



TabiSubi

Designing Trust for Social Travel Matchmaking

From Strangers to
Trusted Travel Companions



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AUTHOR



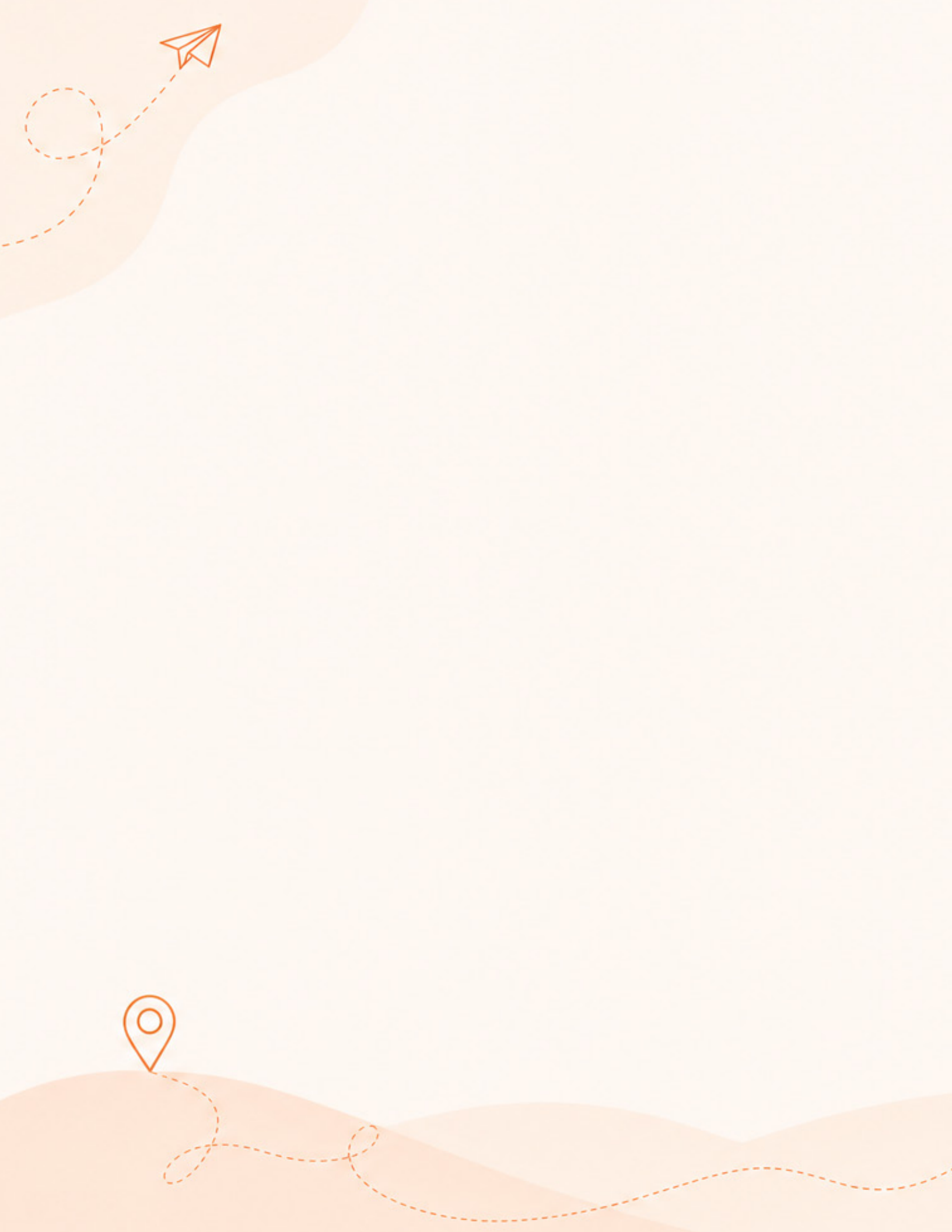
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YEAR



Tabisubi Project Overview

Tabisubi is a social travel matchmaking platform designed to help solo travelers find compatible companions and build trust before traveling together. While solo travel continues to grow worldwide, many travelers still hope to share their experiences with others. However, finding the right travel partner can be challenging. Differences in interests, budgets, schedules, and travel styles often lead to conflict, while concerns about safety and trust make many people hesitant to travel with strangers. Existing platforms such as Facebook groups, Discord communities, and dating apps allow users to connect, but they were not specifically designed to support the unique needs of travel companionship.

This thesis explores how user experience design can help transform strangers into trusted travel companions. Through secondary research, competitive analysis, and interviews with travelers from diverse backgrounds, several key insights emerged. Shared interests and compatible routines are critical to successful travel experiences. Trust develops gradually through transparency, consistent communication, and verification. Users want to know who they are traveling with before committing to a trip, and many expressed the importance of identity verification, detailed profiles, and at least one video call prior to meeting in person.

In response to these findings, Tabisubi was designed as a trust-centered platform that combines compatibility matching with structured trust-building features. Users create profiles that include interests, travel

preferences, budget ranges, schedules, and personality traits. The system then generates a compatibility score to help travelers evaluate potential matches. Safety features such as face verification, review systems, and verified badges increase confidence in the platform. Once matched, users can communicate through group chat, participate in mandatory video calls, and collaboratively plan itineraries and shared expenses before their journey begins.

The name Tabisubi combines the Japanese word “Tabi,” meaning journey, with “Musubi,” meaning connection or bond. Together, the name represents the idea that meaningful relationships can begin through shared travel experiences. More than simply helping users find travel partners, Tabisubi aims to create lasting friendships and foster a sense of belonging in an increasingly disconnected world. This project demonstrates that designing for trust can be just as important as designing for usability, and that thoughtful digital experiences can help people build meaningful human connections both online and offline.



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Table of Contents

01 Introduction	6	05 Final Prototype	54
• Project Overview • Problem Statement • Research Questions • Thesis Scope		• Product Overview • Onboarding Flow • Matching Experience • Face Verification • Secure Chat	
02 Research	16	06 Exhibition	72
• Secondary Research • Competitive Analysis • Primary Research • Interview Findings • Key Insights		• Exhibition Concept • Booth Layout • Interactive Experience • Visitor Feedback Activity	
03 Trust Framework.....	34	07 Reflection	78
• Why Trust Matters • Identity Verification • Compatibility • Communication • Commitment		• Challenges • Lessons Learned • Future Opportunities • Final Thoughts	
04 Concept & Design	40		
• Design Opportunity • Design Principles • Information Architecture • User Journey Map			





01

Introduction

Before people travel together, they need to trust each other.

“Before people travel
together, they need to
trust each other.”

Tabisubi explores how design can help
strangers feel safe, compatible, and confident
enough to become travel companions.







Problem Statement

Many people want to travel, but they do not always have friends or family who are available, interested, or compatible. As a result, they may travel alone even when they would prefer to share the experience with others. Traveling with strangers creates concerns around safety, personality mismatch, budget conflict, different schedules, and last-minute cancellations. Existing platforms help people meet, but often do not provide enough structure to help strangers build trust before committing to a trip.







Why This Matters

Travel companionship is an emotional and practical decision. A travel partner affects how safe people feel, how money is spent, how plans are made, and how the trip is remembered. When travelers are incompatible, small differences can become major problems. Different budgets, sleep schedules, activity preferences, or communication styles can create stress during the trip. Because travel often happens in unfamiliar environments, users need confidence before they agree to meet and travel with someone new.





Safety

Worried about meeting strangers and personal safety.



Compatibility

Different travel styles, habits, and expectations can lead to conflicts.



Budgeting

Managing shared expenses and budgets can be stressful and unclear.



Commitment

Last-minute cancellations or unreliable partners can ruin the trip.



Research Questions

“How might we help travelers build enough trust to become travel companions?”

What makes people feel safe
or unsafe when meeting
strangers online?

What information do travelers
need before joining a trip?





How can shared interests and lifestyle compatibility reduce conflict?

How can shared interests and lifestyle compatibility reduce conflict?

How can a platform encourage commitment before a trip begins?



Thesis Scope

This thesis focuses on the pre-trip experience of finding, evaluating, and building trust with potential travel companions. The project does not attempt to replace full travel booking platforms. Instead, Tabisubi focuses on the social layer of travel planning: helping users decide who they can trust and whether they are compatible enough to travel together.www



Discover



Match



Verify





Included

- ✓ Profile creation
- ✓ Interest and travel preference matching
- ✓ Government ID and face verification
- ✓ Verified Traveler Badge
- ✓ Group discovery
- ✓ Chat and video call
- ✓ Deposit and commitment flow
- ✓ Shared expense support
- ✓ Reviews and reputation



Not Included

- ✗ Flight booking
- ✗ Hotel booking
- ✗ Visa processing
- ✗ Full Insurance service
- ✗ Tour agency management



Chat



Commit



Travel



Review





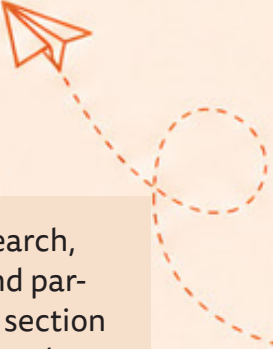
02

Research

The research phase explored how travelers think about trust, compatibility, safety, and commitment when considering travel companions.

The research phase explored how travelers think about trust, compatibility, safety, and commitment when considering travel companions.





Through secondary research, competitive analysis, and participant interviews, this section identifies the key barriers that prevent strangers from becoming trusted travel partners.





Research Approach

The research process combined secondary research, competitive analysis, participant interviews, and synthesis activities. Secondary research helped frame the broader problem of solo travel, online friendships, and digital trust. Competitive analysis examined how existing platforms support or fail to support trust before real-world meetings. Primary research focused on understanding how people choose travel companions, what makes them feel safe, and what kinds of personal information they need before joining a trip with someone new.







Key Research Themes

The research revealed that travel companionship is shaped by both emotional and practical concerns. People do not only ask whether someone is friendly; they also ask whether that person is safe, compatible, reliable, and respectful of boundaries. These themes became the foundation for Tabisubi's trust-building system.



01

Rising Solo Travel



- There's a steady rise in solo travel as more people seek independence, flexibility, and personal growth.
- 84% of solo travelers are women.
- Millennials and Gen Z are especially active.
- Safety, social connection, and convenience are top priorities.
- The solo travel market is significant, with more companies offering solo-friendly options.
- Technology (apps for navigation, translation, safety, etc.) makes solo travel easier than ever.

Source: Solo Traveler Statistics & Data

02

Building Trust Online



- Trust is vital for meaningful online friendships before meeting in real life.
- Identity verification and honesty are key for building trust.
- Consistent communication and transparency increase reliability.
- Respecting boundaries and privacy strengthens authentic connections.

Source: Building Trust and Authenticity in Online Friendships

03

Qualities of Online vs. Offline Friendships



- Online friendships allow deeper initial conversations due to anonymity and self-disclosure.
- Trust online develops over time; offline trust tends to form faster.
- Offline friendships offer richer non-verbal communication and tangible support.
- Longevity online depends on effort and platforms; offline benefits from physical proximity.

Source: Examining the Qualities of Online and Offline Friendships: A Comparison

04

Teenagers & Online Friendships



- Online friendships provide emotional support and validation similar to face-to-face.
- Teens extend offline friendships to digital platforms (Snapchat, Instagram, etc.).
- Online interactions help develop empathy, communication, and emotional intelligence.
- Digital friendships complement and enhance traditional friendships.

Source: Studies on Teenagers' Virtual Social Interactions

05

Transitioning Online to Offline



- Evaluate mutual trust and comfort level first.
- Start with a casual suggestion and shared activities.
- Plan meetups in public places and set clear expectations.
- Use voice or video calls before meeting.
- Acknowledge initial awkwardness and focus on shared interests.
- Reflect after meeting and continue the connection.

Source: How to Transition from Online Friendships to Real Life Friendships

06

The Loneliness Epidemic Among Men



- More than 1 in 7 men in the U.S. report having no close friends.
- Traditional norms discourage emotional expression and vulnerability.
- Men often bond through activities, not conversations.
- Loneliness leads to mental health risks.
- Experts urge a shift in how boys are raised and how we talk about masculinity.

