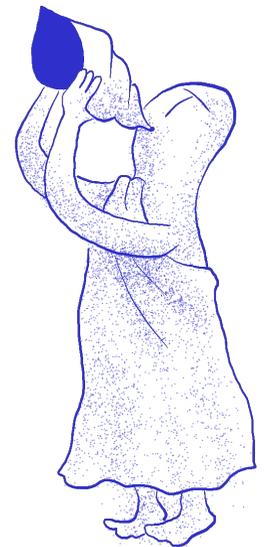
In parallel with the ideation, ideas were prototyped, evaluated, and iterated. The motivation behind the prototypes was to learn as much as possible before going to Nepal. The different formats were prototyped in order to learn success formula of digital storytelling. Furthermore, it gave a sense of which information and media (photos, videos, audio) were needed in order to create the solution. Different narratives were included in the prototypes in order to see what appealed to the users. It was hard to work with narratives relating to lower Mustang because the initial prototyping was done prior to the field trip, and the information regarding the area was limited. To capture the subtle details and provide authentic experiences, stories from personal encounters and memories were used. Using personal experience also allowed greater access to media, like sound, videos, and images. The prototypes were made using different tools. The main prototyping tool was Figma. Webflow and VEV was used in cases that required special interaction opportunities, or where it was more efficient.

4.2.1 First iteration

This chapter presents the first round of prototyping. Five prototypes were made and tested on users. The results from the testing are summarized as key findings.

Prototypes included:

- *Animals of Mustang* - Information regarding the wildlife in Mustang
- *Interactive illustration* - an exploration of personal experiences relating to a Norwegian farm
- *Sound exploration* - different sounds from a journey to Peru
- *Scrollytelling* - Historic event from Nepal



Prototype 1: Animals of Mustang

The first prototype contain information regarding the wildlife in Mustang. Two variations of format where made, variant A displayed the animals in a landscape, while variant B displayed the silhouette of the animals on a plain background (the two variants are explained in greater detail in the following paragraphs). The two variants was tested and compared against eachother. Half the sample got to see variant A first and variant B last, and vice versa

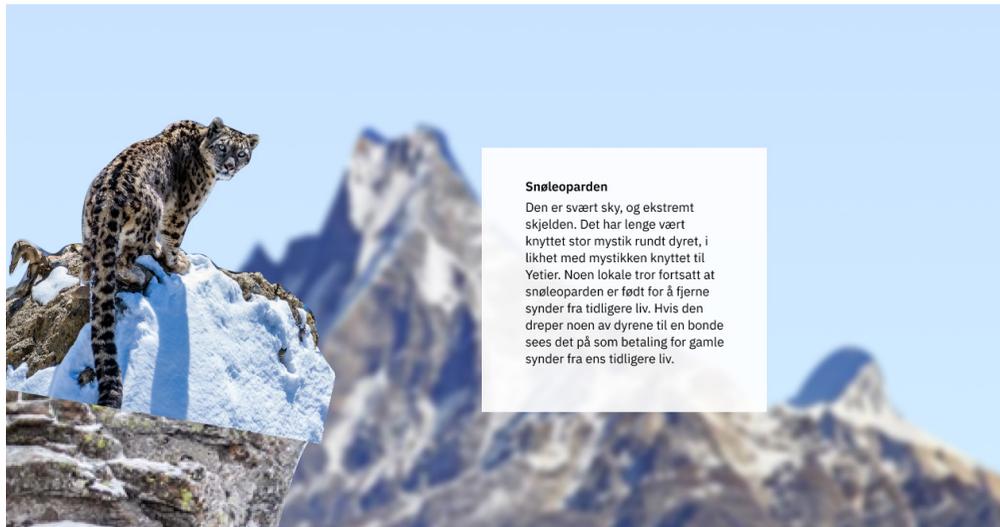


Fig. 3: Variant A: Scrollable landscape displaying the wildlife in the area

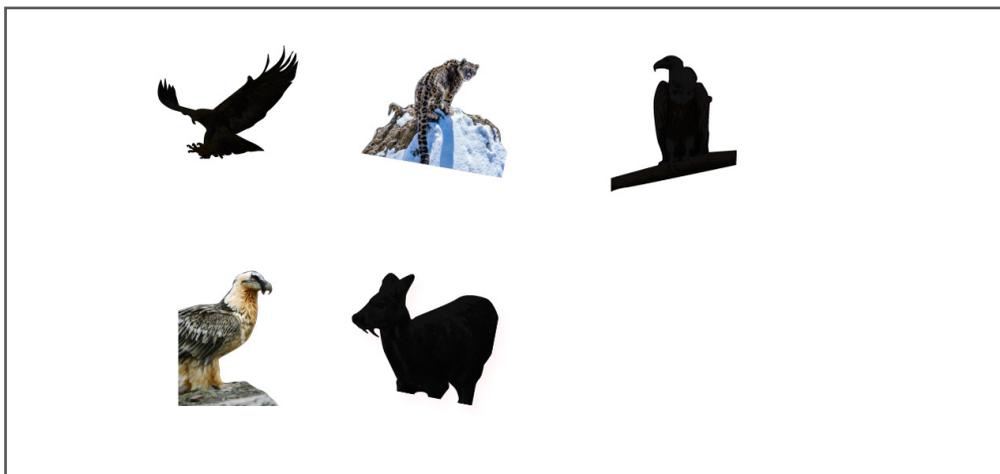


Fig. 4: Variant A: Scrollable landscape displaying the wildlife in the area

Variant A: Scrollable landscape

The prototype display a landscape(e.g, Fig 3). In the beginning, the user only sees the sky, when they scroll down they move vertically down in the landscape, reviling mountains, hills, and finally the ground. While they move downwards in the landscape they encounter different animals. Each animal has a coherent textbox explaining an interesting fact about the animal, some of which tie it to the culture and

Variant B: Animal silhouettes

The prototype displayed the silhouette of different animals. In the beginning, all animals were hidden behind the silhouette. Once the user clicks on one of the silhouettes, the animal is revealed and a coherent textbox appears. Once the textbox is closed, the animal remains visible, leaving only the animals the user yet has not discovered as black silhouettes. The hypothesis was that people could become curious about which animal where hiding behind the silhouette. The text and the image used in both variants were identical.

Key findings from user testing

- People found the animals to be an interesting topic and enjoyed learning more about them
- Variant A (the landscape) appealed more to the users because they enjoyed seeing it in context. Furthermore, they preferred scrolling over clicking at different elements.
- Variant B (silhouettes) did not evoke curiosity in the way that the hypothesis predicted
- Variant B was considered to be “more work”, because it required alot of clicking.
- The text boxes that exceeded four lines were considered too long.
- People preferred the content that tied the animal to the place and culture rather than random information.
- People enjoyed seeing it as a landscape since it felt more like a part of a greater story than just scattered pieces of information.
- People suggested including other information as well: For example, geology or architecture
- Suggestions also included adding sound or video to enrichen the experience

Prototype 2: Interactive illustration

The prototype displays an interactive illustration. The illustration was made prior to this thesis without intentions of being an interactive illustration. However, it illustrates different situations, objects, and characters relating to a specific farm in Norway. The illustration using the prototyping tool Figma.



While hovering the mouse over the dog in the right corner the users were able to read a small piece of text related to the dog living on the farm.

How it works

The user can discover the story behind a certain element in the illustration by moving the cursor. When the cursor hovers over a point of interest, like one of the characters or objects in the illustration, a textbox appears, explaining the story behind it. Only a few elements in the illustration were made interactable, meaning that the user was not able to learn about all of the stories displayed in the illustration.

Key findings from user testing

- With a few exceptions, people instantly got curious about the different elements in the illustration
- Some of the participants curiously asked to get the story behind the elements that were not interactive, proving the concept to be curiosity-evoking.
- Participants struggled to find the interactive elements on the page.
- Participants had a desire to see “the real thing”, and suggested including pictures or videos relating to the stories.
- One of the participants stated that it would not be annoying in situations where he is looking for specific information, but that it would be enjoyable if he were looking to kill time. This is a reminder that the context of use is important and that the final solution should be evaluated with a specific context in mind.

Prototype 3: Exploring sounds

The prototype allows the user to explore different sound clips. The sound recording was recorded during a travel to Peru and captured unusual situations.



When the user hover over the illustration a sound is played, an animation is showed with a short text explaining the contex of the sound

How it works

The prototype displays three rough illustrations. When the user hovers over one of the illustrations, a sound starts to play. The illustration is replaced by an animation of dots moving along a sphere. In addition to the animation, a descriptive text is displayed. The text explains the particular situation relating to the sound.

Hypothesis

"People are able to imagine the moment more vividly with the combination of sound and text, than by seeing an actual video or an image of the situation. It possibly also be an effective way to showcase situations that do not seem as appealing in a picture or in a video."

Key findings from user testing

- Participants were surprised, enjoying it more than they expected
- All participants favored this solution over the other prototypes
- They found the sound to be an effective way of visualizing the moment
- The participants stated that the simple illustration left room for their imagination, and that pictures and videos would have ruined the experience.
- Participants enjoyed the hovering interaction, stating it was effective and intuitive.
- One of the participants suggested improving the visuals so that the eyes would have something to rest on.
- Participants also pointed to the fact that there are certain situations where they do not want to play sound, for instance in public places.
- One participant suggested easing into the moment and removing unnecessary distractions on the page, in order for the user to fully immerse oneself in the sound.
- The solution has a clear potential to convey an atmosphere in a novel and exciting way

Prototype 3: Exploring sounds

The prototype uses the technique of scrollytelling to tell the tragic story of the Nepali royal massacre in 2001.



Scrollytelling page explaining the history of the royal Massachre in Nepal. (Original background image has been changed due to copyright)

How it works

The prototype is a scrollytelling page. It displays a textbox, behind the textbox is a full-size image covering the rest of the screen. When the user scrolls down the page, the image remains still, while the textbox move across the screen. When the textbox exists on the screen the background image changes and a new textbox enters from the bottom of the screen.

Hypothesis

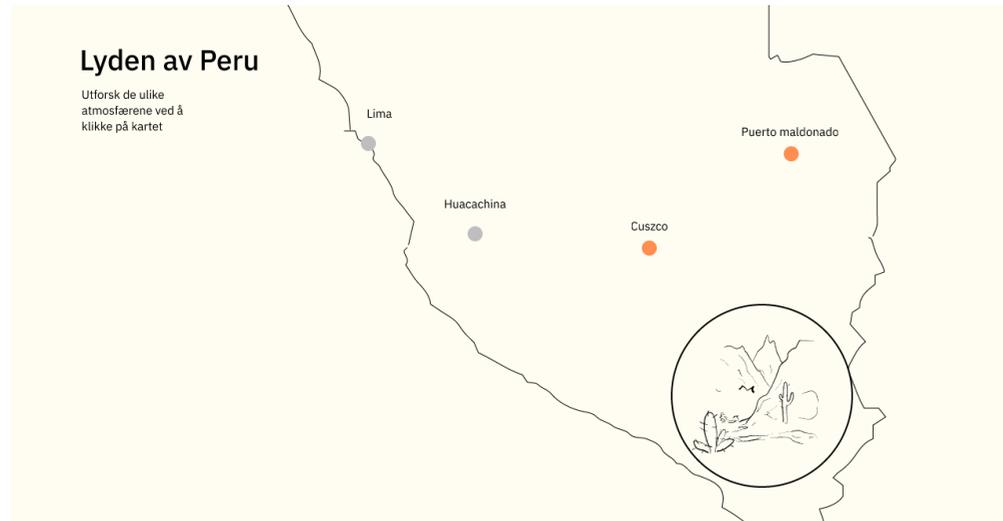
The hypothesis was that this might be a good format to deliver information in a captivating way.

Key findings from user testing

- Participants recognized the format from digital news websites.
- Participants stated that they loved news articles using this format.
- The association with online newspapers created for some, the assumption that this was merely a introduction to a longer news article.
- Participants explicitly stated that they enjoyed it but that they would probably not have bodered to read it if it was just a block of plain text.
- Participants also said it was easier to emerse onself in the story when presented in this format.
- The length of the text was acceptable, and people felt they obtained alot of information in a short time.

4.2.2 Further iterations

The solution underwent several more rounds of iterations to generate more insights. These sections present a brief overview of some of the test concepts and include some lessons learned.



Various interactions were tested, including exploring sounds on a map



Visuals, Variant A



Visual, Variant B



Visuals, Variant C



Visuals, Variant D

Experimentation with sound

Experiment 1: Changing the interaction

Experiments with the interaction with the sound prototype was conducted. The sound was placed on a map, placed in a landscape similar to the animals, and along the journey, and presented one at a time in a forced order.

Key findings interactions:

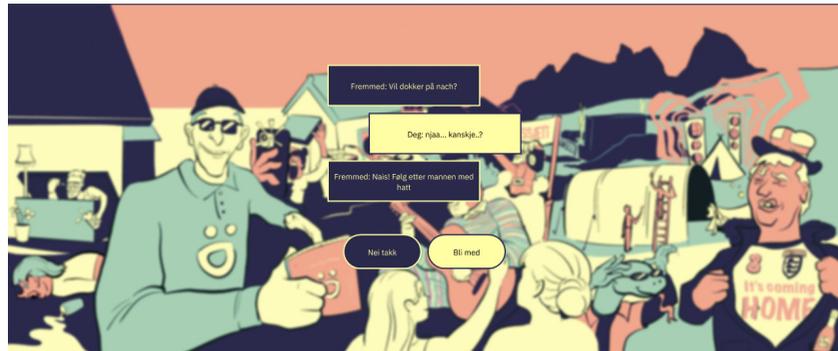
- Most people preferred the original hover interaction since it was faster, gave them more freedom, and required fewer clicks and scrolling.

Experiment 2: Improving visuals

An experiment was conducted where participants were shown different visuals when they listened to the sound. The participant listened to the sound with the visual representations, one visual at a time. After trying all the variants they were asked which one they preferred and why. **Variant A:** Image. **Variant B:** Simple animation of the motor, and waves. **Variant C:** abstract waves. **Variant D:** Visualisation of sound as a sphere of dots, unrelated to the situation

Key findings visuals:

- Participants had very varying preferences. Only the image was considered the worst option in all the cases.
- People who preferred variant D, stated that it was the least disturbing, and that they were able to visualize it more clearly without the illustrations. No participants disapproved of variant D.
- Participants who preferred variant C, enjoyed the artsy look. Participants who disapproved of variant C, felt that the heavy line weight and the busy movement, stole a lot of attention away from the sound.
- Participants who preferred Variant B: Felt they were able to immerse themselves more with, more senses compared to variant D. Participants who disapproved of variant B, felt it stopped them from creating their own image in the head.
- All participants disapproved of variant A, stating they were not able to imagine the situations as vividly when they knew how the real situation looked like.



Experimentation with interactive illustrations

The same principles as in the first prototype was applied on another illustration. This time a illustration made after a Norwegian festival was used, in order to make the content more relevant for the a users testing.

Adding signifiers and including Images/videos/interactive conversations

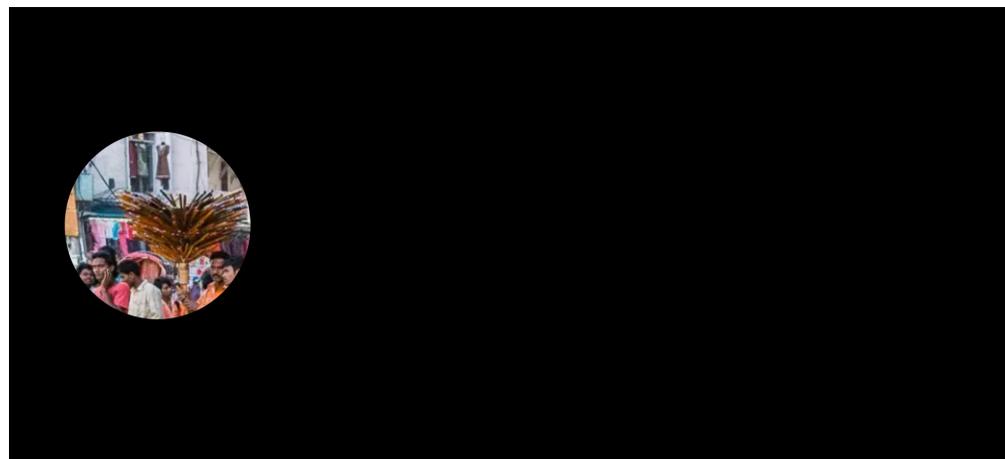
Animations where added to the interactive elements, in order to signal which elements the user could click. The animations were subtle wiggle movements by the characters in the image. Furthermore, the interaction was changed, now allowing the user to click on the objects in order to see videos, photos, or other content relating to the element. The content varied from still photos, video, and plain text to an interactive conversation where the user could make a choice.

Key insights

- The improved version performed significantly better than the first iteration
- Participants enjoyed the transition from illustration to seeing real images
- The variation of media, made participants more curious since they did not know what else they could possibly hide.
- Pictures and videos were clearly more interesting than plain text. Some participants explicitly stated that the elements with just text were disappointing
- Several participants stated that it was a fun and different way of obtaining information and that they were able to imagine the situation in another way than an ordinary website.

New concept – The spotlight

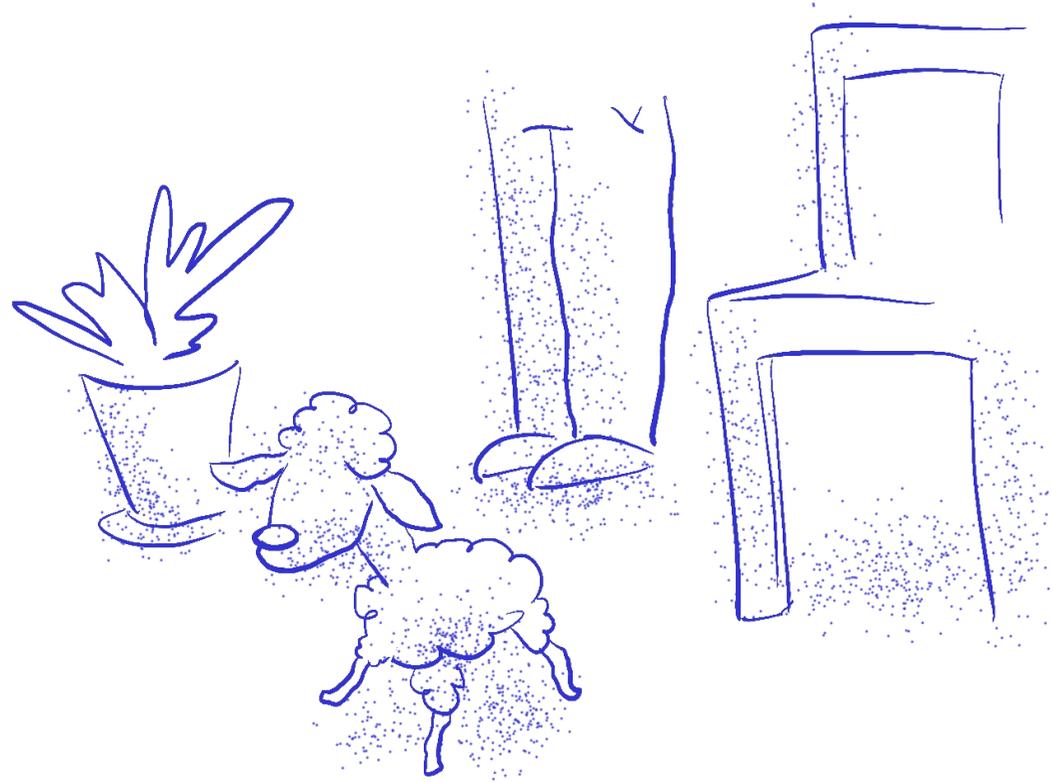
The spotlight is an interactive prototype which allow the user to explore an image or video through a peaking hole. Only a fragment of the picture is visible at the time. The user can explore the image by, moving the cursor around the screen. The circle follows the cursor



When the user moves the mouse the circle follows

Key insights

- Participants found it entertaining, and thought it was an interesting way to discover a photo.
- Participants used a lot of time exploring the image, stopping and leaning closer to the screen in order to investigate facial expressions and small details in the background. This clearly supports the hypothesis that people pay more attention to other elements in the photo than they normally would.



Fieldwork

During the project five-week fieldwork was conducted. The main objective of the fieldwork was to gather relevant narratives and collect the necessary media (images, videos, sound recordings, and more). Additionally, the fieldwork aimed to provide a better understanding of the place and its possibilities. Furthermore, confirming the foundational problem on which the design brief was based by interviewing stakeholders and the local residents, and get a better understanding of the target users.

5.1 Confirming the problem

A part of the fieldwork was to be conducted to see if the problem was confirmed, and to see that the villagers actually wanted tourists to come. Semi-structured interviews and conversations were conducted to ensure that the villagers wanted tourists to come and to get an idea of problems related to tourism in the area. The interviews were done in collaboration with Drejer and Kastellet, who were working on the Mustang Village Trail (see § 2.1.2). The interview sample consisted of several hotel and homestay owners, a village leader, the Annapurna Conservation Area Project, and several local people. The conversations revolved around tourism in the area, how they work to attract more tourists, on-going initiatives, and problems related to tourism. The following sections present my interpretation of the situation.

“Many people have come here to do research. We are not satisfied! Nothing ever happens!” - Local villager

Locals desire short-term actions

The people of the villages desire short-term actions. They want things to change quickly. It seems like people have been coming to the area several times before. The villagers speak of people from several nationalities, researching various topics. Some locals stated that there had been several researchers looking into tourism in the area as well but that it did not result in anything but reports. It seems that some of the villagers are tired of foreign “saviors” coming to the country to do research and leaving a report, that no one acts on. This further strengthens the objective of making something that could be launched, in order to accommodate the villagers’ wish for immediate action.

Lost Authenticity along the Annapurna Circuit and Pokhara

When walking along the Annapurna Circuit it became clear that the tourism had affected the local communities. The same tendency was even more clearly present in Pokhara. Most of the stores were targeted toward tourists, selling hiking gear and souvenirs. The menus in the restaurants included a wide range of Western cuisine, including pizza, pasta, and hamburgers.

Combining farming and homestays

Homestays allow farmers to combine agriculture and tourism. Showcasing homestays can distribute wealth more evenly among the locals who can not afford to build a hotel. Homestays also yield the potential to facilitate interaction between locals and tourists.

Sense of belonging

After speaking to and observing the local people, it became clear that there was a problem with depopulation, particularly among the younger generation. The youth are often driven to seek opportunities abroad or in urban areas, leaving their villages and family behind. Their perception of success seems often tied to securing well-paid jobs, and those who cannot attend university seem to experience a sense of failure. Interestingly, the older generation and the youths that have decided to stay have a strong sense of belonging. They appreciate the warm and welcoming communities they belong to, and are proud of their villages and their culture. This project could potentially try to foster a sense of pride and belonging among the local population. By telling their story and showing them that it is interesting and unique, it could develop a stronger sense of appreciation for their own cultural heritage, nature, and people. This could positively impact their sense of belonging and encourage more people to stay.

5.2 New touchpoints

After traveling around Nepal and Lower Mustang, new touchpoints were discovered.

Bookshelves

Most hotels, tea houses, and hostels have a bookshelf where people can leave books. People are free to read from the books or even bring them along if they want to. Marketing material can easily be left on this bookshelf, especially if they do not come off as marketing material and rather stories or information about a place.

Menus

Some of the restaurants have dedicated the last pages to informing customers about local costumes, local attractions, or even simple Nepali phrases. When people are sitting down and waiting for their food, they are often bored and seeking new input, making these menus a potentially good touchpoint where people can learn more about Lower Mustang.

Wall maps

In addition to official maps placed by the ACAP, there are some maps hanging on the wall of different hotels. Designing a visually appealing map that display the different villages and some unconventional

Bottle Stickers

Surprisingly many tourists have water bottles full of stickers. Hikers like to personalize the bottles with stickers from places they have been or things they have done. This adds to the nostalgic value of the bottle and make them remember the good memories. It can also be an interesting conversation starter, when the bottle stands on the table, other people can see the stickers and can be prompted to ask questions related to the sticker.

Facebook/whatsapp groups

It exists a lot of different Facebook groups related to either trekking in Nepal or more specific groups related to specific trails.

Limitations: The groups often have rules for what people can share. Promotional content is rarely allowed. However, it is allowed to share personal blogs and experiences. Since no one is directly earning money from this solution and since it does not feature specific guide companies, hotels, or organizations, it is potentially possible to share the work created in this master thesis. It is therefore important to design the content so it looks, feels, and behaves like personal stories rather the promotional content.



New rule, potential game changer

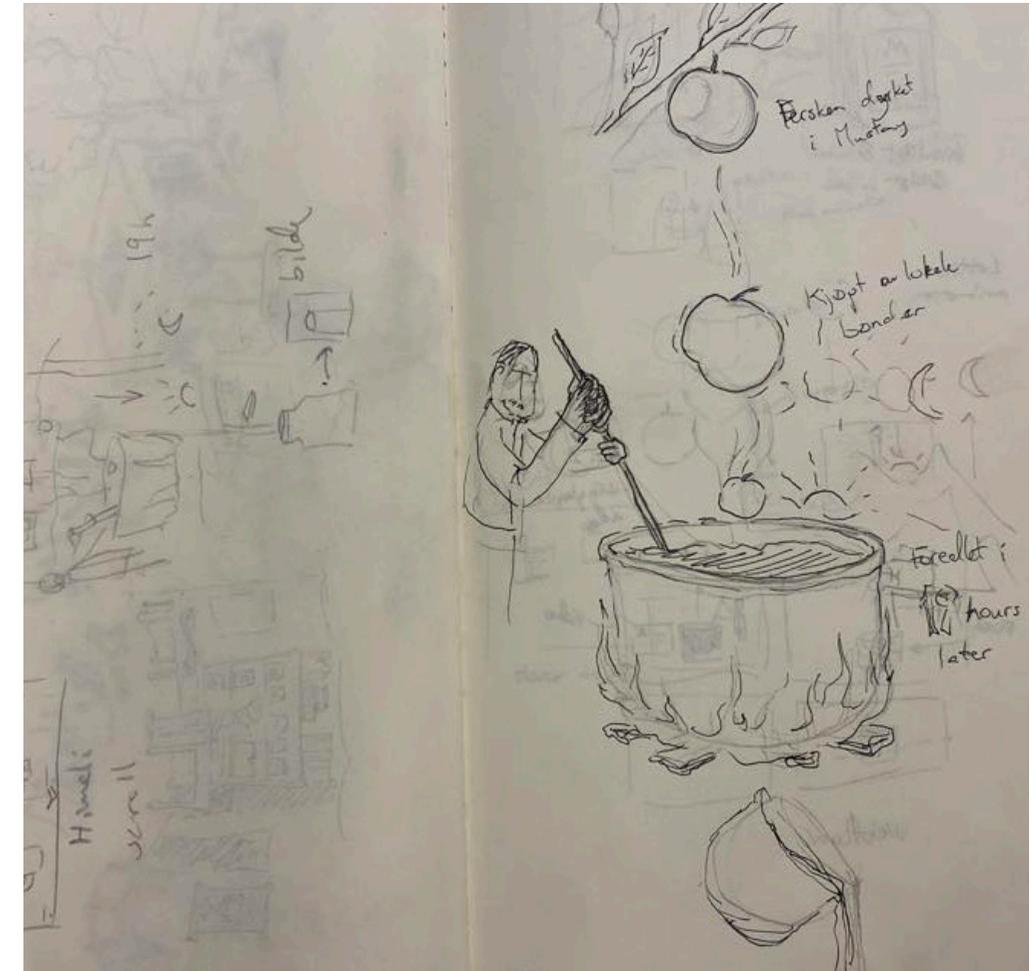
A significant discovery has been made regarding a new rule implemented by the national government. The rule mandates that all trekkers in the area must be accompanied by a guide. The new rule will increase travel costs to the area, potentially resulting in tourists staying for shorter periods or avoiding the region altogether. The rule remains unenforced, and people are confused about the details of the new rule. Locals are concerned about losing tourist revenue and remain skeptical of the rule, believing it to be a strategy for the government to make more money without it gaining the region. However, if tourist numbers decline, the rule may not last long. If fully enforced in the future, it will be crucial to collaborate with the guides and guiding companies.

5.3 Collecting the narratives



In order to collect the narratives, visits were conducted to various points of interest, in some cases accompanied by hired guides who provided detailed information about the culture and history associated with these places. Throughout the research process, self-ethnography was utilized by taking notes while traveling like a tourist. Furthermore, conversations with other tourists gave firsthand knowledge about other interesting people and places. Narratives were implicitly evaluated by listening to other travelers' stories and observing their reactions to the stories we shared. Narratives and stories often appeared spontaneously and unforced by curiously asking questions to local residents. Along the way potential stories were documented with text, pictures, video, and sound.

5.4 Crafting the narrative



The potential narratives underwent an ideation, where the interesting part of the story was extracted and the driving medium was considered. The different narratives were attempted to be translated into the existing concepts that were tested in the first phase of the project (see §4.2). For instance if a funny or interesting sound occurred it was considered to be communicated through the sound exploration interface, while a detailed chaotic image was considered for *the spotlight*.

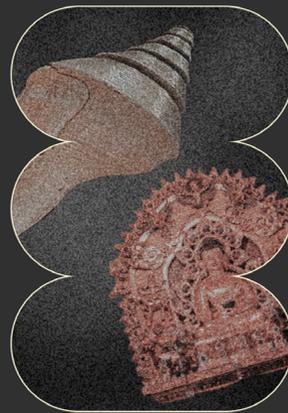


Result

This chapter presents the final result of the thesis. It is a functioning prototype that in theory could be launched.

Memories of Mustang

The villages



The sound of Nepa

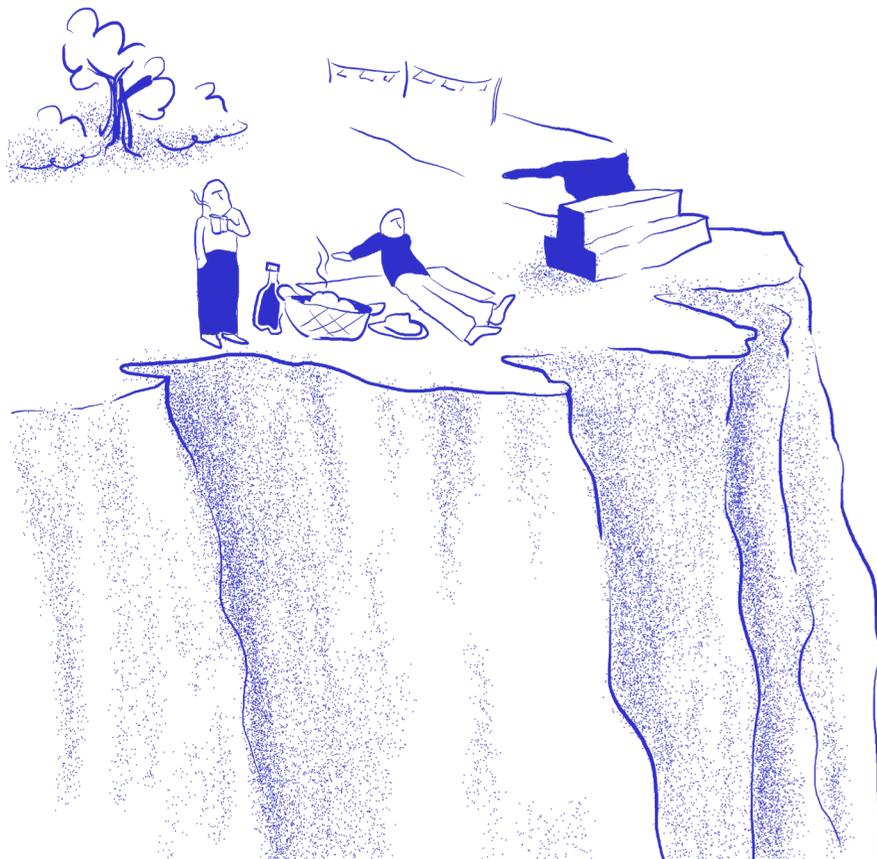


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6.1 Final concept

This chapter presents the final result. The chapter will explain in detail how the different pages work, which narratives are included, and reasoning behind the format, and interactions. The result is a product of continuous iteration and user testing. The elements in the prototype have been continuously tested, and adjusted to be usable, understandable and to ensure the solution follows the design principles presented.

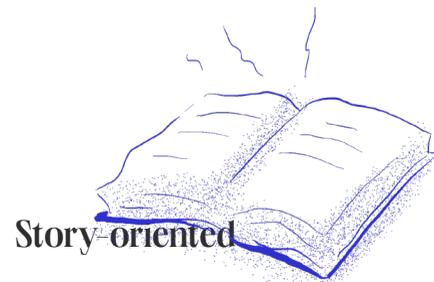


Digital storytelling website

The final concept is a digital storytelling website. Showcasing the hidden gems, the people of Lower Mustang, their culture and their stories. The website is a functioning prototype containing various narratives, presented using various digital storytelling techniques. The narratives presented in the solution include, among other things, personal experiences, local culture and history, and informative narratives regarding the challenges and opportunities of tourism in the area.

6.1.1 Design principles

Four design principles were developed based on the insights.



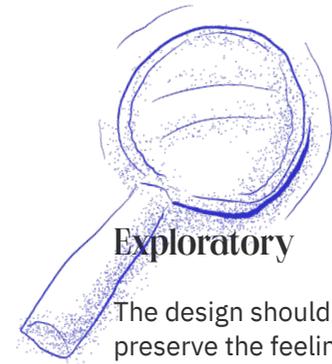
Story-oriented

The solution aims to use storytelling in every element, from start to finish. The user should immerse themselves in the story from the moment they enter the page. The solution should incorporate storytelling in every aspect, never breaking the illusion of immersion. The presentation and the visuals should aim to immerse the audience, drawing them into the story.



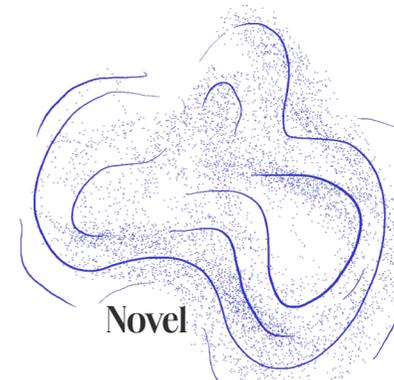
Authentic

In order to accommodate travelers' need for authenticity, the design should appear authentic. It should reflect the authenticity of the villages through visual aesthetics, narratives, and tone of voice. Authenticity should be present in the look and feel of all the images, narratives, illustrations, and all other visual elements on the webpage.



Exploratory

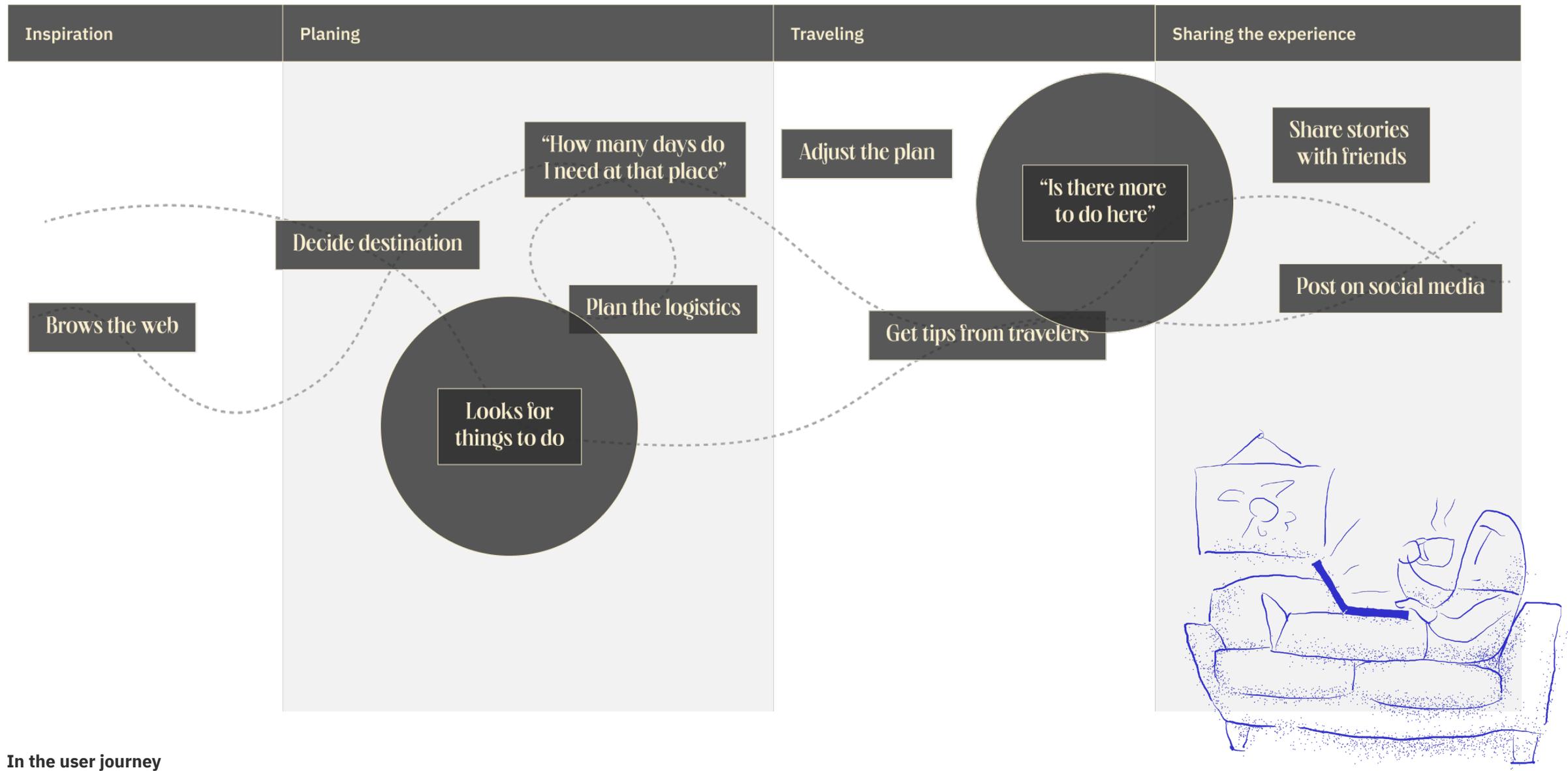
The design should allow the user to explore the content in their way. It strives to preserve the feeling of exploration that travelers enjoy from traveling. The exploration should be rooted in curiosity. Exploring the website should be a fun and fulfilling experience that contributes to the positive experience of travel planning. The design should highlight the value of curious exploration and leverage explorative behavior beyond the website, inspiring travelers to be more curious while they travel as well.



Novel

The design should be novel to stand out in the vast amount of online information. Furthermore, to counteract the standardization process dominating the traditional tourism industry, the design should strive to set an example by daring to do things differently. Finally, through novelty, the design also aims to evoke curiosity among the audience and drive them to explore more of what the area has to offer.

6.1.2 Intended context of use



In the user journey

The solution is intended to target people in the stage where they have determined the area in which they want to travel; this will typically be a user determined to visit the Annapurna region. It aims to serve as a source of diverse inspiration rather than a tool for planning or sorting out logistics. In addition to the pre-travel phase, the solution is highly relevant in the stage where the user is traveling and wants to research more about what the area has to offer.

Contextual scenario

Scenario: *The user sits comfortably on the sofa/ hotel bed/armchair. The user has time to kill, feels understimulated, and seeks new input. (See § 3.3).* The scenario allows the solution to be more exploratory, more “unpractical”, but more immersive and novel since the user has more patients and time is not of the essence.

6.1.3 How to view the final result



Video

A video walkthrough was made in order to provide a better understanding of the animations, transitions, and interactions on the page. Since the page aims to be visual and novel, the pictures alone in the following section do not adequately justify the page's feel and the richness of the interactions. It is more easily understood by watching the video walkthrough or testing the prototype for yourself. Furthermore, a video of each individual page is included in the sections below.

Link to videos:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1FeyaO7NzVXZSheF34aljYbLLXbPaS-HI?usp=share_link

Test the prototype

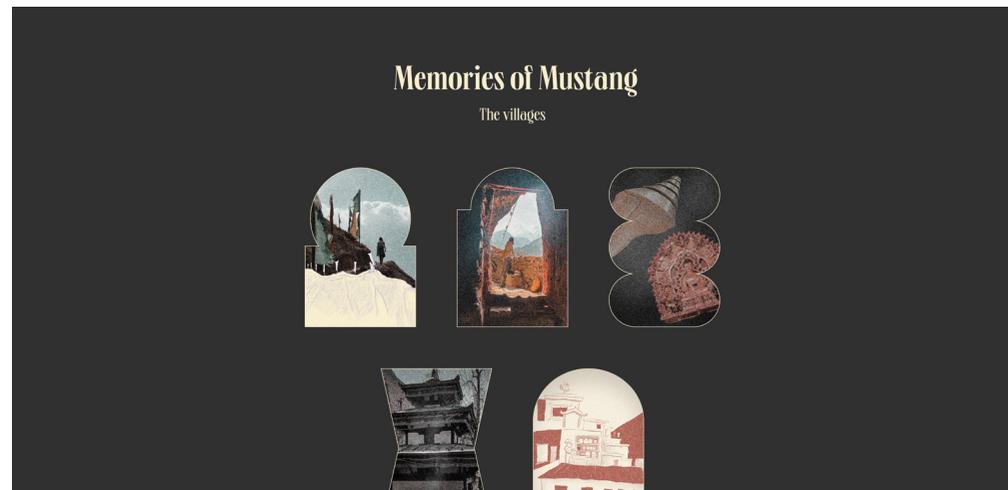
To explore the narratives and interactions in your own pace one can test the interactive prototype oneself. Due to limitations of Figma(See § 2.5) there are certain instructions that should be followed in order to get the best experience.

