



Competitive Analysis

UX Competitive Analysis for Together Forward Travel

Companies: Journy & Mr Hudson

Image Source: Logan Ibarra

Competitive Analysis: Journey

Overview

I'll be analyzing a competitor, Journey (<https://www.gojourney.com/>), who offers a customer concierge service. A Journey Expert Trip Designer will create a custom itinerary for you based on your preferences and make reservations with the exception of airline bookings. Your Trip Designer will also be available during your trip for adjustments and requests.

Key Objectives

The company slogan is "Journey Your Way". They advertise their entire process as being step-by-step and simple to use. Journey's marketing and branding is that of a luxury product that allows you to have a concierge in your pocket. They attempt to stand out from the competition with their full reservation service, round-the-clock availability, industry partnerships, and advanced algorithm that provides a customized questionnaire experience.

Bottom Line

- Books reservations for the user as opposed to just providing recommendations/itineraries
- Vast partnership network
- Intelligent questionnaire that adapts to users' input

Overall Strategy

Journey was featured in Business Insider in June 2019 and on CBS News in July 2020. Since being featured in BI, their price per day has increased from \$25 per day to \$60 per day. The price point adjusts as the number of days traveled increases. They were listed as one of Travel and Leisure's 7 best new concierge apps of 2017.

The company is active on all its social media accounts.

Journey has a 4.1-star rating on the Apple store and has no reviews on the Google Play app store despite having 500+ downloads.

Bottom Line

- Recent press has most likely been a lucrative source of traffic for them
- App has been available for Apple users since at least 2016 to accompany their service. The app could have been released or optimized for iOS first
- While active on social media, interaction with posts is low

Market Advantage

Journey is consistently the first provided option when searching Google for travel planning searches. With the recent press on the news and in Business Insider coupled with their price increase, they might not need to do too much advertising.

They have seemingly adapted quickly to the lack of international travel by promoting domestic travel offerings and online packages which no other company seems to be focusing on.

Journey offers similar services to that of their competitor, with the main exception being their service and that they will make reservations for you.

The company was started by Susan Ho, the former Vice President of Fab.com and Leiti Hsu, an entrepreneur, journalist, and speaker. Journey was backed by Menlo Ventures, a capital firm based in CA that also invested in companies like Roku and Warby Parker.

Bottom Line

- Indexed high in Google searches
- Provides similar offerings to that of competitors with additional booking and concierge services
- Company was created by industry experts with an idea, able to secure capital and execute effectively

Marketing Profile

The company was founded in 2014 by Susan Ho and Leiti Hsu. Hsu is now an advisor for the company but originally it seems they provided most of the partnership and network building for the business.

In 2018, Menlo Ventures invested 3.2M.

They do not specify how their algorithm works. Key verbiage in their old FAQ states "Your itinerary is touched and planned by somebody (a human) from our world-class Concierge team." This is telling, letting us know that their program is automated and then fine-tuned by one of their agents. The ability to do this and market as a customized concierge service is a huge advantage in the industry.

Bottom Line

- Raised 3.2M in 2018
- Company has established international partnerships
- Intelligent algorithm that front-loads a good amount of planning for the customer service agent

SWOT Profile

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confident branding • Established international partnerships • Effective information gathering from user • Intelligent algorithm that front-loads a good amount of planning for the customer service agent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day trips or small excursion planning • Better explanation of what's included • Offering sample itineraries upfront
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incessant chatbot and some pop-ups • Some ADA compliance issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites such as Juants and Gems and Mr Hudson. J&G however is currently not taking bookings. Mr Hudson is their most immediate competitor offering similar services at a lower price point • Local travel blog planners that might make the user feel more comfortable dealing with a specific person as opposed to a company