Source: LATimes – The Way We Socialize Boys Is to Blame

07

Key Features for a Social Travel Platform



- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Travel Preferences | • Chat & Video Calls |
| • Interests | • Rating & Reviews |
| • Budget Range | • Verified Traveler Badges |
| • Destination Compatibility | • Group Trip Organization |
| • Activity Preferences | • Safety Tools (SOS, Location) |
| • Travel Dates | • Itinerary & Insurance |

Source: Market Research & Platform Analysis

08

What If & Core Purpose



- What if travelers are matched by shared interests, styles, and preferences? → More enjoyable trips and higher satisfaction.
- What if the platform has strong trust features? → Users feel safer and more confident.
- Matchmaking isn't just for romance — solo travelers deserve meaningful friendships and connections.
- Our platform helps people find like-minded travel companions and build trust for better travel experiences.

Source: User Needs & Problem Framing



Competitive Analysis

Competitive analysis showed that existing platforms support parts of the travel companion experience, but none of them fully connect compatibility, trust, verification, communication, and trip planning in one system. Facebook and Discord provide large communities and group communication, but they rely heavily on self-organized behavior. Tinder offers fast matching and mutual interest, but its dating context and image-first structure do not support travel planning. Travel-focused platforms may help users meet others, but often lack deeper compatibility screening and structured trust-building.





Platform	Discovery	Trust-building	Compatibility	Planning	Shared expenses
Facebook	High	Low	Low	Low	None
Discord	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	None
WeChat	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
Tabisubi	High	High	High	High	High





Primary Research Method

Primary research focused on people's travel behavior, social comfort, and decision-making when meeting new people. Participants were asked about past travel experiences, solo and group travel preferences, planning habits, trust concerns, and what features would make a travel companion platform feel safer. The research also explored how users evaluate compatibility through interests, personality, budget, schedule, and communication style.

01

User Interviews

Travel habits, trust concerns, and planning pain points.

02

Secondary Research

Travel trends, digital planning, and trust-building.





03

Survey / Questionnaire

Patterns across different
traveler roles and contexts.

04

Prototype Iteration

Turning insights into app
flows and interface
concepts.





Participant Overview

Participants represented different travel habits, comfort levels, and expectations. Some preferred solo travel and flexibility, while others valued group travel and shared experiences. Their responses helped reveal how different travelers define comfort, trust, and compatibility when considering a trip with someone new.





Mao

29

Software Engineer

Tokyo, Japan

Key Takeaways



Enjoys solo travel for relaxation and self-growth.



Values safety and verification when meeting new people.



Prefers well-planned itineraries but likes spontaneous moments.

Interests



Photography



Cafés



Hiking



Exploring



Logan

22

Data Science Student

Berkeley, USA

Key Takeaways



Enjoys meaningful conversations and intellectual exchange.



Prefers smaller groups with shared interests.



Flexible with dates and open to trips around academics.

Interests



Reading



Sports



Travel



Coffee



Ash

27

Graduate Student

Mumbai, India

Key Takeaways



Looks for like-minded travel companions for cultural exchange.



Budget-conscious and plans trips in advance.



Enjoys local food and immersing in traditions.

Interests



Travel



Food



Music



Culture



Katy

27

Freelance Illustrator

Beijing, China

Key Takeaways



Values deep conversations and creative inspiration.



Prefers slower travel to explore local life authentically.



Seeks trustworthy companions and transparent profiles.

Interests



Art



Travel



Nature



Tea



Nielsen

27

Graphic Designer

Sacramento, USA

Key Takeaways



Loves adventure and outdoor activities.



Prefers active groups over large crowds.



Values planning tools and local recommendations.

Interests



Camping



Photography



Cycling



Exploring



Anna

26

Freelance Animator

Chicago, USA

Key Takeaways



Travels during holidays and long weekends.



Looks for value for money experiences.



Enjoys group trips with fun and relaxed vibes.

Interests



Animation



Travel



Music



Illustration



Sandy

-

-

Taiwan

Key Takeaways



Enjoys solo travel and meeting new people.



Values safety, reviews, and verified badges.



Loves exploring cities and discovering hidden gems.

Interests



Culture



Travel



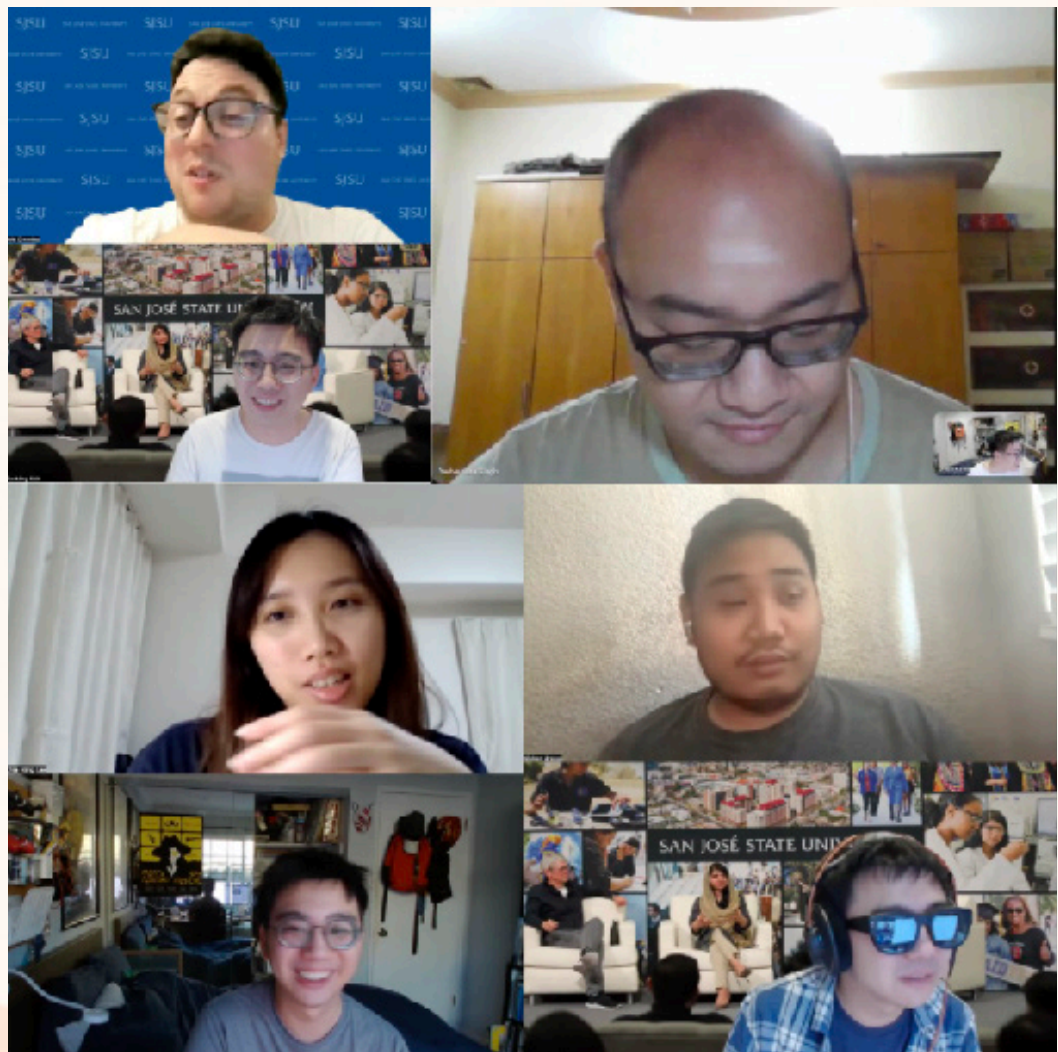
Food



K-pop

Interview Findings

Interviews showed that travelers evaluate potential companions through many small signals. Participants cared about shared interests, budget expectations, group size, communication style, travel pace, and safety. Several participants described trust as something that must be built over time through conversation, observation, and repeated interaction. Others emphasized that one mismatch, such as smoking, overspending, poor planning, or different activity preferences, could negatively affect the entire trip.





"I don't like traveling with a large group... if it's more than four people, I don't enjoy it."

"The only challenge is your schedule should align."

"If we don't share interests, I don't see why I'd travel with a stranger."

"I want the platform to store some basic info about others, so if something happens, they can trace it."

"Budgeting can make or break a trip."

"If I could talk to them over the phone and see their faces... it adds an extra layer of security."

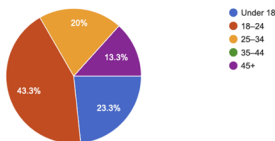


Trust-Building Findings

A major finding was that first-time users need visible trust signals before they feel comfortable joining a group or meeting someone in person. Trust becomes more available when users can choose how much personal information to provide, see whether others have completed verification, and communicate before committing. Optional government ID verification and face verification allow users to prove that they are real without forcing every user to disclose the same level of information. Users who complete these steps receive a verification badge, which acts as a visible safety signal in the matching and group discovery process.

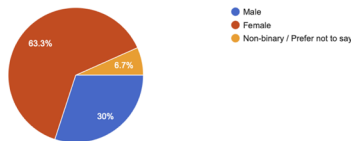
What is your age range?

30 responses



What is your gender/sex?

30 responses



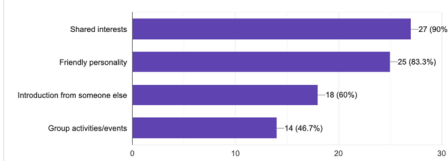
When entering a new environment (school, club, workplace, etc.), how do you usually interact with new people?

30 responses



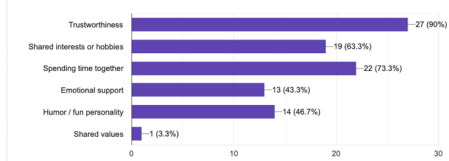
What helps you feel comfortable talking to new people? (choose all that apply)

30 responses



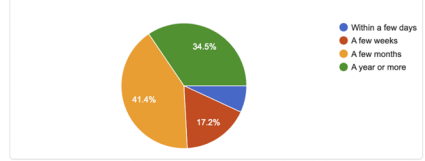
What qualities make you start considering someone as a "friend"? (Select up to 3)

30 responses



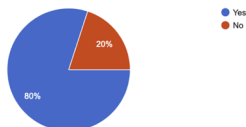
How long does it usually take before you consider someone a close friend?

29 responses



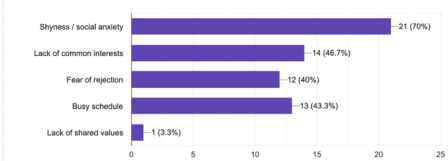
Have you ever turned an acquaintance (someone you just met) into a close friend over time?

30 responses



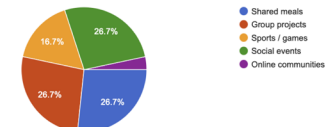
What challenges do you face when trying to make new friends?

30 responses



What activities or settings help you build friendships most effectively?

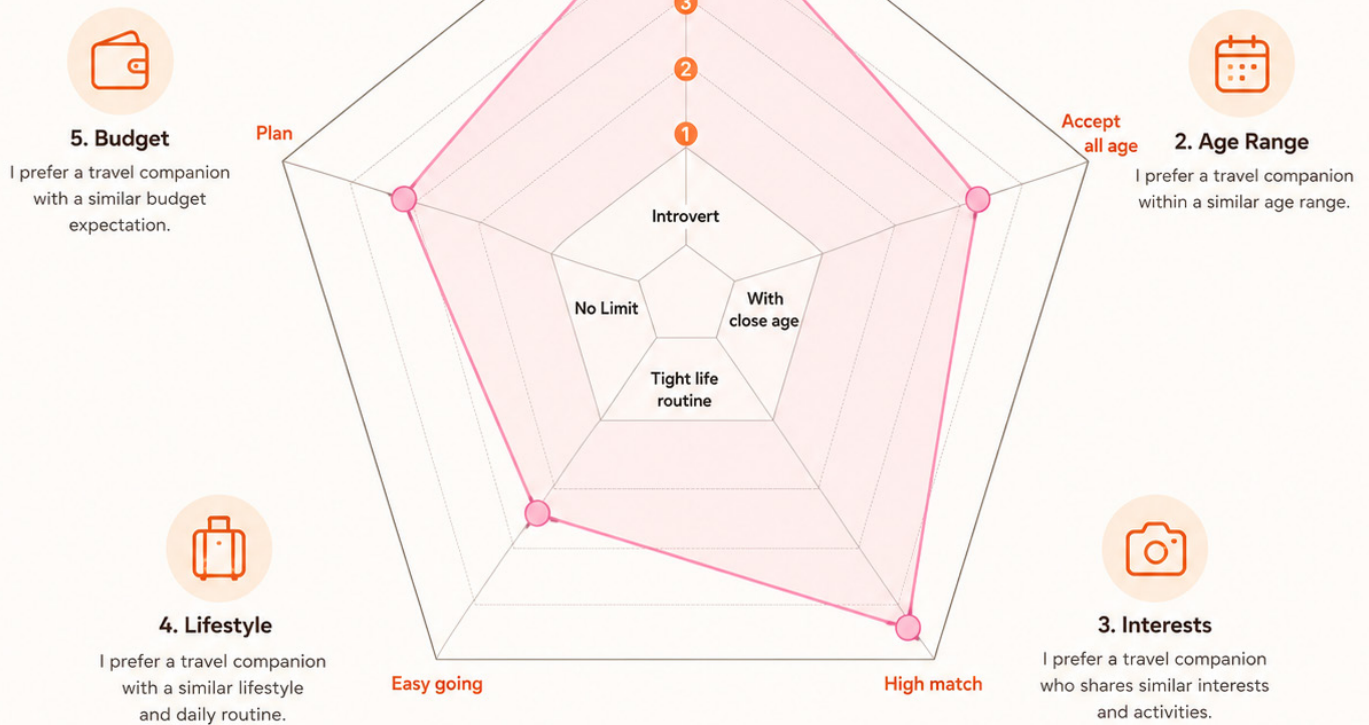
30 responses



Personal Preferences Overview

This radar chart shows the importance of key preferences when looking for a travel companion. The closer the shape is to the outer edge, the more important that factor is.