Link to test prototype: <https://www.figma.com/proto/sHZyeEMVMHoGc0m7L-Cudzv/Ferdig-prototype?page-id=0%3A1&type=design&node-id=282-3305&viewport=8490%2C9901%2C0.51&scaling=scale-down-width&starting-point-node-id=282%3A3287&hotspot-hints=0&hide-ui=1>

- Use a computer, preferably with a mouse
- Open in a browser, do NOT open in the Figma desktop app. The prototype is designed around the back button in the browser
- Open the link: Link:
- (The first page is just intended for the master thesis)
- Make sure the red line at the bottom is visible, if not, use a more narrow screen or reduce the width of the browser until you see it (This issue is due to the limitations of Figma)

6.2 Final solution

The website features a homepage that links several pages. The pages then again link to substories/narratives relating to the pages. When the user first enters the page, they go through a short scrollytelling intro before arriving at the homepage.



Homepage

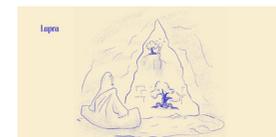


Intro

Flow starting point

Pages

Substories/Narratives



6.2.1 Introduction - Scrollytelling



The intro - First encounter

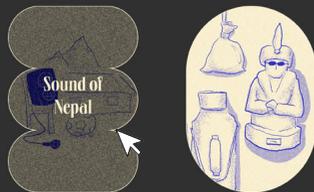
The intro is the first encounter with the website. It is a short scrollytelling page, which ends with the user arriving at the homepage. The objective of the intro is to provide the audience with context about the area and give them an idea of what the webpage is and what it tries to do. The intro displays pictures of nature and the people living there, as well as highlighting the fact that the page is based on personal experiences.

Memories of Mustang

The villages



Feel the atmosphere



Explore the wildlife



Connect with the community



6.2.2 Homepage

The purpose of the homepage is to tie all the elements together. The home page consists of tiles shaped in various ways. Each of the tiles links to another story page. In order to provide the audience with a context, the tiles are sorted under four captions, *Villages*, *Explore the atmosphere*, *Explore the nature*, and *Connect with the community*. When the user hover over a tiles, the title of the page is displayed.



The novel shapes resemble windows offering a curious glimpse of what is hidden behind them. Furthermore, the variations in shapes reflect the variation on the pages hiding behind them.

6.2.3 Jharkot - Interactive illustration



How it works

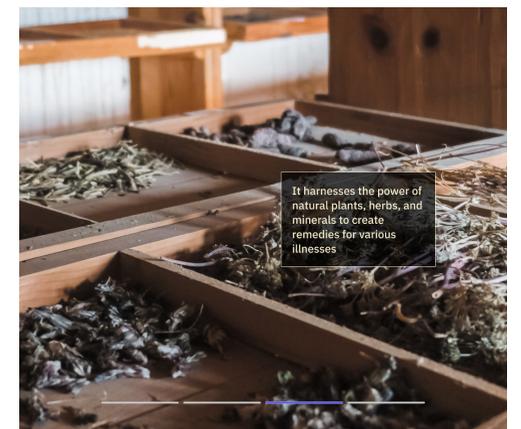
Jharkot is presented as an interactive illustration, similar to the prototype in Chapter 4.2.2. The illustration contains several substories relating to local history, people, places, or personal experiences. The page allows the user to explore the illustration by clicking on the elements they find interesting. The chaotic scene is intended to evoke curiosity through complexity (Berlyne 1960). When the user clicks on one of the elements, they are shown a combination of text, images, illustrations, and/or other media.

The narratives of Jharkot

The page showcases multiple stories, including, among others, the story of the Dacchang festival, the Tibetan doctors in Jharkot, a passionate hotel owner sharing his culture, and the story of a failed stone heist.

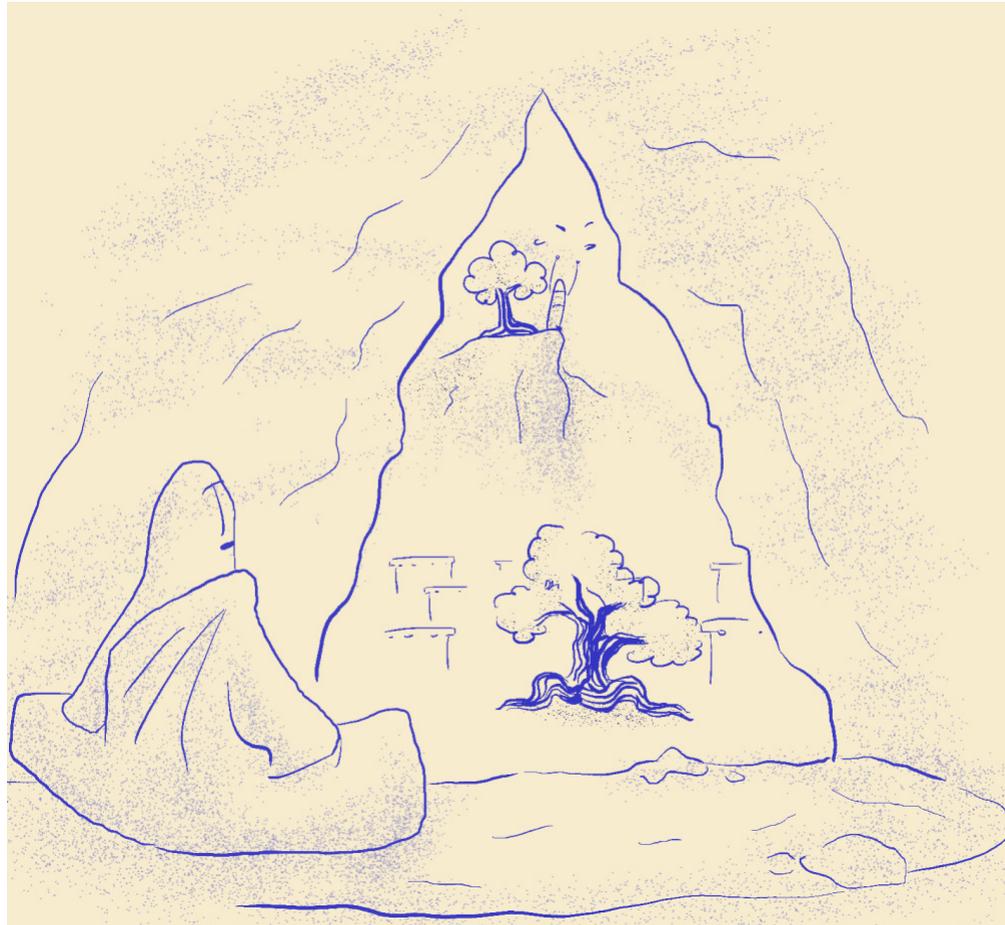


Hover effect - on the interactable elements



Overlay - tells the story behind each element

6.2.5 Lupra - Interactive illustration

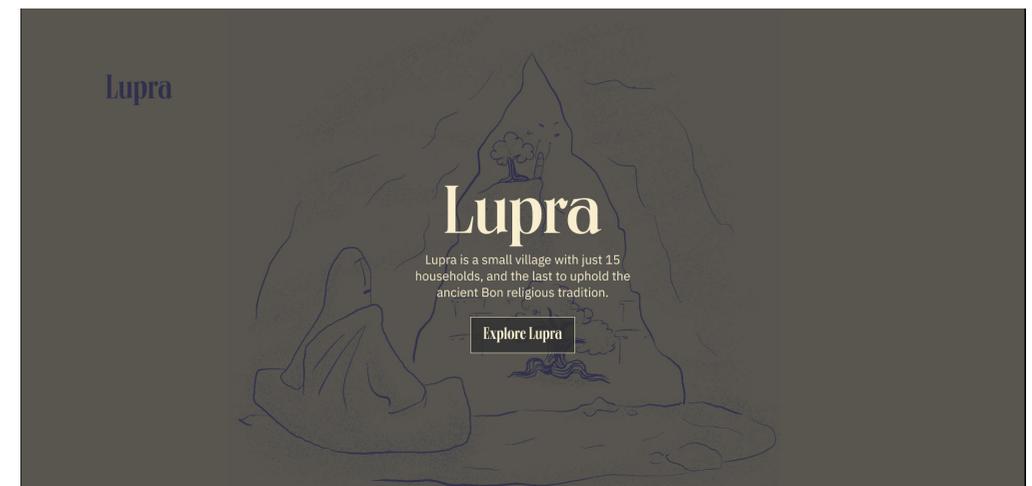


How it works

The page for Lupra also features an interactive illustration, but in contrast to Jhar-kot, it only contains three substories. The different approaches are meant to provide two distinct experiences to prevent users from becoming bored or tired. Signifiers On this page, interactive elements are animated. The animations are constrained to the area of interactions, intuitively drawing the user to explore these points. The first narrative featured on the page is the story of the *Old Tree*, a story about the village's origin. The second story features *The Caves*, which are commonly used for meditation. The third features a *The New Tree*, a tree at the top of the hill, used for a religious ritual.

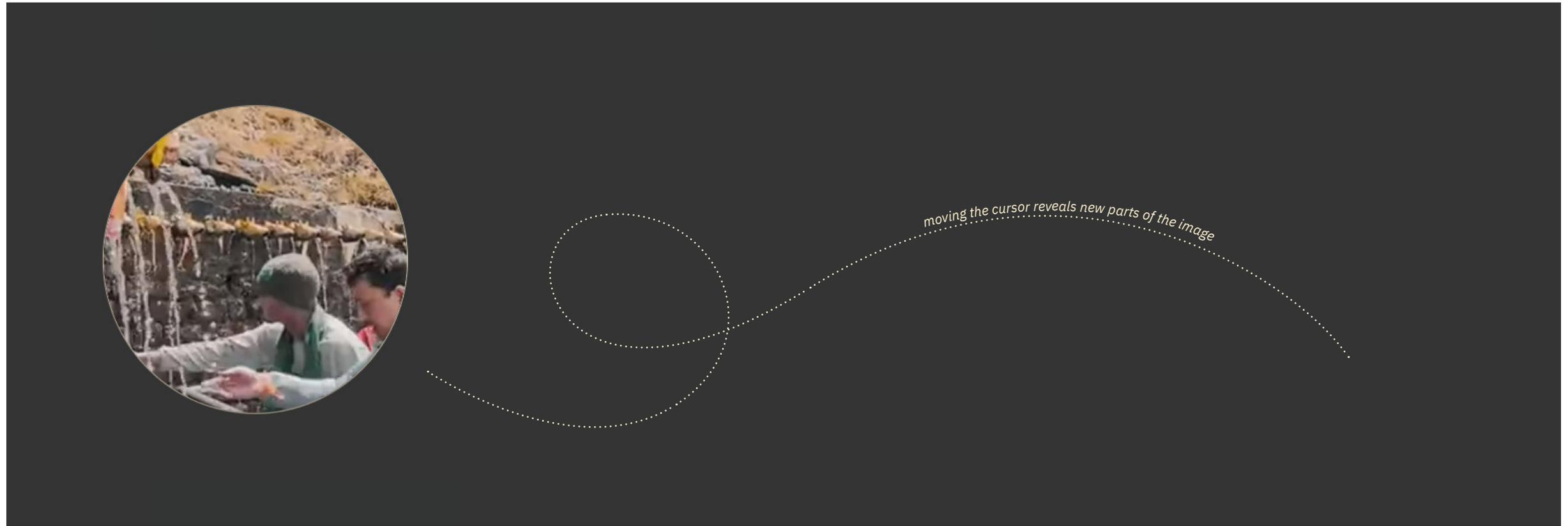


The same overlay is used for all story elements. The user can see how long they have left with the progress bar in the bottom. This overlay tells the story of the old tree of Lupra, a story about the origin of the village.



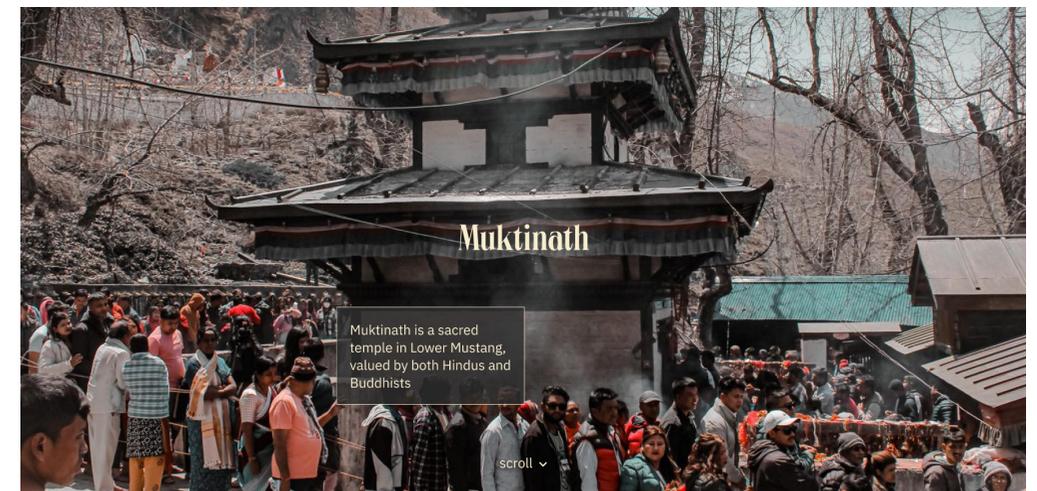
As a result of user testing, all the villages were given an intro, explaining briefly what the village is to provide the user with some context.

6.2.6 Muktinath - The Spotlight



How it works

The page's purpose is to showcase the, religious significance, and the vibrant energy of the crowd of Muktinath. The page begins with a short scrolling section providing contextual information regarding the religious significance of the place. The user quickly proceed to an interactive spotlight building upon the same principles as the prototype presented in Chapter 4.4.2. The spotlight display only a fragment of a continuously looping video captured outside the Muktinath temple. The user can control which part of the video they are looking at by moving the cursor on the screen. As they move around, they unveil new parts of the video. The interface guides the user's eye and forces them to pay closer attention to the details. The aim is to make the audience aware of otherwise neglected details and recognize the value of actively observing the world around them. The concept aims to transcend the on-screen experience by encouraging people to repeat the activity on-site. Indirectly the solution seeks to encourage this behavior in all aspects of traveling, allowing tourists to see beauty in unconventional sites.



Scrollytelling intro provide background information about the temple

6.1.9 Kagbeni - Interactive Collage

The page displays various pictures related to one story, place, or experience in Kagbeni. When the user hovers the mouse over the images, a title appears. The titles are intended to leave the users uncertain about what the story is about and what they can expect.

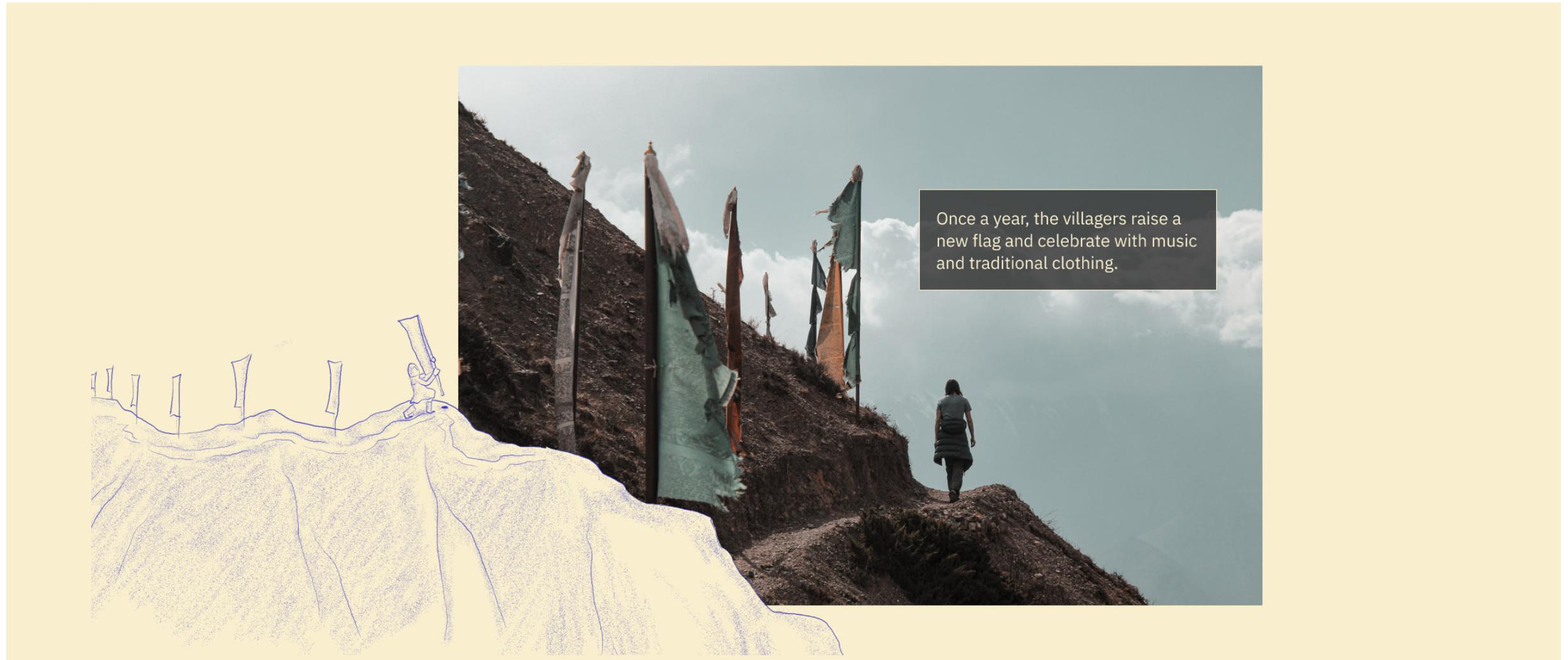


One of the stories is based on our first experience with morning puja (religious ritual). It highlights the everydayness of the religious ceremonies to show that this ritual is a part of their everyday life.

Kagbeni



6.1.10 Jhong - Playful scrollytelling

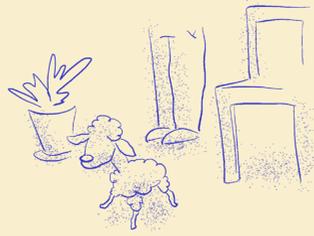


How it works

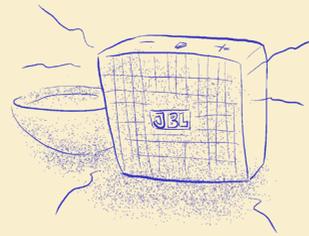
Jhong is displayed as a vertical landscape. The user starts in the sky; as they scroll, they move down in the landscape, passing by the mountain Dakpoche and a picnic spot on the way down towards the village. They pass through the village, the flag hike, and end up in the caves below Jhong. As they progress downward, they encounter textboxes explaining various facts and small stories. Furthermore, effects are triggered by changing between a combination of images and illustrations. The experience is intended to be visual and novel, immersing the user in the story.



The sound of Nepal

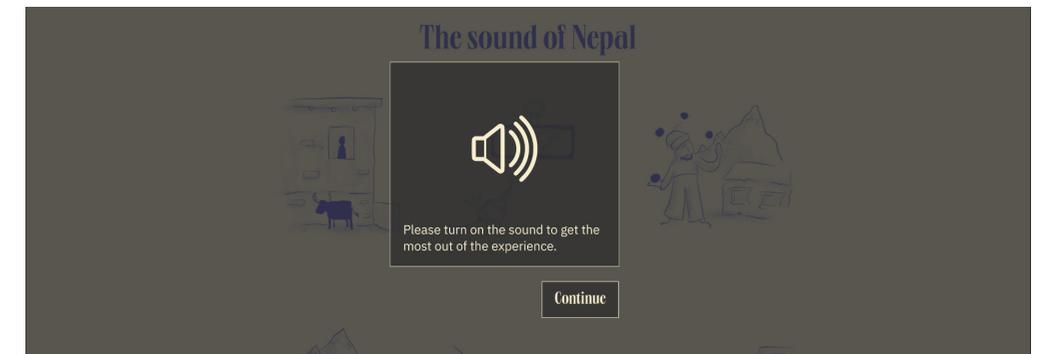


Tourist putting on an outdoor juggling show 4000 meters above sea level



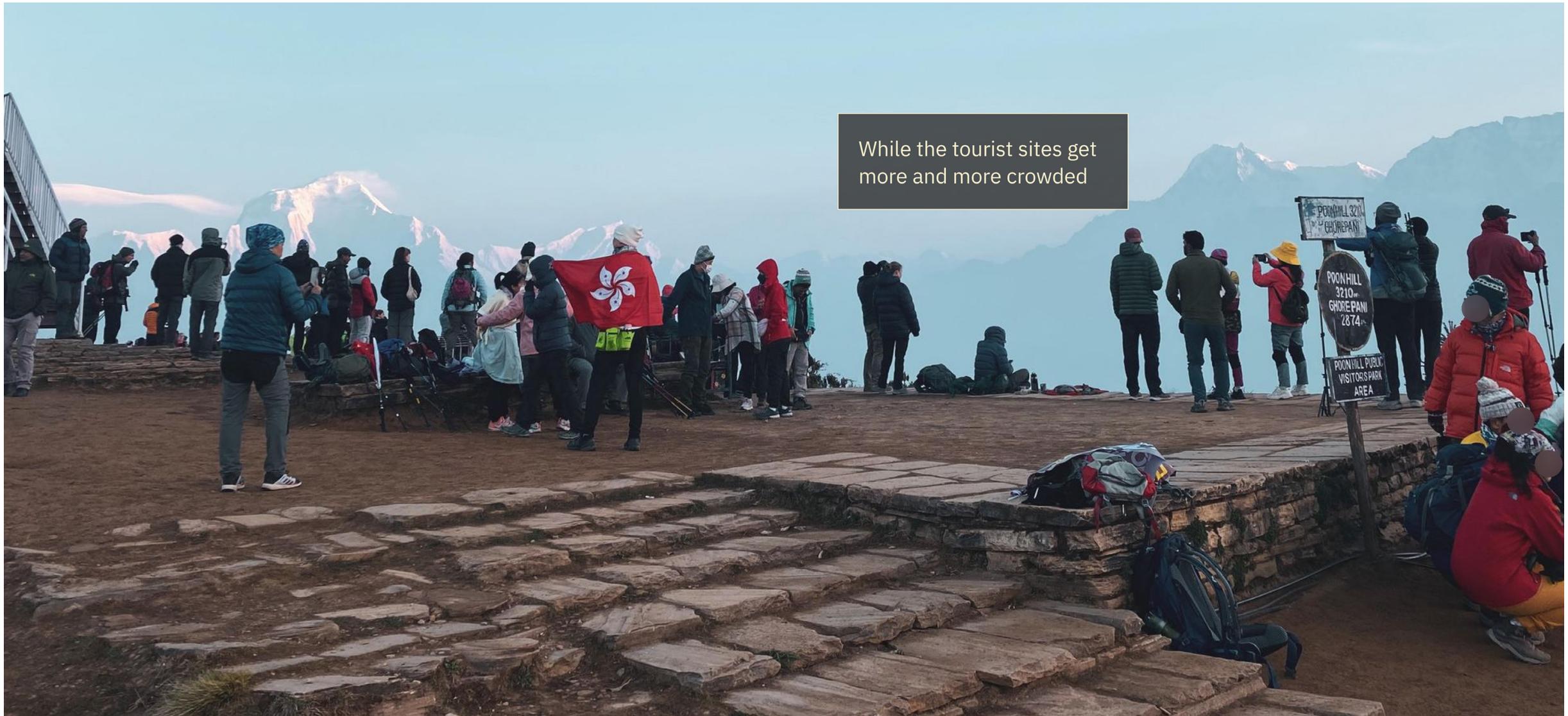
6.1.11 Sound of Nepal

The page features different sounds of unique situations encountered while conducting the fieldwork in Nepal. The interaction and format of the page is based on the lessons learned in chapter 4.2 . The page lets the audience explore the sound clips by hovering their mouse over the illustrations. As shown in chapter 4.2 the sound has the power to transport the audience into the moment and activate their imagination. Likewise, the illustrations give the audience a vague idea of the situation but leave room for imagination. The illustrations are not directly linked to the sound, allowing the sound to be a humoristic surprise.



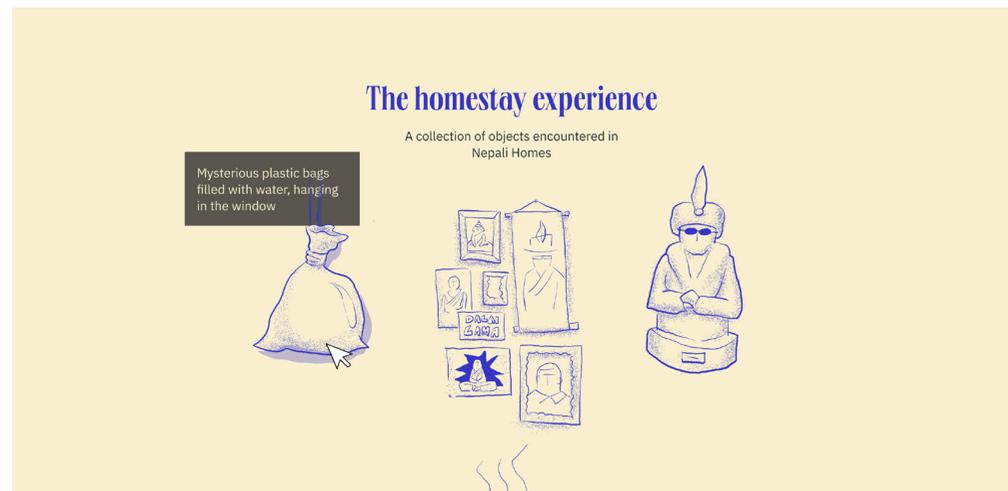
When entering the page, the users are prompted to turn on the sound, a problem revealed during the first round of prototyping phase

6.1.13 Responsible traveling - Reflective narrative



The page is based on a scrollytelling interaction. It presents problems related to tourism and tries to relate them to the area and the people living there. The page's objective is to make travelers reflect upon their own traveling behaviors.

6.1.14 The homestay experience - Everyday life seen through a collection of objects



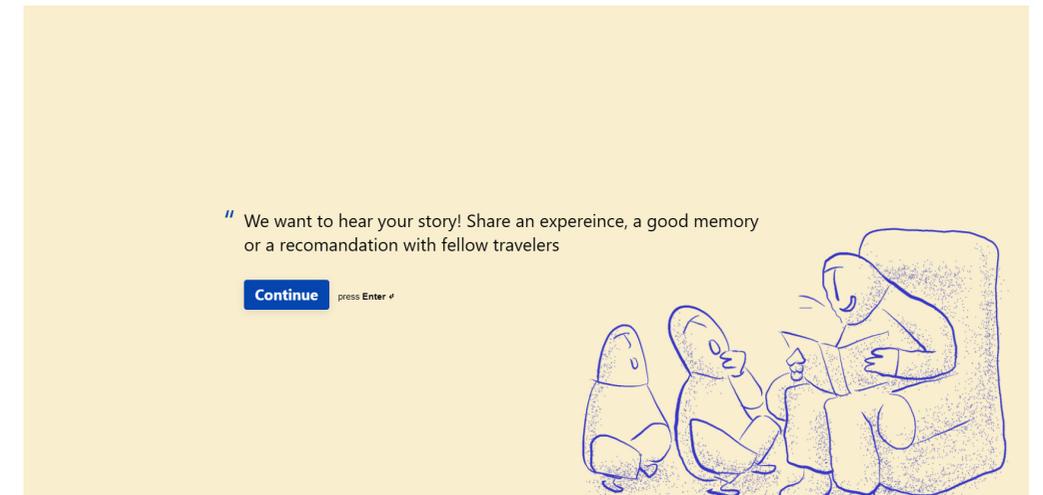
The concept

The page's main objective is to spark an interest in homestays. The page recognizes travelers' fascination with everyday life and presents surprising cultural differences through ordinary objects. The objects are a collection of objects we encountered in Nepali homes. The page aims to be humorous without becoming condescending towards the locals.

How it works

The audience can explore the different objects by hovering over them. When the user hovers over an object, a humorous description of the object is displayed.

6.1.15 Sharing stories



Collecting new narratives

The page aims to collect more stories from the area by encouraging other travelers to share their experiences. The page focuses on storytelling and prompts the users to tell it as a story rather than a review. By collecting new stories, the ones interested in taking over the project could have a greater collection of stories. The page also recognizes the users' desire to share their experiences and strives to achieve a sense of belonging among the users, potentially leading them to share the webpage with their others.

6.1.16 Substories and narratives

This section present some of the many narratives and substories included on the page. To see more, try the prototype or watch the video walkthrough.



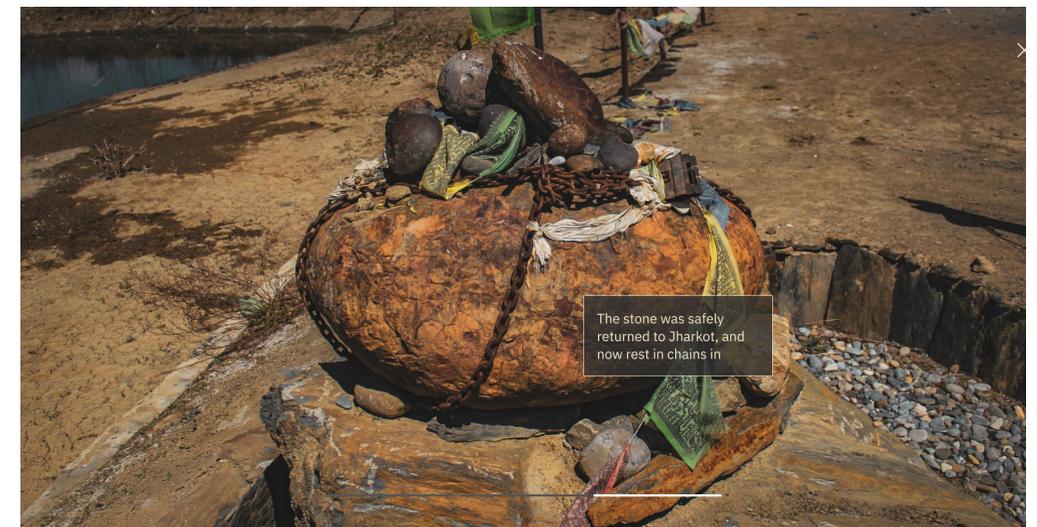
The Falling Apricot (Jharkot page)

The user follows the apricot; as they scroll down the apricot falls, they can read about how they are grown in the area and sees it turn into locally produced jam.



The Caves

The story about the caves of Lupra contains an encouragement to all the audience. It provide the user with a travel tip while and encourages them to pay the monks and nuns respect.



The stone thefts

The story tells the story about a physical object. It bridges the gap between the website and the real world. The idea was that it would add value to the sight of a otherwise not so interesting stone.

6.3 Final evaluation



Method

The final evaluation was conducted through a series of user tests. The participants were given a scenario matching the intended use (ref Appendix 3). Then they got to explore the prototype freely. Some minor changes and bugs were fixed between the different participants tested the solution. The sample size was $n = 7$. The participants age ranged from 20-60 years old, with most participants aged below 30. The results were sorted and summarized according to different topics. Two different intros were initially tested. Three participants were given intro A, while four participants were given intro B.

Intro A: Presented the area's tourism situation, encouraging visitors to visit the smaller villages

Intro B: Presented a brief background on the area's geographic location and explained that the page was based upon personal experiences

Results

The quotes are from participants testing the final solution or were brought up during the concluding discussion about the solution.

Overall experience

Participants seemed overall more emotionally invested, laughing, smiling, and curiously asking questions, compared to the initial participant observations. They expressed joy and enthusiasm toward the solution, actively exploring the page.

Personal experiences & Random encounters

Based on personal experiences

“...It’s a bit like Google reviews, if it comes from someone who has been to a place, they often provide much cooler tips than if you rely on platforms like Trip Advisor or something like that.”

“It’s fun to see personal stories! When I’ve been traveling, I always went for the things that people we met recommended! We stayed here, then we went there and experienced this and that.”

The participants exposed to Intro B registered that the page was based on personal experiences. Several of the participants emphasized that the page gain value from being based on personal experiences. Furthermore, it was received as more relevant, and likely to influence their behavior. They stated that it gave the page more credibility, and made it more authentic. They compared it to review pages and mentioned it was like getting tips from other travelers. *“Is like google reviews, but much more exciting”*. The participants exposed to Intro A were initially confused but recognized after seeing some of the content that it was based on personal experiences.

Random encounters

“Even the things that might seem trivial are also fun to see... Like the juggler(Sound of Nepal page), it reminds you of all the random things you encounter while traveling.”

“Even if I can’t witness exactly all these things, it gives me a clue of all the different experiences I could get there.”

Participants enjoyed the narratives revolving around small random encounters and

unique situations. They acknowledged that they could not expect to get the same experiences. However, they found it inspiring, demonstrating that it was possible to get similar random experiences in the area.

Travel tips

“Wow, can you do that?” (Asking for cooking courses at a local restaurant)

Participants enjoy getting concrete tips about how to improve their travels, like for instance that they could ask for cooking courses, and that they could visit the caves of Lupra.

People

“Did you go there to talk to them?!” (About the tibetian doctors)

“Was there anyone there when you were there?!” (About the caves in Lupra)

“...It said 15 households in Lupra. I would like to hear more about these people.”

The participants tended to notice everything that regarded people. They were very excited to see images of local villagers and often asked follow-up questions regarding the people they saw or people who were directly or indirectly mentioned. They were not only curious about the villagers but also about other travelers.

Narratives

Cultural experiences

“So fun with things that are different” (about the Tibetan doctors in Jharkot)

“Okey, local cuisine! That is cool!” (When exploring the Kagbeni page)

Participants appreciate the stories showcasing cultural practices that diverge significantly from their own. For example, several participants found the Tibetan doctor story to be fascinating. Food-related narratives also appeal to the audience.

Festivals & rites

“So cool! If I was traveling there, I would try to find out when these kinds of things were happening.” (About Dachhang festival)

People are drawn towards rituals, festivals, and unique cultural experiences relating to the people. Participants were intrigued by the Dacchang festival and the ritual

performed at The New Tree, and the riverbank in Kagbeni.

Cultural sites

Participants found the cultural sites that also included scenic nature to be the most interesting. This included the caves, the new tree of Lupra, and the flag hike in Jhong. Furthermore, participants enjoyed the cultural sites where the narratives revolved around what the people do there, such as the ritual at The New Tree and at the river bank in Kagbeni.

The link between the real world and stories

People tend to like the link between objects in the real world and things they read about. For example the story about the stone in Jharkot and the *Old Tree* in Lupra.

The mood of the village

“Wow, this place was more full of life!” (Jharkot, in contrast to Lupra)

“This village seems kind of mysterious” (Lupra)

The participants started to form very specific images of the mood and atmosphere of all the villages based on the content they were exposed to. These moods were not intentionally designed.

Interactions and formats

Interactions

“It’s fun that there are so many different formats. You never know what you’re gonna get on the next page!”

“Cool! I like the combination of sketches and images! Nice to get the pictures of nature as well, since you don’t necessarily get that from just the sketches.”

“ Ohh, then it falls, haha, that is fun!” (Scrollpage related to the production of apricot jam. Local products, Jharkot page)

“This triggers my curiosity! ...when you don’t see everything” (Spotlight, Muktinath page)

“I liked those pages where you hover and get some info or sounds on the same page”

People enjoy the novel interactions, for example, the falling apricot(Jharkot page,

“local products”.) Participants find the scrollytelling parts entertaining and prefer it over long blocks of text. They like the hover actions, where they can easily obtain information quickly without leaving the page. Participants appreciate the combination of images and illustrations from the Jhong page. Furthermore, they like that the website is very visual, easy to comprehend, and does not just contain big blocks of text. They often express joy when entering a new page with a new format. Interactive illustrations evoked enthusiasm among the participant. They found the interaction to be fun and satisfying.

Sounds

“I can see him clearly... this is a real character!” (About the juggler, Sounds of Nepal)

“I really liked this!”

“The sounds really make you imagine the moment.”

Participants appreciated The sound of Nepal. They often laughed or chuckled when listening to the sounds. They stated that the sounds triggered their imagination and that they were able to imagine the moment vividly. Participants encouraged us to include more sound throughout the webpage, not limiting it to The Sound of Nepal page.

Curiosity

“Uhh! Im curious about the caves.” (Lupra)

Engagement and Curiosity decline rapidly after viewing a couple of stories. They actively explored the different pages and were often eager to see what more the page had to offer. Even after the official user test ended, participants continued exploring the page. One participant was in a hurry but kept exploring long after saying she needed to go.

Images / Visuals

Pictures are essential, and participants enjoy photos of people and landscapes. When they were tired of the text, participants often skipped through the pictures to see if they found something interesting. People especially liked the pages that contained a lot of visual content. Participants were drawn to images, often overlooking the text.

Variation

“Wow, there are videos also!” (In the Lupra caves)

People enjoy the surprise of novel media, for example, the videos in the caves of Lupra and the sound on the Jharkot page. Those encountering more varied stimuli in the first clicks often explored more of the content.

Text

People had a tendency to ignore longer blocks of text. A few participants faced issues comprehending the words and sentences and had to read them multiple times. As a result, they suggested using more straightforward language.

Humor

Humor has a promising potential to appeal to users. People often laugh or chuckle when they encounter surprising or obscure stories.

Amount of content

“It is a lot... almost too much.”

“I become like... Think about all the things I have to do.”

“Okei, now Im just quickly clicking through things...” (Tired of reading on the Jharkot page)

“If I was actually going, I would go through it all.”

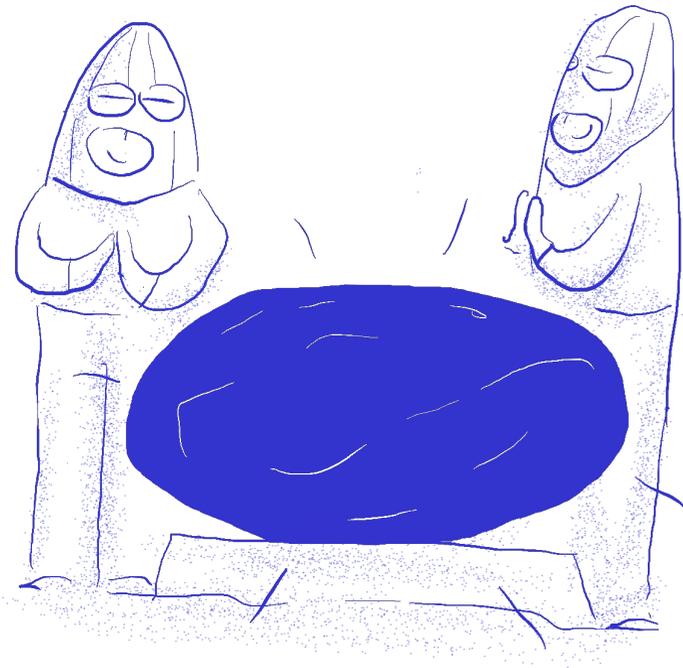
The user feels like the volume of content is very high. Furthermore, they often got tired after viewing a couple of the stories (especially present on the Jharkot page). Some participants expressed that the amount of content reflected the number of things to experience. Some people find the volume too high, causing them to skip content. Others feared they might miss something good, leading them to click through more than they usually read. When entering the interactive illustrations, participants often start by investigating the number of options. The amount of information affects their willingness to invest time in each story. For example, on the Lupra page, with only three possibilities, participants read the whole story more often, whereas in Jharkot, *they usually just scanned through the stories to view the pictures.*

Usability

In terms of usability, the page performed well. Although there were some bugs on the website (due to the Figma limitations), people found their way around it, experiencing little frustration. Participants experienced little trouble interacting with the page, even though the page contained some unconventional interaction patterns. Furthermore, there were some issues related to the incompleteness of the page, where the content was missing or buttons that did not link to pages that were not developed.

6.4 Launch strategy

The launch strategy presents a plan for launching the website and following up, recognizing the locals' desire for immediate action(see §5.1). The launch strategy is a suggestion for how it can be further developed. This thesis only include the first step.



Beta website (this thesis)

The final delivery of this master thesis will be launched as a beta website, although it has some obvious flaws and shortcomings. In order to save time and resources on development, the page will be launched as a High-fidelity Figma prototype. However, publishing a Figma project has certain limitations(see §2.6).

Beta 2.0

The next logical step would be to improve the page's content by removing less interesting narratives and refining the other narratives to better appeal to the audience.

Mobile version

In order to accommodate different user scenarios, the webpage should be easily accessible from mobile devices. However, this requires adjusting all the frames and interactions, which can be time-consuming.