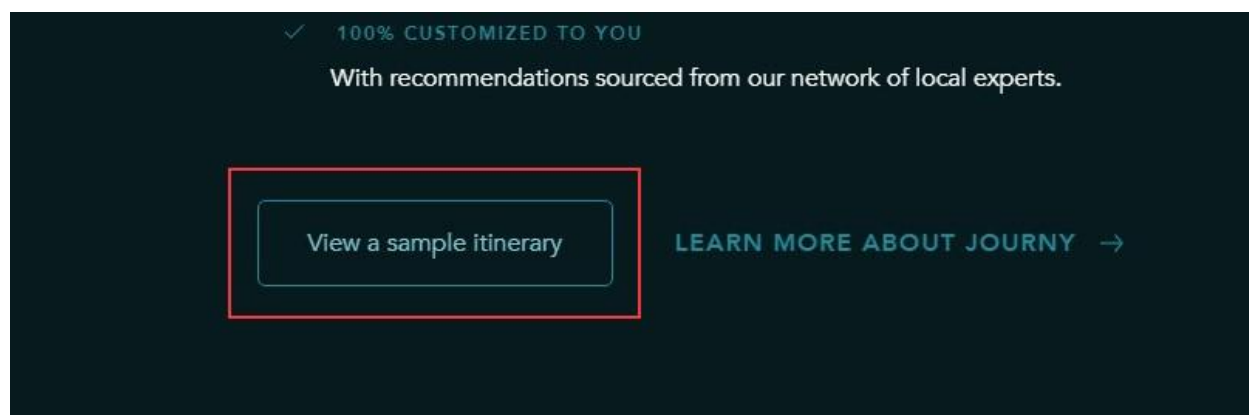
UX Analysis

Usability

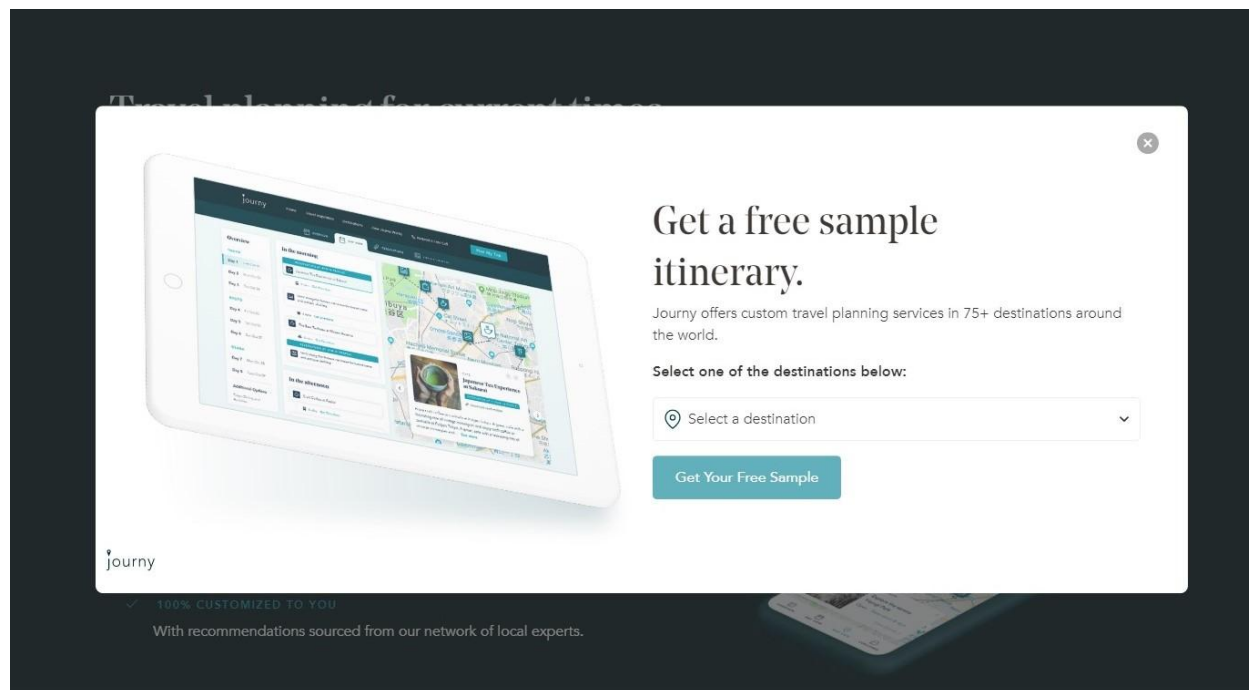
Journy overall provides good ease of use. While browsing, there is consistency in items so you have an understanding of the hierarchy of sections. There can be some frustration when clicking on items such as "View a sample itinerary" and then being taken to a modal that wants you to complete the questionnaire instead. This sort of navigation feels misleading.