— My Preference
1 = Low Importance
5 = High Importance



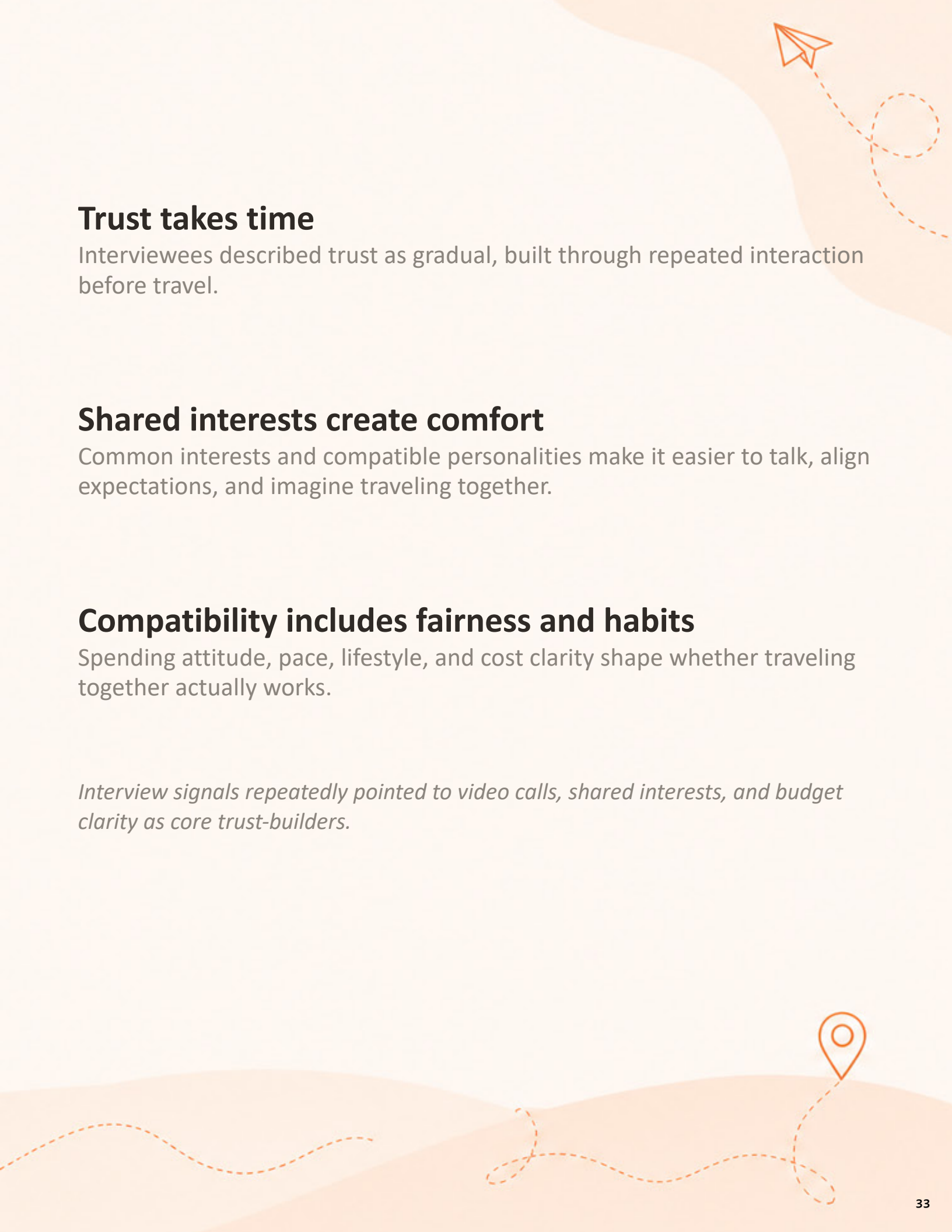
Use these preferences to find a travel companion who matches your personality, expectations, and travel style for a more enjoyable journey together.



Research Insights

The research showed that travel companion matching cannot depend only on destination or shared interests. Users need a layered system that supports safety, compatibility, communication, and commitment. Trust begins with knowing that another person is real, grows through conversation and shared expectations, and becomes stronger when users see reliable behavior over time. These findings informed Tabisubi's design direction: a platform that helps users move gradually from discovery to verification, from chat to commitment, and from strangers to travel companions.





Trust takes time

Interviewees described trust as gradual, built through repeated interaction before travel.

Shared interests create comfort

Common interests and compatible personalities make it easier to talk, align expectations, and imagine traveling together.

Compatibility includes fairness and habits

Spending attitude, pace, lifestyle, and cost clarity shape whether traveling together actually works.

Interview signals repeatedly pointed to video calls, shared interests, and budget clarity as core trust-builders.



03

Trust Framework

Trust is the foundation of the Tabisubi experience. Before users can travel together, they need to feel that the people they meet are real, compatible, respectful, and committed.

The trust framework connects identity, compatibility, communication, commitment, and reputation.



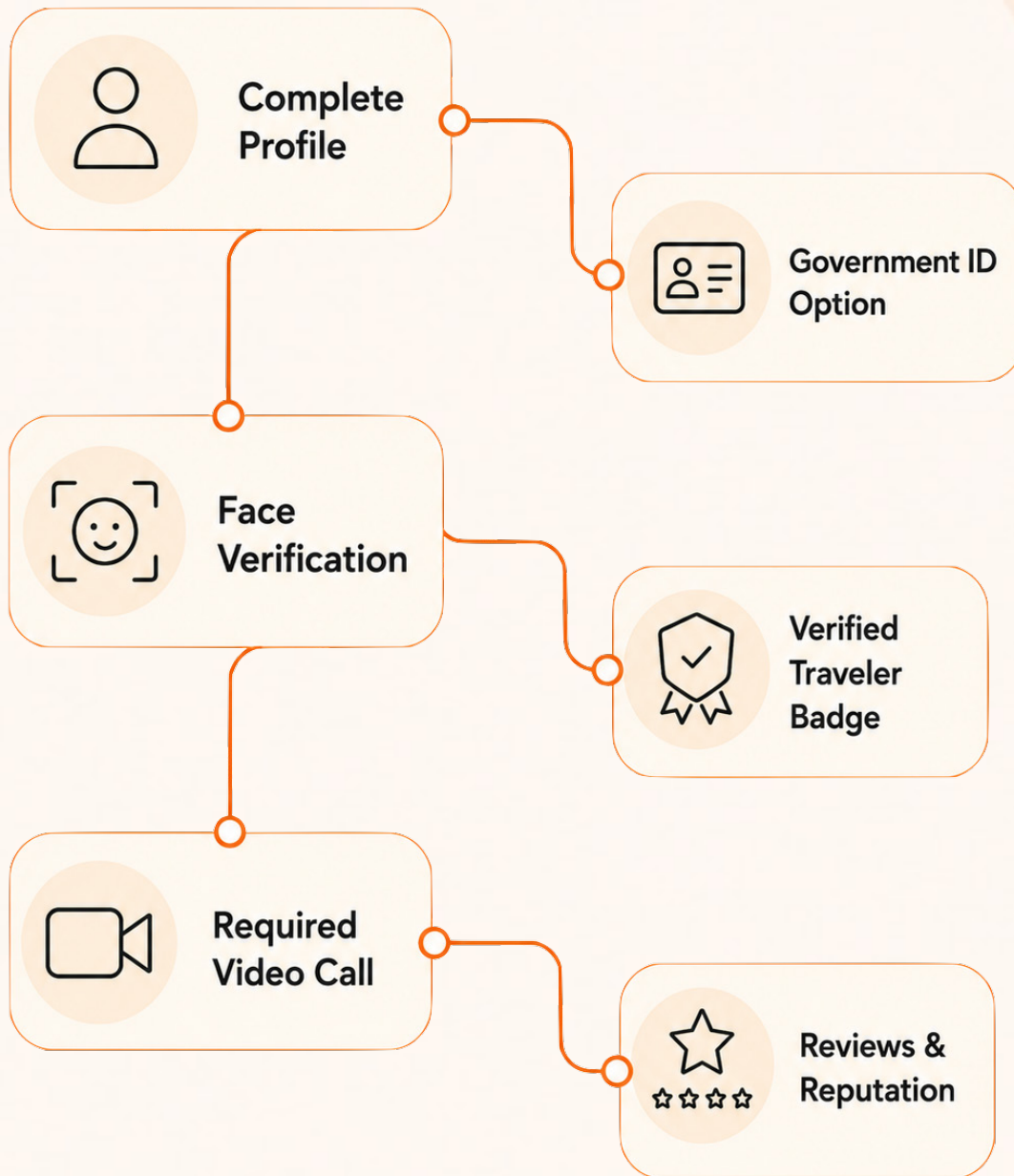


First-Time User Trust Signals

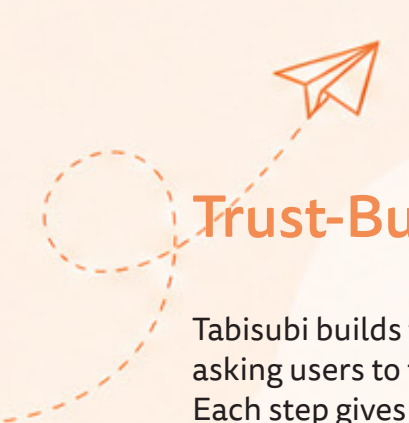
First-time users do not yet have reviews or trip history, so Tabisubi gives them ways to create visible trust signals early. Users have the option to provide government ID information and complete face verification. Those who complete verification receive a Verified Traveler Badge, which appears on their profile and helps others recognize that they have taken additional steps to confirm their identity.

Verification alone does not create complete trust. It works together with profile transparency, compatibility scores, group chat, required video calls, deposits, and reviews. Together, these signals help users feel more informed before deciding whether to travel with someone new.





Trust signals help first-time users evaluate authenticity, safety, and accountability before meeting in person.



Trust-Building Journey

Tabisubi builds trust gradually instead of asking users to trust strangers immediately. Each step gives users more context, more control, and more confidence. A user can first review a profile, compare compatibility, check verification status, enter a group chat, complete a video call, confirm commitment with a deposit, and finally leave a review after the trip.

This sequence turns trust into a designed process. Users are not forced to make one large decision all at once. Instead, they move through smaller steps that make the relationship feel safer and more intentional.



1



Discover & Evaluate

Browse profiles and view verified info to find potential travel companions who match your style and values.

Tips

- Check profiles thoroughly
- Look for verified badges & reviews
- Pay attention to shared interests and travel style

2



Connect & Communicate

Start conversations in-app to get to know each other and build initial comfort.

Tips

- Ask open-ended questions
- Share about your travel goals
- Be responsive and respectful

3



Build Trust Online

Continue meaningful conversations and share experiences to build reliability and trust.

Tips

- Be honest and transparent
- Respect boundaries and privacy
- Stay consistent in communication

4



Deepen Connection

Take your connection deeper with voice or video calls to establish a stronger rapport.

Tips

- Try a voice call first
- Use video chats to connect better
- Share travel plans and expectations

5



Plan Together Thoughtfully

Plan your trip together with clear expectations and align on preferences.