Converting Figma to code

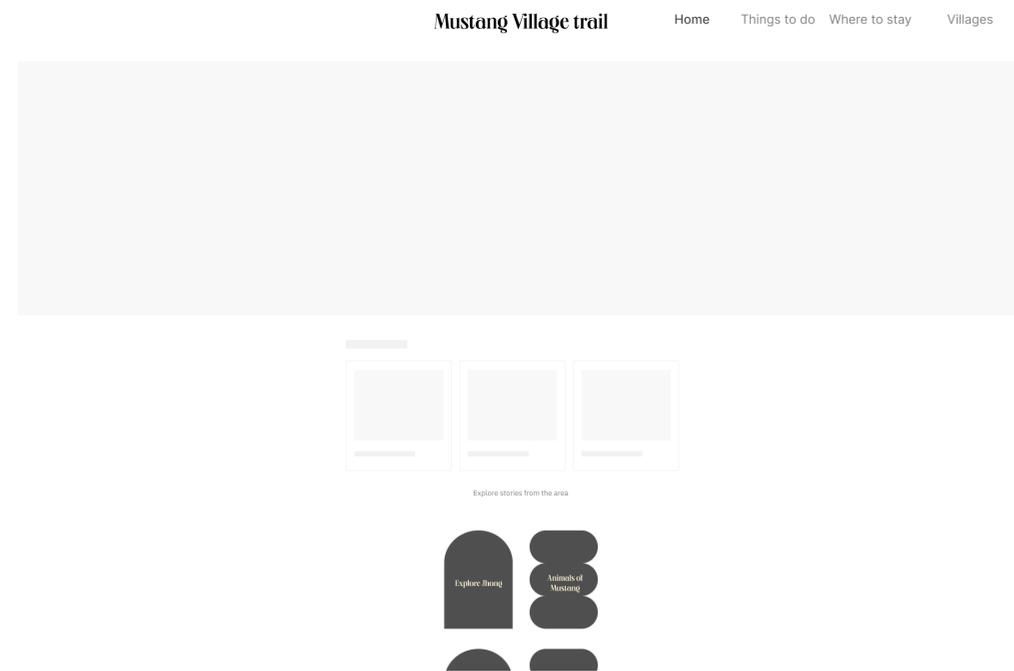
If the project is successful and tourists and the solution impacts tourism in the area, it could be considered to make a more robust webpage by transforming the project to HTML code. This could be done using software like Anima to convert the Figma file into HTML code or by building the website in Webflow. However, adjusting the Figma file to be compatible with this software can be time-consuming, and the services can be pricy, but it eliminates the limitations of Figma(ref).

Integration on the Mustang Village Trail

The stories are designed to be integrated into the Mustang Village Trail website. Ideas for how it can be implemented is presented in the next section.

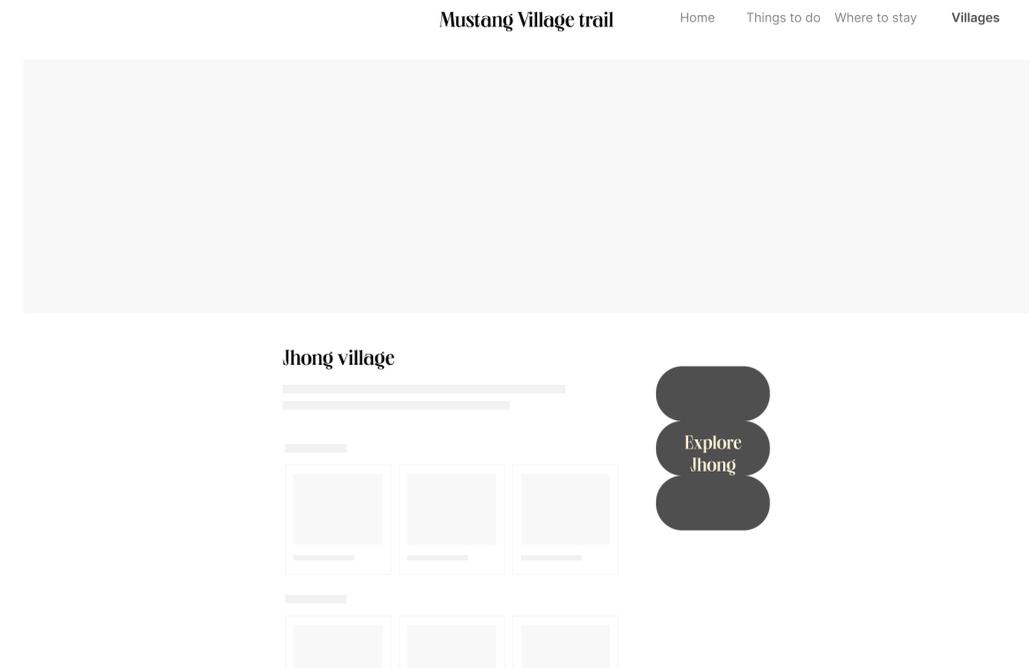
6.3.1 Integration on the Mustang Village Trail

The Mustang Village Trail provides practical information regarding Lower Mustang and holds the potential to reach a broad audience, making it a very relevant touch-point. The stories could act as a source of inspiration, while the website provides relevant information on how to get around. The website is still under development, but the most recent design includes the following pages; *The homepage, Things to Do, Where to Stay, Villages, and Map*. The following section proposes a design for where the stories could be implemented. The design sketches are just low-fidelity wireframes, communicating the general idea, not the finished design.



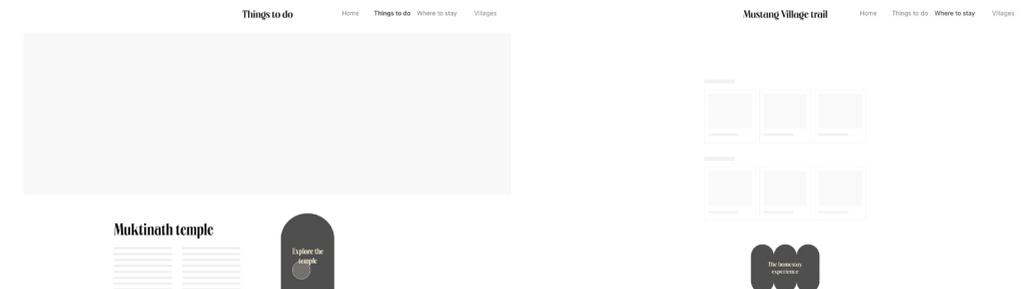
The village page

The Village page includes information about each of the Lower Mustang villages. The corresponding village page from this thesis could be integrated into these pages and serve as a source of inspiration.



The homepage

The homepage features pictures, links, and general inspiration. This page is ideal for the Experience the Atmosphere pages, but it could showcase all of the stories from Memories of Mustang.



Things to do

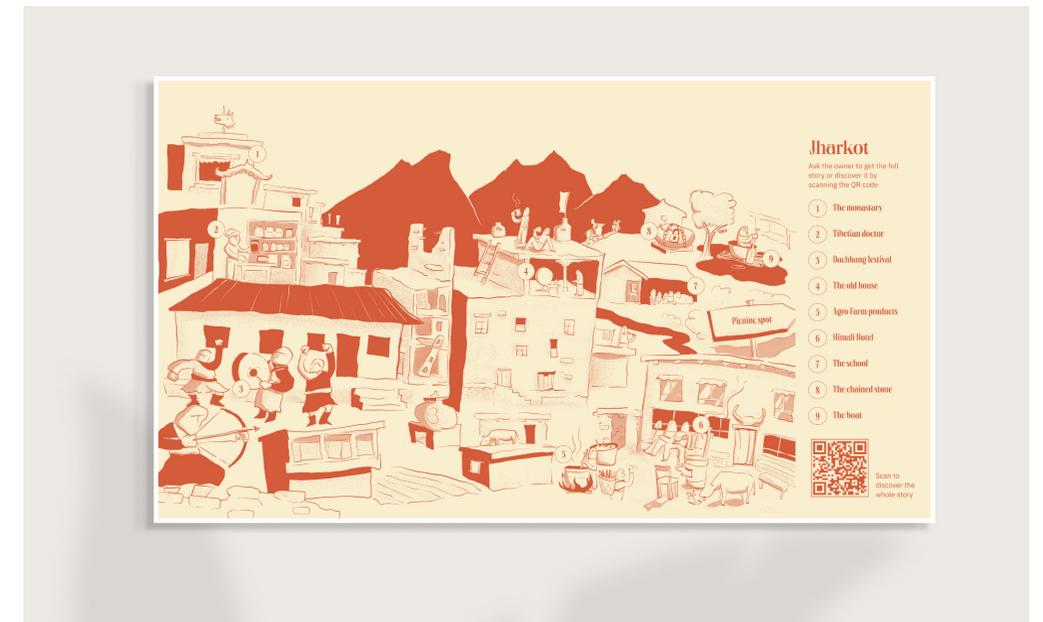
The activity page could showcase narratives relating to the corresponding activity. For example, The Spotlight from Memories of Mustang can be included on the Muktinath Temple page.

Where to stay

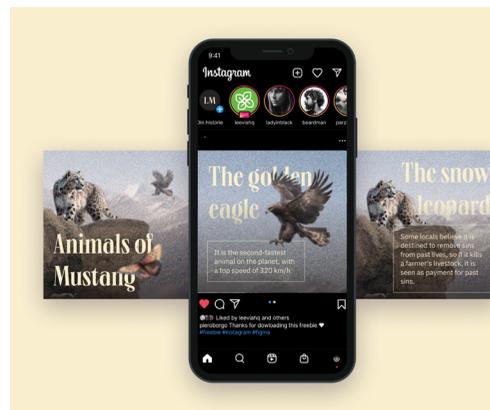
The Where to Stay page features the contact information of different hotels and homestays. This makes it an ideal place to feature the Homestay experience.

6.3.2 Multiple touchpoints

The content and the narratives can be adapted to fit different touchpoints, recognizing that making the website reach a broad audience is hard. The following section exemplifies how the content can be adapted to fit the relevant touchpoints (see §3.3 and § 5.2) and how the design principles and general insights should be included when designing for new touchpoints. The system relating to the new touchpoints still needs to be designed but could be handled by the SAMAJ group.



Wallmaps can act as a source of inspiration and facilitate conversations between the local hotel/ homestay owners and travelers.

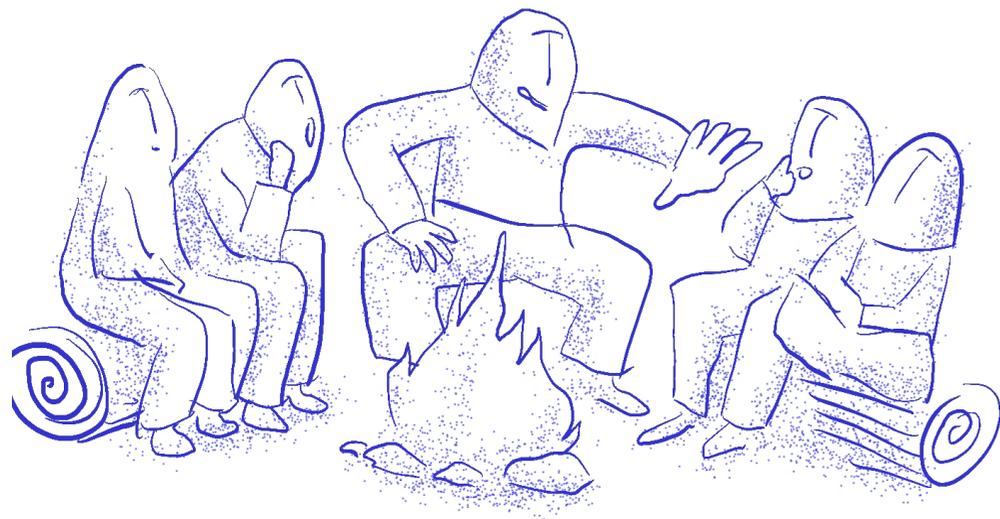


Magazines can be placed on bookshelves (ref) at hotels in Katmandu, Pokhara, along the Anapurna circuit trek, and in the villages of Lower Mustang. They appear more story-oriented and authentic compared to flyers and other advertisement articles.

Social media makes it easy for travelers to share their experiences with other travelers by sharing accounts



Personal stickers (ref), often placed on bottles or phone cases, can be a conversation starter between travelers or among friends and family. The touchpoint recognizes travelers' desire to share their experience (ref) and can have an impact after ending the journey.



Discussion

This chapter discusses the result of the final evaluation and the possibilities of the thesis. Furthermore, it presents the limitations of the thesis and discusses ethical concerns.

7.1 Possibilities

Digital storytelling seems to have great potential for attracting tourists to the villages of Lower Mustang. Participants in the final evaluation expressed excitement about the digital experience and the place. Participants were more emotionally invested, laughing, smiling, and curiously asking questions, compared to the initial participant observations (§ 3.1). It can indicate that they enjoy the experience and might be more likely to remember it. In addition, participants liked the link between real-life and digital stories, demonstrating the potential impact stories can have on the on-site experience. Stories effectively communicate the atmosphere and experiences relating to interactions with the local people. The thesis, therefore, serves as a proof of concept that could be further improved to maximize the desired effect, whether it is attracting more tourists or indirectly and directly encouraging more responsible travel habits.

Consumer narrative vs. organizational storytelling

Participants emphasized that the page gain value from being based on personal experiences. The findings could indicate that consumer narratives (See § 2.2) appeal more than organizational storytelling. If this turns out true, the design should embrace the status as a consumer narrative.

Cultural narrative as a means of cautious behavior

Findings from the final evaluation indicate an interest among participants in cultural narratives, highlighting interesting and unique parts of the destination's culture. These cultural narratives could have the potential to evoke fascination, understanding, and respect among travelers, ultimately leading them to travel with more caution toward the host community.

Interest in people and communities

Stories about people and communities yield great potential. Participants frequently ask questions regarding the people they see and who they are. Furthermore, theory relating to the topic indicates that presenting their actual names and other details linking the information in space and time can contribute to the perceived authenticity. However, presenting personal details can lead to privacy-related issues (discussed further in § 7.3).

Curiosity

Participants became curious about the different elements, actively exploring the website's content, even after the user test had ended. People explored much content, probably more than they would have if the content had been presented in a non-curious manner. This could be caused by the novelty of the look and feel the

novel aesthetics, or the novelty of the interactions on the website. Furthermore, the complexity of the page, with the wide range of possible interactions and media, also seems to contribute to the feeling of curiosity. Uncertainty also occurred when the users noticed interactable elements and headlines but did not know what was hiding behind them due to the considerable variations on the page. Partial exposure to information also evoked curiosity was demonstrated, especially on the Muktinath Spotlight page. All these findings align with the design principles presented in the desk research chapter and demonstrate the potential of designing effect of designing for curiosity when trying to convey information. However, the curiosity evoked by novelty was often short. Once the page was no longer novel, they started to get less curious. The same applies to complexity. When the participants started to see a pattern of repeating stimuli (ex., in the Jharkot page), they got tired of the page. However, those who encountered more varied stimuli in the first clicks often seemed more curious, leading them to explore more, as demonstrated on the Lupra page, which demonstrates the potential of designing the page in a way that demonstrates variety early on. However, sparsely using more novel media and interesting formats might also be a strategy to keep them interested. These potential strategies raise an important question: Is it right to design these curious patterns, so the audience uses more time on the page than they normally would? In order to prevent people from exploring the content out of fear of missing out, there should be a balance between the amount of content and the curiosity evoked. There should be enough content to show that there are plenty of things to do but not so much that they spend too much time exploring it all.

The potential of different digital storytelling formats

The different formats had different strengths and weaknesses. Exploration of atmospheres through sound showed promising results. It made the participants able to imagine moments more vividly. However, using unexpected sounds can be unpleasant in some contextual scenarios.

The hover interactions worked well to let the user explore content rapidly. They enjoyed obtaining information quickly without leaving the page. However, it can be difficult to convey longer stories in this format. The format should be considered when the amount of information is low. Furthermore, hover interactions are not possible on mobile devices, so it requires a responsive design to adjust the interaction to function on mobile devices.

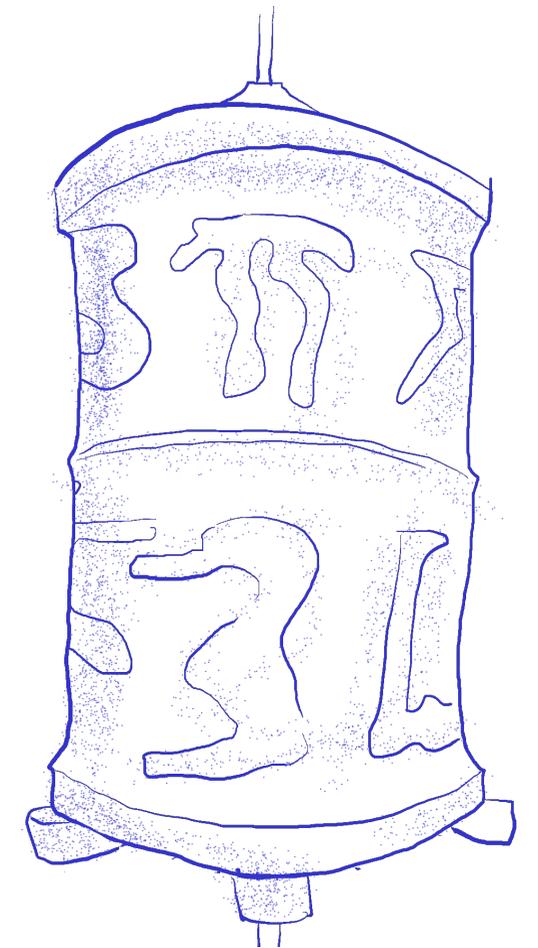
The spotlight functioned well for its purpose. People got curious, explored, and noticed details they had not seen before. This format can be especially effective for communicating narratives relating to responsible traveling. It could, for example, be used to showcase tourist sites and show waste, crowds of people, or other problems related to tourism. It can also be used in a cultural context, where the audience can experience artworks, architecture, monasteries, and more.

The intro works well. Participants read, and process the information, although they have the option to skip it. This could be a powerful tool to communicate narratives

relating to responsible traveling. However, it is important to consider the user's context and expectations. If the user lacks the necessary contextual information when they enter the website, they can become confused, affecting their willingness to explore the rest of the content. Interactive illustration showed promising results in terms of joining content. It evoked curious exploration, but the effect often short and people start to lose interest once the interaction no longer were novel.

For all the formats, it is important to consider the context. If the user is in a physical or mental state where they just want the practical information, they might feel frustrated by the chaotic nature of the information. For this reason, the information should, to some extent, be available in another place or in another format. For example, the website can feature a list view of all the narratives so they can easily return and access the things they found interesting without having to recall the location of the content or have to look through all the content.

The format should also be considered in relation to its need to be updated or changed. Different formats offer different flexibility in terms of changes. For example, the interactive has less flexibility than the scrollytelling pages since it requires more work to alter the illustration than to change one of the text boxes and images of the scrollytelling page.



7.2 Limitations of the thesis

Method, process, and approach

First, one can raise the question: “Does it solve the right problem?”. There are various problems related to the development of Nepal and tourism in general. There are likely other and better ways of solving the problem. Tourism might not be the best way to solve the economic situation since it is vulnerable to change, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, there are better solutions than digital storytelling for increasing tourism. The complexity of stakeholders and influencing factors are very real and significant impact the solution. This thesis has not been focused on the complexity of the possibilities for other solutions due to the limited time and the desire to complete a solution that can be implemented in the real world. Furthermore, local stakeholders and residents could have played a more prominent role in the development of the narratives and the final solution.

The final solution has neither considered the cultural differences in the target group. For example, an American and Indian tourist might have significantly different preferences for web design, aesthetics, interaction, and narratives. Furthermore, the insights conducted could also depend on the cultural background.

The design process was strongly influenced by external conditions. Due to weather conditions in the mountains of Lower Mustang, the fieldwork had to be conducted very late. All the steps and learnings leading up to the fieldwork have been very useful. However, it did not allow for many iterations on the final solution. One can also argue that it was useful for the process and that it opened the possibility to focus more on the format, leading to a more innovative result than it would have done.

It was also easier to capture the right media and nuances, like, for instance, sound recordings, than if the field trip had been conducted earlier.

Due to the sharply formulated design brief provided by Kastellet and Kvassheim(2022), the objective of the task was very focused on attracting more tourists rather than encouraging a responsible travel practice. The final result could have benefited from a stronger focus on responsible travel.

Ultimately, the process of selecting the narratives to be included in the final solution could have been more carefully thought through. Many of the narratives just evolved from sketching and ideation rather than from a series of logical arguments.

Final evaluation

The final evaluation of the solution had shortcomings. First of all, the sample size was small, and there were little variations in the sample in terms of age, nationality, and cultural background.

The test did not evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of communication. It did not collect any quantitative data to determine preferred narratives or formats. However, this is less relevant due to the wide variation and potential errors that can

be caused by the variations in the combination of content and presentation. It would have been interesting to do AB-testing of the content and format to determine the effectiveness of presenting the same content in a different way.

Even though the final evaluation indicates the successfulness of the digital interface, it does not give any usable results in terms of the actual effect on travelers’ intention to visit the destination. If the solution does not change the actual behavior, it is of no use. In order to evaluate this, the solution needs to be deployed and followed up.

Shortcomings

The most significant shortcoming is that many of the narratives have not been properly iterated upon. Some of the narratives have undergone many changes, but there are still some narratives that do not hold up to their potential.

The final solution only highlights five of the villages in the area, although there are several more. This can give the selected villages an unfair advantage compared to the others. The reason for not including more villages is the limited time. However, it is important to note that if more villages are added to the page, the amount of content grows, and it will be harder for the audience to consume all the information.

There are also still some usability issues. The complexity and novelty of some of the interactions pose some usability issues, where people try clicking on things that are not clickable. Combined with the limitations of Figma, it might lead to frustration among some people. Some of the problems are easy to fix and will be fixed before launching, but others require more design work and might be left as it is for now.

Ultimately, the content of the final solution should be reduced. Currently, the amount of content is more than people want to consume, causing them to miss the “best” narratives. In order to do so, the content should be prioritized in relation to the potential to increase visiting intent.

7.3 Ethical concerns and Privacy

Negative impacts of tourism

When designing solutions in relation to tourism, it is important to consider the negative impacts of tourism. Even though the solution seeks to promote a more sustainable tourism practice, the real outcome could contribute to the negative impacts of tourism. Promoting a travel destination, like in the proposed solution, can inspire more people who otherwise would not have traveled to do so. This can lead to environmental impacts like, increased carbon emission, environmental degradation, and problems relating to waste management. The solution tries to accommodate this by targeting users planning a trip to Nepal(see § 6.1.2). The solution should refrain from reaching out to people not intending to travel. However, it is challenging to balance reaching them in time and not encouraging more traveling.

Furthermore, a greater influx of tourists can harm the local culture in the destinations. As explained in chapter 1.3, tourism can cause the commodification of local culture, change traditional festivals and cultural practices, and even contribute to a rising focus on material possessions among locals. The villages targeted by this solution are extra vulnerable because of their small size and population (see § 1.3). The solution aims to counteract these effects by distributing more tourists to less popular destinations in order to share the benefits and burden of tourism, informing and educating tourists about the local culture and people in order to foster understanding and respect among travelers, thereby implicitly encouraging more responsible travel practices. However, if the solution successfully attracts many tourists, and the influx of tourists exceeds the carrying capacity(see § 1.3), the project should be shut down. Furthermore, a system should be in place to ensure that the tourism practice follows a sustainable practice. The system should recognize the complexity of the problem and aim to adjust the result from this thesis to function in the new system. The system could potentially be designed as part of the SAMAJ projects' further works.

Ultimately, if the solution does not want to attract more tourism in general but only distributes the benefits and burden of tourists already planning to travel, it poses another problem. The residents who live near popular hiking trails and other tourist hotspots have become reliant on the income generated by tourism. Therefore, if the solution attracts tourists who would have gone to these areas, it may take away the livelihood of these people.



Privacy

There are some privacy concerns related to this thesis. The final solution features images, sound, and video of local people and the other researchers conducting the fieldwork. In order to ensure the privacy of everyone involved, all the material will be reviewed to ensure that those portrayed have the opportunity to approve their usage. This will be done through contact persons in Nepal. Furthermore, a system should be in place so the involved people can retract from their consent.



Conclusion

This thesis aims to utilize digital storytelling in order to promote a more sustainable tourism practice in Nepal by making more tourists visit the smaller villages of Lower Mustang. The result is a functional digital storytelling website. The thesis shows promising results and demonstrates the potential digital storytelling can have for attracting tourists to the villages of Lower Mustang.

Many travelers want more authentic experiences. They desire, among other things, to experience new cultures and customs, connect with local people, experience everyday life, see new landscapes, and find the diamond in the rough, all of which the smaller villages in Lower Mustang can offer. Travelers want to avoid tourist places but often find themselves at these tourist sites due to limited information about other alternatives. The currently available information about the area and the villages is minimal, does not appeal to the tourist, and does not justify the authentic atmosphere of the place. Furthermore, the insights reveal a need for the solution to enhance the visual representation, convey the unique vibe and atmosphere of the places, increase the visibility of smaller villages, and communicate more effectively by avoiding plain text.

Furthermore, the thesis presents various ideas for narratives and formats that could be explored and tested. Moreover, it presents prototypes of some formats and the lessons learned from these prototypes.

From the insights, four design principles are presented. The solution aims to be; Story Oriented, Novel, Exploratory, and Authentic. The result explains in detail how these design principles are implemented in all aspects of the solution.

The results from the final evaluation show promising results. Participants express excitement over the solution and are actively exploring the content. They are curious and seem emotionally invested in the website, laughing, smiling, and curiously asking questions. They experience the website as authentic and are often interested to learn more about the information they encounter. The participants receive the page as a series of personal experiences and encounters, which they again experience as more authentic, relevant, and likely to influence their behavior.

Participants were especially interested in narratives closely connected to the people living in the villages. They enjoyed narratives that highlighted the culture, festivals, and rituals related to the place. They enjoyed narratives that were rooted in real-life objects, bridging the gap between the stories and real life. Moreover, they expressed that the stories would enhance their on-site experience.

The various formats are discussed in terms of strengths, weaknesses, and considerations. The page's scrollytelling introduction displays promising results in delivering a message since people read and process the message. Sounds are efficient at communicating atmospheres and transporting the audience into a specific moment. Hover interactions were great at delivering small amounts of information in a quick and enjoyable manner. The spotlight made people curious and evoked exploratory behavior. Furthermore, it made the participants aware of details they otherwise

would have missed, making it potentially suitable for communicating reflective narratives relating to responsible traveling. Interactive illustrations worked well as a starting point for the user to explore different story pieces. The novelty of the interaction made participants curious, but the effect was often short.

The process of the project has some limitations. The sample size and variation in the final evaluation were weak. Moreover, the project does not embrace the full complexity of the problem. The project could also have had a stronger focus on responsible traveling and more actively encouraged sustainable travel habits. Furthermore, the final result has some shortcomings. There are still some usability issues, and the narratives presented in the solution could benefit from more iterations.

For further work, it is relevant to get a more comprehensive understanding of the complexity of sustainable tourism in the area and investigate how concrete encouragements can be implemented in the narratives. Through more extensive user-testing, the research could investigate the true effectiveness and efficiency of communication through the different formats. It can also examine how the various narratives affect travelers' intent to visit a place.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Templates

The questions served as a starting point, more than a rigid template. The conversations evolved naturally around the topics suggested by the template.

Kan du fortelle litt om en lengre reise du har vært på?
- Hva fikk deg til å velge akkurat denne destinasjonen?

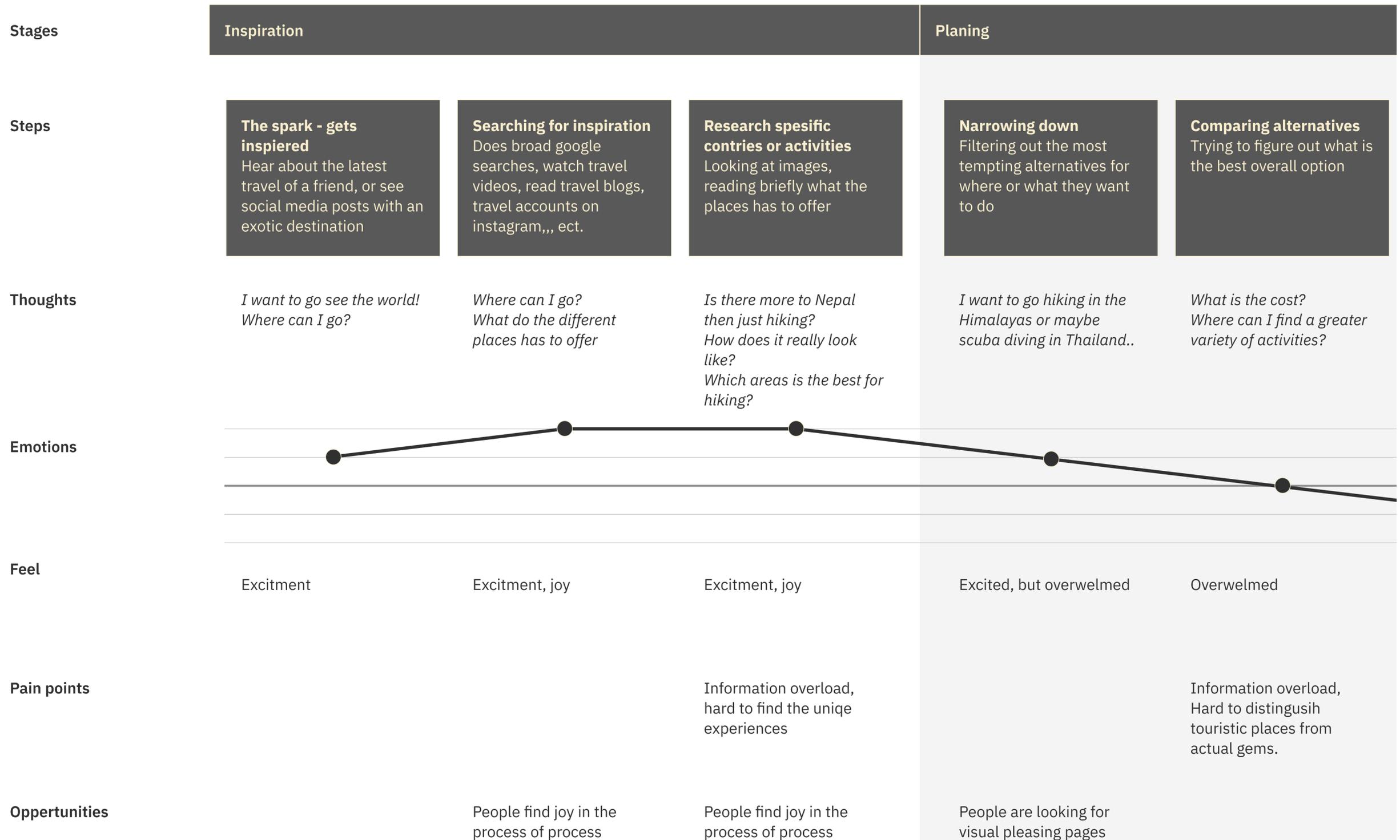
Kan du fortelle om en minneverdig reiseopplevelse?
- Hva kjennetegner en god reiseopplevelse?
- Hvilke aspekter med den var det du likte

Har du hatt noen dårlige reiseopplevelser?
- Hva kjennetegnet disse?

Hva er din reise filosofi? Hvordan mener du den beste måten å reise på er?
- Beste reisetips?

Hvordan planlegger du turer? Hvor finner du informasjon?
- Hvilke kilder støtter du på?
- Hva påvirker valget ditt?

Hvordan tror du digitale medier har påvirket valgene dine på de siste reisene du har vært på? Hvilke kanaler har størst påvirkning på deg?



Appendix 2 : User Journey Map

During travel

Plan logistics

Researching how to get there and where it is possible to stay

Research the area

Researching things to do and other places to visit in the same city or area.

Creating an itinerary

Planing where and for how long they want to stay in one place

Get recommendations

Finds new things to do and see after talking to locals and fellow travelers

Adjust the plan

Constantly adjusting the plan according to new information

Online research

Do more online research if they lack things to do or need a place to stay

*Where can I stay?
How do I get from the first place to the second?*

*Can't wait to go there!
What other things is there to see or do close by?*

Is it enough with 2 days in this place or do I need more to expereince everything?

*That place sounds cool, I want to go there aswell?
Do I trust their recomandations?*

This place has so much to offer, maybe I should stay one extra day?

*What can I do in this place?
Where is the nicest place to eat nearby?*



Overwelmed, bored

Excited

Excited

People are looking for visual pleasing pages

Make it easy and cool to share the page with other travelers

Provide interesting information, present it visually

Sharing the experience

Research history and culture

Read about the history and culture related to the places they plan or have visited

Shares the experience with other travelers

Share their experiences of places and activities to other people they meet.

Share stories with friends and family

Traveling stories are often shared frequently for many years to come

Sharing on social media

People often share photos and videos from their travels on social media

Why is this temple so famous?

Which places would I recommend?

*Do I have something interesting to share from my travels?
Was it a good story?*

*Is this worth sharing?
Will this picture make me look more interesting?*



Make it more fun

Give them narratives to share

Provide “templates”

Appendix 3: Scenario final evaluation

“You planed a trip to Nepal. You have done some initial research and found a popular trekking route called Annapurna Circuit. You have decided to trek the Annapurna and you have read that at the end of Annapurna Circuit is an area called Lower Mustang. You know little about the area and want to investigate if there is something to do there. In a facebook group you encounter a facebook post with a link to a webpage and a short text, explaining that this is an webpage with some personal experiences from the area.”

Utilizing digital storytelling to promote sustainable tourism in Lower Mustang

Master thesis for Magnus Petterteig Mo

Title Facilitating sustainable tourism through digital storytelling

Tittel Fasilitere bærekraftig turisme gjennom digital historiefortelling

This thesis will take part in the SAMAJ project, a transdisciplinary initiative focusing on sustainable development in Nepal.

Tourism is an important source of income for people in Nepal, but the tourists often travel to the same places, leading to over-tourism in some places, while other areas do not benefit economically from the tourists. Students have in previous projects identified the need for improved information in order to attract tourists to the less popular rural destinations. The goal of my project will be to increase interest, among tourists, in some specific villages in Lower Mustang. The focus of the project will be to explore different design narratives and communicate these narratives with techniques from digital and visual storytelling, in order to disseminate sustainable tourism and make it more attractive.

The project will follow a Human-centered design process but will be adjusted in order to fit the practical concerns regarding field work and conditions in Nepal. I will travel to Nepal in the middle of the semester, which means that the initial insights need to be conducted from Norway. Prior to the field trip, I want to do literature research, conduct Interviews and workshops and prototype solutions. During the field trip, I want to test the prototypes, iterate on the solutions and gather contextual insights. After the trip, I will continue working on the prototype, evaluate the solution and facilitate further student work within the SAMAJ project.

Oppgaven utføres etter ”Retningslinjer for masteroppgaver i Industriell design”.

Hovedveileder: Martina Keitsch

Utleveringsdato: 9. januar 2023

Innleveringsfrist: 29. mai 2023

NTNU, Trondheim, 10.01.23



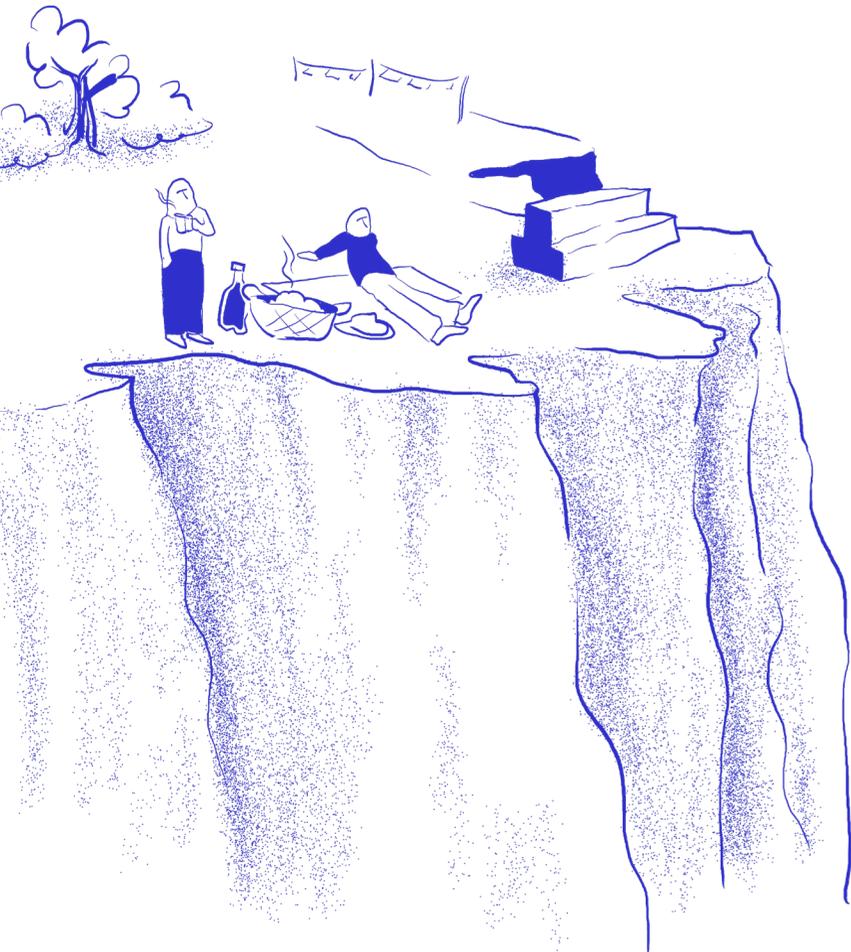
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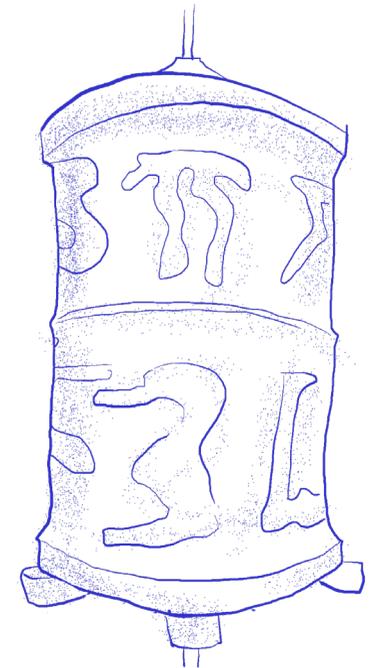
Preface

Acknowledgement



I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have offered their help during my time in Nepal. A special thank to all the people who welcomed us in their homes, and showed us around. I also want to thank my supervisors for their guidance and support throughout this thesis. Additionally, I would like to thank Nora Kastellet and Erle Drejer for their the great experiences we shared in Nepal.

Motivation



The motivation behind this project was to work with digital design and develop something that could be launched into the real world. Furthermore, I was interested in novel digital design and wanted to explore the topic of digital storytelling with a particular focus on playful interactive design. In a previous project, I researched the topic of design for curiosity and wanted to see if I could implement some of the lessons learned into this thesis.

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Glossary

Signifiers - Cues that are included in the design so the users can discover what to do

Abstract

This thesis aims to leverage digital storytelling to encourage sustainable tourism practices in Nepal, specifically by attracting more visitors to the smaller villages of Lower Mustang. The outcome of this thesis is a functional digital storytelling website. The thesis demonstrates promising results and highlights the potential impact of digital storytelling in attracting tourists to explore the villages of Lower Mustang.

The thesis employs a human-centered design (HCD) process, with the tourist as the primary user. The process is iterative and cyclical, ensuring continuous refinement and improvement of the solution. Initial insights were conducted, including interviews with the target user, user journey mapping, and touchpoint analysis. Furthermore, ideation was conducted, and various prototypes were tested in order to gain insight relating to digital storytelling interfaces. Furthermore, fieldwork in Nepal was conducted in order to narrate and materialize for the prototype and to gain an understanding of the context. Ultimately, a functioning prototype was developed through rapid iterations, and a final evaluation was conducted to assess the potential of digital storytelling for this purpose.

The primary delivery of this thesis is a functional prototype. It demonstrates various concepts, formats, and narratives that can be further iterated and evaluated. The website conveyed information through different formats, such as scrollytelling, sounds, hover interactions, and interactive illustrations. The final evaluation demonstrates promising results, with participants expressing excitement and engagement with the digital storytelling website. The narratives closely connected to the local culture, festivals, and rituals were particularly appreciated. Participants curiously explore the website's content and are emotionally invested in the things they find.

The findings suggest that digital storytelling has the potential to attract tourists to the villages of Lower Mustang, providing them with more authentic and immersive travel planning experiences. The research highlights the significance of enhancing visual representation, conveying the unique vibe of the villages in order to influence travelers' behavior. The study also identifies the need to further explore sustainable tourism narratives to encourage responsible tourism in the area.

Keywords: Digital storytelling, Sustainable tourism, Lower Mustang, Nepal, Design for curiosity, Interactive experiences

Sammendrag

Denne oppgaven har som mål å utnytte digital historiefortelling for å fremme bærekraftig turisme i Nepal, spesifikt ved å tiltrekke seg flere besøkende til de mindre landsbyene i Nedre Mustang. Resultatet av denne oppgaven er en fungerende nettside som utnytter seg av digital historiefortelling. Oppgaven viser lovende resultater og demonstrerer den potensielle kraften i digital historiefortelling til det gjeldende formålet.

Oppgaven benytter en brukersentrert designprosess, der turistene er den primære brukeren. Prosessen er iterativ og syklisk, hvor løsningen kontinuerlig forbedres og raffineres. Innsikt ble innhentet, inkludert intervjuer med potensielle brukere, kartlegging av brukerens reise og analyse av touchpoints. Videre ble det gjennomført idégenerering, og ulike prototyper ble testet for å få mer innsikt i digitale historiefortellingsgrensesnitt. I tillegg ble det gjennomført et 5 ukers feltarbeid i Nepal for å samle historier og materiale til prototypen, og for å få en forståelse av konteksten det designes for. Til slutt ble det utviklet en fungerende prototype gjennom raske iterasjoner, og en endelig evaluering ble gjennomført for å vurdere potensialet til digital historiefortelling for dette formålet.