There is a small inconsistency in functionality between the "Plan My Trip" option and required fields - entering your email to proceed isn't required when beginning from one access point when it is from another.

Another key interaction exception would be their Journey Luxe, their premium service offering. For the most part, the branding and layout are consistent however there are some hover styles in their navigation that are different or potentially missing.



Navigation Example 1: Clicking on "View a sample itinerary"...



Navigation Example 2: ...Provides you with a modal to their questionnaire as opposed to actually providing the promised item.

Layout

The layout of Journy is clean and consistent. Sections have room to breathe and the structure feels familiar from page to page, providing ease of use.

The button selections on the "Plan My Trip" questionnaire, while provided intelligently, can be a lot of options at times. I would be curious if the number of options is fully being used or if it's better serving the user to narrow it down to the most popular and any extra can be entered in a text area field.

The screenshot shows a mobile application interface for Journy. At the top, there's a dark teal header with the Journy logo on the left, a progress indicator with four steps (1, 2, 3, 4) where step 4 is checked, and a close button (X) on the right. Below the header, there's a light beige background. On the left, there's a '< Back' button, and on the right, there's a 'View all sections' button with a hamburger menu icon. The main content area is titled 'FOOD & BEVERAGES' in a small, teal font. Below that, the question 'What dining features/environment are you looking for?' is displayed in a large, dark teal font. The answer options are presented as a grid of 18 pill-shaped buttons, each containing a dining feature: 'Hole-in-the-wall', 'Casual & Everyday', 'Fine Dining', 'New & Trending', 'Party Scene', 'Hipster', 'Cozy & Romantic', 'Where Locals Hang', 'Good for Groups', 'Historic', 'Food Markets', 'Non-Boozy Options', 'Late-Night Eats', 'No Waits', 'Authentic Ethnic', 'World-Class Cocktails', 'Craft Beer', 'Notable Wine Lists', and 'Artisanal Coffee'. At the bottom center, there is a teal 'Next' button.

Navigation Example: Pill selections from the questionnaire could potentially be overwhelming.