Tips

- Discuss budget, stay & activities
- Set clear expectations
- Prioritize safety and comfort

6



Travel Together

Enjoy your trip, communicate openly, and support each other to create great memories.

Tips

- Be flexible and patient
- Communicate openly
- Support and respect each other

7



Reflect & Stay Connected

Reflect on your experience and stay in touch for future adventures and friendships.

Tips

- Share feedback and reviews
- Thank and appreciate each other
- Plan future trips together

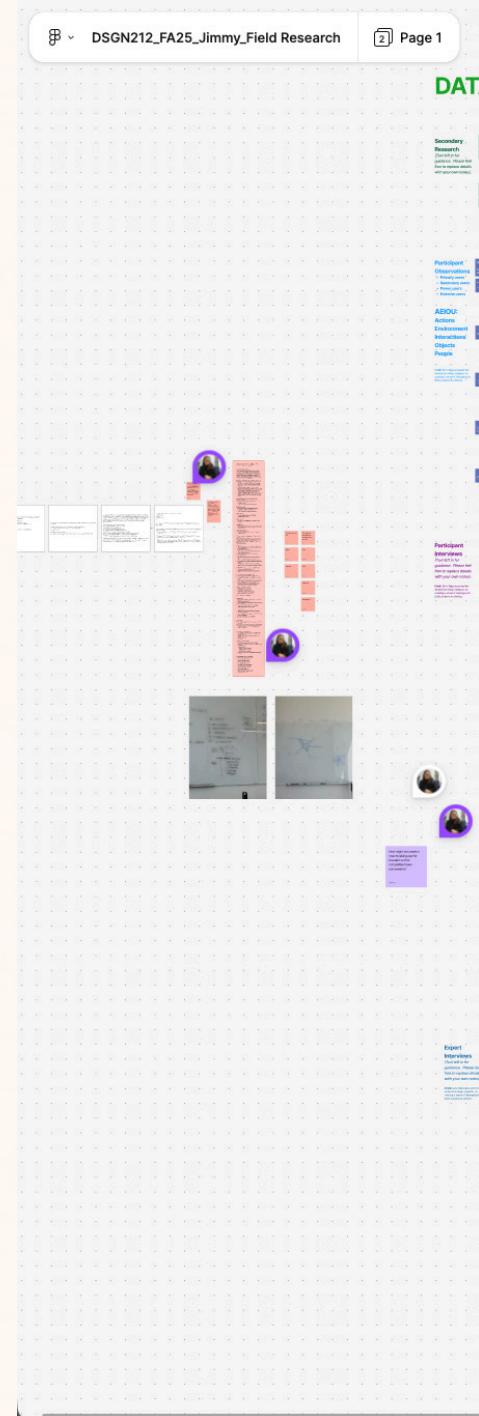
Tabisubi turns uncertainty into confidence through progressive trust-building.

04

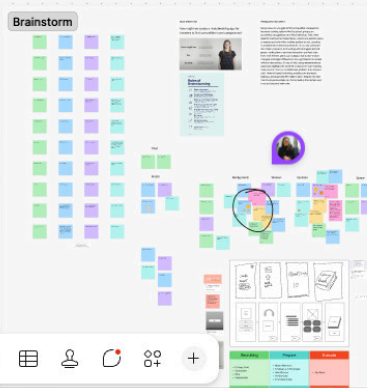
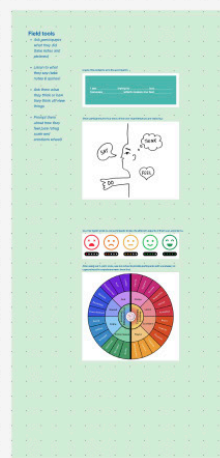
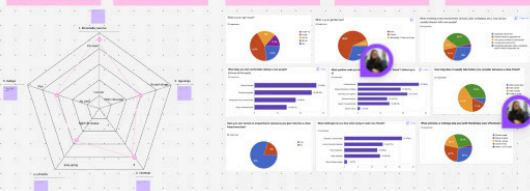
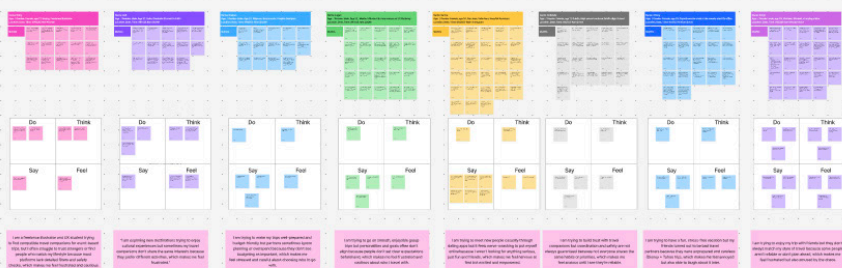
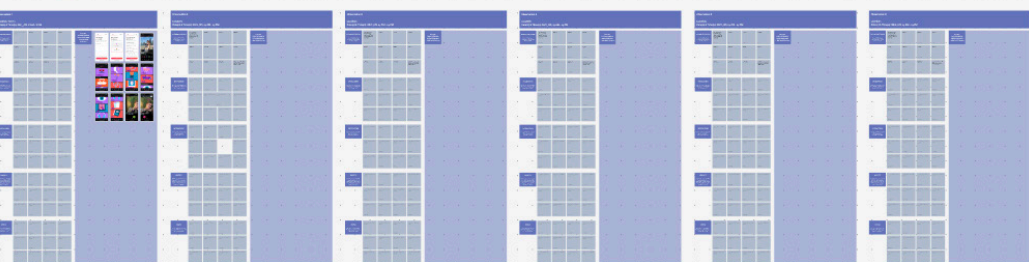
Concept & Design Direction

This section translates research findings into a clear design direction for Tabisubi. Based on user interviews, secondary research, and competitive analysis, the concept focuses on helping travelers move from uncertainty to trust before meeting in person.

The design direction is built around four core needs: finding compatible companions, understanding shared expectations, creating safety signals, and supporting communication before the trip begins.



A GATHERING



Problem

Many people want to travel but do not always have someone they feel comfortable traveling with. Meeting strangers online introduces uncertainty around safety, compatibility, budget, and commitment. Existing platforms allow people to connect, but they do not provide enough structure to help travelers evaluate whether they can trust one another before sharing a trip.



01

Safety Concerns

Users worry about their personal safety when meeting and traveling with someone they don't know well.



Plans fall through due to changes, leaving users and with limited options.



02

Personality Mismatch

Different travel styles, habits, and expectations can lead to conflicts and unpleasant experiences.



03

Budget Conflicts

Unclear spending habits and budget expectations often cause tension during trip planning and on the road.

04

Last-minute Cancellations

Due to last-minute cancellations, travelers are frustrated and disappointed.



05

Lack of Commitment

Some travelers are not serious about plans, leading to unreliable commitments and wasted time.

"Traveling with strangers is exciting, but trust must be built before the journey begins."



Design Opportunity

Many travelers want to explore new places but do not always have someone available or compatible to travel with. Traveling with strangers can create opportunities for friendship, but it also introduces uncertainty. Users may worry about safety, personality mismatch, different budgets, different travel pace, or whether the other person will actually follow through. Current platforms make it possible to find people, but they often do not provide enough structure for travel companionship. Social media groups, Discord servers, and dating apps can help users connect, but they are not designed specifically for building trust before a shared trip. As a result, users must judge compatibility through scattered information, casual messages, and personal instinct. Tabisubi responds to this problem by designing a more intentional way for travelers to meet, compare compatibility, communicate, and build trust before deciding to travel together.

“If we don’t share interests, I don’t see why I’d travel with a stranger.”

This quote can connect to the participant insight that shared interests are a first reason to trust and connect. Your research also notes that users wanted details like favorite artists, bands, lifestyles, and safety checks to be visible before considering travel with strangers

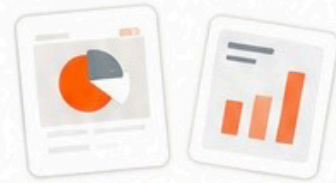


01



RESEARCH INSIGHTS

Understanding user needs, pain points, and expectations through interviews and research.

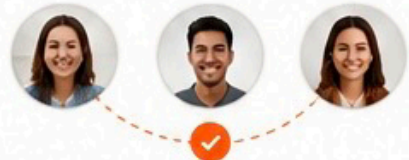


02



COMPATIBILITY MATCHING

Match travelers based on shared interests, travel styles, budgets, and preferences.

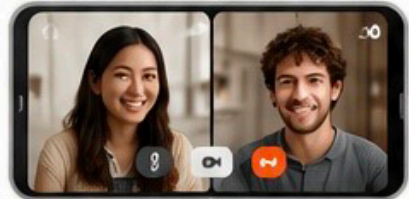


03



COMMUNICATION

Enable meaningful conversations with chat and video calls to know each other better.



04



VERIFICATION

Enable confidence with ID verification, badges, and review systems.



VERIFIED TRAVELER



05



COMMITMENT

Encourage commitment through trip plans, agreements, and deposits.

TRIP DEPOSIT

Secured



06



SHARED TRAVEL

Confidently embark on the journey together and create meaningful memories.



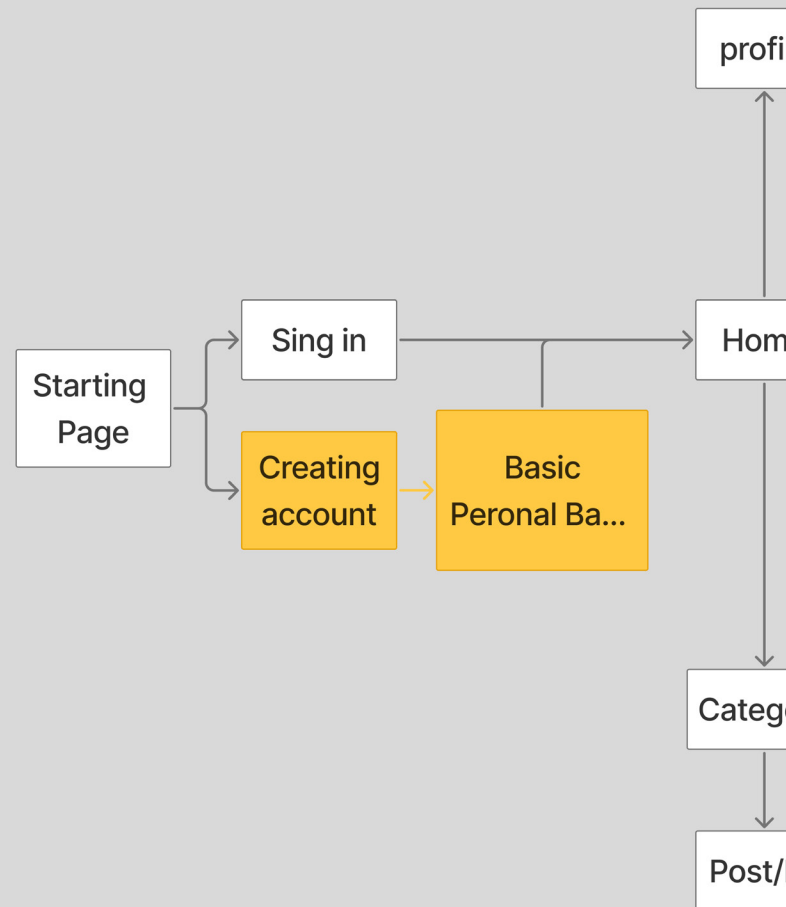
Tabisubi creates an opportunity to design a travel companion platform where compatibility, identity, communication, and commitment are shown clearly before users decide to travel together.