Leveransen består hovedsakelig av den fungerende prototypen. Den demonstrerer ulike konsepter, formater og historier som kan videreutvikles og evalueres. Nettsiden formidler informasjon gjennom ulike formater, som skrollehistorier, lyder, hover-interaksjoner og interaktive illustrasjoner. Den endelige evalueringen viser lovende resultater, der deltakerne uttrykker entusiasme og engasjement for nettsiden. Historiene som er tett knyttet til den lokale kulturen, festivaler og ritualer ble spesielt verdsatt.

Resultatene antyder at digital historiefortelling har potensial til å tiltrekke turister til landsbyene i Nedre Mustang, samt gi de en mer engasjerende opplevelse i reiseplanleggingsfasen. Forskingen fremhever betydningen av å forbedre den visuelle representasjonen og formidle den unike atmosfæren i landsbyene for å påvirke reisendes adferd. Studien identifiserer også behovet for ytterligere utforskning av bærekraftige turismehistorier for å oppmuntre til mer ansvarlig turisme i området. Nøkkelord: Digital historiefortelling, Bærekraftig turisme, Nedre Mustang, Nepal, Design for nysgjerrighet, Interaktive opplevelser.

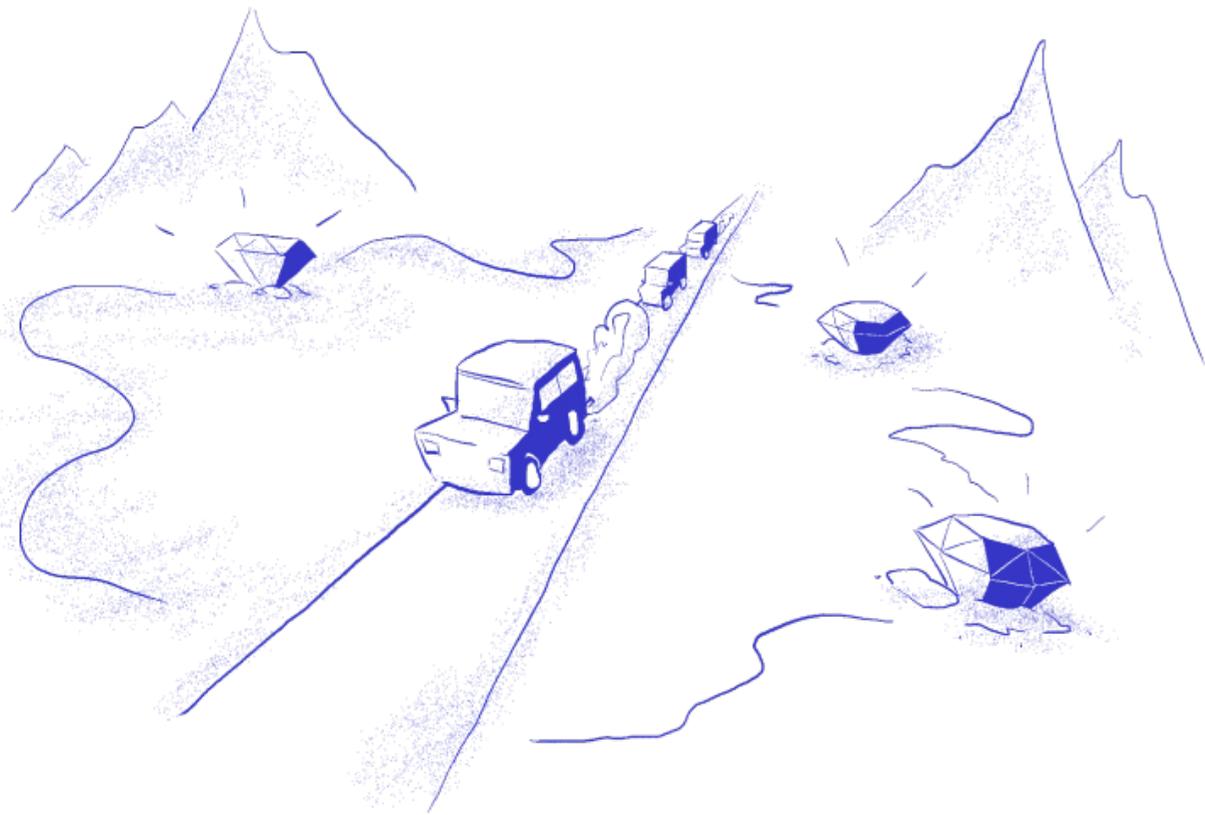
About the project

This thesis uses human-centered design to develop a high-fidelity prototype that utilizes digital storytelling to improve the economic situation in rural villages in Lower Mustang, Nepal. The thesis is a part of the SAMAJ project, a transdisciplinary collaboration between the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and The Institute of Engineering (IOE) at Tribhuvan University. The objective of the SAMAJ project is to implement the UN's Sustainable Development Goals into all educational and research activities at IOE by utilizing Nepal's socio-economic, environmental, and cultural potential (Keitsch, 2021). The initiative focuses on various sustainability goals, recognizing the need for development to balance social, economic, and environmental sustainability. This thesis builds upon previous research conducted by the SAMAJ group, responding to a call for further work in a report by Kasstellet and Kvasshems(2022). This thesis aims to ensure a fair distribution of both the economic benefits and the burden of tourism, primarily by making more tourists visit the smaller villages in the area.

This main goal of this thesis is to explore techniques and aspects of digital storytelling and examine their potential applications for tourism in Lower Mustang. The goal is to give the audience a new perspective on the location, highlight values they would not typically notice, and make them reflect upon their own traveling habits to promote a more responsible tourism practice. The thesis is practical, exploring various formats and narratives through rapid iterations. Ultimately, the desired outcome is to develop a functional prototype, allowing the project to generate insights for those interested in taking it further and hopefully make a difference for the people living in the smaller villages.

The final result of this thesis is a functioning prototype containing various narratives, presented using various digital storytelling techniques. The narratives presented in the solution include, among other things, personal experiences, local culture and history, and informative narratives regarding the challenges and opportunities of tourism in the area. In addition to the prototype, the thesis provides a strategy for how the prototype can be launched and how it can be adapted to fit other touch-points.





Background

This chapter provides the background for the project. The chapter begins by presenting the socio-economic situation in Nepal. Furthermore, it presents sustainable tourism practices as a mechanism for development, present challenges related to tourism and introduces the SAMAJ's ongoing project with sustainable tourism in Lower Mustang.

1.1 Socio-Economic Situation in Nepal

According to the United Nations (UN), Nepal is among the world's least-developed countries (UNCTAD, 2022). A report published by the National Planning Commission (2021) states that 4.9 million people, which accounts for 17.4% of the population in Nepal, are still considered multi-dimensionally poor.

Nepal's economy is heavily dependent on two sectors: tourism and agriculture. The agriculture sector employs around 75% of the population, while tourism accounts for 6.7 percent (Worldbank, 2019). The unemployment rate among youths in Nepal is high, at around 19% (Sharma, 2022). The high unemployment rate has led to a culture where it is widespread among youths to travel abroad to either study or work. According to UNESCO (2022), Nepali students going abroad to study nearly doubled from 44,255 in 2017 to 95,268 in 2022. Out of all students enrolling in higher education after finishing high school, 21.6% go abroad to study (UNESCO, 2022).

Nepal's economy heavily relies on tourism. According to the World Bank (2019), the tourism industry accounted for 6.7% of the national GDP, supporting over one million direct and indirect jobs. Furthermore, they state that 80% of these jobs were located in remote and resource-constrained areas. According to the Ministry of Culture, Tourism & Civil Aviation (2023), the country welcomed more than 1.1 million tourists in 2019, with an average stay of 12.7 days. The most common nationality among the tourists was India, China, the USA, the UK, and Sri Lanka, and the primary reasons for visiting ranged from holiday and pleasure to pilgrimage and mountaineering (Ministry Of Foreign Affairs, 2023).

1.2 Sustainable Tourism for Development

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing economic sectors, employing over 235 million people worldwide (UNWTO, 2012). The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2012) states that tourism has become an opportunity for less privileged people to enter the workforce, especially women and youths in developing countries. The UNEP (2012) has identified tourism as one of the ten sectors with the most significant potential to create employment and reduce poverty in developing countries. Tourism yields the potential to have both positive and negative impacts on a country. In order to maximize the positive effects and minimize the negative impacts of tourism in the country, it is essential to adopt sustainable tourism practices. The UN defines sustainable tourism as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities." (UNWTO, 2023) The UN environmental program (UNEP) furthermore states that in order to balance long-term sustainability, there should be established a balance between the economic, sociocultural, and environmental aspects of tourism (UNWTO, 2023). According to The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (2021), the negative impact of tourism includes, among other things: economic leakage, damage to the natural environment, and overcrowding. Furthermore, they acknowledge positive aspects of the tourism industry, including job creation, cultural heritage preservation, wildlife preservation, and landscape restoration. According to a report published by the Worldbank (2022) the environmental benefits of tourism in protected areas in Nepal are greater than the benefits gained only from managing those areas because parts of the economic benefits are invested into work with preservation of the area.

1.3 Responsible tourism



Travelers' behavior can affect the sustainability of the tourism practice. When travelers go to already popular destinations, it increases the pressure on the local environment and society. There are also certain behaviors that are more harmful than others. Cultural arrogance refers to a behavior where a tourist knowingly continues to follow their own cultural rules, discarding the local culture's norms and rules (Samson, 2015). This can, for example, be tourists that break religious, cultural, or social codes and can lead the locals to feel increased resentment towards the tourists (Samson, 2015). Responsible tourists are people who behave in a way that aligns with maximizing the positive impacts of tourism and minimizing the negative aspects (Global Sustainable Tourism Council, 2021). The following section presents the positive and negative effects of tourism.

“Responsible Travel is a term referring to the behavior and style of individual travelers. The behaviors align with making a positive impact to the destination rather than negative ones” (Global Sustainable Tourism Council, 2021).

Positive impacts of tourism

In addition to the direct economic benefits presented in section 1.2, there are a lot of other positive impacts of tourism. Facilities develop for tourism, like infrastructure, health care, and transportation, can also benefit the residents (Samson, 2015). Furthermore, when tourists are interested in local culture and customs, it can lead to increased interest among local government and residents in cultural preservation (Samson, 2015). Furthermore, the economic benefits generated by the tourism industry can also be invested in the preservation of the local environment and cultural heritage (Samson, 2015) (Worldbank, 2022). The jobs created by the tourism industry can also reduce depopulation in rural areas, strengthening local communities (Samson, 2015).

Negative impacts of tourism

In order to promote responsible tourism, it is important to have a foundational understanding of the negative impacts of tourism. The number of tourists should be seen in relation to the size of the host community in order to assess the possible negative impacts of tourism (Urry & Larsen, 2011), so when working with tourism in smaller villages with a low population, the number of tourists needed to cause negative impacts is lower. It is, important to stay within the carrying capacity of the places. The carrying capacity is the limit of acceptable change in the host community (Kennell, 2014). It relates to both the environment and the socio-cultural aspect of the place.

The environmental impact is the change made to the natural environment. Environmental impacts can be viewed at different scales, from the local to the global environment. Global environmental impacts related to tourism include, among other things, greenhouse gas emissions from aviation (Filho et al., 2023). Local environmental impacts include, among other things, waste management and degradation of the natural environment and wildlife (Lew et al., 2004).

The *socio-cultural impact* relates to the culture and the people living in the villages. Negative socio-cultural impacts include, among other things, The process of commodification, standardization, changes in cultural products and festivals, and the demonstration effect (Samson, 2015).

Commodification

Commodification is the process by which something is transformed into an object of trade or commodity (Samson, 2015). Tourism can make religious rituals, ethnic rites, or festivals into commercial experiences. These traditional festivals and special events are particularly vulnerable due to tourists' willingness to pay for entertainment (Theobald, 1994). Furthermore, sacred places may lose respect when commercial forces are introduced (Theobald, 1994). The process of commodification also relates to traditional crafts that are sold to tourists as souvenirs. Traditional craftsmen often alter their designs and processes to accommodate the rising demand (Theobald, 1994).

Standardization

Tourists' desire for familiarity might cause the destination to be standardized. The destination tries to adapt to the tourists' desire for familiar food, drinks, and facilities and ends up as a standard tourist destination (Samson, 2015).

Culture clash

The differences in cultural behavior between the residents and the tourists can sometimes be so significant that it is impossible to achieve mutual understanding, causing antipathy amongst both groups (Theobald, 1994). Furthermore, attitudes towards tourism among the residents may change as tourism develops (Samson, 2015). It often begins with a positive attitude developing into apathy and, finally, irritation as tourism grows.

Demonstrative effect

When less developed areas are exposed to tourism, it can cause the so-called Demonstrative effect (Samson, 2015). It causes the locals to focus on what they do not possess, leading them to work harder and strive for higher levels of education to emulate the living standard of the tourist (Theobald, 1994).

Changes in cultural products and festivals

When festivals and cultural products promote a destination, tourists are encouraged to penetrate the local happening. However, when commercial interests are introduced, it can lead to the local culture and customs changing to satisfy tourists' needs. (Theobald, 1994) Samson (2015) uses an example from Bali, where a traditional dance is taken out of its religious context, shortened, and performed daily for tourists to see.

The tourism industry in Nepal faces various challenges, including the issue of high influx of tourism in certain areas (Fyall, 2019). When too many tourists visit the same place at the same time it can lead to overcrowding, increased environmental pressure, and degradation of local culture and environment (Milano et al., 2018).

This challenge is particularly evident along the most popular trekking trails in Nepal. Along these well-trodden paths, waste management poses a significant concern (ACAP, n.d). Research conducted by the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP, n.d) states that an average trekking group of 15 people generates approximately 15 kilograms of non-degradable and non-burnable trash during a 10-day hike. This waste management problem is exacerbated by the limited infrastructure available in many places. Furthermore, tourists exert considerable pressure on forest resources, as their consumption exceeds that of the local population by more than double (ACAP, n.d).



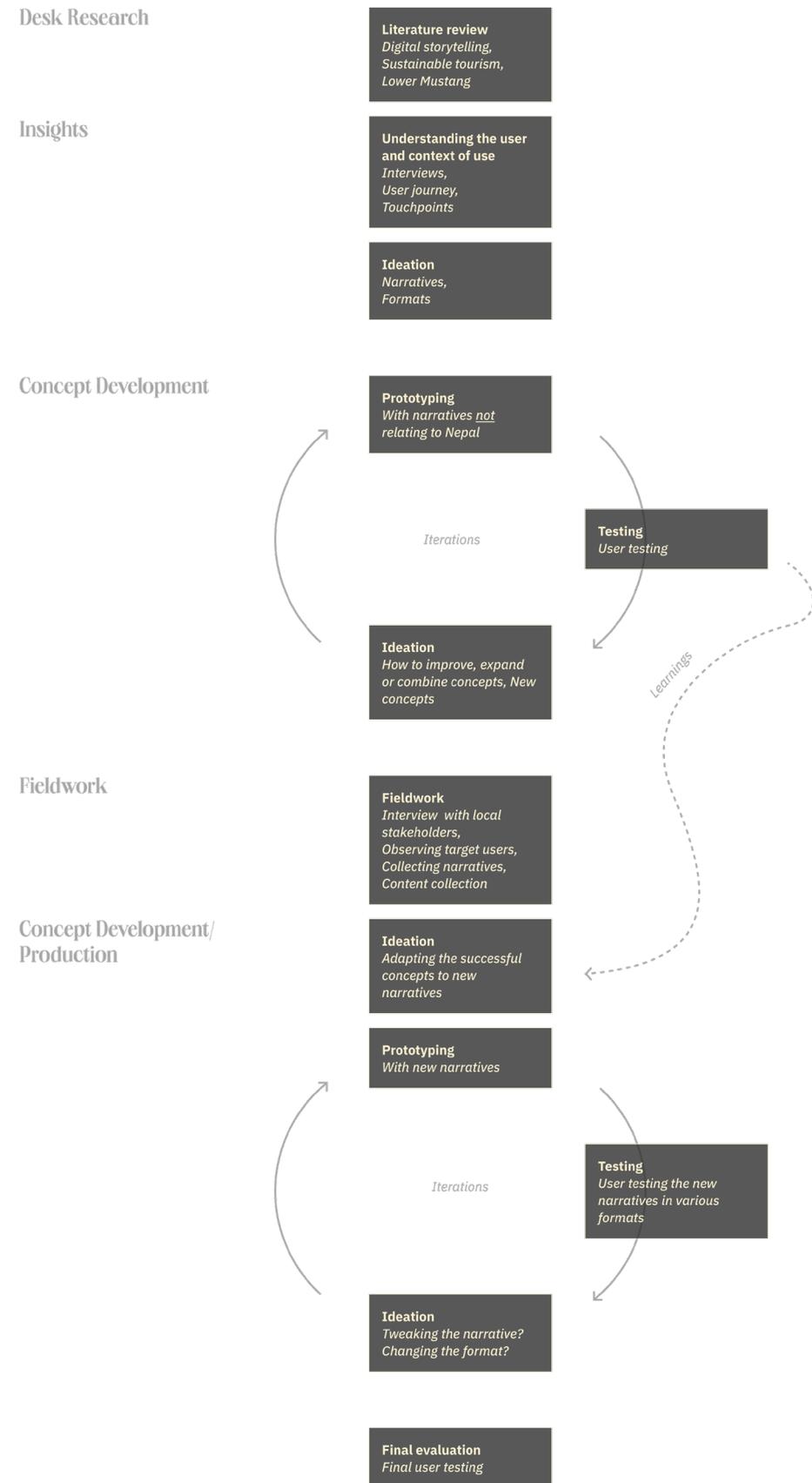
1.4 Sustainable tourism in Lower Mustang

SAMAJ has previously initiated a project in collaboration with local residents with the aim of establishing a sustainable tourism practice in Lower Mustang, a region in Nepal. They have conducted fieldwork in the area and concluded that the locals are eager to welcome tourists and are already working on projects to attract more tourists (Kastellet & Kvasheim, 2022). Furthermore, they state that the area has the potential to be an attractive destination for tourists, with scenic views and authentic culture. However, tourists struggle to obtain information about the area, causing them to pass by without knowing the possibility (Kastellet & Kvasheim, 2022). For this reason, Kastellet & Kvasheim (2022) suggested creating a web platform that shares information about the area. This thesis will work in collaboration with Kastellet and Drejer to provide tourists with information about the area. Kastellet and Drejer work in parallel with a project named Mustang Village Trail. Their project aims to establish a hiking trail between the smaller villages of Lower Mustang and create a website to promote the hiking trail. The website aims to provide practical information about the area, what to do there, and where to stay. This thesis will look at the potential of digital storytelling as an addition to the information they provide, and explore how digital storytelling can contribute to a more sustainable tourism practice in the area.

1.5 Design Process

This research project draws on prior studies and is based on a call for further action in Kastellet and Kvasshems's (2022) research report on tourism in Lower Mustang. This project uses a human-centered design approach, focusing on the traveler as the primary user. Human-centered design (HCD) is a process that helps meet the needs of the user, ensuring the solution is usable and understandable as well as positive and enjoyable (Norman, 2013). The HCD process consists of four steps, observe, ideate, prototype, and test. The Process is circular and is intended to be repeated (Norman, 2013).

In order to collect narratives and gather material for the prototype, fieldwork in Nepal was scheduled. Due to the harsh winter conditions in the mountains of Lower Mustang, the fieldwork had to be conducted in the later half of the project period. Since external factors defined the timing of the fieldwork, the design process was adapted to make time for the completion of the prototype. For this reason, the insights regarding the target user, ideation, and initial prototyping were scheduled before traveling. The intended approach was to learn as much as possible about digital storytelling through rapid iterations and a wide range of prototypes. The intention was to build interactive prototypes with other narratives that could be replaced with content related to Lower Mustang.



1.6 Metodology

This section explains the methods used in the project.

Semi-structured interviews

A semi-structured interview is a method of gathering insights where you ask questions based on a general theme. The phrasings and the order of the question are not rigidly determined but allow for flexibility(George, 2022).

User journey maps

A user journey map is a service design tool, which visualizes an experience over time (Stickdorn, 2018). It can be used to visualize an existing service or experience as well as a potential solution for a new experience. This could for example be the existing experience of planning and executing a travel, or a future scenario for how the travel experience could look with the intended solution. It helps to reveal gaps and opportunities in a potential solution, as well as communicating the value of the solution that is proposed(Stickdorn, 2018).

Desk research

In service design desk research refers to both preparatory research and secondary research. The preparatory research is about digging into and trying to understand the domain and the industry, the client, and their problems. Preparatory research is more targeted towards finding the questions to ask than the actual answers(Stickdorn, 2018). Secondary research uses existing secondary data, meaning qualitative and quantitative data regarding the topics, using online search engines and scientific data bases to investigate the topics(Stickdorn, 2018).

Self-ethnography

Is a process where the researcher explores an experience themselves and documents the process through field notes, photos, videos and audio recordings(Stickdorn, 2018).

User scenarios

User scenarios are detailed descriptions of realistic situations the user encounters relevant to the design solution(Interaction Design Foundation, 2019).

Stakeholder map

Stakeholder map is a representation of stakeholders involved in a project, intended to visualize the relationship between them. It can be complex or simple depending on the project and the needs of the project(Service Design Tools, 2018).

Participant observation

Is a method where the researchers observe the participants in order to understand how they really behave in a certain situation. When conducting participant observations it is important to note what they do as well as what they do not do (Stickdorn, 2018).

How might we statements

How might we statements are questions that help to reframe the insight from a project into actionable opportunities(Anderson, n.d.). It helps recognize users' needs and problems instead of thinking about solutions. Furthermore, they help frame the design challenge and are a helpful starting point for ideation.



Desk Research

First, the chapter presents the area of Lower Mustang, provides a brief contextual understanding of the place, presents the status quo of tourism in the area, and introduces relevant stakeholders related to the project. Secondly, it summarizes essential findings related to storytelling in tourism. Third, it defines digital storytelling and provides relevant related work. Fourth, it presents design principles for leveraging curiosity. At last, it provides necessary theoretical knowledge regarding software related to web design.

2.1 The current situation in Lower Mustang

This section aim to provide an understanding of the area of Lower Mustang and the stakeholders relating to tourism in the area.

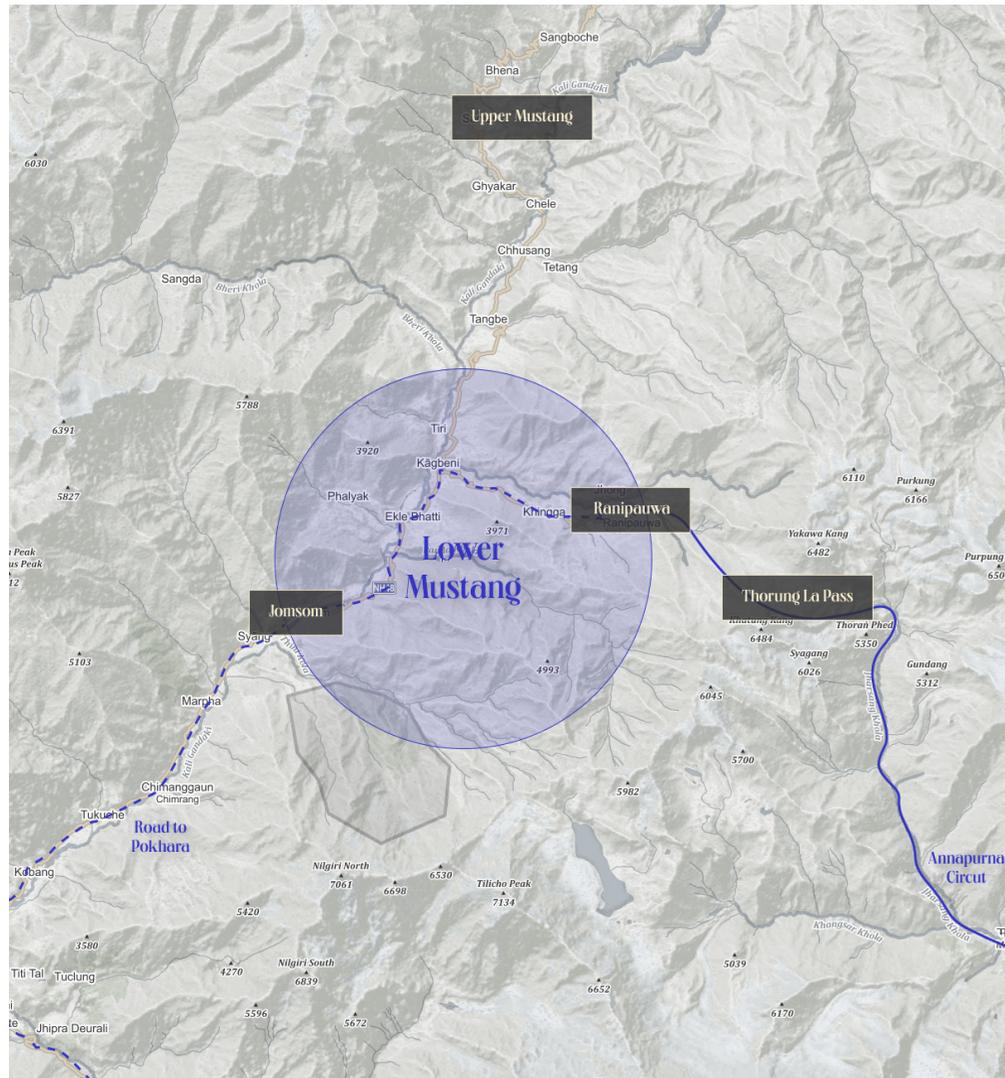


Figure 1 Area overview

2.1.1 The Area

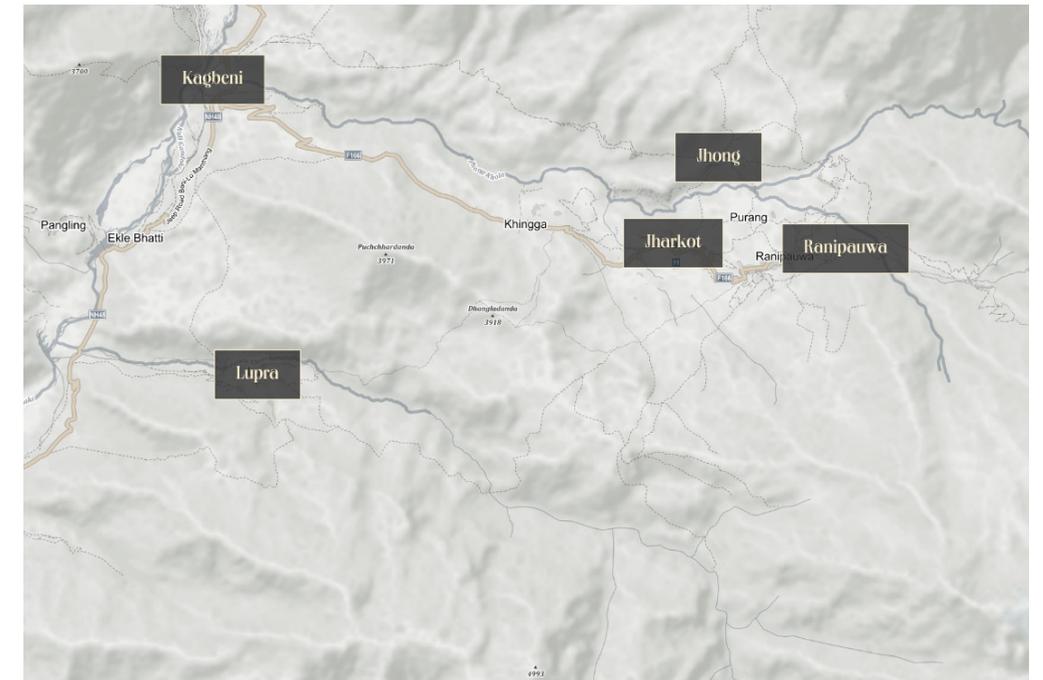
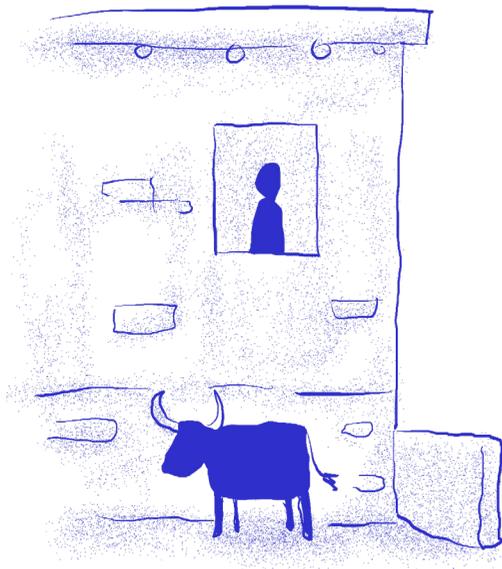


Figure 2 Village overview

Lower Mustang is a part of the Mustang region, located north of Nepal, connected to the Himalayas, and extending towards the Tibetan plateau (Office of the District Coordination Committee, n.d.). Lower Mustang is located within the Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA) and is a mountainous area with several small agricultural villages. West of Lower Mustang lays is the mountain pass Thorong La, the highest point of the Annapurna Circuit trek (e.g., Figure 1). North of Lower Mustang (e.g., Figure 1), lays Upper Mustang, “the last forbidden kingdom,” a place famous for the well-preserved traditional Tibetan culture (Fatland, 2020). There are several villages in the Lower Mustang (e.g., Figure 2), but this thesis focuses mainly on the villages; Jharkot, Jhong, Lupra, Kagbeni, and Ranipauwa (commonly referred to as Mukti-nath), since they are a part of the proposed hiking trail by Kastellet and Drejer.

The primary aim should be to ensure a fair distribution of both the economic benefits and the burden of tourism, primarily by making more tourists visit the smaller villages(Kastellet & Kvasheim, 2022).



Tourism in the area

According to Kastellet and Kvasheim(2022), tourism in Lower Mustang primarily gravitates towards two destinations: Ranipauwa and Jomsom. Ranipauwa, located at the end of the road and closest to Thorung La Pass(e.g, Figure 1), is an important pilgrimage site for Hindus and Buddhists and serves as the last stop for many trekkers trekking the Annapurna Circuit. On the other hand, Jomsom serves as the entry point to the area, housing an airport and a Jeep station, making it an ideal starting or ending point for travelers(Kastellet & Kvasheim, 2022). In addition to trekkers and pilgrims, the area is popular among bikers, often traveling in bigger groups led by a guide.

Measures for sustainable tourism in the area

In their 2022 study, Kastelle and Kvasheim carried out field research to map the current state of tourism in the region. They propose that the primary aim should be to ensure a fair distribution of both the economic benefits and the burden of tourism, primarily by making more tourists visit the smaller villages(Kastellet & Kvasheim, 2022). In order to strengthen tourism in these less visited villages, they proposed five unique design strategies

Information - *Providing tourists with details about the region's villages, landmarks, and attractions.*

Collaboration - *Formalizing cooperation among internal stakeholders and enhancing collaboration between internal and external entities.*

Ecotourism - *Utilizing the region's natural resources and biodiversity sustainably to minimize the negative impacts of tourism.*

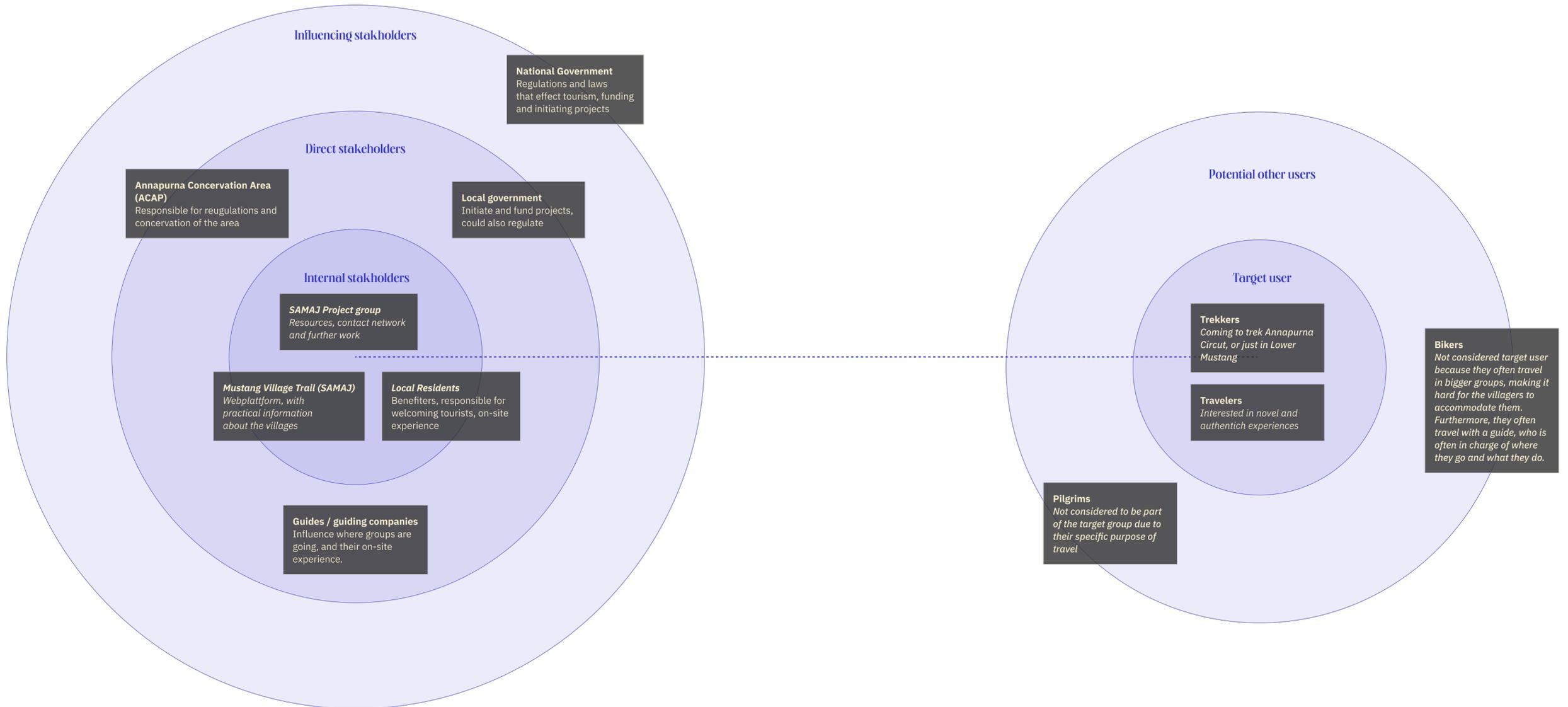
Hiking Routes - *Developing new hiking trails that incorporate the smaller villages.*

Web Platform - *Creating a digital platform providing all relevant information to tourists.*

Current tourism practice in the smaller villages

The following section is based on the report of Kastellet &Kvasheim(2022) and my interpretation of the situation based on the fieldwork conducted in Nepal(see § 5.1). The smaller villages have already initiated some projects to attract more visitors, including constructing a road to a nearby viewpoint. Since the tourist flow is not significant enough, some locals combine tourism and farming. They often operate by having their phone number on the door of the homestay and hotel so they can be reached by phone if they go out on the fields to work. However, this becomes a problem when the tourists arrive and assume the place is closed. When farming demands extra work, farmers may need to arrange for someone to fill in to host tourists. This requires them to get advance notice. If they cannot host the tourists, they often send them to other hotels or homestays in the village. This is often a mutual collaboration.

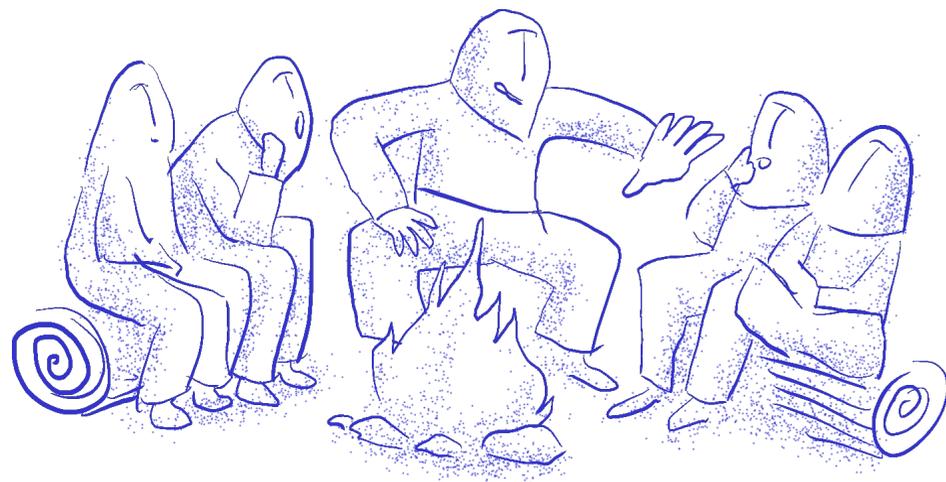
2.1.2 Stakeholders & target users



Visualization of the relevant stakeholders in the area.

2.2 Storytelling in Tourism

This introduces the concept of storytelling, highlights the potential for storytelling in tourism, and presents key insights regarding the practical use of storytelling in tourism.



“People are hardwired to listen to stories. Stories are the way human knowledge was passed down before the written word. Storytelling is hardwired into our brains. It’s the natural way our brains learn and process information” (Akash, 2015, s. 8–9).

What is storytelling?

Pachucki et al. (2022) define stories as narratives that place events and characters in a coherent sequence. Storytelling has not only been a tool for humans to convey information but also a way of creating an intense emotional connection with one another. (Walter og Parmenter, 2020, s. 63). It has become a more commonly used tool also in modern society and is now increasingly used in destination marketing to promote travel experiences. This section presents key insights extracted from a literature review on the topic of storytelling in tourism.

Key insights storytelling in tourism

In tourism, storytelling distinguishes between consumer narratives, personal experiences like travel blogs and social media posts, and organizational storytelling, narratives provided by an organization to promote a destination (Pachucki et al., 2022). Stories effectively trigger attention among humans, making them relevant for marketing purposes (Pachucki et al., 2022). Stories have some significant advantages compared to other ways of conveying information. Narratives are considered to be easier to understand than arguments (Pachucki et al., 2022). When presenting something as a story, compared to arguments, the message is received as more real, relevant, and personal (Pachucki et al., 2022). Furthermore, Pachucki et al. (2022), states that studies indicate people produce fewer counterarguments when exposed to narratives rather than arguments.

Dionisio & Nisi (2021) states that stories can effectively communicate emotions and values, making them suitable for influencing peoples' behaviors and attitudes. Stories that emotionally touch the audiences have the potential to bring about positive social change, can educate and engage them on various issues, and even encourage them to take action (Dionisio & Nisi, 2021), making them highly relevant in the context of sustainable tourism.

Findings show that using a first-person storyteller (uses pronouns like I, we, us), compared to a third-person storyteller (uses pronouns like, He, She, It) significantly increases tourists' intention to visit a destination (Pachucki et al., 2022). Chiu et al. (2012) identify four key principles when designing stories in destination marketing: Authenticity, conciseness, reversal, and humor.

Authenticity can be achieved by collecting abundant, rich, and varied facts. For example, the story becomes more authentic by including names or specific information, like a location, a date, or something similar (Chiu et al., 2012). Conciseness can be achieved by reducing redundancy. When people see a longer text, it reduces their motivation to process the information. Therefore, it is crucial to tell a story with as few words as possible (Chiu et al., 2012).

A reversal in storytelling relates to a big reveal, a sudden change of events where the audience is given a new piece of information. The reversal creates tension and forces the audience to see what they know about the plot and the characters in a new light (Chiu et al., 2012).

Humor is important in order to get and hold the audience's attention, and commonly is one of the most commonly used communication strategies in advertisement (Chiu et al., 2012).

Key takeaways

Storytelling is effective for influencing attitudes and behaviour

The story should contain a reversal and use humor

Use as few words as possible to tell the story

Authenticity can be achieved by including names, dates, locations, or other specific facts

Using a first person storyteller (compared to third-person) can increase visitors intention to visit a destination



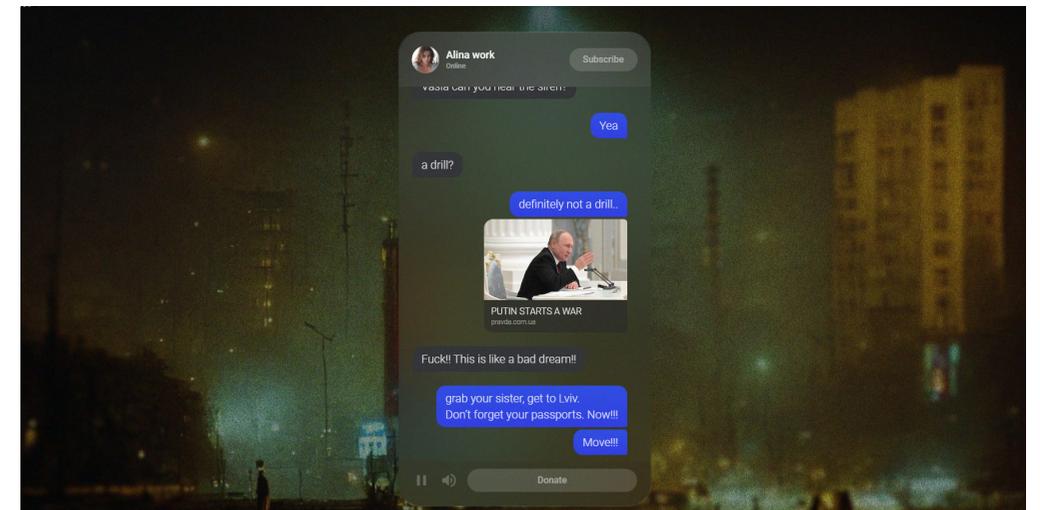
2.3 Digital Storytelling

This section introduces the concept of storytelling, highlights the potential for storytelling in tourism, and presents key insights regarding the practical use of storytelling in tourism. The term Digital Storytelling was been used in a wide range of context, including the film-making industry(Jager, 2017), and education(McLellan, 2007). More recently, the term relates to all kinds of stories created using digital tools(Sethi, 2021). The new era of digital storytelling often uses a wide range of media and compelling interactive formats(Sethi, 2021). In order to get an understanding in the range of possibilities, and to gain inspiration for the solution an extensive investigation and analazis of existing digital storytelling works was conducted. The following section provide some of the examples that were tested, and drawn inspiration from.