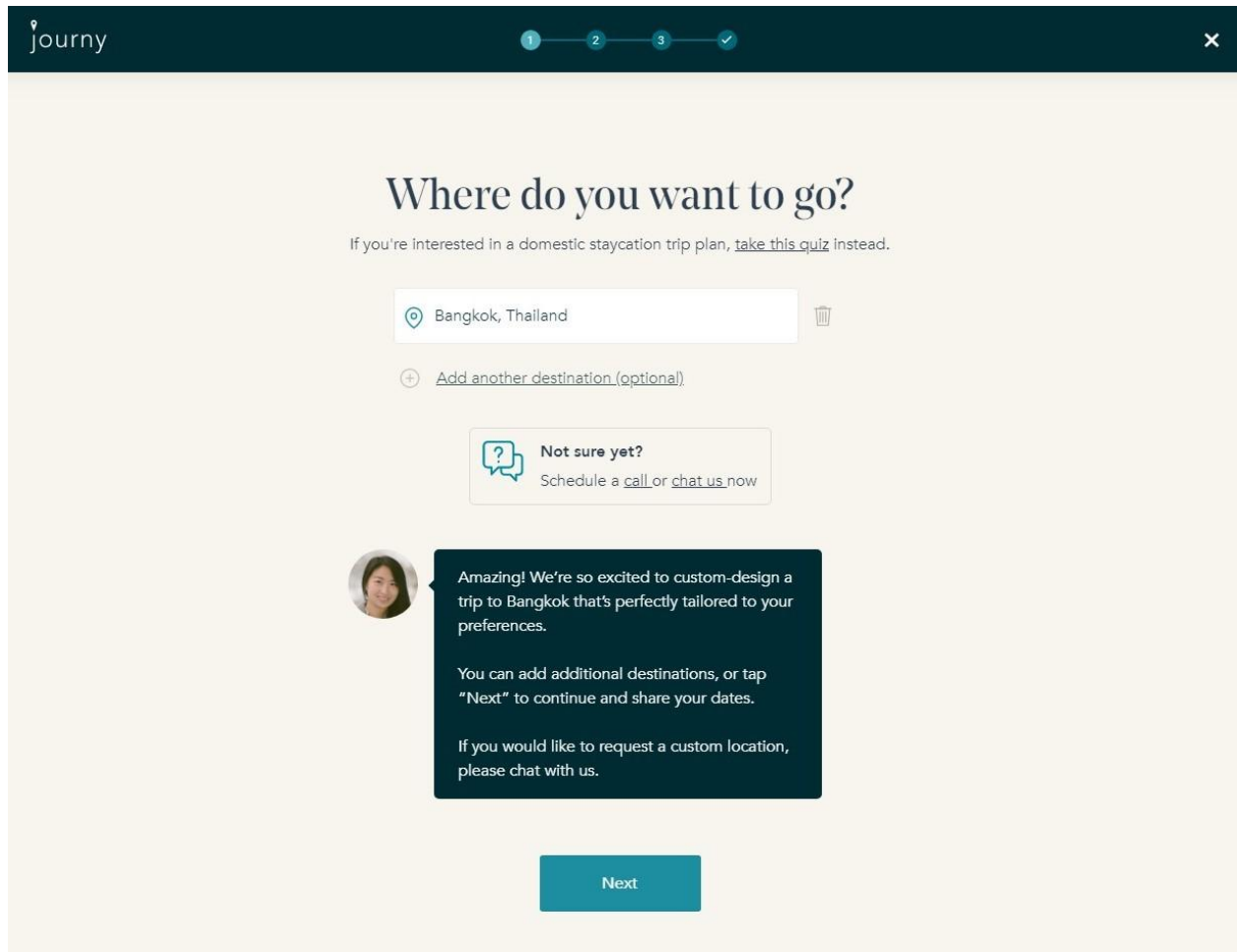
Navigation Structure

Overall the navigation structure is laid out well. The top navigation and footer are logical. Their top nav consists of jump links to sections in their FP which is common however some of the more informational topics such as "How Journy Works" take the user to some general splash images without an option to get more info. They currently have a couple of dead links which are not ideal for their brand.

Compatibility

From browser to browser the experiences are extremely similar with the only notable differences being those that are browser-based, not site/app-based.

The most notable difference was that certain travel locations are not supported on mobile that are on desktop.



Compatibility Example 1: Inputting "Bangkok, Thailand" on desktop is supported with the popup assistant replying "Amazing! We're so excited to custom design a trip to Bangkok that's perfectly tailored to your preferences."

The screenshot shows a mobile browser interface. At the top, the status bar displays the time 7:10, signal strength, Wi-Fi, and battery level at 69%. The browser address bar shows the URL "Journey | We Plan Your Pe..." and "gojourny.com". Below the address bar, a search input field contains "Bangkok, Thailand" with a location pin icon on the left and a close button on the right. A light blue error message box is displayed below the search field, containing the text: "Sorry, we don't support that location yet, please select an option from the dropdown menu or talk to us:". Below the message is a teal button labeled "Schedule a Call". Underneath the message box, a list of supported locations is shown, with "ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA" and "ARUBA" visible, each followed by a horizontal line indicating more options.

Compatibility Example 2: Conversely, when entering the same location on mobile, you are provided a completely different message. "Sorry, we don't support that location yet..." and can't proceed.

Differentiation

Journey offers a pleasant browsing experience and an overall high-quality questionnaire/onboarding process. They make the reservations for the customer, which is unique in comparison to other travel planners. Additionally, their "travel designers" are available to assist while you are on your vacation, similar to a travel agent to meet your needs.

Journey has a large network of experts and an intelligent algorithm that uses the information from the user-provided form to do the majority of the planning for them. My intention is to create a similar travel app that acts as a platform to connect travelers with locals and guides. Since Journey has countries that they currently do not support (even though they say they will custom build it for you) this creates a pain point for the user, especially on their mobile app. Having locals from all areas would ideally prevent this type of problem. Additionally, taking notes from how Journey has users complete their questionnaire would be wise as the process is clean and intuitive. They provide helpful hints to reassure the user without being too hand-holdy.