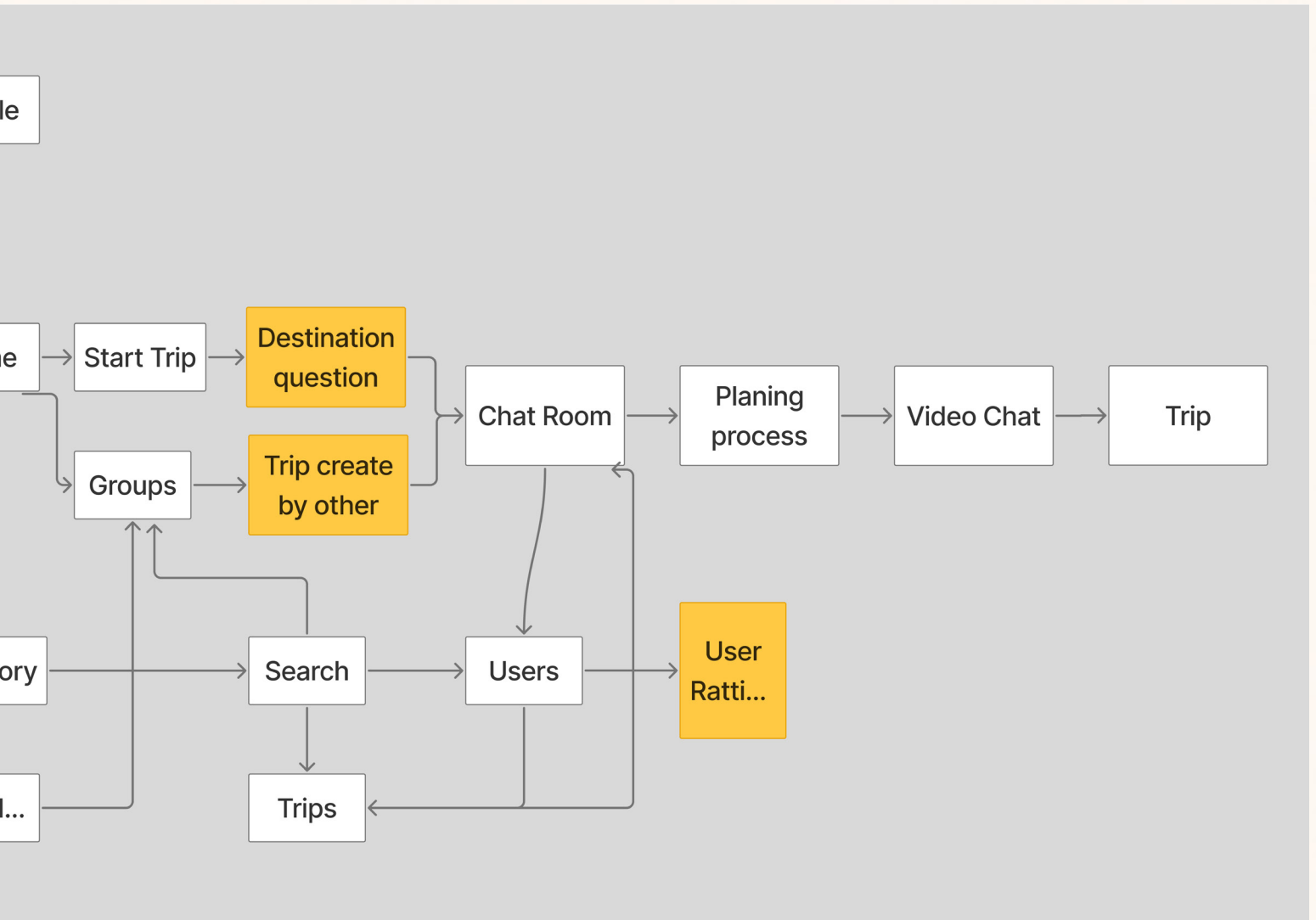
Each research finding became a design requirement for the platform.

User Journey Concept

The journey begins with uncertainty. A user may want to travel but does not have a trusted companion available. Tabisubi introduces potential travel groups through shared interests and destination goals, then gradually adds trust signals through profile details, compatibility, verification, chat, video calls, deposits, and reviews.

This journey is designed to help users move from curiosity to confidence. Instead of making one large decision, users move through smaller steps that make the relationship feel safer and more intentional.

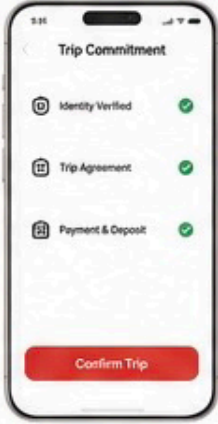
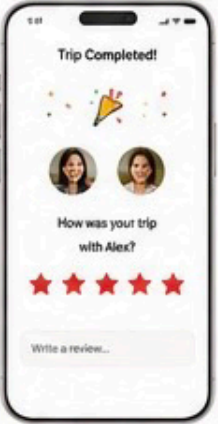
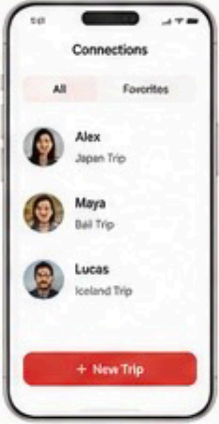




Tabisubi structures the

User Journey Concept

STAGES	1. DISCOVER	2. SIGN UP & SET UP PROFILE	3. FIND MATCHES	4. CONNECT & CHAT	5. PLAN TOGETHER
ACTIONS	Lily hears about TabiSubi from a friend and downloads the app.	She signs up, verifies her email, and creates her profile with her travel preferences.	She browses potential matches based on interests, travel style, destination, and dates.	Lily likes a profile and starts a chat to get to know them better.	They decide to travel together and start planning their trip on the platform.
TOUCHPOINTS	 Social media ad Friend referral App store	 Sign up screen Profile setup Identity verification	 Match feed Filters Recommendations	 Chat Video call Profile details	 Trip planner Shared itinerary Budget planning
EMOTIONS	 Curious	 Excited	 Hopeful	 Happy	 Excited
PAIN POINTS	Not sure if the platform is reliable.	Takes time to complete profile and identity verification.	Hard to know if someone is a good match at first glance.	Worried about safety and whether the person is genuine.	Coordinating schedules and budgets can be complicated.
OPPORTUNITIES	 Build trust through social proof, reviews, and testimonials.	 Make onboarding quick, simple, and rewarding.	 Use smart matching and detailed filters to improve relevance.	 Provide icebreakers, verified badges, and video call option.	 Offer collaborative planning tools and budget tracker.

STAGES	 6. TRIP CONFIRMATION & COMMITMENT	 7. DURING THE TRIP	 8. POST-TRIP EXPERIENCE	 9. STAY CONNECTED
				
ACTIONS	They review trip details, agree on the plan, and make the deposit to confirm the trip.	They travel together, explore, and manage expenses using TabiSubi tools.	After the trip, Lily leaves a review and rates her experience.	They stay in touch, join future trips, or recommend TabiSubi to friends.
TOUCHPOINTS	 Trip agreement Deposit payment Confirmation	 Itinerary Expense split In-app support	 Review & rating Feedback form Trip summary	 Connections Group chats Future trip invites
EMOTIONS	 Relieved	 Joyful	 Satisfied	 Connected
PAIN POINTS	Concerns about payment security or last-minute cancellations.	Unexpected changes, budget overrun, or miscommunication.	Forgetting to leave a review or not knowing how to give feedback.	Hard to keep the connection without a platform.
OPPORTUNITIES	 Ensure secure payments, clear policies, and refund protection.	 Provide real-time support, expense tracking, and safety tools.	 Make review process easy and rewarding (badges, points).	 Encourage community engagement and future trip suggestions.

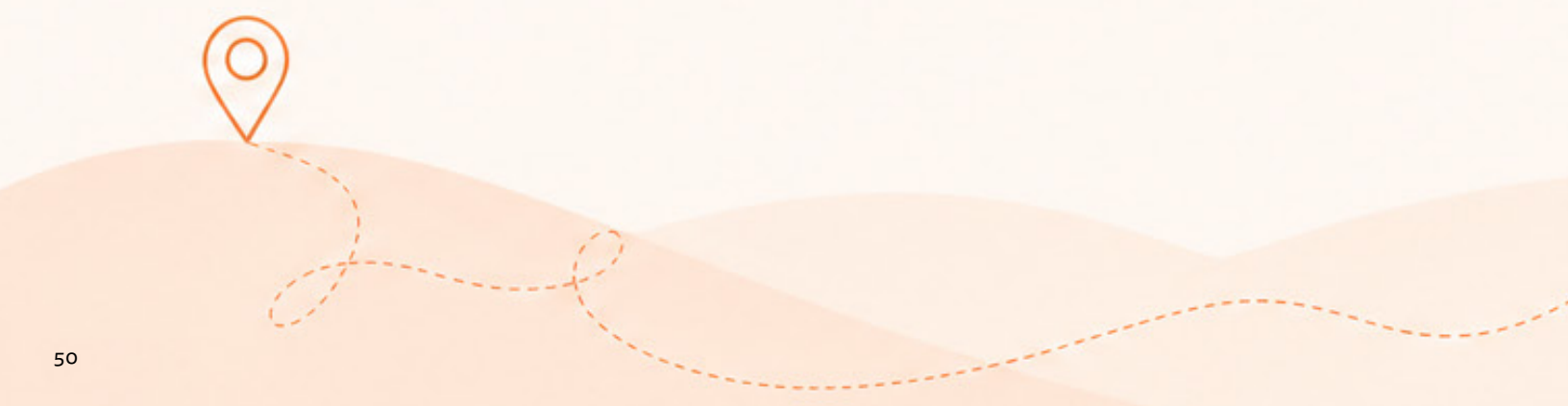


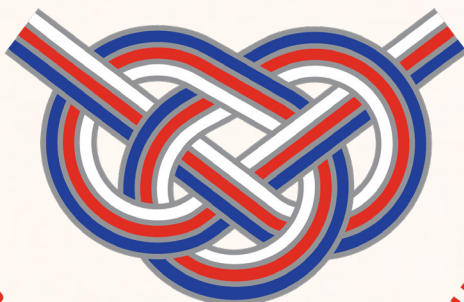
Logo Meaning

旅 Journey

Tabi

Tabi (旅) means “journey” in Japanese. It represents movement, exploration, and the desire to experience new places. The name connects directly to the core purpose of the platform—helping travelers begin their next journey with the right companions. By using a culturally meaningful term, the brand conveys a sense of adventure, curiosity, and shared travel experiences.





Subi

Subi comes from musubi (結び), a Japanese word meaning “to tie,” “to connect,” or “to bind.” In many Asian cultures, knots and red strings symbolize the invisible bonds that bring people together. Subi represents connection, trust, and meaningful relationships—capturing the essence of how the platform helps travelers meet, match, and form lasting friendships.

Persona



Mao

29 • Marketing Executive

📍 Tokyo, Japan

Thoughtful

Organized

Cultural Explorer



About

Loves meaningful travel and deep cultural experiences. Plans carefully and values comfort and safety.



Goals

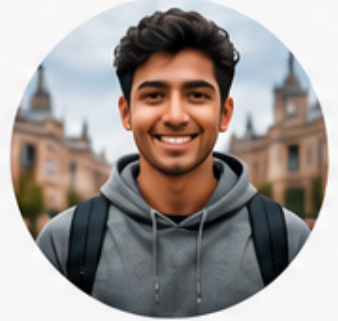
- Travel more often with the right companion
- Experience local culture authentically
- Feel safe and prepared before the trip



Pain Points

- Worried about safety when traveling with strangers
- Needs time to build trust and understand someone
- Dislikes last-minute changes or cancellations

“ I want to travel with someone who shares my values and respects the experience as much as I do.” ”



About

Graduate stu
new places a
people. Trav



Goals

- Find like-m
- Explore ne
- Make gen



Pain Points

- Hard to fir
- Some peo
- Commun

“ I want to travel, learn
people who have a si
respect each other's

Ash

25 • Graduate Student

Delhi, India

Curious Open-minded Budget-conscious

Student who loves exploring
and meeting like-minded
traveling on a student budget.

Mindful travel companions
New places affordably
Genuine connections

and companions with similar budgets
People are not serious about plans
Vacation can be inconsistent

...and connect with
similar mindset and
time and money.”

”



Katy

27 • Freelance Illustrator

Beijing, China

Creative Independent Spontaneous



About

Freelance illustrator who travels to find
inspiration. Values authentic conversations
and shared interests.



Goals

- Travel to places that inspire creativity
- Meet companions with similar interests
- Enjoy a flexible and fun travel experience



Pain Points

- Hard to know if someone is truly compatible
- Prefers real conversations before traveling
- Needs flexibility in plans and schedules

“ I want to meet people who inspire me and
make the journey just as meaningful as
the destination.”