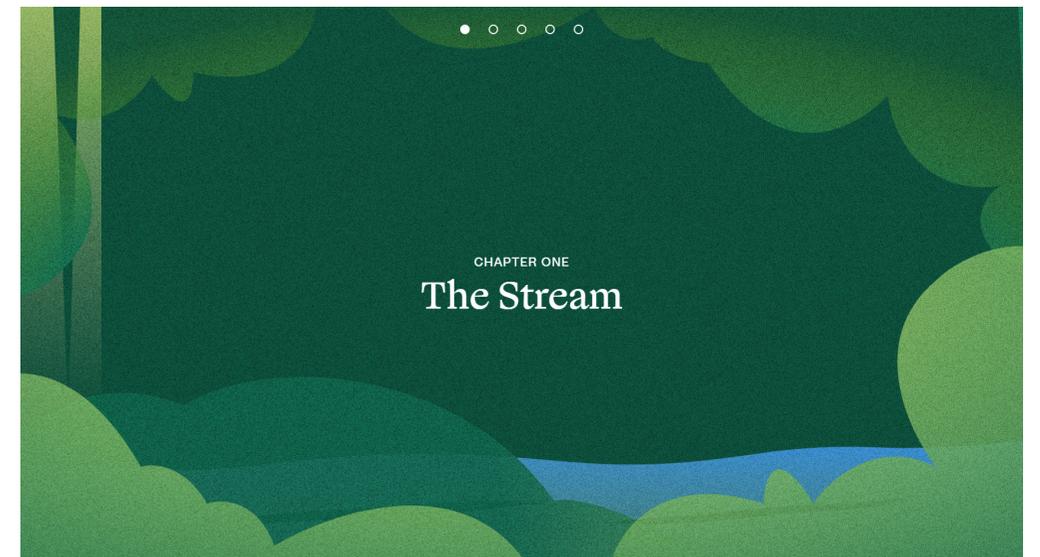
Relevant works of digital storytelling



The Scrollytelling page uses fullscreen images and videos to immerse the audience. The user interacts by scrolling down. The scrolling causes the background to change. (<https://www.nrk.no/jakten-pa-klimaendringene-1.14375177>)



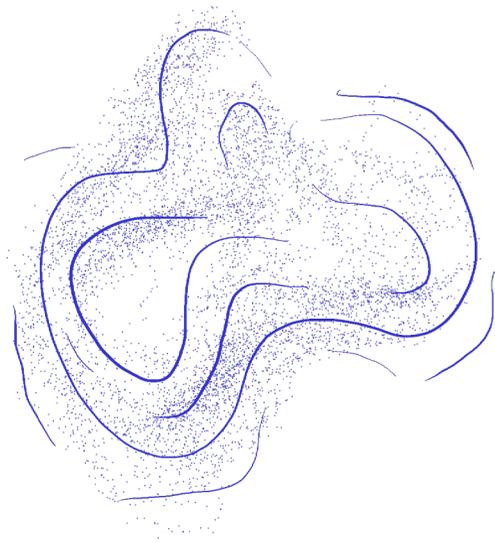
Uaid's website educates the audience about the war in Ukraine by telling a story through text messages between two fictional people, linking the conversation to real events. (<https://plus.u-aid.org/>)



Hearing Birdsong is an interactive hearing test that combines rich audio, beautiful illustrations, and animations to create a more enjoyable method for assessing individuals' hearing abilities. (<https://beta.hearingbirdsong.com/>)

2.4 Design for curiosity

Curiosity is a driving mechanism for behavior and can significantly influence people's behavior (Loewenstein, 1994). The project aims to use curiosity to leverage explorative behavior in the narratives and interactions. This section briefly introduces the theory relating to design for curiosity. Research on curiosity in interaction design has highlighted five basic principles relating to curiosity; novelty, complexity, uncertainty, partial exposure, and conflict. (Berlyne, 1960)(Vorst, 2007, as cited in Tieben et al., 2011).



Novelty

Novelty refers to how novel stimuli are (Berlyne, 1960). The degree of novelty depends on the frequency, how often a particular stimulus has been experienced, recency, how recently it has been experienced, and similarity, how similar it is to other things experienced in the past (Berlyne, 1960).

Complexity

Complexity can be described as the variation in a stimulus pattern. Mast et al. (2021) point to *layered complexity* as a potential strategy to leverage exploration in interactive installations. Furthermore, they state that the first action should be intuitive and obvious, therefore, not too complex. Then, complexity can increase when the user starts to get more comfortable.

Uncertainty

Curiosity evoked by uncertainty relates to humans' need to resolve uncertainty, as presented in Loewenstein's (1994) *Information Gap Theory*. A strategy proposed to instigate curiosity through uncertainty is to make the audience aware of gaps in their knowledge (Loewenstein, 1994).

Conflict

Curiosity can be leveraged by violating expectations (Loewenstein, 1994). A proposed strategy to achieve this effect is establishing a pattern and then breaking it. However, it is important to find the optimal level of incongruity, where the experience is pleasant and stimulating, not frustrating (Hebb, 1949).

Partial exposure

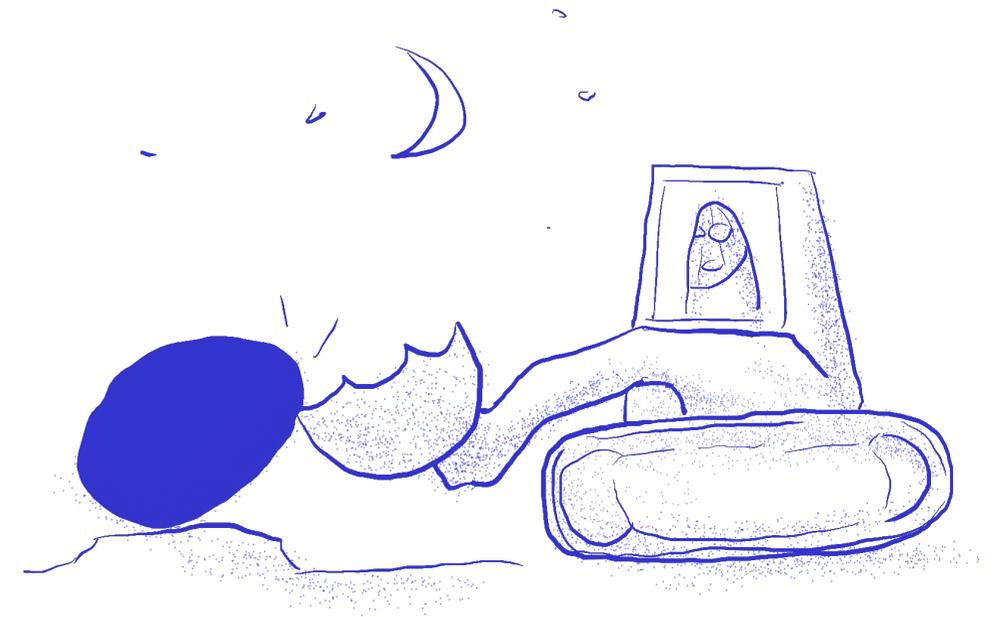
People can become curious if they are partially exposed to information or stimuli (Vorst, 2007, as cited by Tieben et al., 2011). Furthermore, people tend to be more curious about fragments of a bigger picture than individual pieces of information (Loewenstein, 1994).

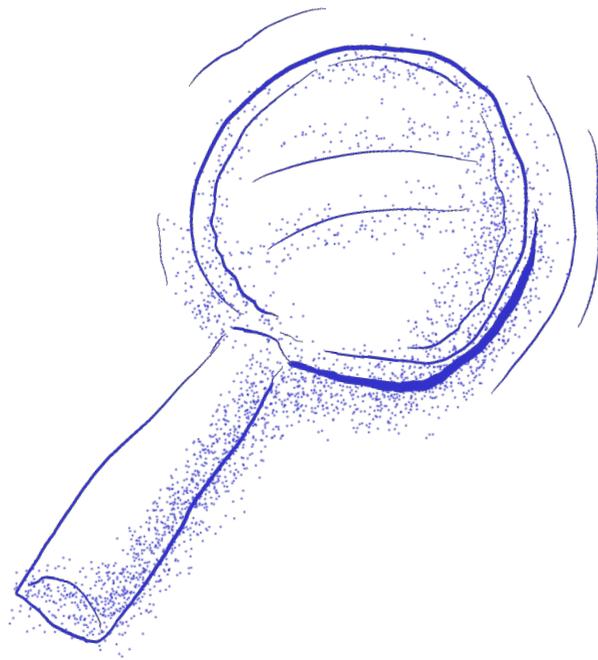
2.5 Prototyping tools

The choice of software plays an important role when planning to launch a functioning digital prototype with limited time and resources. Therefore, it is essential to understand the limitations and possibilities with different choices related to software for development. Several softwares were tested and considered, including, Webflow, Anima, VEV, square space, and WordPress. However, this chapter only focuses on the opportunities and limitations of Figma, which is utilized in the final design.

Figma

Figma offers a lot of design freedom and allows for rapid prototyping. The software is intended to be used for prototyping, not for publishing websites. However, the solution enables to share of web links to the prototypes that behave and act as a regular website. Limitations of Figma include; No support for responsive design, slow loading time, no support for custom domain names, limited interaction opportunities relating to scrolling animations, no support for user input, and no support for 3D objects. Furthermore, there is no logic handling in Figma, which sometimes leads to design compromises regarding usability. *Responsive design* is a common term in web design. Responsiveness in design relates to the ability of the solution to adapt to the users' needs and the devices they are using (Marcotte, 2011). For example, if the users use a phone, the content needs to be more vertically oriented than a user using a wide desktop screen. Furthermore, some functionality, like hover effects, does not work when using a phone, forcing the solution to adapt to the lacking interaction capability.



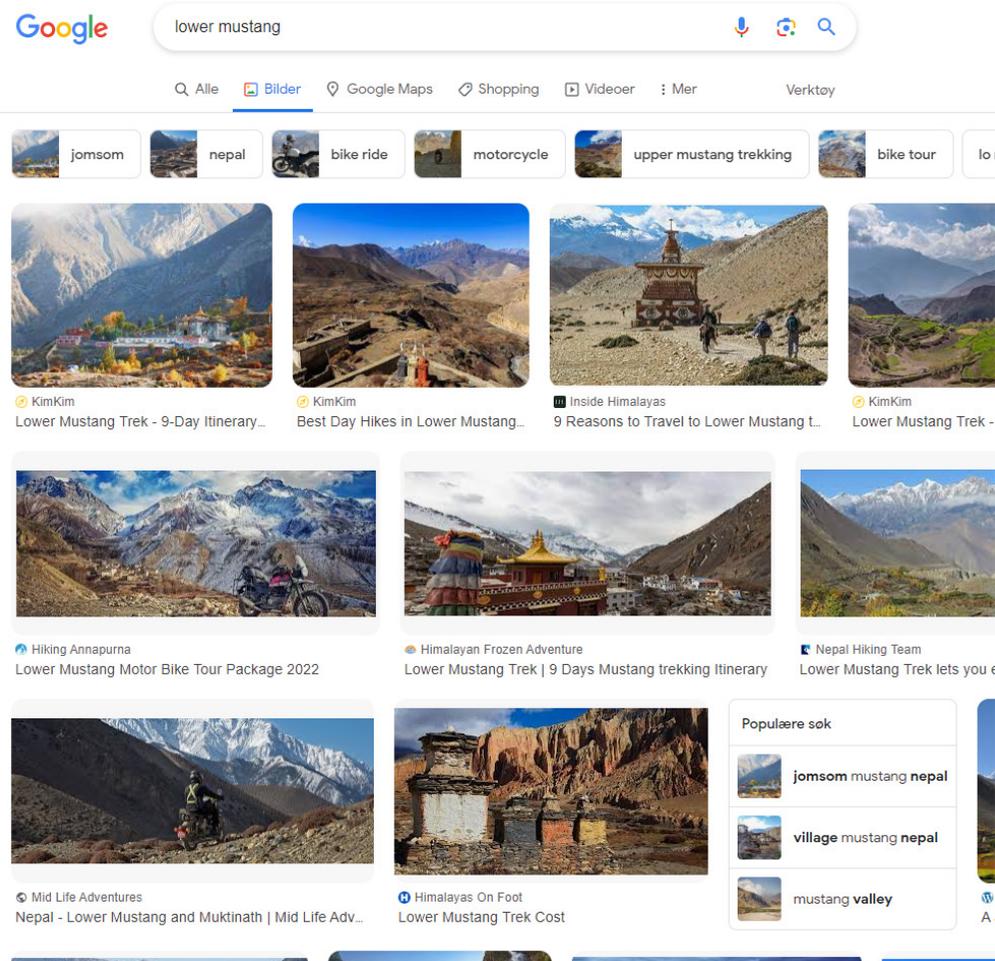


Insights

The following chapter presents insights from participant observations and interviews with the target users. Furthermore, it summarizes the insights through a user journey map and contextual scenarios. Ultimately, it presents a design brief and defines an intended approach that the solution aims to follow.

3.1 Available information about Lower Mustang

This chapter explores the currently available information online regarding Lower Mustang and investigates how the users perceive the information. The chapter aims to identify key insights that will be used to enhance the final solution.



Images retrieved from Google Search: "Lower Mustang"

Method

In order to understand what information is available through digital platforms today, self-testing and participant observations were utilized. In the self-testing process, a search engine was used to gather information about the place. Various searches were tried, and the information found on the websites was analyzed and documented. During the participant observation, they were given a scenario, where they were going to use digital media in order to obtain information about the area. Although the sample size was limited to only four participants, a distinct pattern emerged. The result of both methods is combined and documented as key insights.

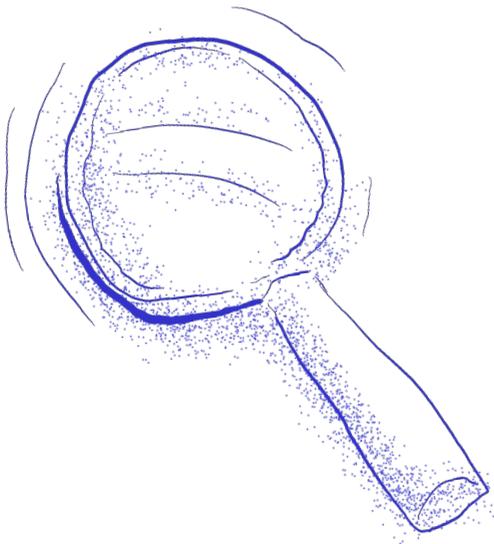


Scenario

"You want to travel to Nepal. You have already explored the areas in Nepal, but you recently got a tip from a co-worker that you should check out the area Lower Mustang."

Key Insights

- Participants rely mainly on search engines as their initial point of reference.
- Most people begin their search by viewing pictures.
- Landscape photos dominate the images of Lower Mustang.
- Participant experience many of the photos as unappealing, flat, and grey.
- Participants are more drawn to images featuring white, snow-covered mountains.
- It is difficult to grasp the overall vibe and atmosphere of the place, as it appears a bit deserted and abandoned.
- There are very few pictures of people.
- The majority of information is sourced from blog posts and trekking itineraries.
- Textual content dominates the web pages.
- Jomsom, Muktinath, and Kagbeni are the most frequently mentioned places, although some pages mention Tiri and Lupra.
- After conducting their research, participants have little or no connection to the various village names.
- Participants rarely read big blocks of text



Key Takeaways

The solution could convey the unique vibe and atmosphere of the places.

Enhancing the visual representation with better and more diverse images would benefit the destination

Recognizing the importance of search engines as a primary touchpoint for information is crucial.

The solution should increase the visibility of smaller villages.

Plain is not a good tool for communication in the context of traveling

3.2 Interviews

This chapter revolves around two topics, traveling and digital media. First, the topic of traveling investigates people's motivation, what they enjoy about traveling, what makes a good travel story, and factors that influence their travel experience. The second topic, digital media, investigates digital media's influence on people who intend to travel. It looks into different touchpoints and how they shape our understanding of destinations. This study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the target group and identify their needs.

Method

In order to understand why people travel, and which digital medias influenced them in the travel planing process, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The sample consisted of individuals who have previously traveled to a distant location, preferably for an extended period. The participants were prompted to tell stories about their where past travel experiences. They were asked follow-up questions, leading them to reflect on their travel habits. Furthermore, subjects were asked to reflect on the influence of digital media and how it has affected their past choices of travel destinations. In order to identify potential touchpoints, participants were given a list of different touchpoints and encouraged to contribute their suggestions. The insights from the participants were then integrated into the list. The sample consisted of all Norwegian people aged 20 - 35. The sample size was 8. The results were categorized according to various topics. Interview template is included in the Appendix 1

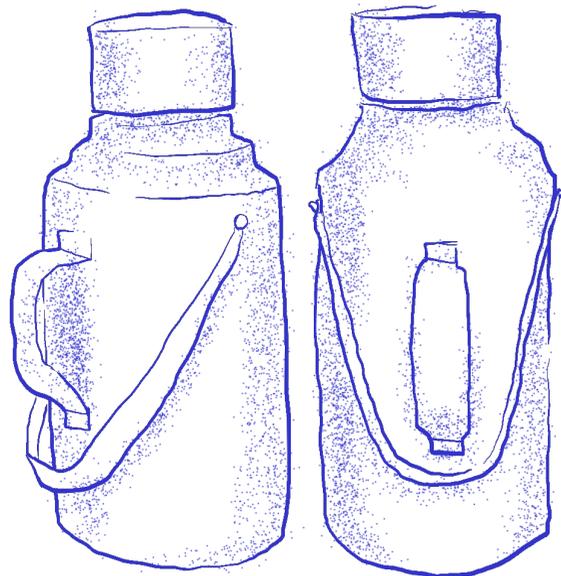
3.2.1 Topic : Traveling

Different purposes

Participants highlighted the fact that people travel with different intentions in mind. Sometimes, they travel to unwind or have a good time with friends; other times, they want to experience new cultures and do something they have never done before. Participants highlighted among other thing the desire for novel experiences and sights. It can relate to seeing new landscapes, like deserts or jungles, or trying new things like scuba diving or bungee jumping. Trying new food, immersing in different cultures and customs, and connecting with people are also valued aspects of traveling.

Self-realization

Participants highlight traveling as a means of self-realization. They experience that traveling can give new perspectives and valuable lessons. Participants also mention "going outside the comfort zone", as a motivation for traveling. Some participants also admitted that the desire to travel partly came from external pressure. They experience that traveling is a symbol of status and that one can appear more interesting by traveling.



To tell the story

Although the participants do not state it as a primary motivation for traveling, participants highlight that traveling generates fun, exciting stories and that they can be told in various situations. People tend to find pride in the more unique stories. The experiences often get shared in person and through photos and videos on social media.

Visiting friends

Several participants found visiting friends abroad to be the ideal way of traveling. They highlighted local knowledge as a contributing factor. Furthermore, they experienced that it changed their purpose of travel from visiting a place to visiting a person. When visiting a person, one tends not to feel the desire to visit the tourist sites and can rely on local knowledge, leading to better and more authentic experiences.

Finding the diamond in the rough

When asked what their most memorable travel experiences were, people often referred to experiences where they found a diamond in the rough. This included nice authentic restaurants in sketchy back neighborhoods and cozy Towns and villages in the middle of nowhere.

Discovering places

Participants enjoy discovering places for themselves. Several participants expressed that Google Maps served as a source of inspiration for them. They enjoyed exploring the map and discovering points of interest, such as lakes or parks in the city. In addition, discovering things themselves gives them a sense of pride and makes the experience more authentic.

Interacting with locals

Many of the most enjoyable travel memories people had revolved around locals in the area they visited. The interactions varied from observing the locals in their everyday life, talking to them, hearing about their life, or even getting invited to dinners or events. People tend to talk about these memories with pride since it is not an experience that can not be bought. The experiences are personal and nonreplicable and thereby become more cherished.

Authenticity

Several subjects use the word “Authenticity” when describing memorable travel experiences. Although many of the subjects cannot identify the characteristics of an authentic experience, they say it is more a subjective feeling. For example, one subject describes authenticity as seeing something that was not intended to be seen. Seeing ordinary people living an ordinary life is also mentioned as an authentic experience. In discussions on authentic experiences, the participants consistently highlight the significance of small towns and meaningful interactions

with locals. Furthermore, they express that the presence of commercial actors, like travel agencies, reduces the authenticity of places. The participants emphasize that a conversation with a local person becomes less authentic and loses value if the local person tries to sell them something. This feeling applies to guided experiences where financial transactions occur, as these encounters tend to feel more contrived and less authentic compared to being accompanied by a friend or a local individual encountered along the way.

Touristic places

The target user tends to avoid tourist places, which they describe as overcrowded. Souvenir stores, in particular, are viewed as inauthentic and detract from the experience. While some users acknowledge the feeling of safety and familiarity these places offer, their overall experience is often disappointing due to high expectations. Travel experiences commonly revolve around specific places, sights, or monuments. However, subjects frequently express their disappointment with these attractions, often describing them as overcrowded, underwhelming, and leaving them uncertain about what to do when they get there. However, despite their dislike for these tourist locations, the participants often find themselves at these tourist sites due to a lack of better alternatives.

Planing vs. Spontaneity

When it comes to planning a trip, individuals exhibit contrasting preferences. For example, some individuals enjoy planning and immersing themselves in research. On the other hand, some enjoy the surprise of arriving at a destination without any plans or prior knowledge. Those who preferred the surprise aspect mentioned that viewing pictures or knowing too much about a place beforehand could reduce the excitement of experiencing it firsthand.

Learning about the place

Several participants enjoy learning about the history and context of places before they travel. It makes them able to notice details they otherwise would have missed. In addition, the information often adds an extra layer of excitement upon arrival and sparks the imagination. Participants state that they can imagine past events and relate them to what they see, bridging the gap between imagination and real life. Some participants also read about the place while they are on-site.

3.2.2 Topic: Digital media

Key insights

- Digital media have varying influences on people's choice of travel destinations.
- When choosing a traveling destination, people mentioned: Hearing about a friend's travel experience, seeing pictures from friends on social media, and repeated exposure to pictures as the primary source of inspiration.
- Adventurous travelers want to avoid typical Instagram spots because these places often are crowded.
- People have different preferences; some people need to see pictures before traveling, and others enjoy the surprise of getting there without knowing.
- Adventurous travelers often disapprove of travel influencers. Surprisingly, the same people often have respect for travel photographers, although they cannot give a clear distinction between the groups. One subject tries to distinguish them by saying: "Travel photographer is good at capturing authentic moments with real people, while the typical travel influencers just capture popular destinations."
- People share content on social media because they are proud of what they are doing and enjoy sharing moments from their life with their friends and family.



Touchpoints – When planning a travel

Digital media

- Search engines: Mostly Google
- Traveling blogs
- Commercial pages promoting experiences or guided tours
- Online travel platforms: Platforms like TripAdvisor, Lonely Planet
- Travel videos and vlogs

Social media

- Instagram: *Travel influencers and travel photography*
- TikTok: *Travel-related videos*
- Facebook: *Travel-related groups, pages, and travel communities where people share their experiences and recommendations*
- YouTube: *Travel videos showcasing destinations, travel vlogs*
- Snapchat - *Friends sharing photos and videos from their travels.*

Peer Influence

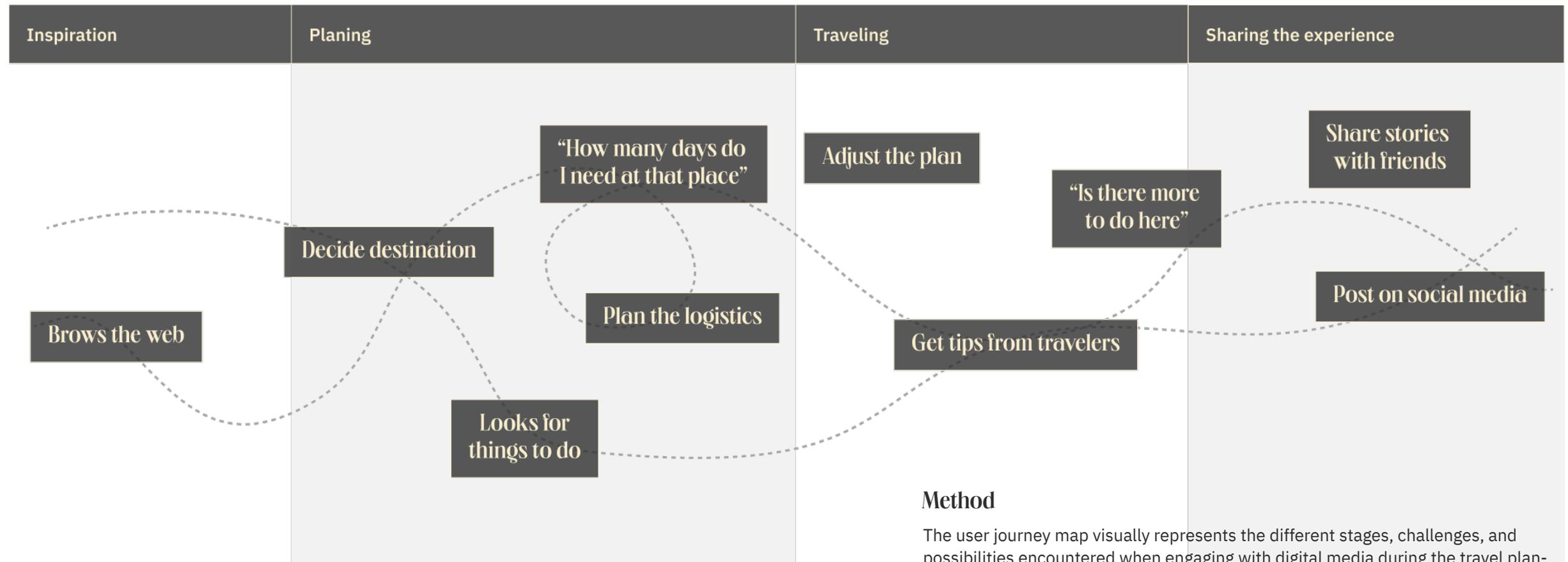
- Stories from friends and family
- Social media posts from friends and family
- Recommendations from people you meet while traveling
- Tips from locals

Physical media

- Tourist information centers
- Travel agencies
- Advertising posters
- Flyers and brochures
- Media
- Travel books
- Tv-series and movies
- Magazines and newspapers

3.3 User journey

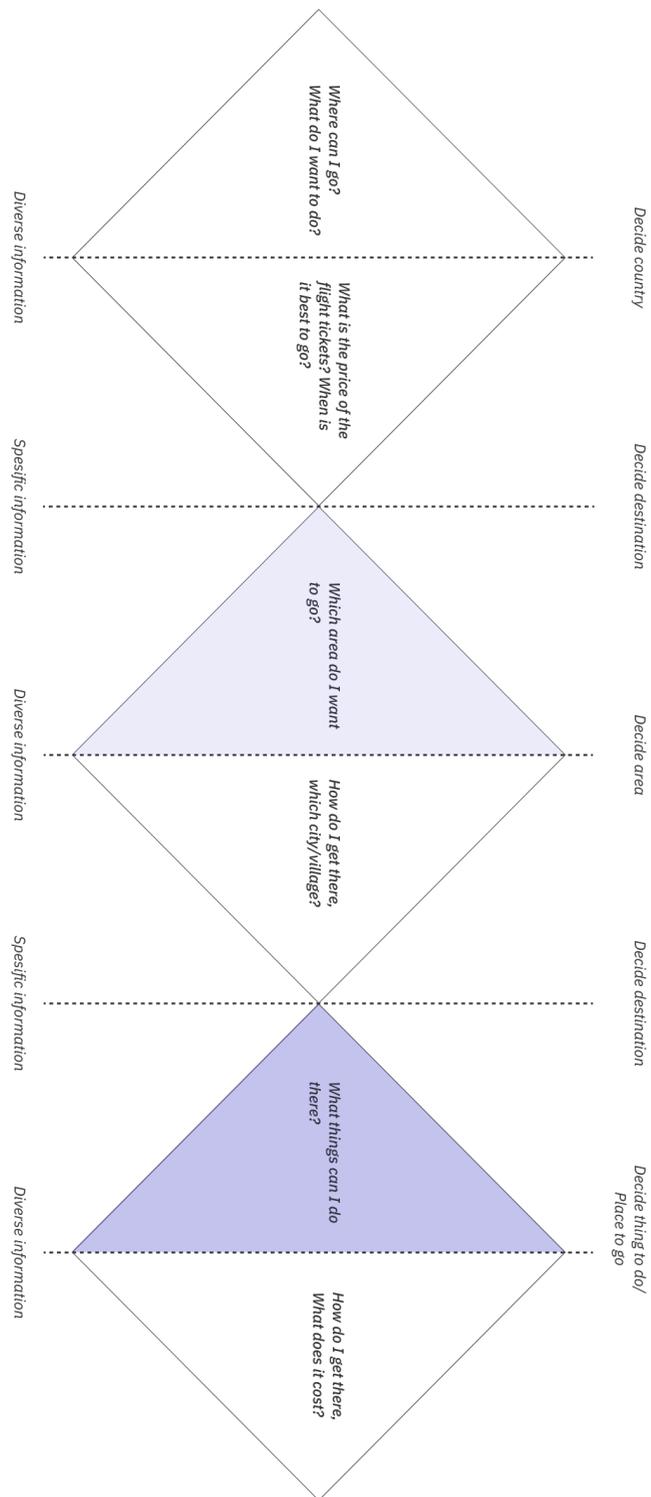
To understand how people use digital media while traveling, a user journey was created. The following paragraph presents the user journey, starting from the pre-travel phase, progressing through the travel experience, and concluding with the post-travel phase.



A simplification of the user journey, see full user journey map in Appendix 2

Method

The user journey map visually represents the different stages, challenges, and possibilities encountered when engaging with digital media during the travel planning process. First, an initial journey map was created based on the insights from the participant observations, the self-testing, and the interviews. Next, the journey map was shared with participants, who provided valuable feedback and insights. Finally, the suggestions were incorporated into the final user journey map. From the different participants, it became clear that the user journey was highly dependent on the user and that it could differ depending on the type of travel. Some users include more steps, skip steps, or experience them in a different order. The emotional experience also depends on the user. The user journey is not a defined journey, but it presents a general understanding of the process of traveling.



Specific vs. diverse information

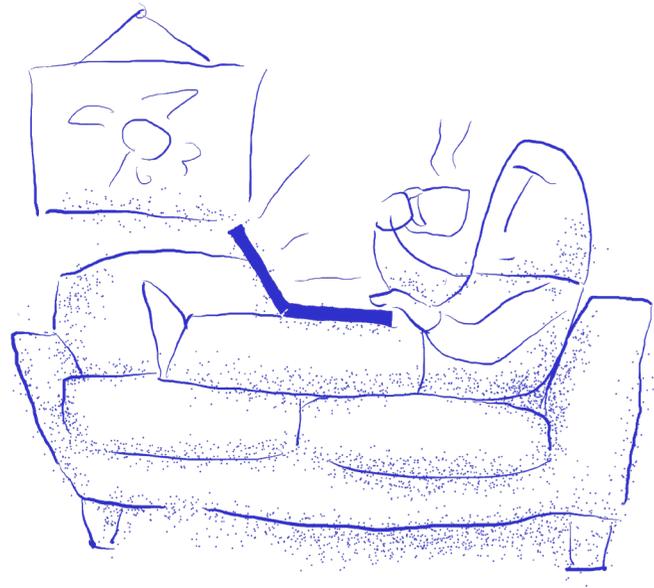
People seek diverse and specific information according to where in the user journey they are. The blue areas highlight the point in the user journey the solution targets since the intended approach aims to deliver diverse information.

Key takeaways user journey

Many people find joy and excitement in travel planning process. People look for specific and diverse information in different phases. First people often look for diverse inspiration, some times around a certain area or a specific site. In this phase they are open minded and is often exposed to many different pages and platforms. However, they tend not to look to deep in the material, and are often reluctant to spend much time on each source. Visual design of the website play an important role in assesing wich sources is worth spending more time on. Then they often narrow down on the area, looking for more specific information. When they have found a destination, they often look for more diverse information again. After deciding a destination, they are more likly to spend more time doing extensive reasearch related to what they can do, the local history or culture. There are also different approaches among different people, some people like to plan extensively while others like a more spontaneous approach where they do not plan anything ahead. Different users find different things interesting, allowing the user to engage with the content they find interesting is important. People do not necessarily know what they are searching for in the beginning, providing them with inspiration is useful.

Contextual scenarios

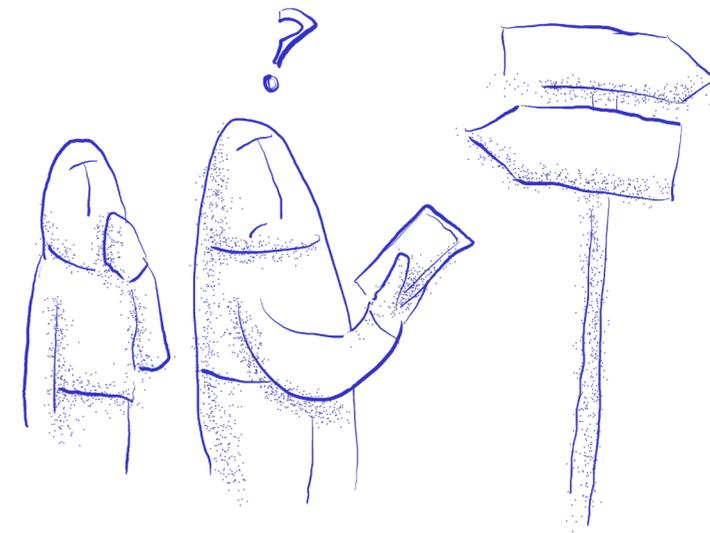
People might want different information or want to have it presented differently according to the context.



Scenario 1 *The user sits comfortably on the sofa/ hotel bed/armchair. The user has time to kill, feels understimulated, and seeks new input.*



Scenario 2 *The user sits at a desk and is set to do a task. The user has a lot of information and wants structure and order to make an informed decision.*



Scenario 3 *The user is in the field, need answers right away. Time is of the essence.*

3.4 Design brief

Based on the insights three question was developed to be used for ideation.

“How might we use digital media to showcase everyday experiences, the unique atmosphere of a place, and other authentic experiences rarely highlighted on current travel platforms?”

“How might we use novel interactions, and visually striking content to make the destination stand out and stick to memory, in the mass of information available online.”

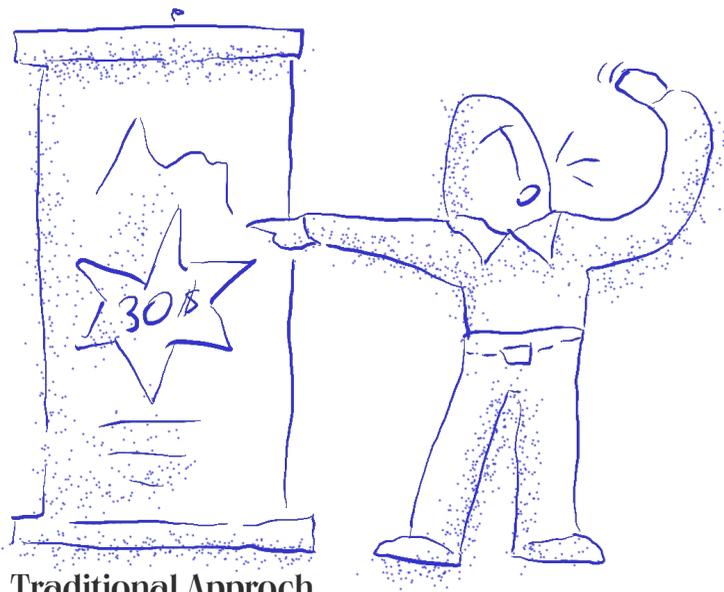
“How can we showcase the hidden gems, activities, and accommodations in the area without it appearing commercial or touristic?”

“How might we encourage people to tell their story”

Intended Approach

In order to counteract the process of standardization, accommodate the need for authenticity and cultivate the potential of personal narratives, the solution seek to have a novel approach, compared to traditional traveling websites.





Traditional Approach

Analogy: Walking by a tourist agency avoiding eye contact, while the tourist agent speak loud and fast in order to convince you to join a tour.

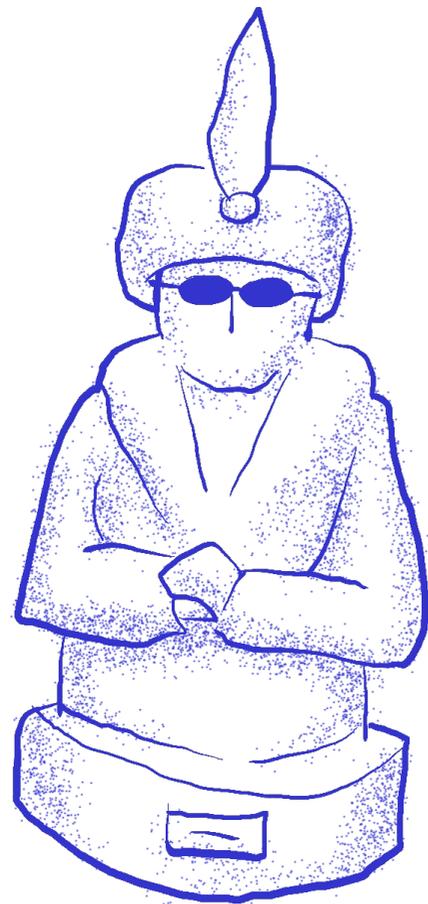
Feels: *Commercial, streamlined, and efficient.* Presents a popular sight, provides information about what it costs and how you will get there. It is often very convenient and available. The user often recognize that it is touristic, but in lack of better alternatives they often fall for it.



Intended Approach

Analogy: Feels like a local sharing about their hometown, or a fellow traveler talking about a place they just visited

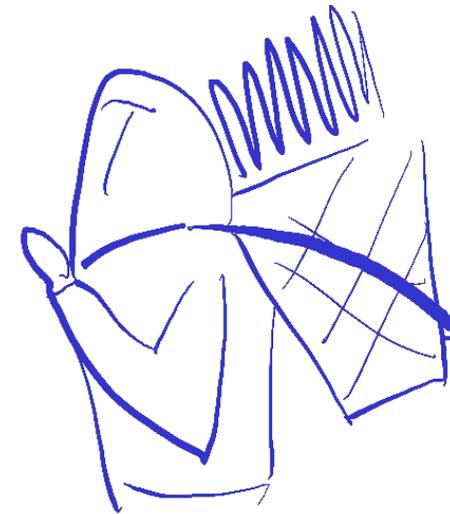
Feels: *Authentic, personal.* The approach do not intend to sell anything or convince anyone to do something. It feels like the person speak out of fascination and wants to share something that is close to them. It should feel like the they only offering to help you without any self interest.



Concept development

This chapter describes the concept development phase. It includes the method for ideation, presents various ideas for different digital storytelling formats and narratives, and the first round of prototyping. Furthermore, it includes lessons learned from user testing the various prototypes.

4.1 Ideation

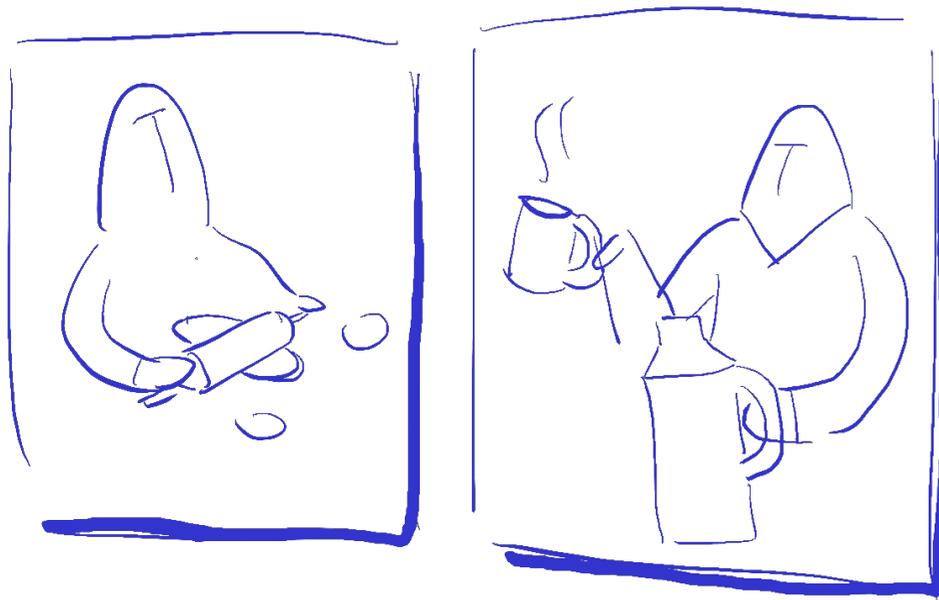


Method

The ideation in this project has occurred in parallel with the rest of the project. Ideas have emerged through various sources, including drawing inspiration from related projects, participant suggestions during interviews and observations, dedicated ideation sessions, and experimentation with prototypes. Some of the ideas were based on initial thoughts and intuition, while other ideas are based on the key findings, the user journey, and other insights. Specific ideation exercises was also conducted, including sourcing inspiration from an extensive range of disciplines, including digital storytelling in journalism, game design, marketing, entertainment, media, art, digital design, branding, and related fields.