Calls to Action

As previously mentioned, there are pop-ups combined with a chat widget that can feel like a lot at times. The majority of their actionable links are to plan your trip, their primary form of providing you with a sample itinerary and obtaining business. Other actionable items include viewing a sample itinerary, signing up for their mailing list, and scheduling a free call. It should be noted that scheduling a free call is currently one of their dead links.

Image Sources:

Journey: <https://www.gojourney.com/>

Competitive Analysis: Mr Hudson

Overview

I'll be analyzing a second competitor, Mr Hudson (<https://mrhudsonexplores.com/trip-design/>), a gay travel inspiration blog that has since added a custom travel planning service.

Key Objectives

The company slogan is "The Smart Way to Holiday". Desiring travel recommendations for the gay community that focused on a more complete travel experience beyond just gay destinations, the founders designed one themselves. Their travel guides are cleanly laid out, offering recommendations on hotels, dining, nightlife, and more. Their custom trip planning is affordably priced and offers the user an itinerary and recommendations.

Bottom Line

- The planning service offers recommendations and an itinerary only, which is most common for travel planning services
- The company is building upon years of writing international travel guides
- Competitively priced per day

Overall Strategy

Mr Hudson is primarily a travel blog and the company has also recently released a book, a travel companion. The most recent press directed towards the company is for the book. There have been a couple of interviews with the co-creator of the company, Bastiaan Ellen regarding the travel service in the past couple of years but they are relatively low profile.

The company is active on Facebook and Instagram, with Twitter being only occasionally posted on.

They do not have an app to accompany their travel planning service, which also seems common for travel planners who aren't agents.

Bottom Line

- Since they are not providing service during travel, they are not providing an app to accompany their travel planning.
- The company is most likely using existing site loyalty and word of mouth within the community to build the business.

Market Advantage

Mr Hudson is the second or third provided option in Google when searching for “custom travel planning” or “travel planning services”. The majority of articles for the company are in reference to their recently published book. The company name is not in their page title so Google search results instead provide “Custom Trip Itinerary Planners, Travel Planning and Travel...”

Mr Hudson does have years of writing excellent travel guides and their layout is clean and easy to use. They have identified key information that travelers find important and have a flow to their guides and itineraries that is pleasant and intuitive to use.

Their questionnaire also includes images with their selections and a progress bar to show how far along you are. The progress bar in particular is a nice feature that sets them apart from their competitors.

Additionally, they are serving an underserved market while making the service inclusive to everyone.

Bottom Line

- Years of experience from a diverse group of contributors writing international travel guides
- Positioned high in search results

Marketing Profile

Mr Hudson started in 2016 as a travel blog and their custom travel service was added in early 2020. The site was co-created by Bastiaan Ellen, who is also the CEO of Curated, an outsourcing site for digital and creative needs.

They claim that your trip will be in the hands of one of their experienced trip designers, the same people who write their travel guides and stories.

The company seems to continue to curate partnerships with other travelers and travel writers to expand its network. Their years of experience writing guides and their diverse network of writers with expert understanding of the gay community and activities set them apart in the market.

Bottom Line

- Since releasing its trip planning service marketing seems consistent with its original branding.
- They seem to be using their own years of knowledge along with their questionnaire/algorithm to create their trip planning services. Nothing about their algorithm seems revolutionary.

SWOT Profile

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Affordable daily pricing structure ● Itineraries are well designed and easy to use, with clean interactions ● Catering to an underserved market by those within the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The service provides recommendations only and doesn't make any reservations. This is in line with their price point but there isn't an option to pay more to have this done for you ● Offering some flexible travel options such as staycations for the current travel climate ● Having an app to easily view your bookings
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some of the transition interactions on the site with menus are frustrating to use ● Carousel does not loop when you get to the end ● Video on the site, while extremely informative, auto plays with sound 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Journey provides the same service with additional offerings such as making reservations and having the agent available on your trip. Jaunts and Gems is a similar planning service but they are currently not available. ● Local travel blog planners that might make the user feel more comfortable dealing with a specific person as opposed to a company