”



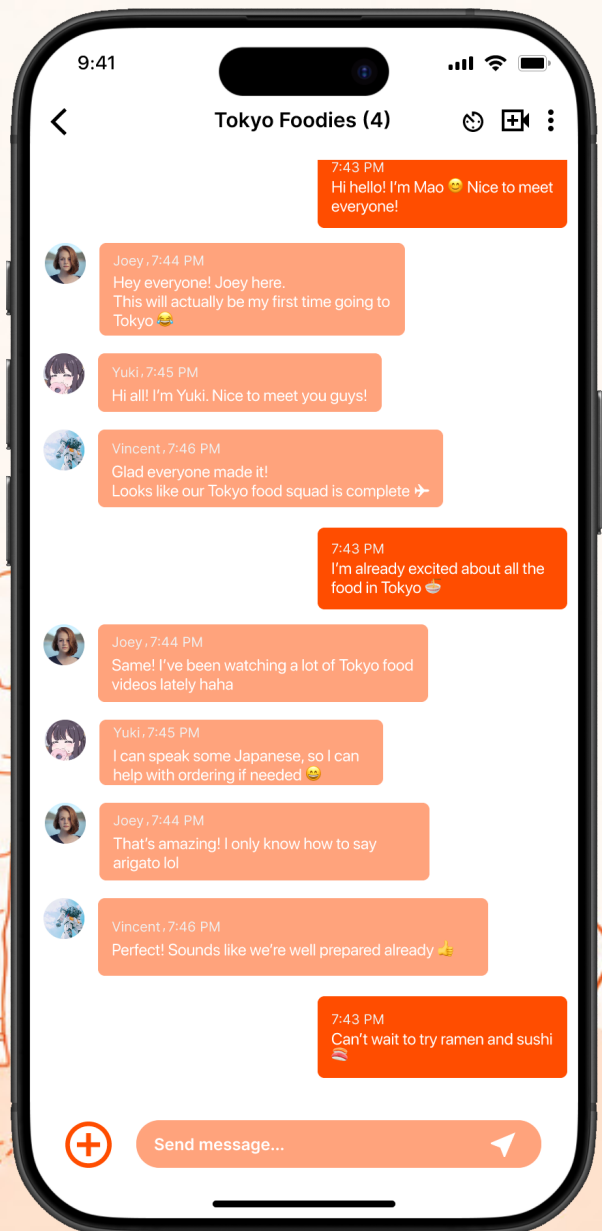
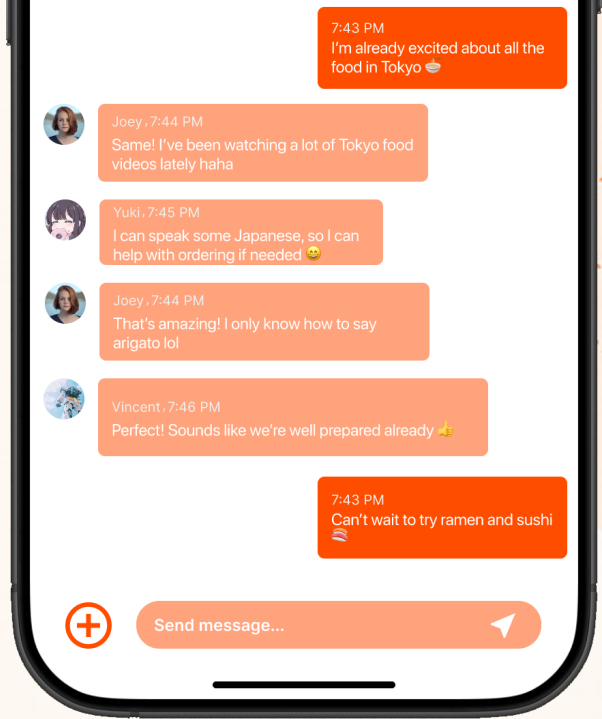
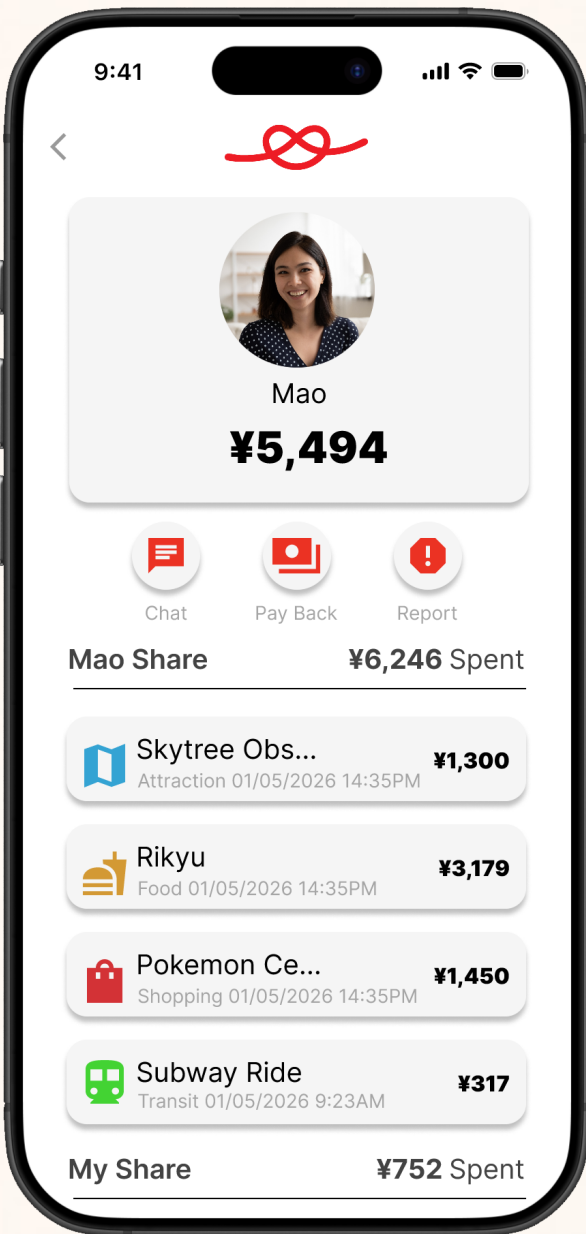
05

Final Design & Prototype

The final prototype presents Tabisubi as a mobile platform that helps travelers find compatible companions, verify identity, communicate safely, and commit to a shared trip with more confidence.

The final design turns trust into a step-by-step experience.





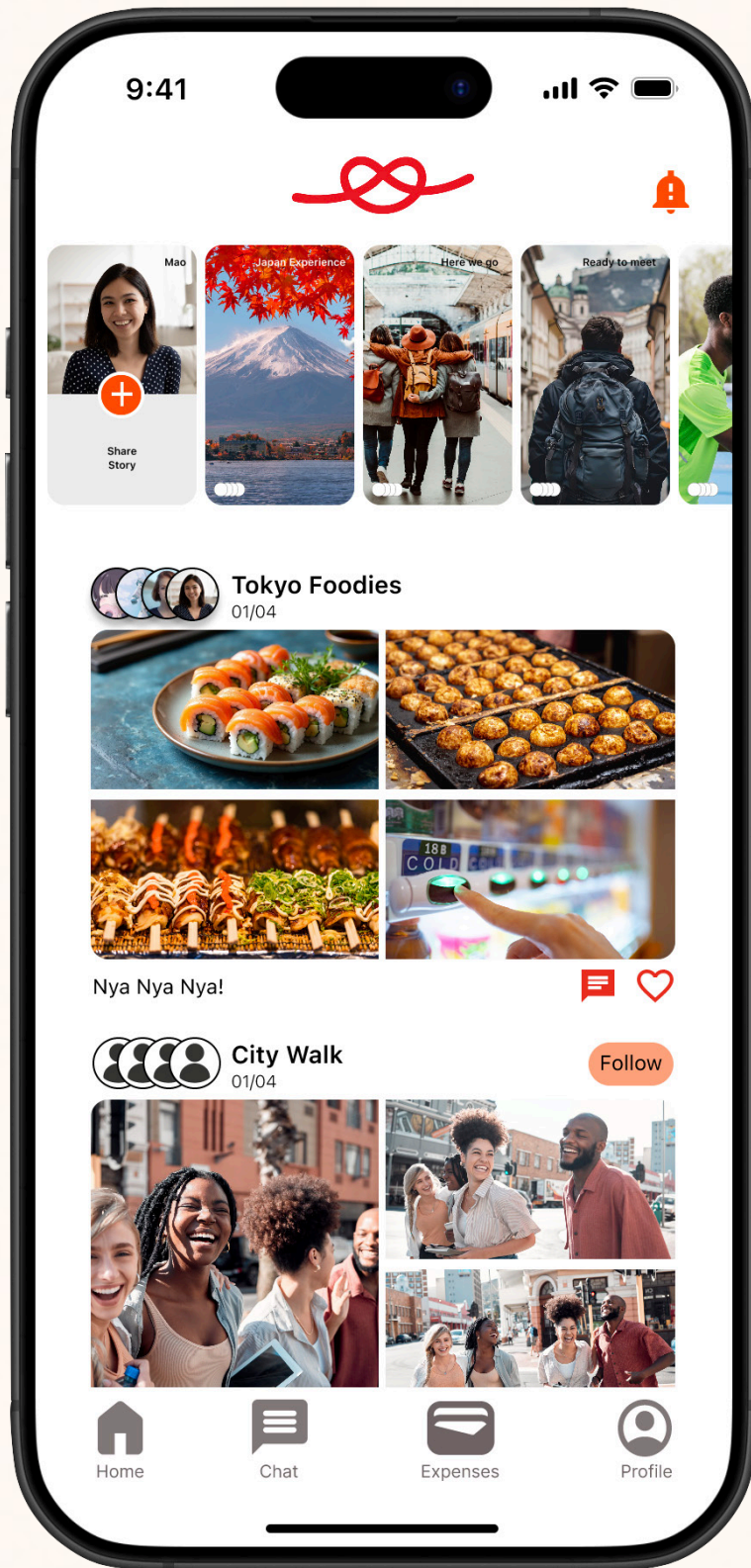


Home Screen

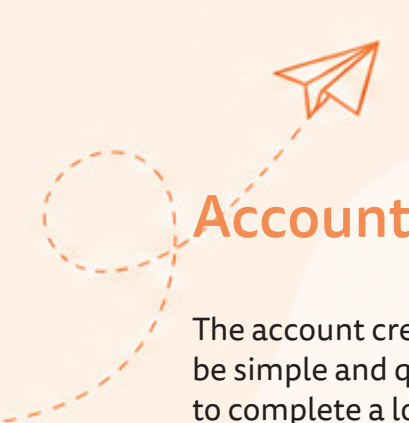
The home screen helps users discover travel inspiration from other groups and travelers. By seeing posts, destinations, shared experiences, and similar trip ideas, users can gather planning inspiration before creating or joining a group.

This screen makes Tabisubi feel like a social travel space, not only a matching tool. It encourages users to explore what others are planning and imagine how their own trip could take shape.





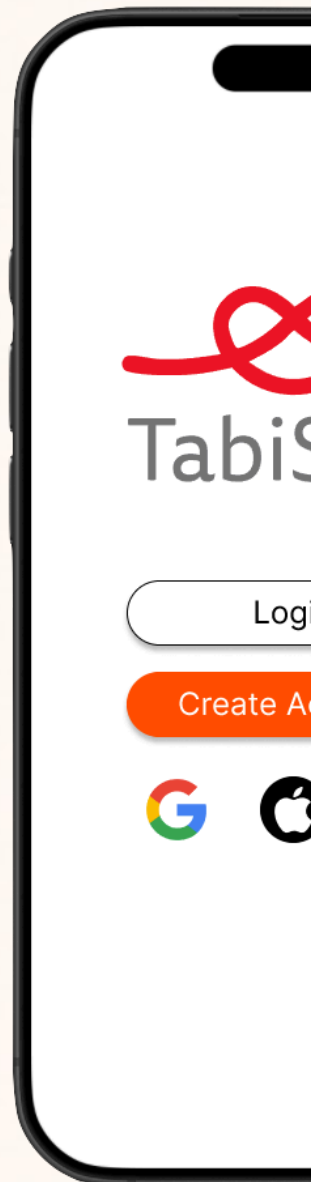
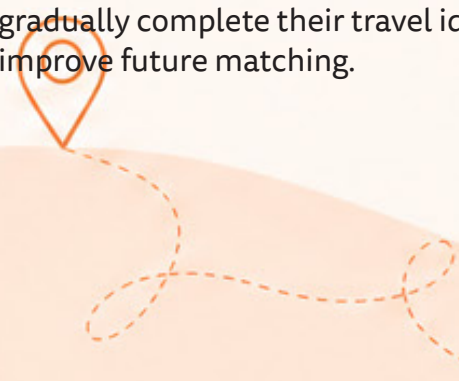
The home feed shows other travelers' posts and similar trips to inspire users during planning.