Ideas

The section below presents some of the concepts which can be combined or further developed to stand on their own. The ideas range from conceptual to specific ways of arranging content on a webpage. Some of the ideas are ways of tying pieces of information together, while other ideas are ways of presenting the information. The ideas are presented in relation to the How might we statements that it tries to answer.



“How might we use digital media to showcase everyday experiences, the unique atmosphere of a place, and other authentic experiences rarely highlighted on current travel platforms?”

Sound exploration [format] [narrative]

A webpage that allow the user to explore different audio clips. Each audio clip could represent a different travel moment. By only providing a sound clip and abstract illustration and text the user is forced to imagine the situation. It is unusual for the tourist domain to rely on sound making it a novel experience.

Slow video [format]

Display the fascinating in the non spectacular. Inspired by NRK “sakte TV”. It can display long cut videos of everyday scenes, in order to make the user dwell upon the moment. It could “force” the user, by redjecting them the possibility to close the page.

Present unconventional authentic situations [narrative]

Focus on unique situations, rather than attractions. This could be a strange or unusual situation that occurred, a person, family, or community you encounter or something totally different.

Passion stories [narrative]

The content could revolve around, one or several people with a passion for what they do. This could be for example; craftsmen, chefs or even farmers.

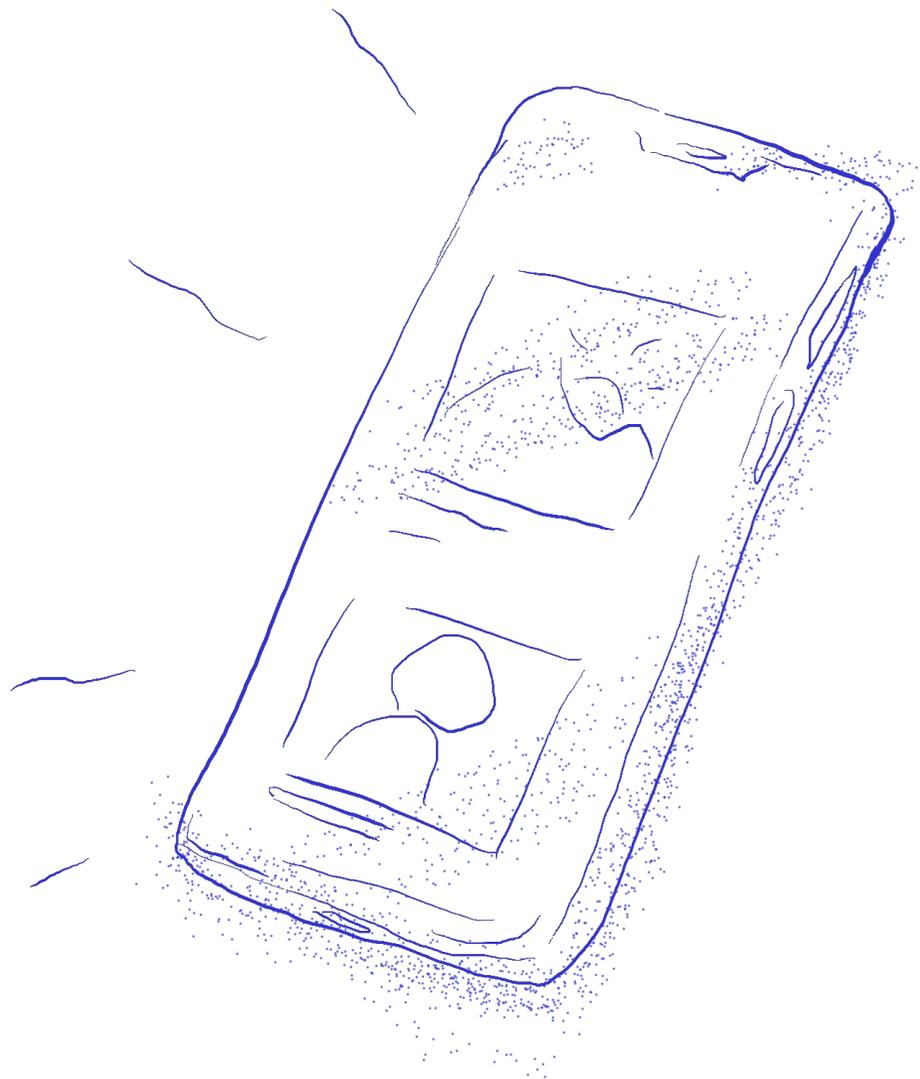
Community stories [narrative]

The story could revolve around a community and some specific tradition or practice that display a sense of unity.

A day in the life of... [narrative]

Present the day in the life of a person, or a profession. For example the day in the life of a Monk, A day in the life of a Shepard.

“How might we use novel interactions, and visually striking content to make the destination stand out and stick to memory, in the mass of information available online.”



Present the wildlife, geology, or flora as an informational page [narrative]

Make people aware of the fascinating aspects of the place, whether it is geology, wildlife, flora, or something else.

Interactive plate of food [narrative] [format]

Present spark an interest towards local food or cuisine with an interactive photo displaying the traditional dal bhat, where you can explore the different secrets to the different elements that make up the dish.

Present culture, history, traditions, or food through scrollytelling [narrative]

Use scrollytelling to communicate interesting facts in a visual way.

Interactive map [format]

A map that allow the user to explore videos, images and other media.

Emotional Journey map [format] [narrative]

Track different subjective parameters during the travel. Let the user explore a journey based on emotions. Example: Tranquility, Surprise, Excitement, Fun, Joy, curious, Connected, Grateful, Anxious, stressed, tired, sad. Let the user explore a map, choose an emotion, and see how it changed from place to place

Interactive illustrations [format]

Let the user explore an illustration or image. Make the elements on the illustration interactable, so they can explore different stories relating to the things displayed in the image.

Point and click story [format]

A interactive story wich presents you with coices, for instance by choosing between two roads. The story then gives information, shows pictures, sound clips or something else along the journey.

The viewing glasses [format]

See the same picture through the eyes of different people. If you click the histori- an it might highlight something related to history. The geologist might highlight a mountain or a river, with a text explaining why it is fascinating.

“How can we showcase the hidden gems, activities, and accommodations in the area without it appearing commercial or touristic?”

Present it a personal journey [narrative]

Present the information as a personal journey rather than an informational page about the place.

Personal life stories of the locals [narrative]

Inspired by Chef’s Table. Connect it to something you can travel to experience, for instance, a personal story about a chef, or a weaver, or maybe a bow shooter.

Village personas [narrative] [format]

Create a village persona, a representation of the village as it would appear if it was a human being. A quiet, beautiful village could be represented as a laid back and relaxed. A busy village can be a chatty social person.

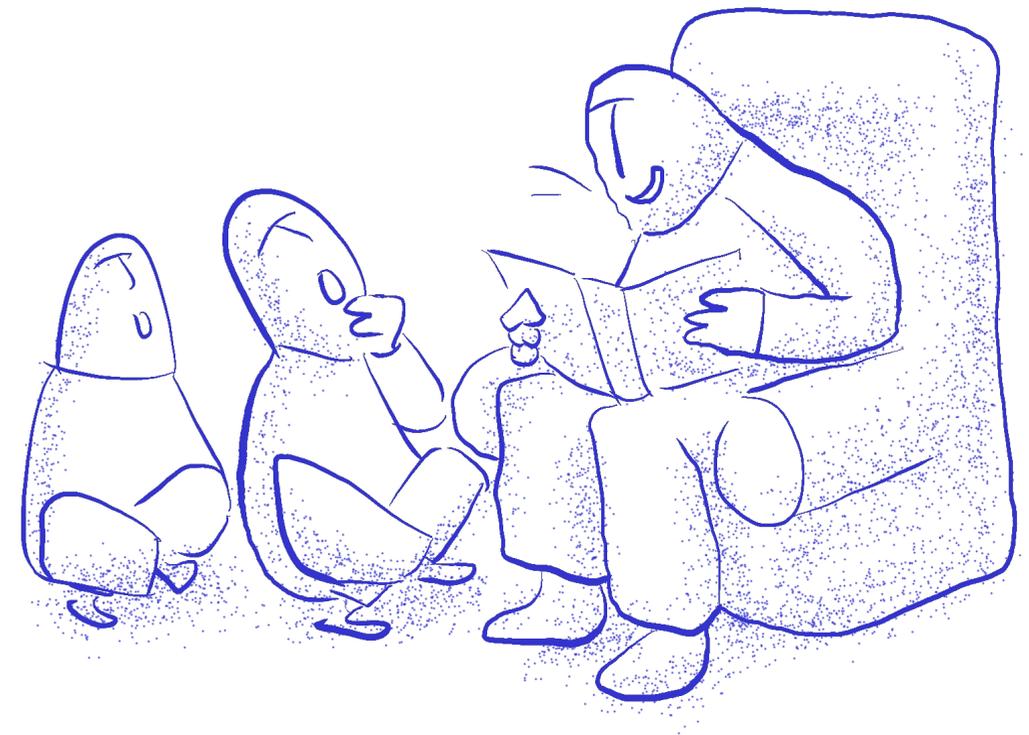
“How might we encourage people to tell their story”

Guest book

Allows travelers to share photos, videos, or text in the format of a digital guest book. Could be related to the area, homestay, or hotel.

Storytelling templates

Allow the user to generate content in a certain format. This could be anything from a sound recording app, a TikTok template, or for example, a webpage that allow you to create scrollytelling pages you can share with friends and family.



4.2 Prototyping

Method

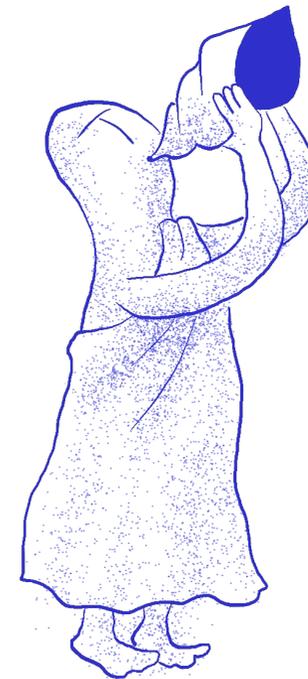
In parallel with the ideation, ideas were prototyped, evaluated, and iterated. The motivation behind the prototypes was to learn as much as possible before going to Nepal. The different formats were prototyped in order to learn success formula of digital storytelling. Furthermore, it gave a sense of which information and media (photos, videos, audio) were needed in order to create the solution. Different narratives were included in the prototypes in order to see what appealed to the users. It was hard to work with narratives relating to lower Mustang because the initial prototyping was done prior to the field trip, and the information regarding the area was limited. To capture the subtle details and provide authentic experiences, stories from personal encounters and memories were used. Using personal experience also allowed greater access to media, like sound, videos, and images. The prototypes were made using different tools. The main prototyping tool was Figma. Webflow and VEV was used in cases that required special interaction opportunities, or where it was more efficient.

4.2.1 First iteration

This chapter presents the first round of prototyping. Five prototypes were made and tested on users. The results from the testing are summarized as key findings.

Prototypes included:

- *Animals of Mustang* - Information regarding the wildlife in Mustang
- *Interactive illustration* - an exploration of personal experiences relating to a Norwegian farm
- *Sound exploration* - different sounds from a journey to Peru
- *Scrollytelling* - Historic event from Nepal



Prototype 1: Animals of Mustang

The first prototype contain information regarding the wildlife in Mustang. Two variations of format where made, variant A displayed the animals in a landscape, while variant B displayed the silhouette of the animals on a plain background (the two variants are explained in greater detail in the following paragraphs). The two variants was tested and compared against eachother. Half the sample got to see variant A first and variant B last, and vice versa

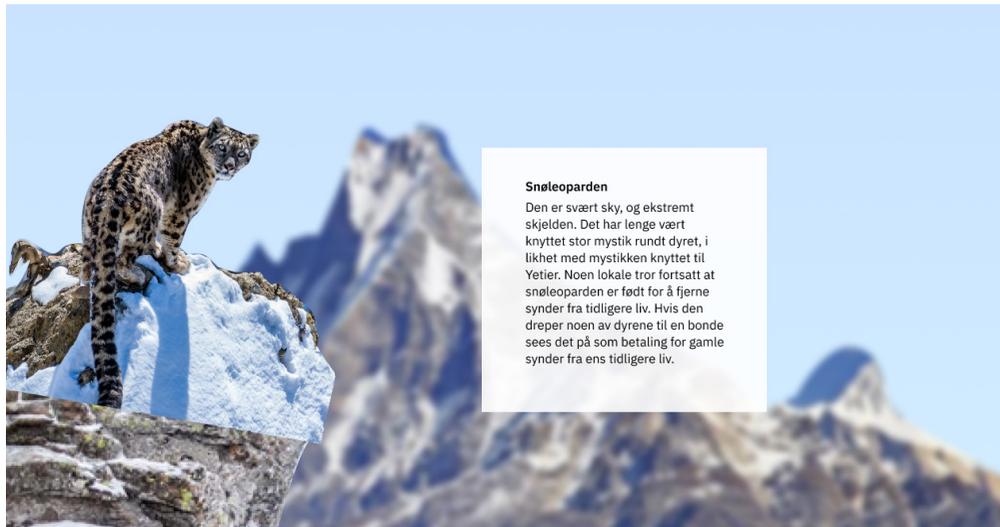


Fig. 3: Variant A: Scrollable landscape displaying the wildlife in the area

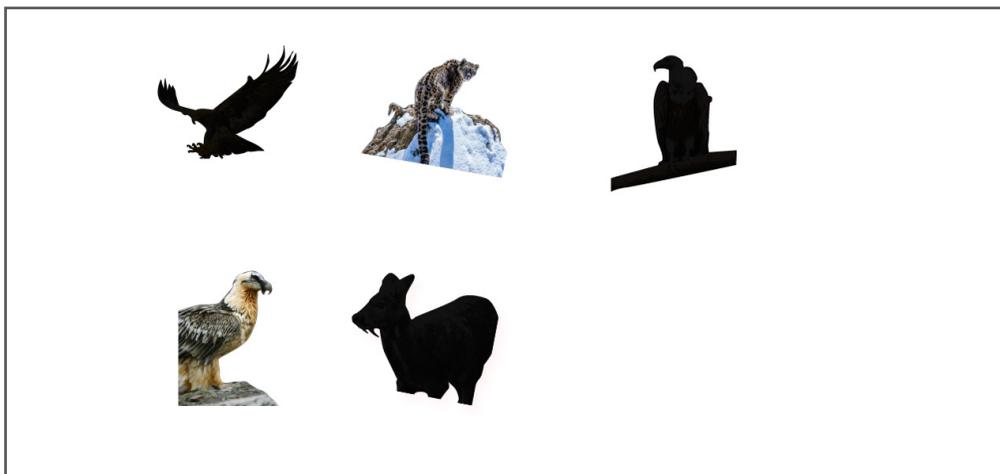


Fig. 4: Variant A: Scrollable landscape displaying the wildlife in the area

Variant A: Scrollable landscape

The prototype display a landscape(e.g, Fig 3). In the beginning, the user only sees the sky, when they scroll down they move vertically down in the landscape, reviling mountains, hills, and finally the ground. While they move downwards in the landscape they encounter different animals. Each animal has a coherent textbox explaining an interesting fact about the animal, some of which tie it to the culture and

Variant B: Animal silhouettes

The prototype displayed the silhouette of different animals. In the beginning, all animals were hidden behind the silhouette. Once the user clicks on one of the silhouettes, the animal is revealed and a coherent textbox appears. Once the textbox is closed, the animal remains visible, leaving only the animals the user yet has not discovered as black silhouettes. The hypothesis was that people could become curious about which animal where hiding behind the silhouette. The text and the image used in both variants were identical.

Key findings from user testing

- People found the animals to be an interesting topic and enjoyed learning more about them
- Variant A (the landscape) appealed more to the users because they enjoyed seeing it in context. Furthermore, they preferred scrolling over clicking at different elements.
- Variant B (silhouettes) did not evoke curiosity in the way that the hypothesis predicted
- Variant B was considered to be “more work”, because it required alot of clicking.
- The text boxes that exceeded four lines were considered too long.
- People preferred the content that tied the animal to the place and culture rather than random information.
- People enjoyed seeing it as a landscape since it felt more like a part of a greater story than just scattered pieces of information.
- People suggested including other information as well: For example, geology or architecture
- Suggestions also included adding sound or video to enrichen the experience

Prototype 2: Interactive illustration

The prototype displays an interactive illustration. The illustration was made prior to this thesis without intentions of being an interactive illustration. However, it illustrates different situations, objects, and characters relating to a specific farm in Norway. The illustration using the prototyping tool Figma.



Alvin Den Uskikkelige

Alvin er Johans lille pøbelunge. Med en gang han ser negleklipperen skyter den fart og glemmer seg mer en gjerne under huset hvor ingen får tak i han. Han spiser kun luksus leverpostei uten brød, og tar lar potetene ligge igjen hvis han får servert entrecote.

While hovering the mouse over the dog in the right corner the users were able to read a small piece of text related to the dog living on the farm.

How it works

The user can discover the story behind a certain element in the illustration by moving the cursor. When the cursor hovers over a point of interest, like one of the characters or objects in the illustration, a textbox appears, explaining the story behind it. Only a few elements in the illustration were made interactable, meaning that the user was not able to learn about all of the stories displayed in the illustration.

Key findings from user testing

- With a few exceptions, people instantly got curious about the different elements in the illustration
- Some of the participants curiously asked to get the story behind the elements that were not interactive, proving the concept to be curiosity-evoking.
- Participants struggled to find the interactive elements on the page.
- Participants had a desire to see “the real thing”, and suggested including pictures or videos relating to the stories.
- One of the participants stated that it would not be annoying in situations where he is looking for specific information, but that it would be enjoyable if he were looking to kill time. This is a reminder that the context of use is important and that the final solution should be evaluated with a specific context in mind.

Prototype 3: Exploring sounds

The prototype allows the user to explore different sound clips. The sound recording was recorded during a travel to Peru and captured unusual situations.



When the user hover over the illustration a sound is played, an animation is showed with a short text explaining the contex of the sound

How it works

The prototype displays three rough illustrations. When the user hovers over one of the illustrations, a sound starts to play. The illustration is replaced by an animation of dots moving along a sphere. In addition to the animation, a descriptive text is displayed. The text explains the particular situation relating to the sound.

Hypothesis

"People are able to imagine the moment more vividly with the combination of sound and text, than by seeing an actual video or an image of the situation. It possibly also be an effective way to showcase situations that do not seem as appealing in a picture or in a video."

Key findings from user testing

- Participants were surprised, enjoying it more than they expected
- All participants favored this solution over the other prototypes
- They found the sound to be an effective way of visualizing the moment
- The participants stated that the simple illustration left room for their imagination, and that pictures and videos would have ruined the experience.
- Participants enjoyed the hovering interaction, stating it was effective and intuitive.
- One of the participants suggested improving the visuals so that the eyes would have something to rest on.
- Participants also pointed to the fact that there are certain situations where they do not want to play sound, for instance in public places.
- One participant suggested easing into the moment and removing unnecessary distractions on the page, in order for the user to fully immerse oneself in the sound.
- The solution has a clear potential to convey an atmosphere in a novel and exciting way

Prototype 3: Exploring sounds

The prototype uses the technique of scrollytelling to tell the tragic story of the Nepali royal massacre in 2001.



Scrollytelling page explaining the history of the royal Massachre in Nepal. (Original background image has been changed due to copyright)

How it works

The prototype is a scrollytelling page. It displays a textbox, behind the textbox is a full-size image covering the rest of the screen. When the user scrolls down the page, the image remains still, while the textbox move across the screen. When the textbox exists on the screen the background image changes and a new textbox enters from the bottom of the screen.

Hypothesis

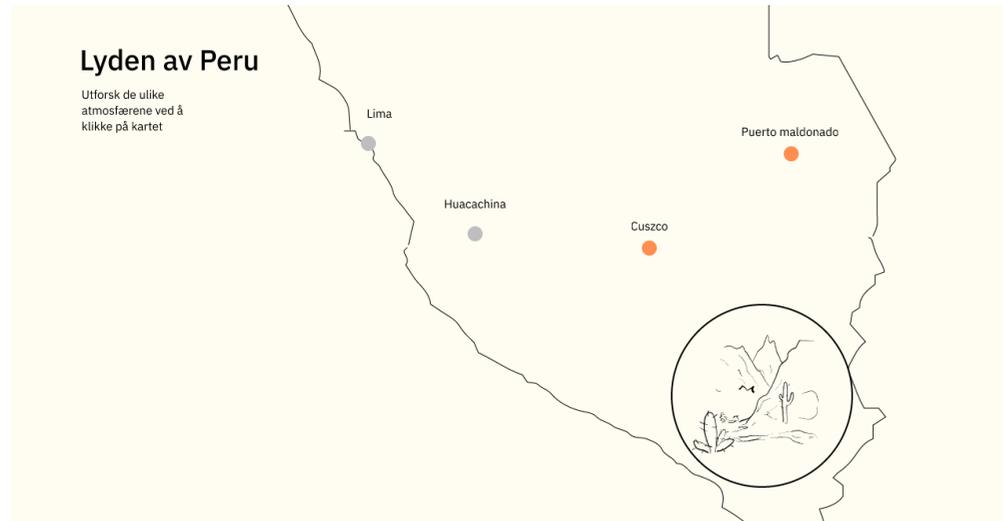
The hypothesis was that this might be a good format to deliver information in a captivating way.

Key findings from user testing

- Participants recognized the format from digital news websites.
- Participants stated that they loved news articles using this format.
- The association with online newspapers created for some, the assumption that this was merely a introduction to a longer news article.
- Participants explicitly stated that they enjoyed it but that they would probably not have bodered to read it if it was just a block of plain text.
- Participants also said it was easier to emerse onself in the story when presented in this format.
- The length of the text was acceptable, and people felt they obtained alot of information in a short time.

4.2.2 Further iterations

The solution underwent several more rounds of iterations to generate more insights. These sections present a brief overview of some of the test concepts and include some lessons learned.



Various interactions were tested, including exploring sounds on a map



Visuals, Variant A



Visual, Variant B



Visuals, Variant C



Visuals, Variant D

Experimentation with sound

Experiment 1: Changing the interaction

Experiments with the interaction with the sound prototype was conducted. The sound was placed on a map, placed in a landscape similar to the animals, and along the journey, and presented one at a time in a forced order.

Key findings interactions:

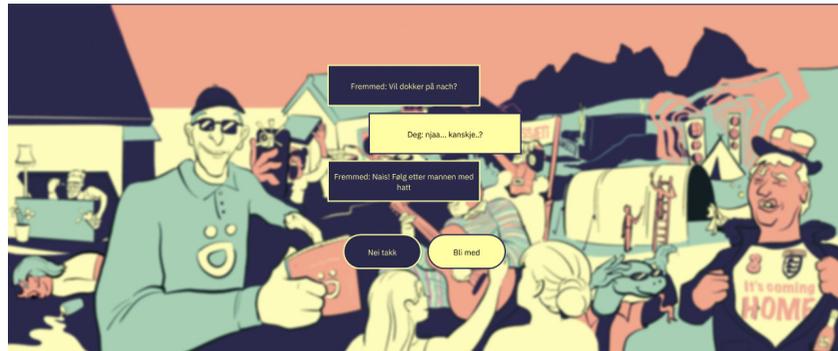
- Most people preferred the original hover interaction since it was faster, gave them more freedom, and required fewer clicks and scrolling.

Experiment 2: Improving visuals

An experiment was conducted where participants were shown different visuals when they listened to the sound. The participant listened to the sound with the visual representations, one visual at a time. After trying all the variants they were asked which one they preferred and why. **Variant A:** Image. **Variant B:** Simple animation of the motor, and waves. **Variant C:** abstract waves. **Variant D:** Visualisation of sound as a sphere of dots, unrelated to the situation

Key findings visuals:

- Participants had very varying preferences. Only the image was considered the worst option in all the cases.
- People who preferred variant D, stated that it was the least disturbing, and that they were able to visualize it more clearly without the illustrations. No participants disapproved of variant D.
- Participants who preferred variant C, enjoyed the artsy look. Participants who disapproved of variant C, felt that the heavy line weight and the busy movement, stole a lot of attention away from the sound.
- Participants who preferred Variant B: Felt they were able to immerse themselves more with, more senses compared to variant D. Participants who disapproved of variant B, felt it stopped them from creating their own image in the head.
- All participants disapproved of variant A, stating they were not able to imagine the situations as vividly when they knew how the real situation looked like.



Experimentation with interactive illustrations

The same principles as in the first prototype was applied on another illustration. This time a illustration made after a Norwegian festival was used, in order to make the content more relevant for the a users testing.

Adding signifiers and including Images/videos/interactive conversations

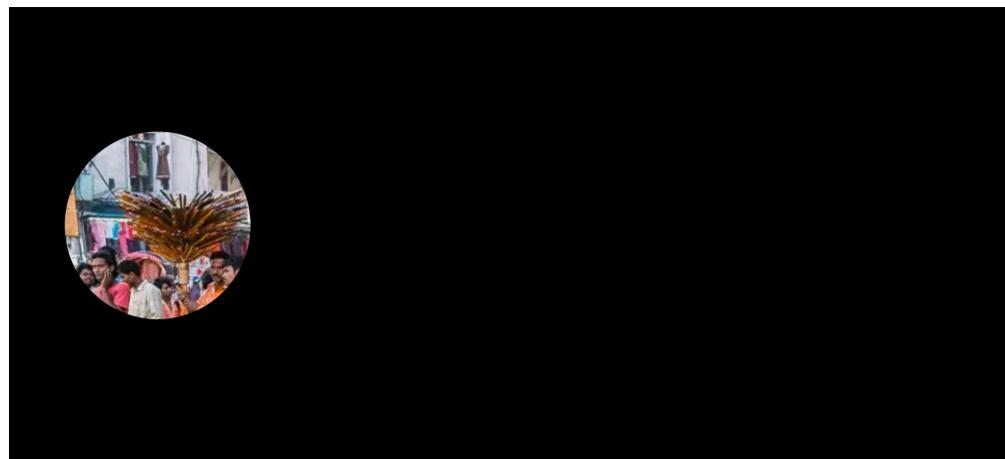
Animations where added to the interactive elements, in order to signal which elements the user could click. The animations were subtle wiggle movements by the characters in the image. Furthermore, the interaction was changed, now allowing the user to click on the objects in order to see videos, photos, or other content relating to the element. The content varied from still photos, video, and plain text to an interactive conversation where the user could make a choice.

Key insights

- The improved version performed significantly better than the first iteration
- Participants enjoyed the transition from illustration to seeing real images
- The variation of media, made participants more curious since they did not know what else they could possibly hide.
- Pictures and videos were clearly more interesting than plain text. Some participants explicitly stated that the elements with just text were disappointing
- Several participants stated that it was a fun and different way of obtaining information and that they were able to imagine the situation in another way than an ordinary website.

New concept – The spotlight

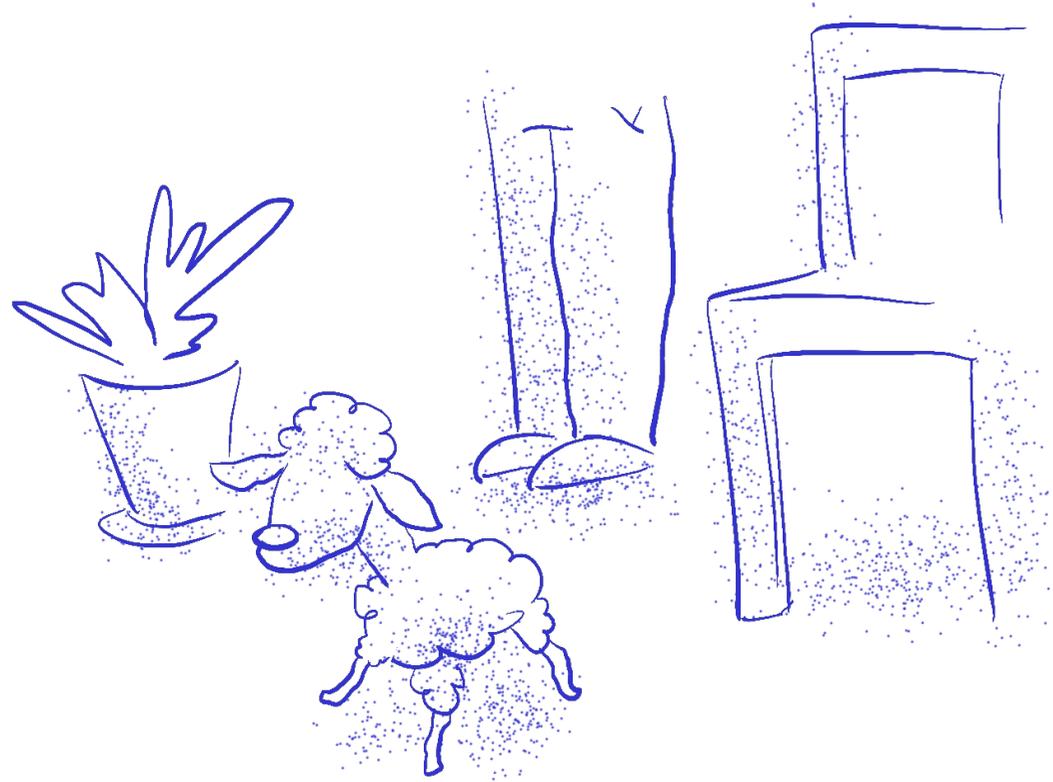
The spotlight is an interactive prototype which allow the user to explore an image or video through a peaking hole. Only a fragment of the picture is visible at the time. The user can explore the image by, moving the cursor around the screen. The circle follows the cursor



When the user moves the mouse the circle follows

Key insights

- Participants found it entertaining, and thought it was an interesting way to discover a photo.
- Participants used a lot of time exploring the image, stopping and leaning closer to the screen in order to investigate facial expressions and small details in the background. This clearly supports the hypothesis that people pay more attention to other elements in the photo than they normally would.



Fieldwork

During the project five-week fieldwork was conducted. The main objective of the fieldwork was to gather relevant narratives and collect the necessary media (images, videos, sound recordings, and more). Additionally, the fieldwork aimed to provide a better understanding of the place and its possibilities. Furthermore, confirming the foundational problem on which the design brief was based by interviewing stakeholders and the local residents, and get a better understanding of the target users.

5.1 Confirming the problem

A part of the fieldwork was conducted to see confirm the problem, and to see that the villagers actually wanted tourists to come. Semi-structured interviews and conversations were conducted to ensure that the villagers wanted tourists to come and to get an idea of problems related to tourism in the area. The interviews were done in collaboration with Drejer and Kastellet, who were working on the Mustang Village Trail (see § 2.1.2). The interview sample consisted of several hotel and homestay owners, a village leader, the Annapurna Conservation Area Project, and several local people. The conversations revolved around tourism in the area, how they work to attract more tourists, on going initiatives, and problems related to tourism. The following sections present my interpretation of the situation.

“Many people have come here to do research. We are not satisfied! Nothing ever happens!” - Local villager

Locals desire short-term actions

The people of the villages desire short-term actions. They want things to change quickly. It seems like people have been coming to the area several times before. The villagers speak of people from several nationalities, researching various topics. Some locals stated that there had been several researchers looking into tourism in the area as well but that it did not result in anything but reports. It seems that some of the villagers are tired of foreign “saviors” coming to the country to do research and leaving a report, that no one acts on. This further strengthens the objective of making something that could be launched, in order to accommodate the villagers’ wish for immediate action.

Lost Authenticity along the Annapurna Circuit and Pokhara

When walking along the Annapurna Circuit it became clear that the tourism had affected the local communities. The same tendency was even more clearly present in Pokhara. Most of the stores were targeted toward tourists, selling hiking gear and souvenirs. The menus in the restaurants included a wide range of Western cuisine, including pizza, pasta, and hamburgers.

Combining farming and homestays

Homestays allow farmers to combine agriculture and tourism. Showcasing homestays can distribute wealth more evenly among the locals who can not afford to build a hotel. Homestays also yield the potential to facilitate interaction between locals and tourists.

Sense of belonging

After speaking to and observing the local people, it became clear that there was a problem with depopulation, particularly among the younger generation. The youth are often driven to seek opportunities abroad or in urban areas, leaving their villages and family behind. Their perception of success seems often tied to securing well-paid jobs, and those who cannot attend university seem to experience a sense of failure. Interestingly, the older generation and the youths that have decided to stay have a strong sense of belonging. They appreciate the warm and welcoming communities they belong to, and are proud of their villages and their culture. This project could potentially try to foster a sense of pride and belonging among the local population. By telling their story and showing them that it is interesting and unique, it could develop a stronger sense of appreciation for their own cultural heritage, nature, and people. This could positively impact their sense of belonging and encourage more people to stay.

5.2 New touchpoints

After traveling around Nepal and Lower Mustang, new touchpoints were discovered.

Bookshelves

Most hotels, tea houses, and hostels have a bookshelf where people can leave books. People are free to read from the books or even bring them along if they want to. Marketing material can easily be left on this bookshelf, especially if they do not come off as marketing material and rather stories or information about a place.

Menus

Some of the restaurants have dedicated the last pages to informing customers about local costumes, local attractions, or even simple Nepali phrases. When people are sitting down and waiting for their food, they are often bored and seeking new input, making these menus a potentially good touchpoint where people can learn more about Lower Mustang.

Wall maps

In addition to official maps placed by the ACAP, there are some maps hanging on the wall of different hotels. Designing a visually appealing map that display the different villages and some unconventional

Bottle Stickers

Surprisingly many tourists have water bottles full of stickers. Hikers like to personalize the bottles with stickers from places they have been or things they have done. This adds to the nostalgic value of the bottle and make them remember the good memories. It can also be an interesting conversation starter, when the bottle stands on the table, other people can see the stickers and can be prompted to ask questions related to the sticker.

Facebook/whatsapp groups

It exists a lot of different Facebook groups related to either trekking in Nepal or more specific groups related to specific trails.

Limitations: The groups often have rules for what people can share. Promotional content is rarely allowed. However, it is allowed to share personal blogs and experiences. Since no one is directly earning money from this solution and since it does not feature specific guide companies, hotels, or organizations, it is potentially possible to share the work created in this master thesis. It is therefore important to design the content so it looks, feels, and behaves like personal stories rather the promotional content.



New rule, potential game changer

A significant discovery has been made regarding a new rule implemented by the national government. The rule mandates that all trekkers in the area must be accompanied by a guide. The new rule will increase travel costs to the area, potentially resulting in tourists staying for shorter periods or avoiding the region altogether. The rule remains unenforced, and people are confused about the details of the new rule. Locals are concerned about losing tourist revenue and remain skeptical of the rule, believing it to be a strategy for the government to make more money without it gaining the region. However, if tourist numbers decline, the rule may not last long. If fully enforced in the future, it will be crucial to collaborate with the guides and guiding companies.

5.3 Collecting the narratives



In order to collect the narratives, visits were conducted to various points of interest, in some cases accompanied by hired guides who provided detailed information about the culture and history associated with these places. Throughout the research process, self-ethnography was utilized by taking notes while traveling like a tourist. Furthermore, conversations with other tourists gave firsthand knowledge about other interesting people and places. Narratives were implicitly evaluated by listening to other travelers' stories and observing their reactions to the stories we shared. Narratives and stories often appeared spontaneously and unforced by curiously asking questions to local residents. Along the way potential stories were documented with text, pictures, video, and sound.

5.4 Crafting the narrative



The potential narratives underwent an ideation, where the interesting part of the story was extracted and the driving medium was considered. The different narratives were attempted to be translated into the existing concepts that were tested in the first phase of the project (see §4.2). For instance if a funny or interesting sound occurred it was considered to be communicated through the sound exploration interface, while a detailed chaotic image was considered for *the spotlight*.

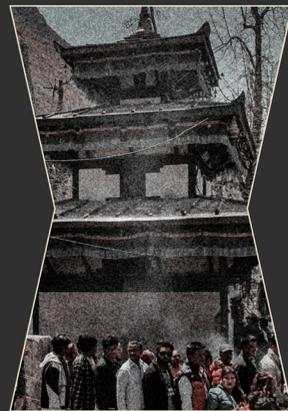
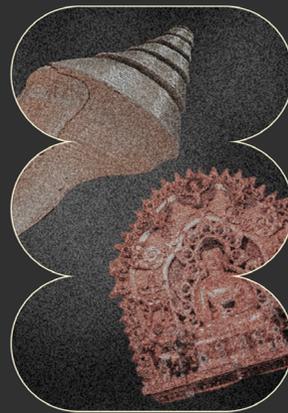


Result

This chapter presents the final result of the thesis. It is a functioning prototype that in theory could be launched.

Memories of Mustang

The villages



The sound of Nepa

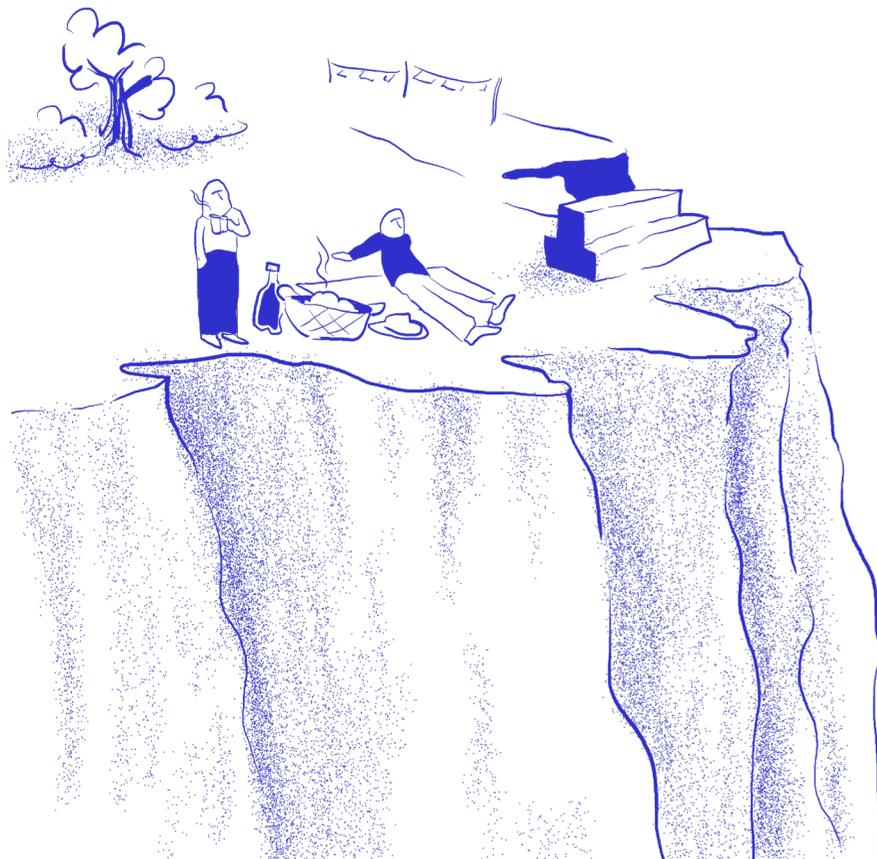


The s leop



6.1 Final concept

This chapter presents the final result. The chapter will explain in detail how the different pages work, which narratives are included, and reasoning behind the format, and interactions. The result is a product of continuous iteration and user testing. The elements in the prototype have been continuously tested, and adjusted to be usable, understandable and to ensure the solution follows the design principles presented.

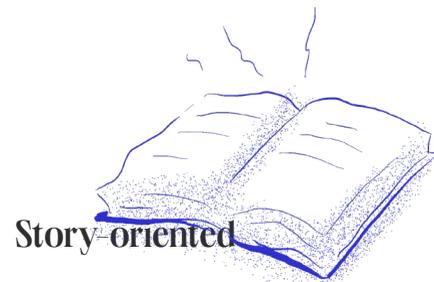


Digital storytelling website

The final concept is a digital storytelling website. Showcasing the hidden gems, the people of Lower Mustang, their culture and their stories. The website is a functioning prototype containing various narratives, presented using various digital storytelling techniques. The narratives presented in the solution include, among other things, personal experiences, local culture and history, and informative narratives regarding the challenges and opportunities of tourism in the area.

6.1.1 Design principles

Four design principles were developed based on the insights.



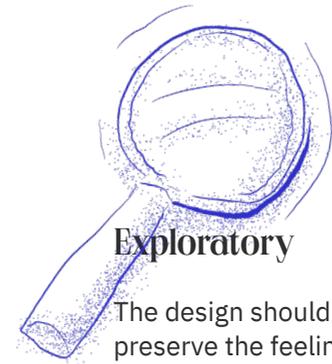
Story-oriented

The solution aims to use storytelling in every element, from start to finish. The user should immerse themselves in the story from the moment they enter the page. The solution should incorporate storytelling in every aspect, never breaking the illusion of immersion. The presentation and the visuals should aim to immerse the audience, drawing them into the story.



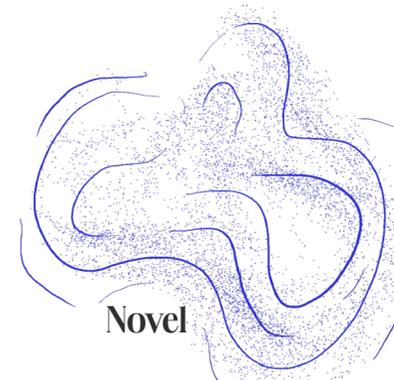
Authentic

In order to accommodate travelers' need for authenticity, the design should appear authentic. It should reflect the authenticity of the villages through visual aesthetics, narratives, and tone of voice. Authenticity should be present in the look and feel of all the images, narratives, illustrations, and all other visual elements on the webpage.



Exploratory

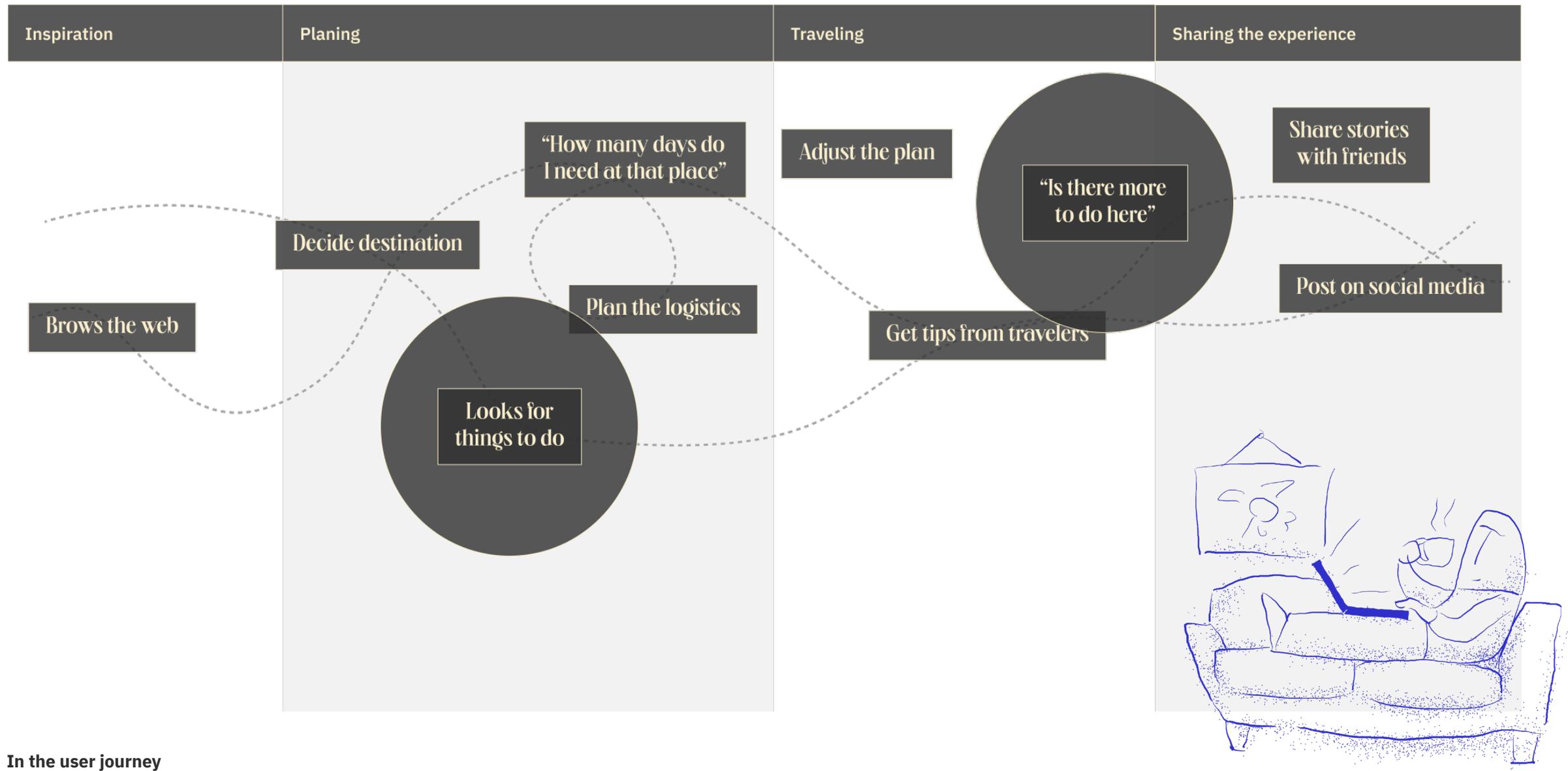
The design should allow the user to explore the content in their way. It strives to preserve the feeling of exploration that travelers enjoy from traveling. The exploration should be rooted in curiosity. Exploring the website should be a fun and fulfilling experience that contributes to the positive experience of travel planning. The design should highlight the value of curious exploration and leverage explorative behavior beyond the website, inspiring travelers to be more curious while they travel as well.



Novel

The design should be novel to stand out in the vast amount of online information. Furthermore, to counteract the standardization process dominating the traditional tourism industry, the design should strive to set an example by daring to do things differently. Finally, through novelty, the design also aims to evoke curiosity among the audience and drive them to explore more of what the area has to offer.

6.1.2 Intended context of use



In the user journey

The solution is intended to target people in the stage where they have determined the area in which they want to travel; this will typically be a user determined to visit the Annapurna region. It aims to serve as a source of diverse inspiration rather than a tool for planning or sorting out logistics. In addition to the pre-travel phase, the solution is highly relevant in the stage where the user is traveling and wants to research more about what the area has to offer.

Contextual scenario

Scenario: *The user sits comfortably on the sofa/ hotel bed/armchair. The user has time to kill, feels understimulated, and seeks new input. (See § 3.3).* The scenario allows the solution to be more exploratory, more “unpractical”, but more immersive and novel since the user has more patients and time is not of the essence.

6.1.3 How to view the final result



Video

A video walkthrough was made in order to provide a better understanding of the animations, transitions, and interactions on the page. Since the page aims to be visual and novel, the pictures alone in the following section do not adequately justify the page's feel and the richness of the interactions. It is more easily understood by watching the video walkthrough or testing the prototype for yourself. Furthermore, a video of each individual page is included in the sections below.

Link to videos:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1FeyaO7NzVXZSheF34aljYbLLXbPaS-HI?usp=share_link

Test the prototype

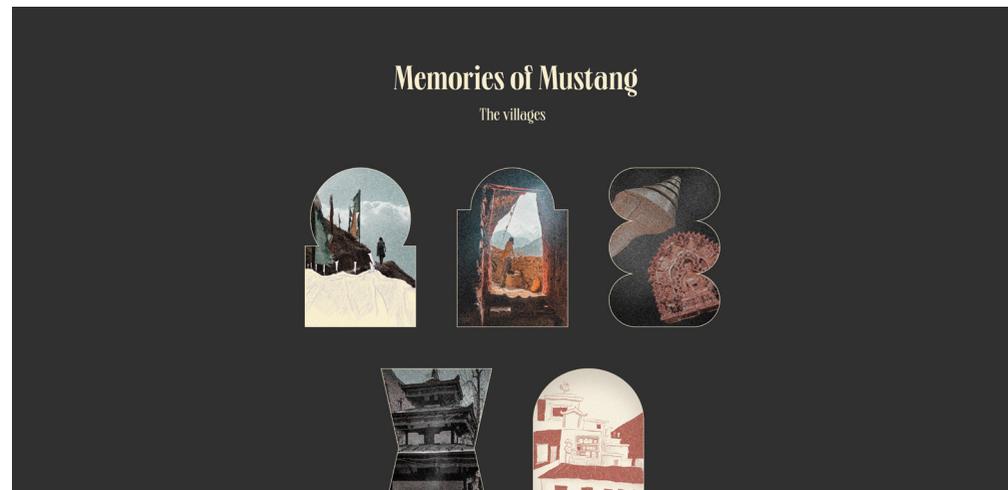
To explore the narratives and interactions in your own pace one can test the interactive prototype oneself. Due to limitations of Figma(See § 2.5) there are certain instructions that should be followed in order to get the best experience.

Link to test prototype: <https://www.figma.com/proto/sHZyeEMVMHoGc0m7L-Cudzv/Ferdig-prototype?page-id=0%3A1&type=design&node-id=282-3305&viewport=8490%2C9901%2C0.51&scaling=scale-down-width&starting-point-node-id=282%3A3287&hotspot-hints=0&hide-ui=1>

- Use a computer, preferably with a mouse
- Open in a browser, do NOT open in the Figma desktop app. The prototype is designed around the back button in the browser
- Open the link: Link:
- (The first page is just intended for the master thesis)
- Make sure the red line at the bottom is visible, if not, use a more narrow screen or reduce the width of the browser until you see it (This issue is due to the limitations of Figma)

6.2 Final solution

The website features a homepage that links several pages. The pages then again link to substories/narratives relating to the pages. When the user first enters the page, they go through a short scrollytelling intro before arriving at the homepage.



Homepage

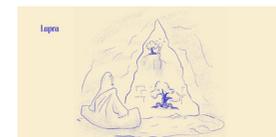


Intro

Flow starting point

Pages

Substories/Narratives



6.2.1 Introduction - Scrollytelling



The intro - First encounter

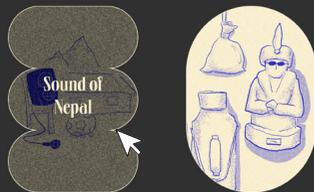
The intro is the first encounter with the website. It is a short scrollytelling page, which ends with the user arriving at the homepage. The objective of the intro is to provide the audience with context about the area and give them an idea of what the webpage is and what it tries to do. The intro displays pictures of nature and the people living there, as well as highlighting the fact that the page is based on personal experiences.

Memories of Mustang

The villages



Feel the atmosphere



Explore the wildlife



Connect with the community



6.2.2 Homepage

The purpose of the homepage is to tie all the elements together. The home page consists of tiles shaped in various ways. Each of the tiles links to another story page. In order to provide the audience with a context, the tiles are sorted under four captions, *Villages*, *Explore the atmosphere*, *Explore the nature*, and *Connect with the community*. When the user hover over a tiles, the title of the page is displayed.



The novel shapes resemble windows offering a curious glimpse of what is hidden behind them. Furthermore, the variations in shapes reflect the variation on the pages hiding behind them.

6.2.3 Jharkot - Interactive illustration



How it works

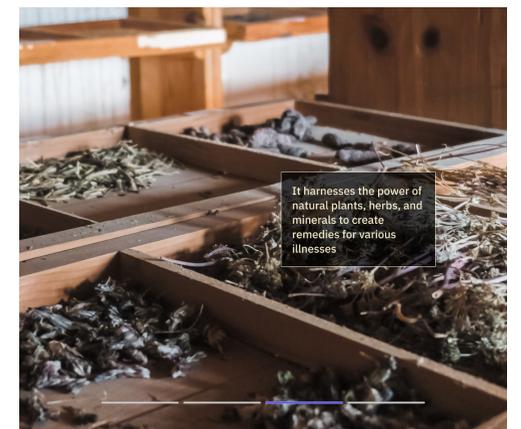
Jharkot is presented as an interactive illustration, similar to the prototype in Chapter 4.2.2. The illustration contains several substories relating to local history, people, places, or personal experiences. The page allows the user to explore the illustration by clicking on the elements they find interesting. The chaotic scene is intended to evoke curiosity through complexity (Berlyne 1960). When the user clicks on one of the elements, they are shown a combination of text, images, illustrations, and/or other media.

The narratives of Jharkot

The page showcases multiple stories, including, among others, the story of the Dacchang festival, the Tibetan doctors in Jharkot, a passionate hotel owner sharing his culture, and the story of a failed stone heist.

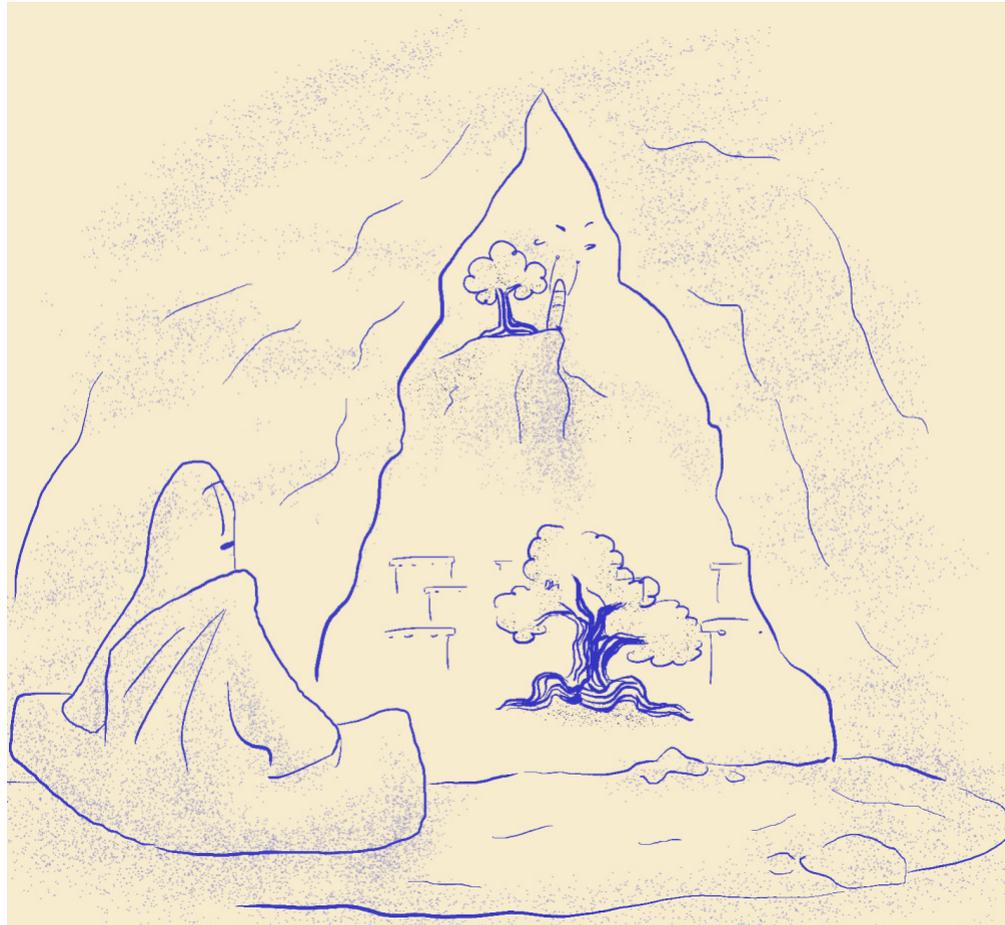


Hover effect - on the interactable elements



Overlay - tells the story behind each element

6.2.5 Lupra - Interactive illustration

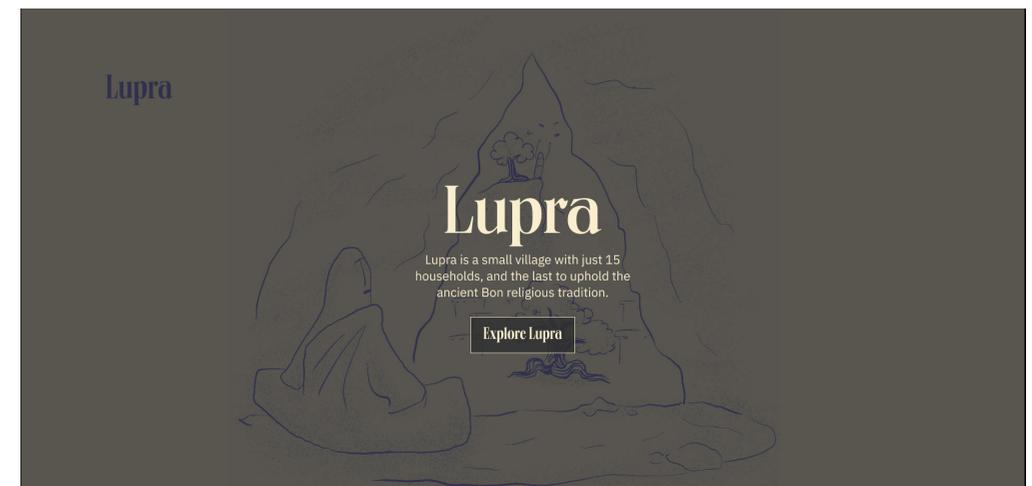


How it works

The page for Lupra also features an interactive illustration, but in contrast to Jhar-kot, it only contains three substories. The different approaches are meant to provide two distinct experiences to prevent users from becoming bored or tired. Signifiers On this page, interactive elements are animated. The animations are constrained to the area of interactions, intuitively drawing the user to explore these points. The first narrative featured on the page is the story of the *Old Tree*, a story about the village's origin. The second story features *The Caves*, which are commonly used for meditation. The third features a *The New Tree*, a tree at the top of the hill, used for a religious ritual.

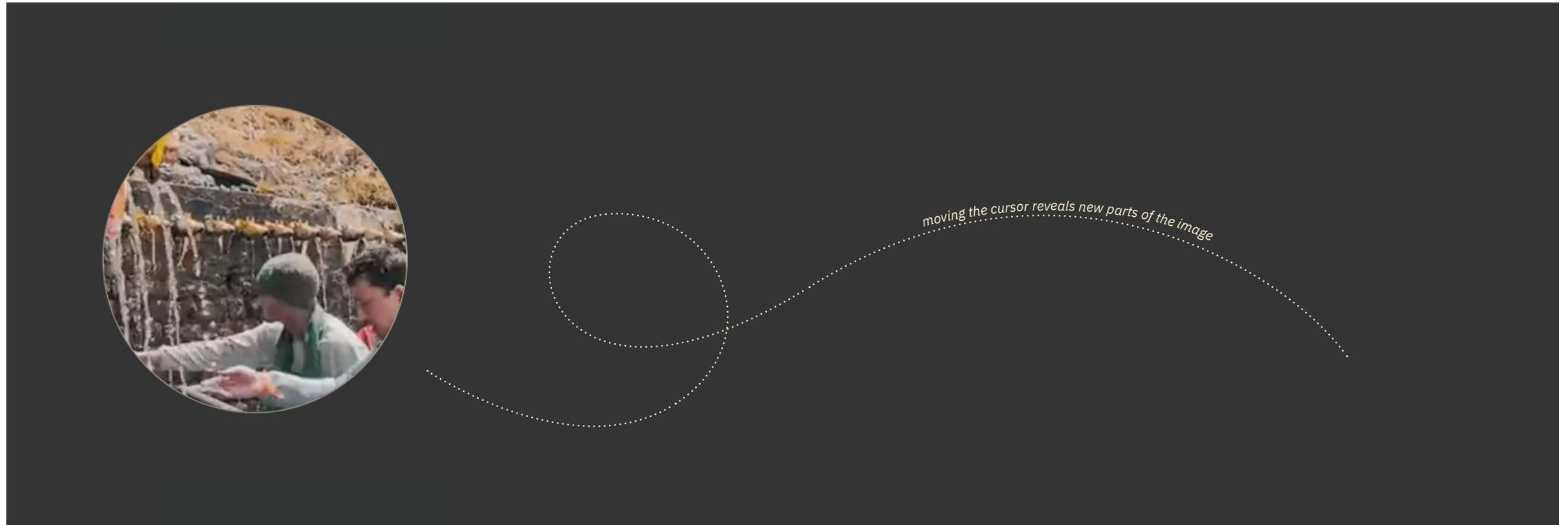


The same overlay is used for all story elements. The user can see how long they have left with the progress bar in the bottom. This overlay tells the story of the old tree of Lupra, a story about the origin of the village.



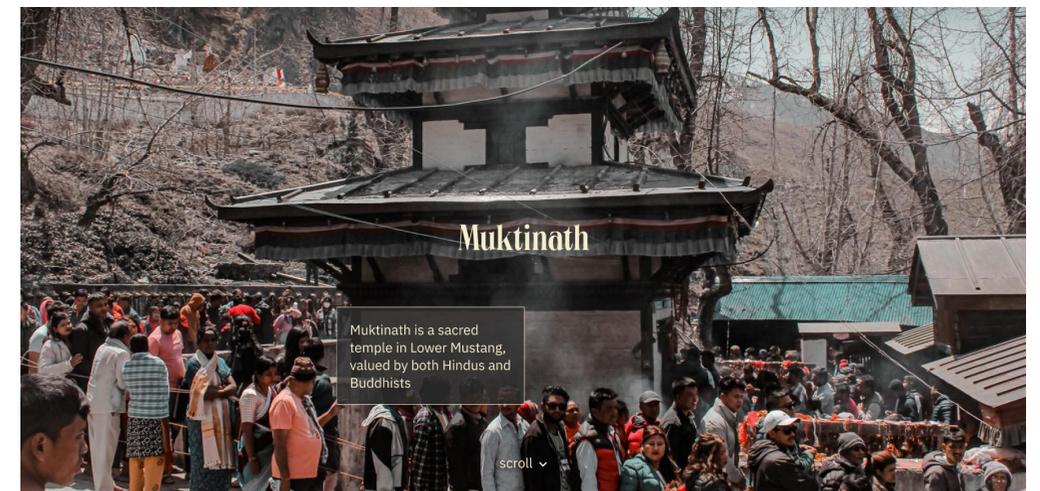
As a result of user testing, all the villages were given an intro, explaining briefly what the village is to provide the user with some context.

6.2.6 Muktinath - The Spotlight



How it works

The page's purpose is to showcase the, religious significance, and the vibrant energy of the crowd of Muktinath. The page begins with a short scrolling section providing contextual information regarding the religious significance of the place. The user quickly proceed to an interactive spotlight building upon the same principles as the prototype presented in Chapter 4.4.2. The spotlight display only a fragment of a continuously looping video captured outside the Muktinath temple. The user can control which part of the video they are looking at by moving the cursor on the screen. As they move around, they unveil new parts of the video. The interface guides the user's eye and forces them to pay closer attention to the details. The aim is to make the audience aware of otherwise neglected details and recognize the value of actively observing the world around them. The concept aims to transcend the on-screen experience by encouraging people to repeat the activity on-site. Indirectly the solution seeks to encourage this behavior in all aspects of traveling, allowing tourists to see beauty in unconventional sites.



Scrollytelling intro provide background information about the temple

6.1.9 Kagbeni - Interactive Collage

The page displays various pictures related to one story, place, or experience in Kagbeni. When the user hovers the mouse over the images, a title appears. The titles are intended to leave the users uncertain about what the story is about and what they can expect.

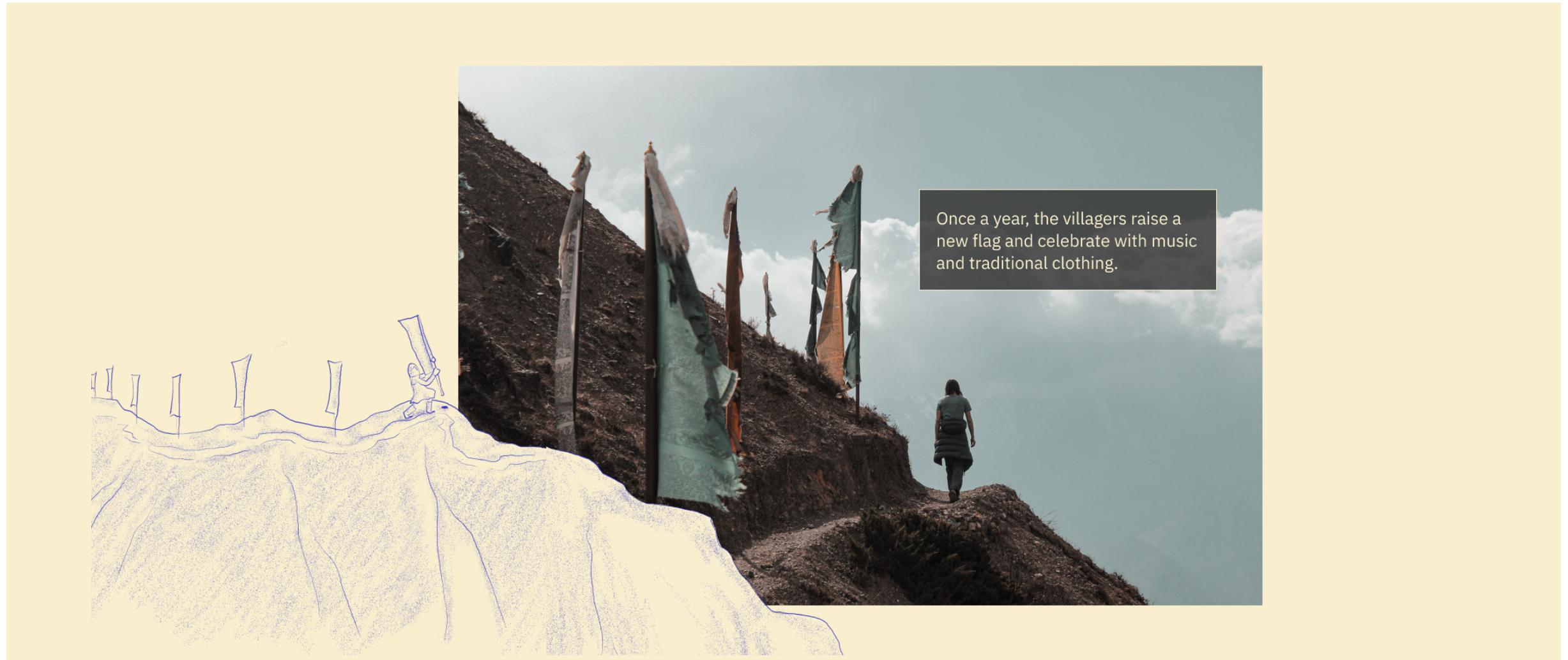


One of the stories is based on our first experience with morning puja (religious ritual). It highlights the everydayness of the religious ceremonies to show that this ritual is a part of their everyday life.

Kagbeni



6.1.10 Jhong - Playful scrollytelling

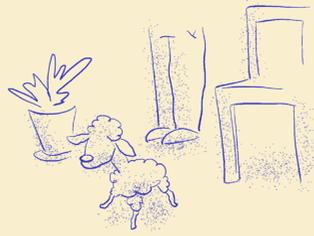


How it works

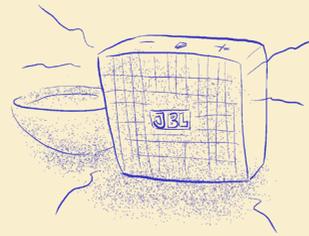
Jhong is displayed as a vertical landscape. The user starts in the sky; as they scroll, they move down in the landscape, passing by the mountain Dakpoche and a picnic spot on the way down towards the village. They pass through the village, the flag hike, and end up in the caves below Jhong. As they progress downward, they encounter textboxes explaining various facts and small stories. Furthermore, effects are triggered by changing between a combination of images and illustrations. The experience is intended to be visual and novel, immersing the user in the story.



The sound of Nepal

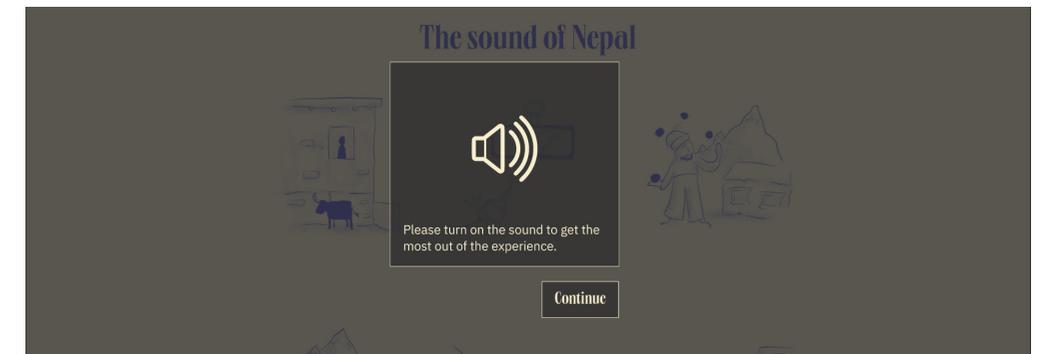


Tourist putting on an outdoor juggling show 4000 meters above sea level



6.1.11 Sound of Nepal

The page features different sounds of unique situations encountered while conducting the fieldwork in Nepal. The interaction and format of the page is based on the lessons learned in chapter 4.2. The page lets the audience explore the sound clips by hovering their mouse over the illustrations. As shown in chapter 4.2 the sound has the power to transport the audience into the moment and activate their imagination. Likewise, the illustrations give the audience a vague idea of the situation but leave room for imagination. The illustrations are not directly linked to the sound, allowing the sound to be a humoristic surprise.



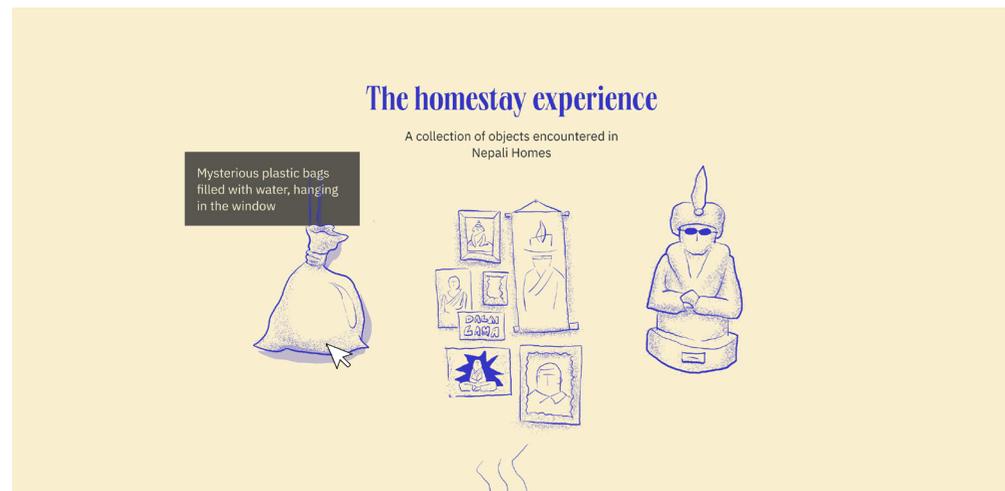
When entering the page, the users are prompted to turn on the sound, a problem revealed during the first round of prototyping phase

6.1.13 Responsible traveling - Reflective narrative



The page is based on a scrollytelling interaction. It presents problems related to tourism and tries to relate them to the area and the people living there. The page's objective is to make travelers reflect upon their own traveling behaviors.

6.1.14 The homestay experience - Everyday life seen through a collection of objects



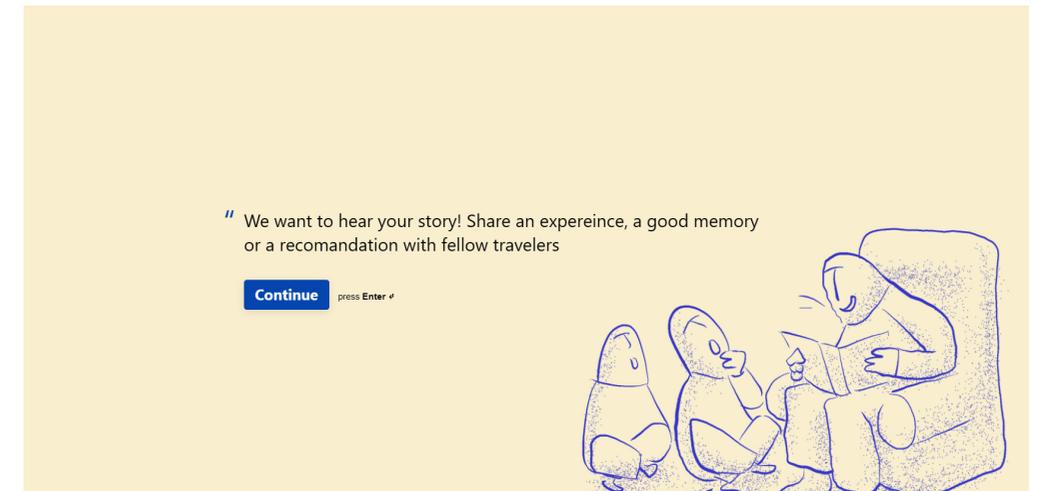
The concept

The page's main objective is to spark an interest in homestays. The page recognizes travelers' fascination with everyday life and presents surprising cultural differences through ordinary objects. The objects are a collection of objects we encountered in Nepali homes. The page aims to be humorous without becoming condescending towards the locals.

How it works

The audience can explore the different objects by hovering over them. When the user hovers over an object, a humorous description of the object is displayed.

6.1.15 Sharing stories



Collecting new narratives

The page aims to collect more stories from the area by encouraging other travelers to share their experiences. The page focuses on storytelling and prompts the users to tell it as a story rather than a review. By collecting new stories, the ones interested in taking over the project could have a greater collection of stories. The page also recognizes the users' desire to share their experiences and strives to achieve a sense of belonging among the users, potentially leading them to share the webpage with their others.

6.1.16 Substories and narratives

This section present some of the many narratives and substories included on the page. To see more, try the prototype or watch the video walkthrough.



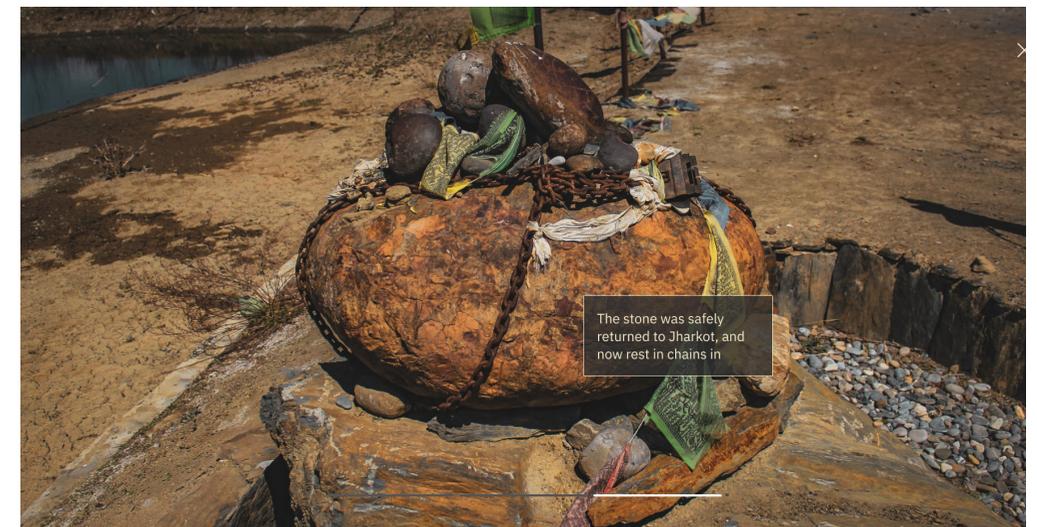
The Falling Apricot (Jharkot page)

The user follows the apricot; as they scroll down the apricot falls, they can read about how they are grown in the area and sees it turn into locally produced jam.



The Caves

The story about the caves of Lupra contains an encouragement to all the audience. It provide the user with a travel tip while and encourages them to pay the monks and nuns respect.



The stone thefts

The story tells the story about a physical object. It bridges the gap between the website and the real world. The idea was that it would add value to the sight of a otherwise not so interesting stone.

6.3 Final evaluation



Method

The final evaluation was conducted through a series of user tests. The participants were given a scenario matching the intended use (ref Appendix 3). Then they got to explore the prototype freely. Some minor changes and bugs were fixed between the different participants tested the solution. The sample size was $n = 7$. The participants age ranged from 20-60 years old, with most participants aged below 30. The results were sorted and summarized according to different topics. Two different intros were initially tested. Three participants were given intro A, while four participants were given intro B.

Intro A: Presented the area's tourism situation, encouraging visitors to visit the smaller villages

Intro B: Presented a brief background on the area's geographic location and explained that the page was based upon personal experiences

Results

The quotes are from participants testing the final solution or were brought up during the concluding discussion about the solution.

Overall experience

Participants seemed overall more emotionally invested, laughing, smiling, and curiously asking questions, compared to the initial participant observations. They expressed joy and enthusiasm toward the solution, actively exploring the page.

Personal experiences & Random encounters

Based on personal experiences

“...It’s a bit like Google reviews, if it comes from someone who has been to a place, they often provide much cooler tips than if you rely on platforms like Trip Advisor or something like that.”

“It’s fun to see personal stories! When I’ve been traveling, I always went for the things that people we met recommended! We stayed here, then we went there and experienced this and that.”

The participants exposed to Intro B registered that the page was based on personal experiences. Several of the participants emphasized that the page gain value from being based on personal experiences. Furthermore, it was received as more relevant, and likely to influence their behavior. They stated that it gave the page more credibility, and made it more authentic. They compared it to review pages and mentioned it was like getting tips from other travelers. *“Is like google reviews, but much more exciting”*. The participants exposed to Intro A were initially confused but recognized after seeing some of the content that it was based on personal experiences.

Random encounters

“Even the things that might seem trivial are also fun to see... Like the juggler(Sound of Nepal page), it reminds you of all the random things you encounter while traveling.”

“Even if I can’t witness exactly all these things, it gives me a clue of all the different experiences I could get there.”

Participants enjoyed the narratives revolving around small random encounters and

unique situations. They acknowledged that they could not expect to get the same experiences. However, they found it inspiring, demonstrating that it was possible to get similar random experiences in the area.

Travel tips

“Wow, can you do that?” (Asking for cooking courses at a local restaurant)

Participants enjoy getting concrete tips about how to improve their travels, like for instance that they could ask for cooking courses, and that they could visit the caves of Lupra.

People

“Did you go there to talk to them?!” (About the tibetian doctors)

“Was there anyone there when you were there?!” (About the caves in Lupra)

“...It said 15 households in Lupra. I would like to hear more about these people.”

The participants tended to notice everything that regarded people. They were very excited to see images of local villagers and often asked follow-up questions regarding the people they saw or people who were directly or indirectly mentioned. They were not only curious about the villagers but also about other travelers.

Narratives

Cultural experiences

“So fun with things that are different” (about the Tibetan doctors in Jharkot)

“Okey, local cuisine! That is cool!” (When exploring the Kagbeni page)

Participants appreciate the stories showcasing cultural practices that diverge significantly from their own. For example, several participants found the Tibetan doctor story to be fascinating. Food-related narratives also appeal to the audience.

Festivals & rites

“So cool! If I was traveling there, I would try to find out when these kinds of things were happening.” (About Dachhang festival)

People are drawn towards rituals, festivals, and unique cultural experiences relating to the people. Participants were intrigued by the Dacchang festival and the ritual

performed at The New Tree, and the riverbank in Kagbeni.

Cultural sites

Participants found the cultural sites that also included scenic nature to be the most interesting. This included the caves, the new tree of Lupra, and the flag hike in Jhong. Furthermore, participants enjoyed the cultural sites where the narratives revolved around what the people do there, such as the ritual at The New Tree and at the river bank in Kagbeni.

The link between the real world and stories

People tend to like the link between objects in the real world and things they read about. For example the story about the stone in Jharkot and the *Old Tree* in Lupra.

The mood of the village

“Wow, this place was more full of life!” (Jharkot, in contrast to Lupra)

“This village seems kind of mysterious” (Lupra)

The participants started to form very specific images of the mood and atmosphere of all the villages based on the content they were exposed to. These moods were not intentionally designed.

Interactions and formats

Interactions

“It’s fun that there are so many different formats. You never know what you’re gonna get on the next page!”

“Cool! I like the combination of sketches and images! Nice to get the pictures of nature as well, since you don’t necessarily get that from just the sketches.”

“ Ohh, then it falls, haha, that is fun!” (Scrollpage related to the production of apricot jam. Local products, Jharkot page)

“This triggers my curiosity! ...when you don’t see everything” (Spotlight, Muktinath page)

“I liked those pages where you hover and get some info or sounds on the same page”

People enjoy the novel interactions, for example, the falling apricot(Jharkot page,

“local products”.) Participants find the scrollytelling parts entertaining and prefer it over long blocks of text. They like the hover actions, where they can easily obtain information quickly without leaving the page. Participants appreciate the combination of images and illustrations from the Jhong page. Furthermore, they like that the website is very visual, easy to comprehend, and does not just contain big blocks of text. They often express joy when entering a new page with a new format. Interactive illustrations evoked enthusiasm among the participant. They found the interaction to be fun and satisfying.

Sounds

“I can see him clearly... this is a real character!” (About the juggler, Sounds of Nepal)

“I really liked this!”

“The sounds really make you imagine the moment.”

Participants appreciated The sound of Nepal. They often laughed or chuckled when listening to the sounds. They stated that the sounds triggered their imagination and that they were able to imagine the moment vividly. Participants encouraged us to include more sound throughout the webpage, not limiting it to The Sound of Nepal page.

Curiosity

“Uhh! Im curious about the caves.” (Lupra)

Engagement and Curiosity decline rapidly after viewing a couple of stories. They actively explored the different pages and were often eager to see what more the page had to offer. Even after the official user test ended, participants continued exploring the page. One participant was in a hurry but kept exploring long after saying she needed to go.

Images / Visuals

Pictures are essential, and participants enjoy photos of people and landscapes. When they were tired of the text, participants often skipped through the pictures to see if they found something interesting. People especially liked the pages that contained a lot of visual content. Participants were drawn to images, often overlooking the text.