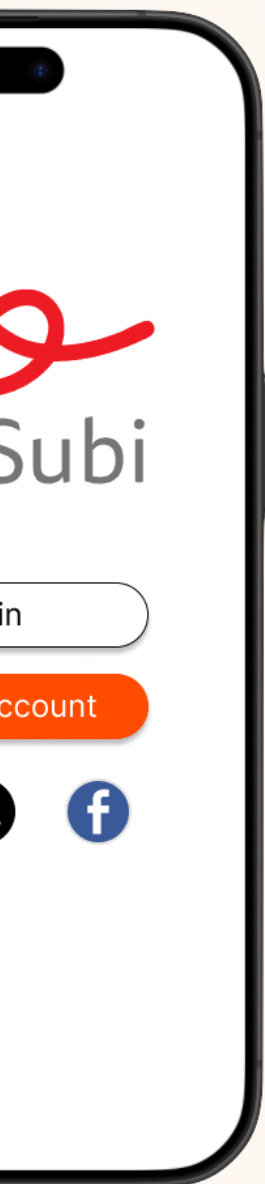
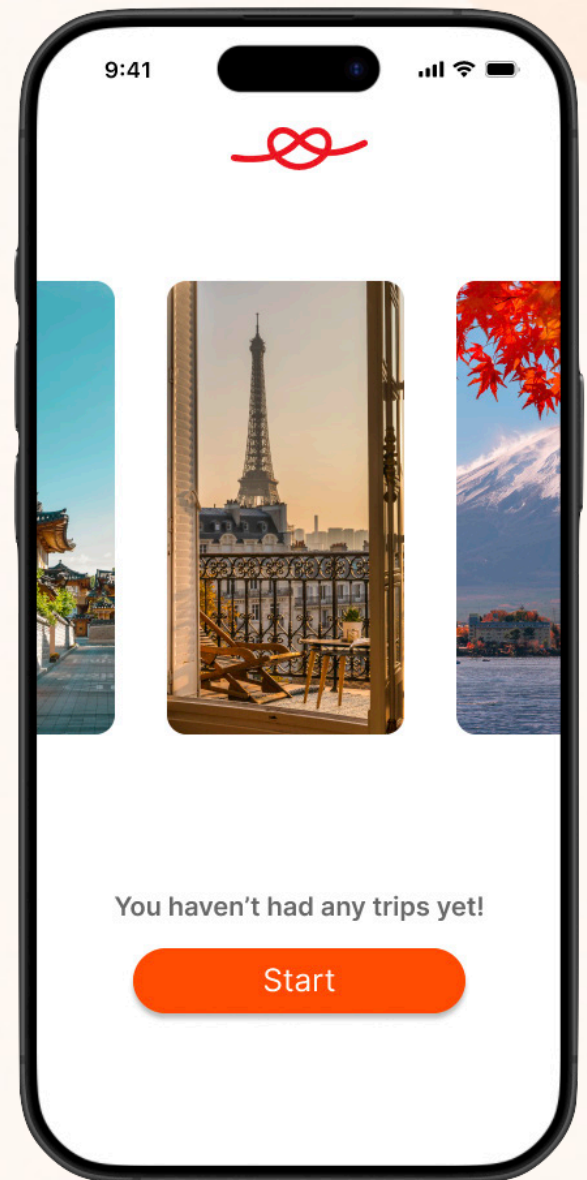


Account Creation

The account creation process is designed to be simple and quick. Instead of asking users to complete a long survey before entering the app, Tabisubi begins with seven basic questions related to personal information and daily routine.

These early questions help the platform understand the user's general lifestyle while keeping onboarding lightweight. More detailed travel preferences and habits appear later in the personal profile, where users can gradually complete their travel identity and improve future matching.



This image shows a mobile app interface for account creation. At the top, there is a red infinity symbol. Below it, the form consists of several fields: 'Name' with a 'Text' input, 'Birthday' with a 'Date' input, 'Region' with a 'Location' input, and 'Language' with a 'Select' input. Below these fields, there are three buttons labeled 'Male', 'Female', and 'Non-binary'. At the bottom, there is a 'Phone Number' field with the placeholder '(000) 000-0000'. Two buttons, 'Next' (orange) and 'Back' (grey), are at the very bottom.

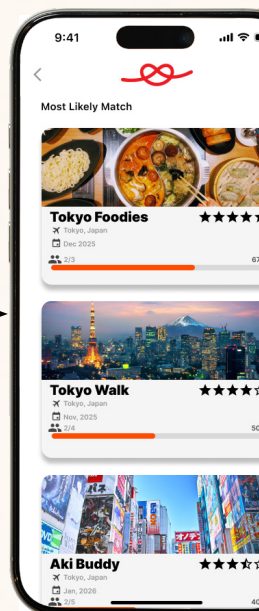
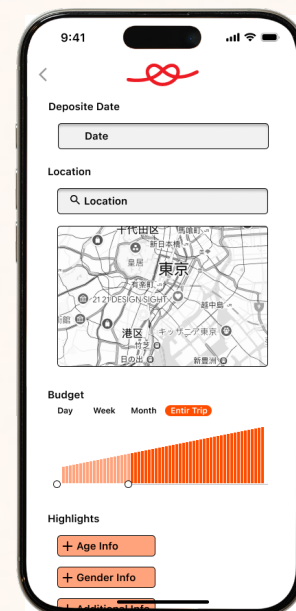
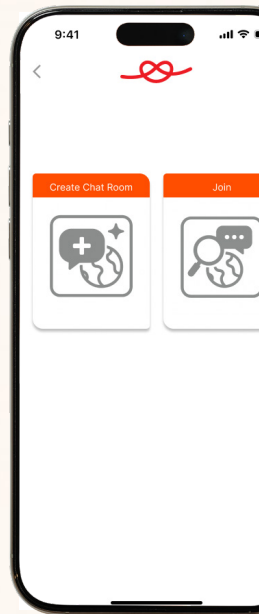
Account creation should reduce friction, not overwhelm first-time users.

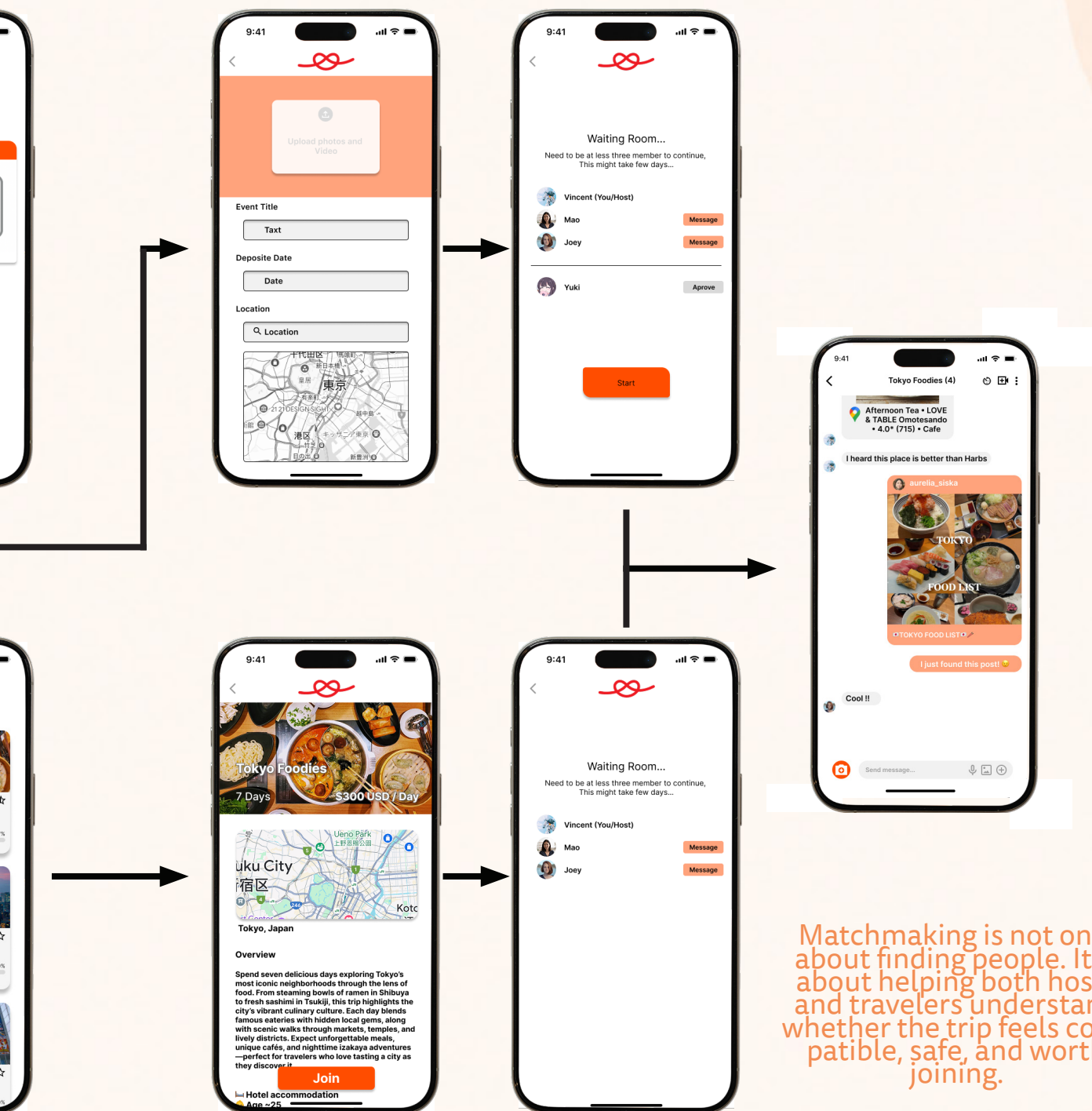
Matchmaking Information

Tabisubi's matchmaking system has two main paths: one for hosts who create travel groups, and one for travelers who are looking for a group to join. This structure supports both people who already have a clear travel plan and people who want to explore existing trips before making a decision.

In the host path, the user sets the travel information and group goals. They define the destination, dates, budget range, activity interests, group size, travel pace, safety preferences, and expectations for the trip. This information becomes a group post that other users can browse, compare, and apply to join.

In the traveler path, users also provide their travel goals and preferences, but they do not need to create a group immediately. Instead, they can scroll through different group pages, read each group description, review compatibility information, and decide which group best fits their travel style.





Matchmaking is not only about finding people. It is about helping both hosts and travelers understand whether the trip feels compatible, safe, and worth joining.