Variation

“Wow, there are videos also!” (In the Lupra caves)

People enjoy the surprise of novel media, for example, the videos in the caves of Lupra and the sound on the Jharkot page. Those encountering more varied stimuli in the first clicks often explored more of the content.

Text

People had a tendency to ignore longer blocks of text. A few participants faced issues comprehending the words and sentences and had to read them multiple times. As a result, they suggested using more straightforward language.

Humor

Humor has a promising potential to appeal to users. People often laugh or chuckle when they encounter surprising or obscure stories.

Amount of content

“It is a lot... almost too much.”

“I become like... Think about all the things I have to do.”

“Okei, now Im just quickly clicking through things...” (Tired of reading on the Jharkot page)

“If I was actually going, I would go through it all.”

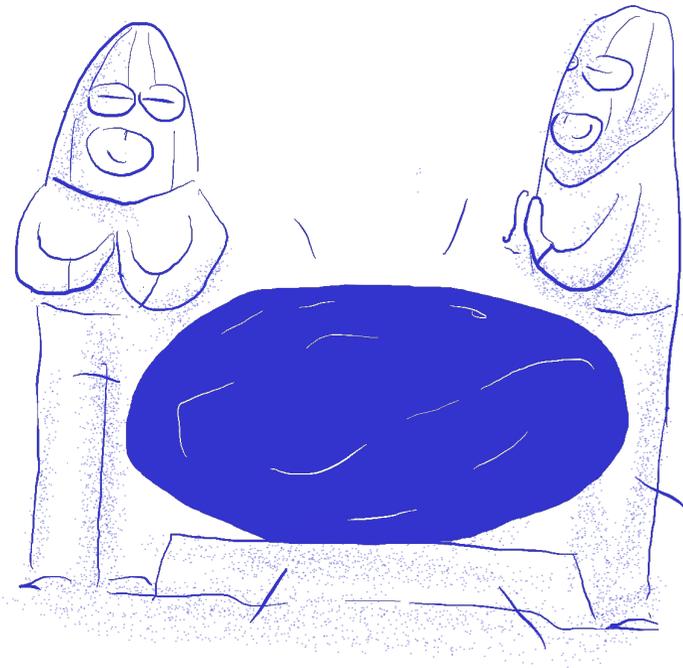
The user feels like the volume of content is very high. Furthermore, they often got tired after viewing a couple of the stories (especially present on the Jharkot page). Some participants expressed that the amount of content reflected the number of things to experience. Some people find the volume too high, causing them to skip content. Others feared they might miss something good, leading them to click through more than they usually read. When entering the interactive illustrations, participants often start by investigating the number of options. The amount of information affects their willingness to invest time in each story. For example, on the Lupra page, with only three possibilities, participants read the whole story more often, whereas in Jharkot, *they usually just scanned through the stories to view the pictures.*

Usability

In terms of usability, the page performed well. Although there were some bugs on the website (due to the Figma limitations), people found their way around it, experiencing little frustration. Participants experienced little trouble interacting with the page, even though the page contained some unconventional interaction patterns. Furthermore, there were some issues related to the incompleteness of the page, where the content was missing or buttons that did not link to pages that were not developed.

6.4 Launch strategy

The launch strategy presents a plan for launching the website and following up, recognizing the locals' desire for immediate action(see §5.1). The launch strategy is a suggestion for how it can be further developed. This thesis only include the first step.



Beta website (this thesis)

The final delivery of this master thesis will be launched as a beta website, although it has some obvious flaws and shortcomings. In order to save time and resources on development, the page will be launched as a High-fidelity Figma prototype. However, publishing a Figma project has certain limitations(see §2.6).

Beta 2.0

The next logical step would be to improve the page's content by removing less interesting narratives and refining the other narratives to better appeal to the audience.

Mobile version

In order to accommodate different user scenarios, the webpage should be easily accessible from mobile devices. However, this requires adjusting all the frames and interactions, which can be time-consuming.

Converting Figma to code

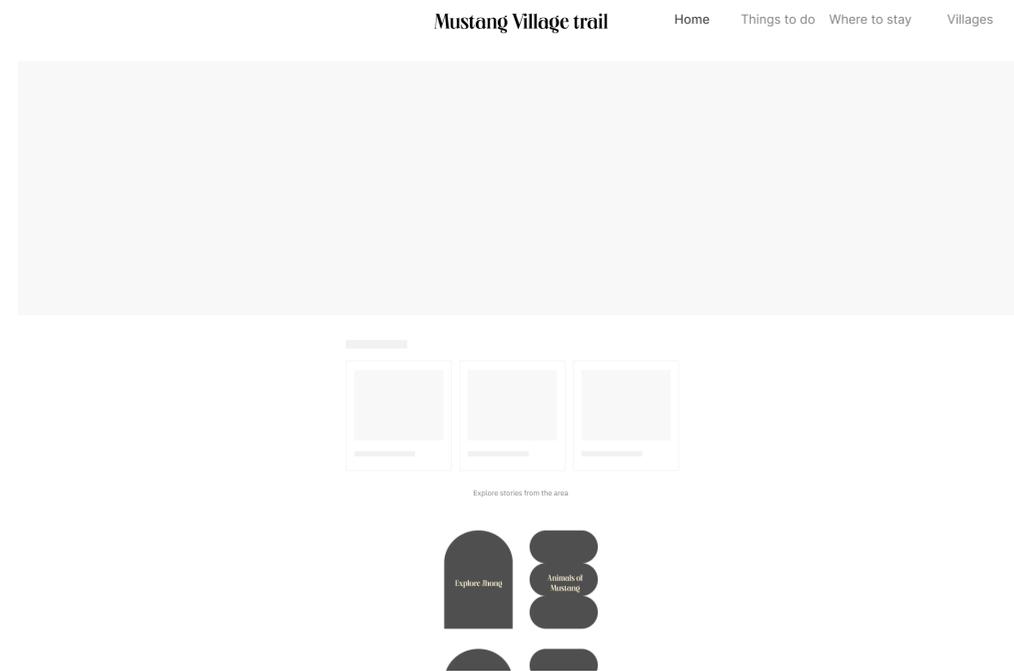
If the project is successful and tourists and the solution impacts tourism in the area, it could be considered to make a more robust webpage by transforming the project to HTML code. This could be done using software like Anima to convert the Figma file into HTML code or by building the website in Webflow. However, adjusting the Figma file to be compatible with this software can be time-consuming, and the services can be pricy, but it eliminates the limitations of Figma(ref).

Integration on the Mustang Village Trail

The stories are designed to be integrated into the Mustang Village Trail website. Ideas for how it can be implemented is presented in the next section.

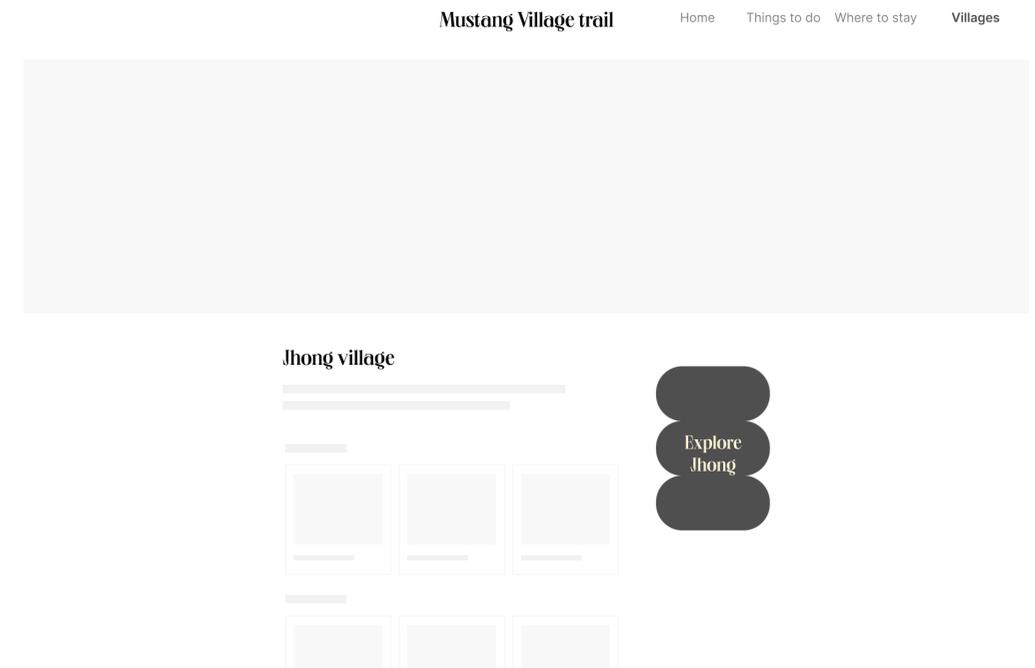
6.3.1 Integration on the Mustang Village Trail

The Mustang Village Trail provides practical information regarding Lower Mustang and holds the potential to reach a broad audience, making it a very relevant touch-point. The stories could act as a source of inspiration, while the website provides relevant information on how to get around. The website is still under development, but the most recent design includes the following pages; *The homepage, Things to Do, Where to Stay, Villages, and Map*. The following section proposes a design for where the stories could be implemented. The design sketches are just low-fidelity wireframes, communicating the general idea, not the finished design.



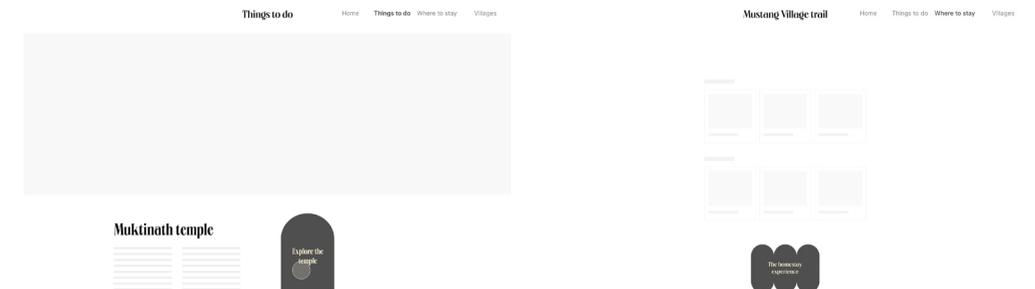
The village page

The Village page includes information about each of the Lower Mustang villages. The corresponding village page from this thesis could be integrated into these pages and serve as a source of inspiration.



The homepage

The homepage features pictures, links, and general inspiration. This page is ideal for the Experience the Atmosphere pages, but it could showcase all of the stories from Memories of Mustang.



Things to do

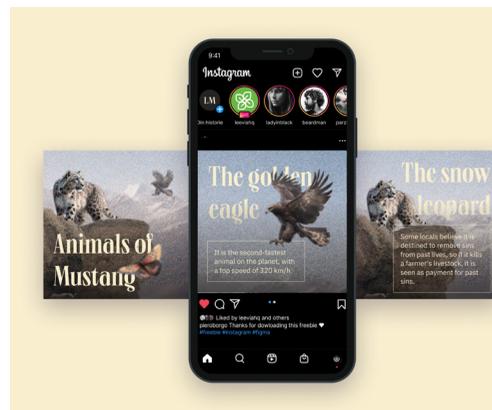
The activity page could showcase narratives relating to the corresponding activity. For example, The Spotlight from Memories of Mustang can be included on the Muktinath Temple page.

Where to stay

The Where to Stay page features the contact information of different hotels and homestays. This makes it an ideal place to feature the Homestay experience.

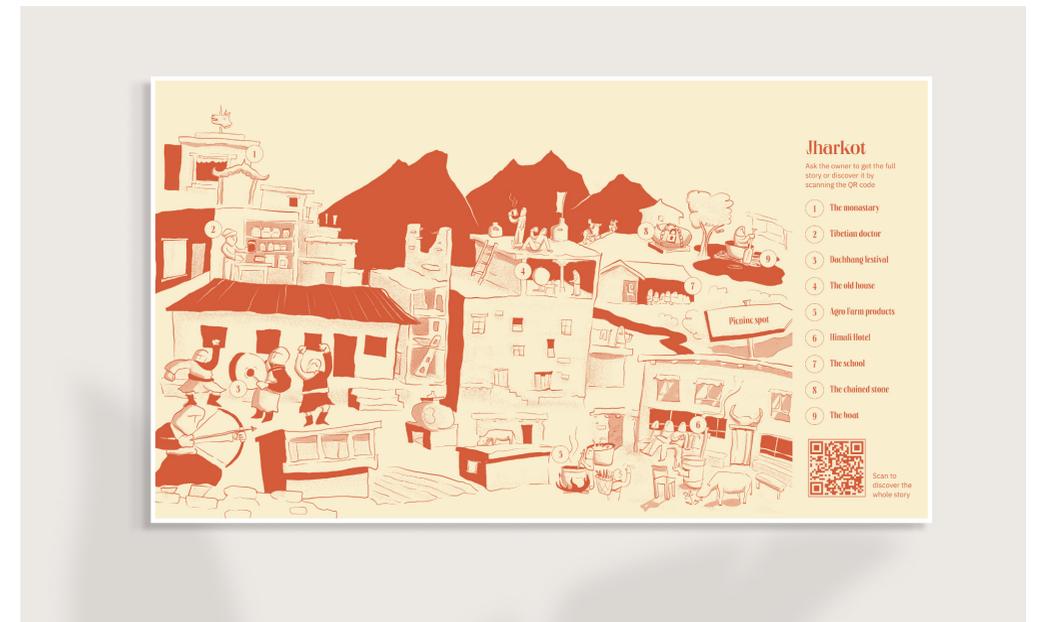
6.3.2 Multiple touchpoints

The content and the narratives can be adapted to fit different touchpoints, recognizing that making the website reach a broad audience is hard. The following section exemplifies how the content can be adapted to fit the relevant touchpoints (see §3.3 and § 5.2) and how the design principles and general insights should be included when designing for new touchpoints. The system relating to the new touchpoints still needs to be designed but could be handled by the SAMAJ group.



Magazines can be placed on bookshelves (ref) at hotels in Katmandu, Pokhara, along the Anapurna circuit trek, and in the villages of Lower Mustang. They appear more story-oriented and authentic compared to flyers and other advertisement articles.

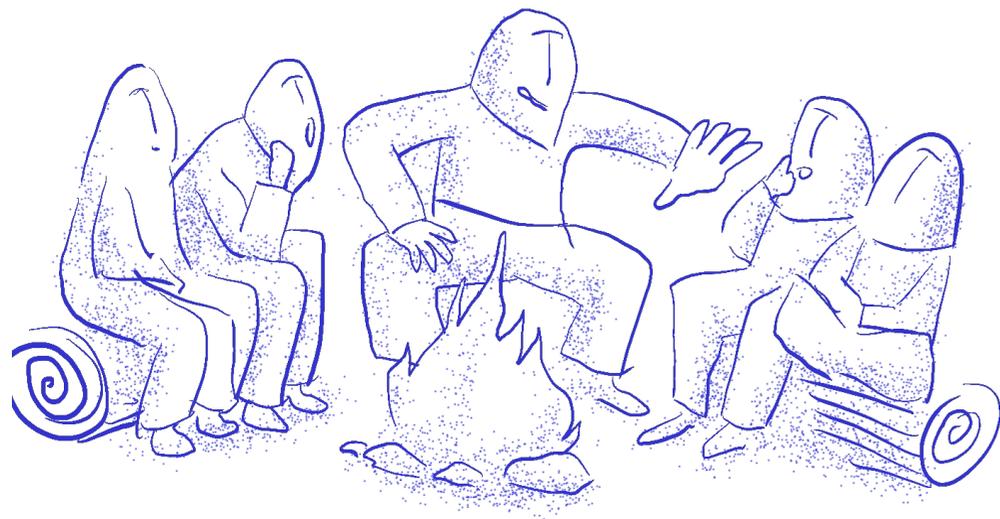
Social media makes it easy for travelers to share their experiences with other travelers by sharing accounts



Wallmaps can act as a source of inspiration and facilitate conversations between the local hotel/ homestay owners and travelers.



Personal stickers (ref), often placed on bottles or phone cases, can be a conversation starter between travelers or among friends and family. The touchpoint recognizes travelers' desire to share their experience (ref) and can have an impact after ending the journey.



Discussion

This chapter discusses the result of the final evaluation and the possibilities of the thesis. Furthermore, it presents the limitations of the thesis and discusses ethical concerns.

7.1 Possibilities

Digital storytelling seems to have great potential for attracting tourists to the villages of Lower Mustang. Participants in the final evaluation expressed excitement about the digital experience and the place. Participants were more emotionally invested, laughing, smiling, and curiously asking questions, compared to the initial participant observations (§ 3.1). It can indicate that they enjoy the experience and might be more likely to remember it. In addition, participants liked the link between real-life and digital stories, demonstrating the potential impact stories can have on the on-site experience. Stories effectively communicate the atmosphere and experiences relating to interactions with the local people. The thesis, therefore, serves as a proof of concept that could be further improved to maximize the desired effect, whether it is attracting more tourists or indirectly and directly encouraging more responsible travel habits.

Consumer narrative vs. organizational storytelling

Participants emphasized that the page gain value from being based on personal experiences. The findings could indicate that consumer narratives (See § 2.2) appeal more than organizational storytelling. If this turns out true, the design should embrace the status as a consumer narrative.

Cultural narrative as a means of cautious behavior

Findings from the final evaluation indicate an interest among participants in cultural narratives, highlighting interesting and unique parts of the destination's culture. These cultural narratives could have the potential to evoke fascination, understanding, and respect among travelers, ultimately leading them to travel with more caution toward the host community.

Interest in people and communities

Stories about people and communities yield great potential. Participants frequently ask questions regarding the people they see and who they are. Furthermore, theory relating to the topic indicates that presenting their actual names and other details linking the information in space and time can contribute to the perceived authenticity. However, presenting personal details can lead to privacy-related issues (discussed further in § 7.3).

Curiosity

Participants became curious about the different elements, actively exploring the website's content, even after the user test had ended. People explored much content, probably more than they would have if the content had been presented in a non-curious manner. This could be caused by the novelty of the look and feel the

novel aesthetics, or the novelty of the interactions on the website. Furthermore, the complexity of the page, with the wide range of possible interactions and media, also seems to contribute to the feeling of curiosity. Uncertainty also occurred when the users noticed interactable elements and headlines but did not know what was hiding behind them due to the considerable variations on the page. Partial exposure to information also evoked curiosity was demonstrated, especially on the Muktinath Spotlight page. All these findings align with the design principles presented in the desk research chapter and demonstrate the potential of designing effect of designing for curiosity when trying to convey information. However, the curiosity evoked by novelty was often short. Once the page was no longer novel, they started to get less curious. The same applies to complexity. When the participants started to see a pattern of repeating stimuli (ex., in the Jharkot page), they got tired of the page. However, those who encountered more varied stimuli in the first clicks often seemed more curious, leading them to explore more, as demonstrated on the Lupra page, which demonstrates the potential of designing the page in a way that demonstrates variety early on. However, sparsely using more novel media and interesting formats might also be a strategy to keep them interested. These potential strategies raise an important question: Is it right to design these curious patterns, so the audience uses more time on the page than they normally would? In order to prevent people from exploring the content out of fear of missing out, there should be a balance between the amount of content and the curiosity evoked. There should be enough content to show that there are plenty of things to do but not so much that they spend too much time exploring it all.

The potential of different digital storytelling formats

The different formats had different strengths and weaknesses. Exploration of atmospheres through sound showed promising results. It made the participants able to imagine moments more vividly. However, using unexpected sounds can be unpleasant in some contextual scenarios.

The hover interactions worked well to let the user explore content rapidly. They enjoyed obtaining information quickly without leaving the page. However, it can be difficult to convey longer stories in this format. The format should be considered when the amount of information is low. Furthermore, hover interactions are not possible on mobile devices, so it requires a responsive design to adjust the interaction to function on mobile devices.

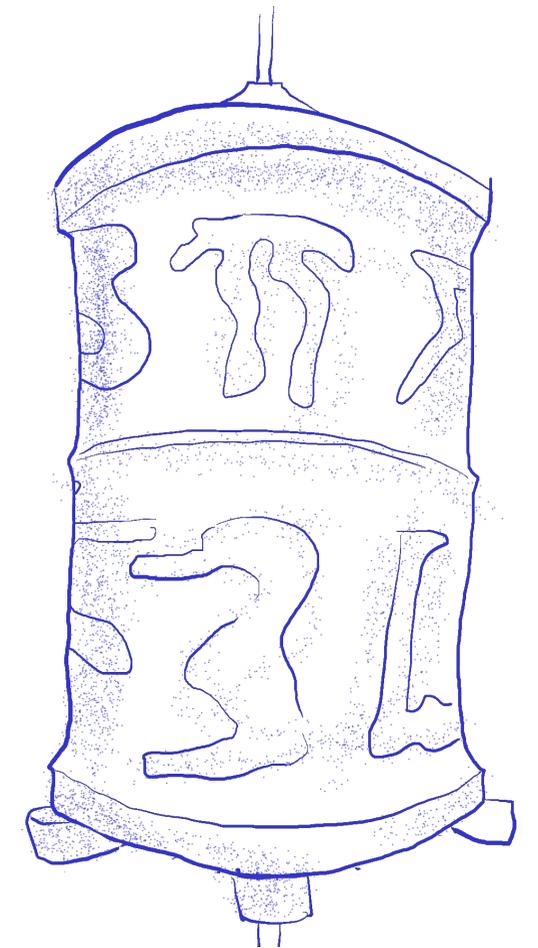
The spotlight functioned well for its purpose. People got curious, explored, and noticed details they had not seen before. This format can be especially effective for communicating narratives relating to responsible traveling. It could, for example, be used to showcase tourist sites and show waste, crowds of people, or other problems related to tourism. It can also be used in a cultural context, where the audience can experience artworks, architecture, monasteries, and more.

The intro works well. Participants read, and process the information, although they have the option to skip it. This could be a powerful tool to communicate narratives

relating to responsible traveling. However, it is important to consider the user's context and expectations. If the user lacks the necessary contextual information when they enter the website, they can become confused, affecting their willingness to explore the rest of the content. Interactive illustration showed promising results in terms of joining content. It evoked curious exploration, but the effect often short and people start to lose interest once the interaction no longer were novel.

For all the formats, it is important to consider the context. If the user is in a physical or mental state where they just want the practical information, they might feel frustrated by the chaotic nature of the information. For this reason, the information should, to some extent, be available in another place or in another format. For example, the website can feature a list view of all the narratives so they can easily return and access the things they found interesting without having to recall the location of the content or have to look through all the content.

The format should also be considered in relation to its need to be updated or changed. Different formats offer different flexibility in terms of changes. For example, the interactive has less flexibility than the scrollytelling pages since it requires more work to alter the illustration than to change one of the text boxes and images of the scrollytelling page.



7.2 Limitations of the thesis

Method, process, and approach

First, one can raise the question: “Does it solve the right problem?”. There are various problems related to the development of Nepal and tourism in general. There are likely other and better ways of solving the problem. Tourism might not be the best way to solve the economic situation since it is vulnerable to change, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, there are better solutions than digital storytelling for increasing tourism. The complexity of stakeholders and influencing factors are very real and significant impact the solution. This thesis has not been focused on the complexity of the possibilities for other solutions due to the limited time and the desire to complete a solution that can be implemented in the real world. Furthermore, local stakeholders and residents could have played a more prominent role in the development of the narratives and the final solution.

The final solution has neither considered the cultural differences in the target group. For example, an American and Indian tourist might have significantly different preferences for web design, aesthetics, interaction, and narratives. Furthermore, the insights conducted could also depend on the cultural background.

The design process was strongly influenced by external conditions. Due to weather conditions in the mountains of Lower Mustang, the fieldwork had to be conducted very late. All the steps and learnings leading up to the fieldwork have been very useful. However, it did not allow for many iterations on the final solution. One can also argue that it was useful for the process and that it opened the possibility to focus more on the format, leading to a more innovative result than it would have done.

It was also easier to capture the right media and nuances, like, for instance, sound recordings, than if the field trip had been conducted earlier.

Due to the sharply formulated design brief provided by Kastellet and Kvassheim(2022), the objective of the task was very focused on attracting more tourists rather than encouraging a responsible travel practice. The final result could have benefited from a stronger focus on responsible travel.

Ultimately, the process of selecting the narratives to be included in the final solution could have been more carefully thought through. Many of the narratives just evolved from sketching and ideation rather than from a series of logical arguments.

Final evaluation

The final evaluation of the solution had shortcomings. First of all, the sample size was small, and there were little variations in the sample in terms of age, nationality, and cultural background.

The test did not evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of communication. It did not collect any quantitative data to determine preferred narratives or formats. However, this is less relevant due to the wide variation and potential errors that can

be caused by the variations in the combination of content and presentation. It would have been interesting to do AB-testing of the content and format to determine the effectiveness of presenting the same content in a different way.

Even though the final evaluation indicates the successfulness of the digital interface, it does not give any usable results in terms of the actual effect on travelers’ intention to visit the destination. If the solution does not change the actual behavior, it is of no use. In order to evaluate this, the solution needs to be deployed and followed up.

Shortcomings

The most significant shortcoming is that many of the narratives have not been properly iterated upon. Some of the narratives have undergone many changes, but there are still some narratives that do not hold up to their potential.

The final solution only highlights five of the villages in the area, although there are several more. This can give the selected villages an unfair advantage compared to the others. The reason for not including more villages is the limited time. However, it is important to note that if more villages are added to the page, the amount of content grows, and it will be harder for the audience to consume all the information.

There are also still some usability issues. The complexity and novelty of some of the interactions pose some usability issues, where people try clicking on things that are not clickable. Combined with the limitations of Figma, it might lead to frustration among some people. Some of the problems are easy to fix and will be fixed before launching, but others require more design work and might be left as it is for now.

Ultimately, the content of the final solution should be reduced. Currently, the amount of content is more than people want to consume, causing them to miss the “best” narratives. In order to do so, the content should be prioritized in relation to the potential to increase visiting intent.

7.3 Ethical concerns and Privacy

Negative impacts of tourism

When designing solutions in relation to tourism, it is important to consider the negative impacts of tourism. Even though the solution seeks to promote a more sustainable tourism practice, the real outcome could contribute to the negative impacts of tourism. Promoting a travel destination, like in the proposed solution, can inspire more people who otherwise would not have traveled to do so. This can lead to environmental impacts like, increased carbon emission, environmental degradation, and problems relating to waste management. The solution tries to accommodate this by targeting users planning a trip to Nepal(see § 6.1.2). The solution should refrain from reaching out to people not intending to travel. However, it is challenging to balance reaching them in time and not encouraging more traveling.

Furthermore, a greater influx of tourists can harm the local culture in the destinations. As explained in chapter 1.3, tourism can cause the commodification of local culture, change traditional festivals and cultural practices, and even contribute to a rising focus on material possessions among locals. The villages targeted by this solution are extra vulnerable because of their small size and population (see § 1.3). The solution aims to counteract these effects by distributing more tourists to less popular destinations in order to share the benefits and burden of tourism, informing and educating tourists about the local culture and people in order to foster understanding and respect among travelers, thereby implicitly encouraging more responsible travel practices. However, if the solution successfully attracts many tourists, and the influx of tourists exceeds the carrying capacity(see § 1.3), the project should be shut down. Furthermore, a system should be in place to ensure that the tourism practice follows a sustainable practice. The system should recognize the complexity of the problem and aim to adjust the result from this thesis to function in the new system. The system could potentially be designed as part of the SAMAJ projects' further works.

Ultimately, if the solution does not want to attract more tourism in general but only distributes the benefits and burden of tourists already planning to travel, it poses another problem. The residents who live near popular hiking trails and other tourist hotspots have become reliant on the income generated by tourism. Therefore, if the solution attracts tourists who would have gone to these areas, it may take away the livelihood of these people.



Privacy

There are some privacy concerns related to this thesis. The final solution features images, sound, and video of local people and the other researchers conducting the fieldwork. In order to ensure the privacy of everyone involved, all the material will be reviewed to ensure that those portrayed have the opportunity to approve their usage. This will be done through contact persons in Nepal. Furthermore, a system should be in place so the involved people can retract from their consent.



Conclusion

This thesis aims to utilize digital storytelling in order to promote a more sustainable tourism practice in Nepal by making more tourists visit the smaller villages of Lower Mustang. The result is a functional digital storytelling website. The thesis shows promising results and demonstrates the potential digital storytelling can have for attracting tourists to the villages of Lower Mustang.

Many travelers want more authentic experiences. They desire, among other things, to experience new cultures and customs, connect with local people, experience everyday life, see new landscapes, and find the diamond in the rough, all of which the smaller villages in Lower Mustang can offer. Travelers want to avoid tourist places but often find themselves at these tourist sites due to limited information about other alternatives. The currently available information about the area and the villages is minimal, does not appeal to the tourist, and does not justify the authentic atmosphere of the place. Furthermore, the insights reveal a need for the solution to enhance the visual representation, convey the unique vibe and atmosphere of the places, increase the visibility of smaller villages, and communicate more effectively by avoiding plain text.

Furthermore, the thesis presents various ideas for narratives and formats that could be explored and tested. Moreover, it presents prototypes of some formats and the lessons learned from these prototypes.

From the insights, four design principles are presented. The solution aims to be; Story Oriented, Novel, Exploratory, and Authentic. The result explains in detail how these design principles are implemented in all aspects of the solution.

The results from the final evaluation show promising results. Participants express excitement over the solution and are actively exploring the content. They are curious and seem emotionally invested in the website, laughing, smiling, and curiously asking questions. They experience the website as authentic and are often interested to learn more about the information they encounter. The participants receive the page as a series of personal experiences and encounters, which they again experience as more authentic, relevant, and likely to influence their behavior.

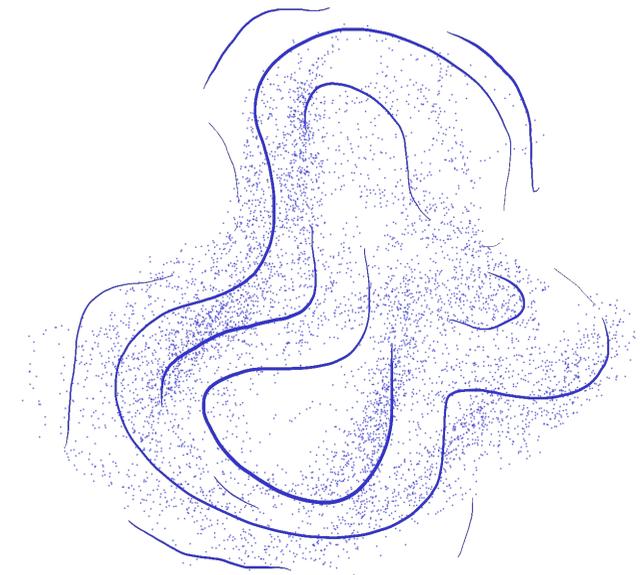
Participants were especially interested in narratives closely connected to the people living in the villages. They enjoyed narratives that highlighted the culture, festivals, and rituals related to the place. They enjoyed narratives that were rooted in real-life objects, bridging the gap between the stories and real life. Moreover, they expressed that the stories would enhance their on-site experience.

The various formats are discussed in terms of strengths, weaknesses, and considerations. The page's scrollytelling introduction displays promising results in delivering a message since people read and process the message. Sounds are efficient at communicating atmospheres and transporting the audience into a specific moment. Hover interactions were great at delivering small amounts of information in a quick and enjoyable manner. The spotlight made people curious and evoked exploratory behavior. Furthermore, it made the participants aware of details they otherwise

would have missed, making it potentially suitable for communicating reflective narratives relating to responsible traveling. Interactive illustrations worked well as a starting point for the user to explore different story pieces. The novelty of the interaction made participants curious, but the effect was often short.

The process of the project has some limitations. The sample size and variation in the final evaluation were weak. Moreover, the project does not embrace the full complexity of the problem. The project could also have had a stronger focus on responsible traveling and more actively encouraged sustainable travel habits. Furthermore, the final result has some shortcomings. There are still some usability issues, and the narratives presented in the solution could benefit from more iterations.

For further work, it is relevant to get a more comprehensive understanding of the complexity of sustainable tourism in the area and investigate how concrete encouragements can be implemented in the narratives. Through more extensive user-testing, the research could investigate the true effectiveness and efficiency of communication through the different formats. It can also examine how the various narratives affect travelers' intent to visit a place.



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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Templates

The questions served as a starting point, more than a rigid template. The conversations evolved naturally around the topics suggested by the template.

Kan du fortelle litt om en lengre reise du har vært på?
- Hva fikk deg til å velge akkurat denne destinasjonen?

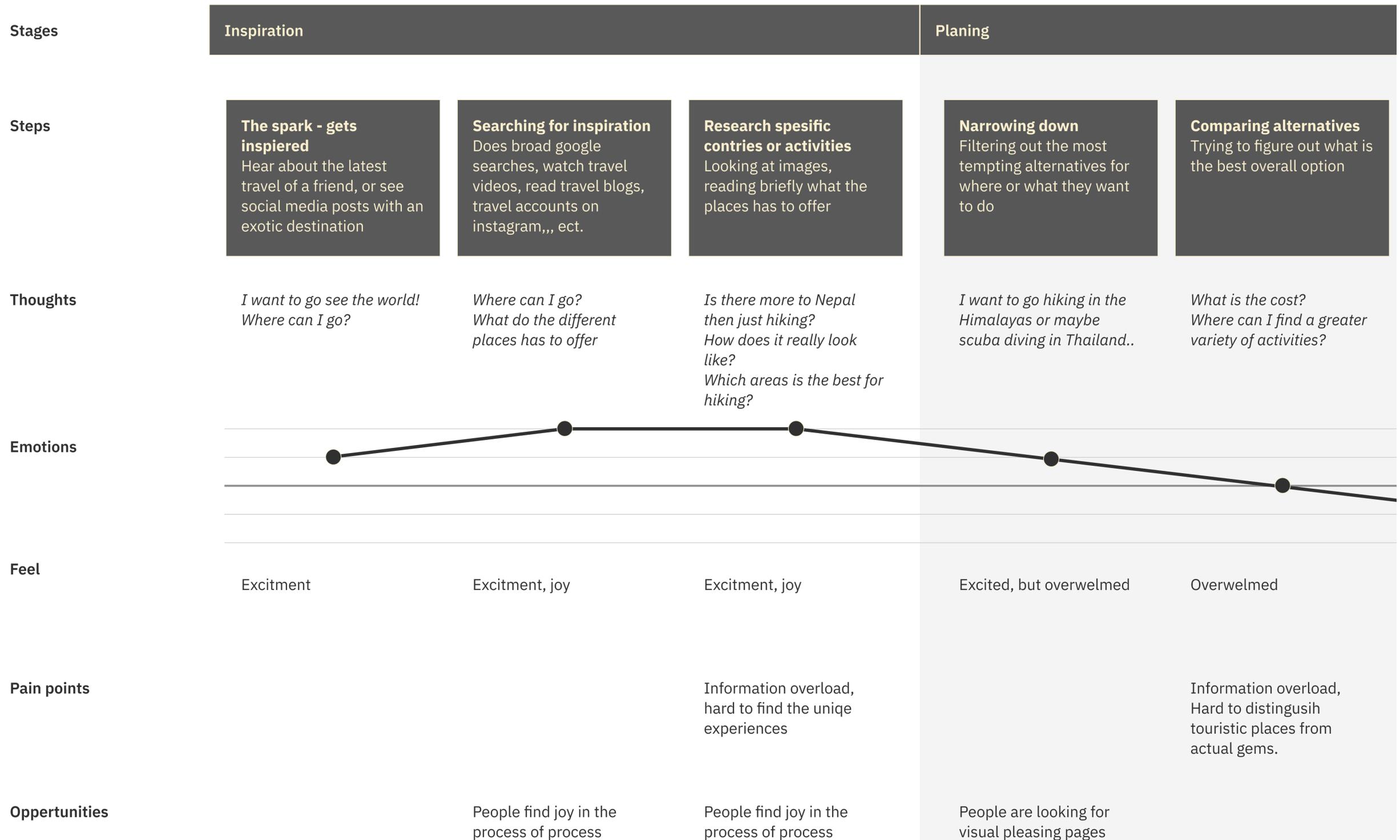
Kan du fortelle om en minneverdig reiseopplevelse?
- Hva kjennetegner en god reiseopplevelse?
- Hvilke aspekter med den var det du likte

Har du hatt noen dårlige reiseopplevelser?
- Hva kjennetegnet disse?

Hva er din reise filosofi? Hvordan mener du den beste måten å reise på er?
- Beste reisetips?

Hvordan planlegger du turer? Hvor finner du informasjon?
- Hvilke kilder støtter du på?
- Hva påvirker valget ditt?

Hvordan tror du digitale medier har påvirket valgene dine på de siste reisene du har vært på? Hvilke kanaler har størst påvirkning på deg?



Appendix 2 : User Journey Map

During travel

Plan logistics

Researching how to get there and where it is possible to stay

Research the area

Researching things to do and other places to visit in the same city or area.

Creating an itinerary

Planing where and for how long they want to stay in one place

Get recommendations

Finds new things to do and see after talking to locals and fellow travelers

Adjust the plan

Constantly adjusting the plan according to new information

Online research

Do more online research if they lack things to do or need a place to stay

*Where can I stay?
How do I get from the first place to the second?*

*Can't wait to go there!
What other things is there to see or do close by?*

Is it enough with 2 days in this place or do I need more to expereince everything?

*That place sounds cool, I want to go there aswell?
Do I trust their recomandations?*

This place has so much to offer, maybe I should stay one extra day?

*What can I do in this place?
Where is the nicest place to eat nearby?*



Overwelmed, bored

Excited

Excited

People are looking for visual pleasing pages

Make it easy and cool to share the page with other travelers

Provide interesting information, present it visually

Sharing the experience

Research history and culture

Read about the history and culture related to the places they plan or have visited

Shares the experience with other travelers

Share their experiences of places and activities to other people they meet.

Share stories with friends and family

Traveling stories are often shared frequently for many years to come

Sharing on social media

People often share photos and videos from their travels on social media

Why is this temple so famous?

Which places would I recommend?

*Do I have something interesting to share from my travels?
Was it a good story?*

*Is this worth sharing?
Will this picture make me look more interesting?*



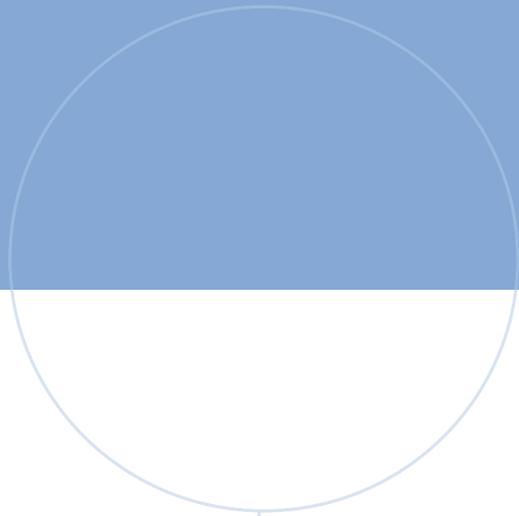
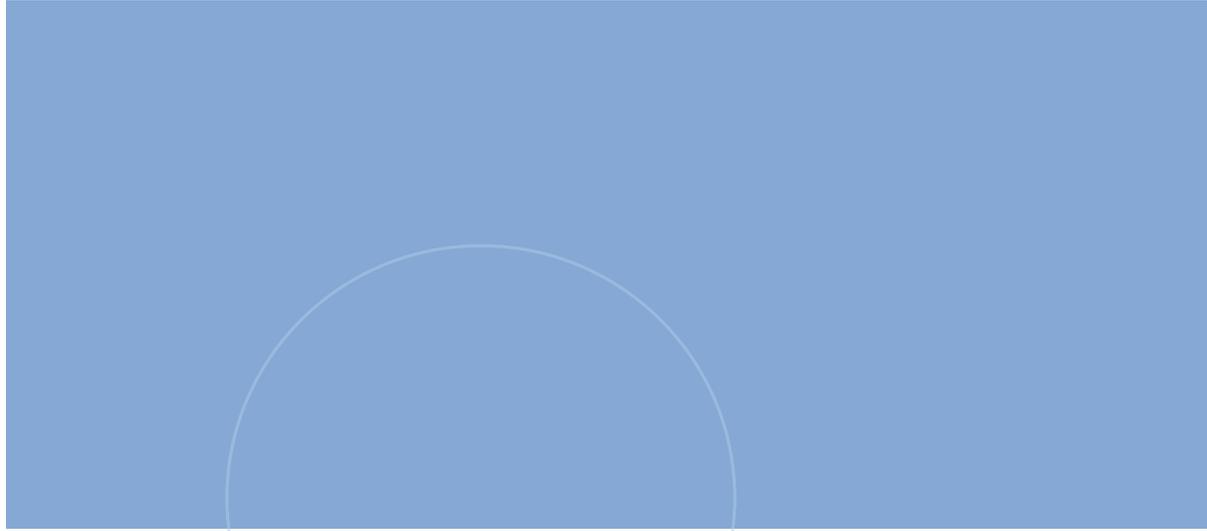
Make it more fun

Give them narratives to share

Provide “templates”

Appendix 3: Scenario final evaluation

“You planed a trip to Nepal. You have done some initial research and found a popular trekking route called Annapurna Circuit. You have decided to trek the Annapurna and you have read that at the end of Annapurna Circuit is an area called Lower Mustang. You know little about the area and want to investigate if there is something to do there. In a facebook group you encounter a facebook post with a link to a webpage and a short text, explaining that this is an webpage with some personal experiences from the area.”



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