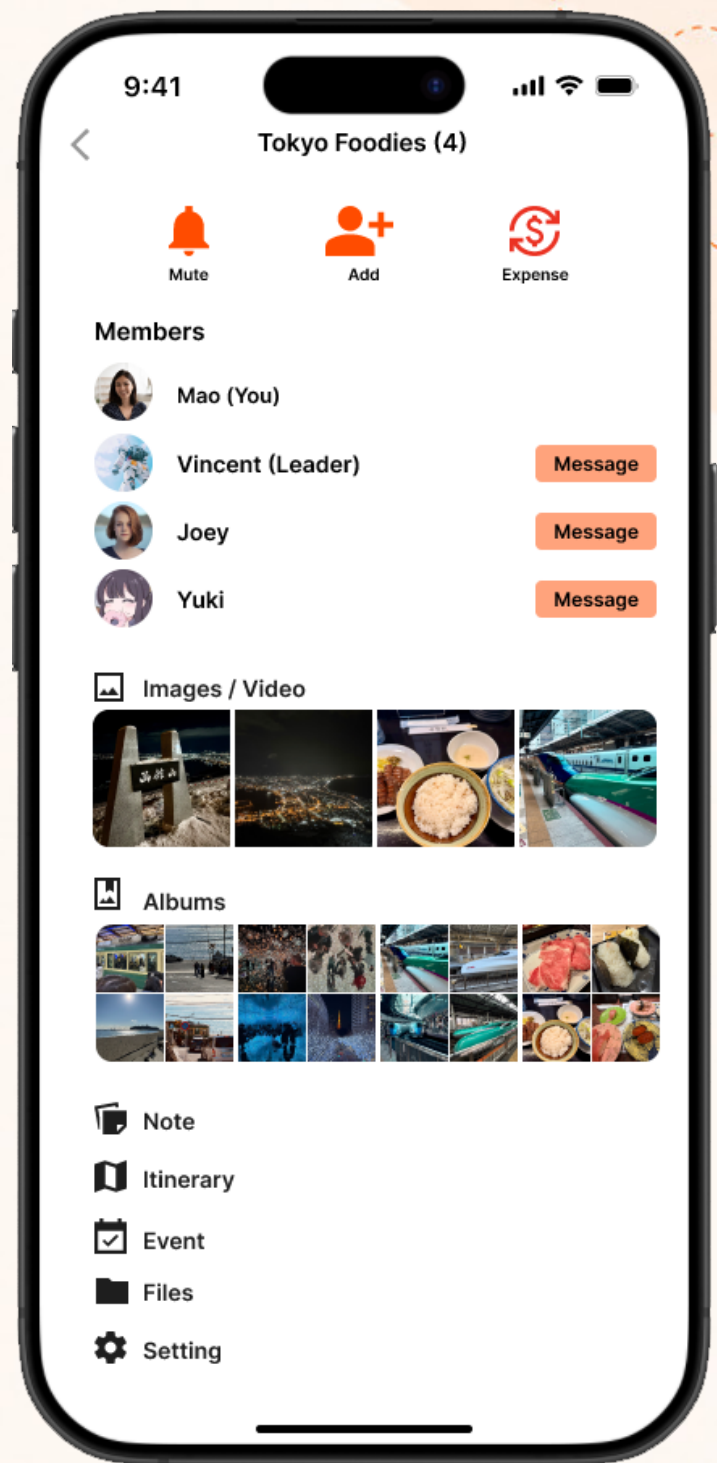
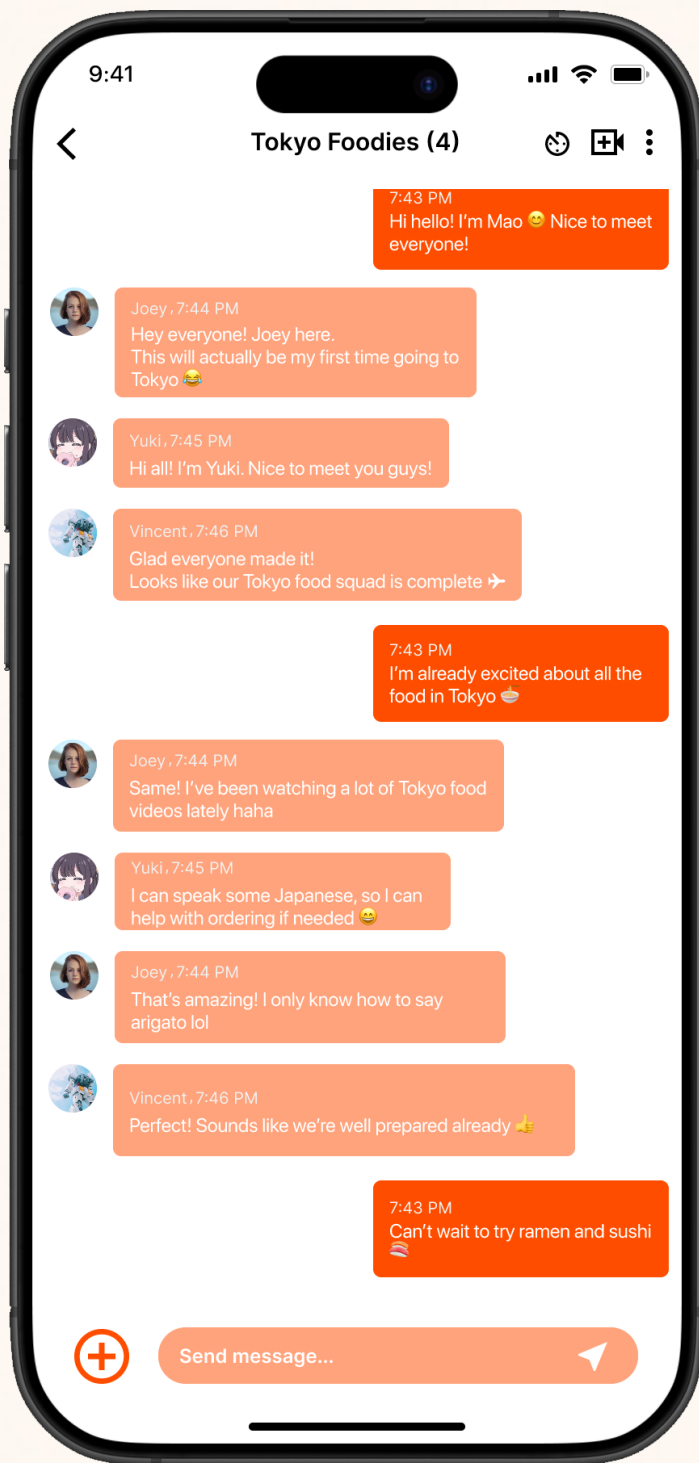
Chat Room

The chat room gives group members a place to discuss their upcoming trip. Users can talk about destination plans, food preferences, budget expectations, transportation, meeting points, and personal boundaries.

The chat room gives group members a place to discuss their upcoming trip. Users can

The chat room also helps users observe communication style and group dynamics before meeting in person.





The chat room helps members plan together and become more familiar before the trip.



Video Call

Before the trip begins, members are required to complete at least one video call. This helps users confirm that other members are real, understand communication style, and discuss expectations face to face.

Video interaction adds a stronger layer of trust between online matching and offline travel.

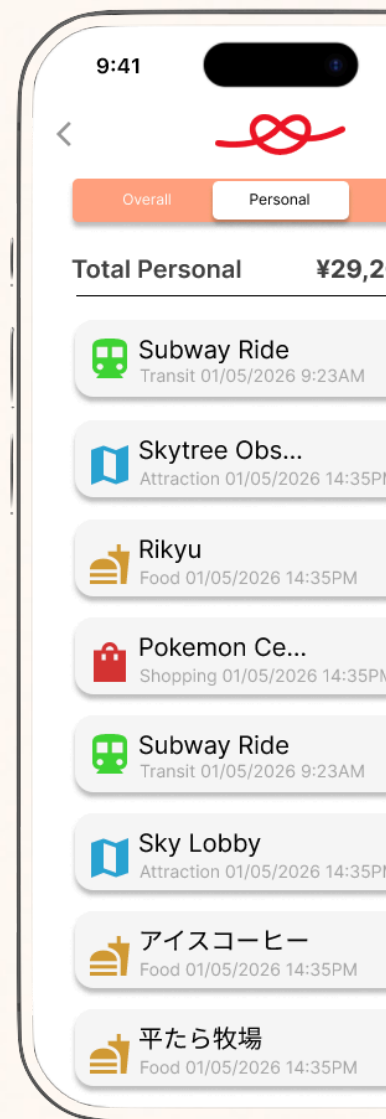




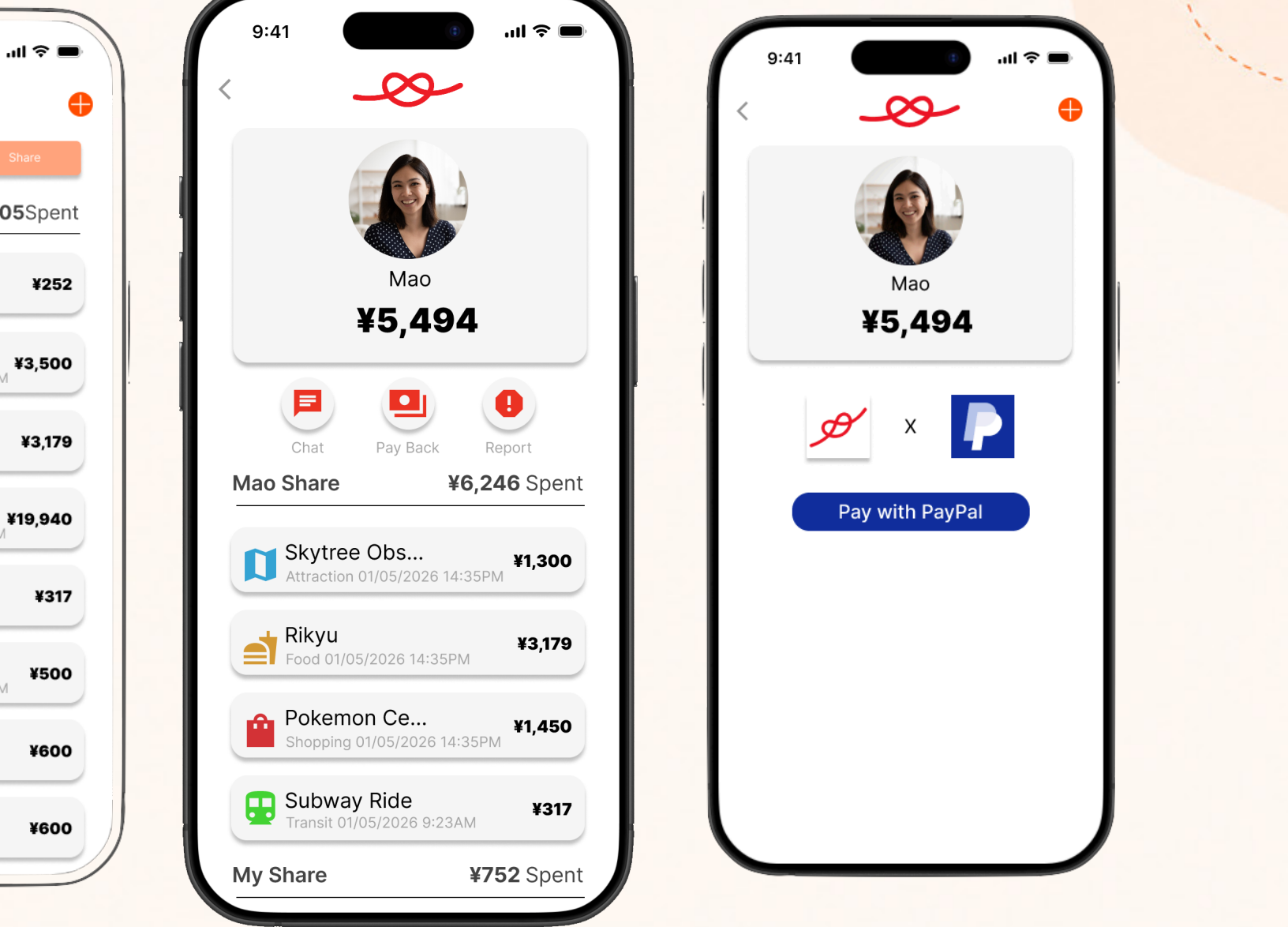
Video calls help users feel more comfortable before meeting in real life.

Finance Management

Finance management supports transparency around shared expenses. Travelers often split costs for food, transportation, tickets, and activities. Tabisubi allows users to upload receipts, track balances, and see who owes or is owed money.



This feature helps reduce awkward payment conversations and prevents financial confusion from damaging the group relationship.



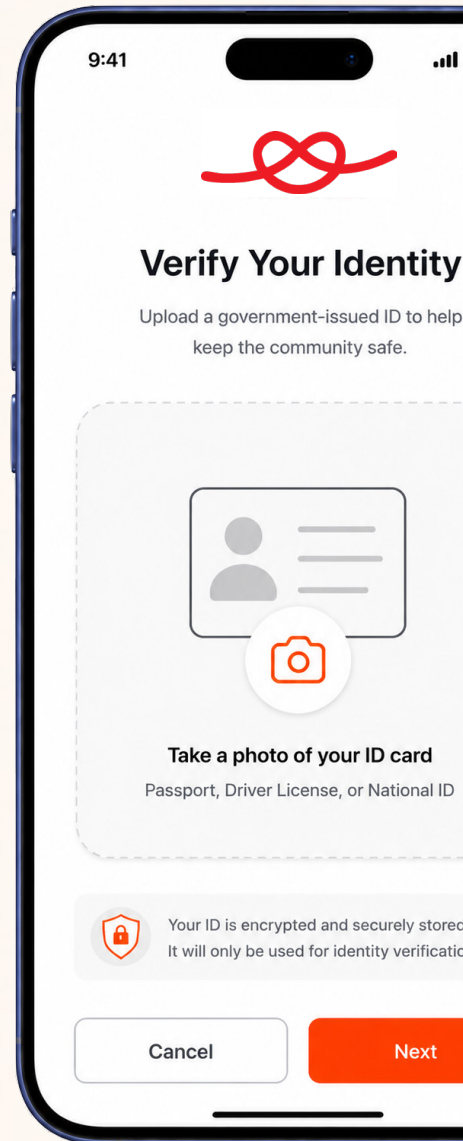
Clear expense tracking
helps build financial trust
among travel companions.

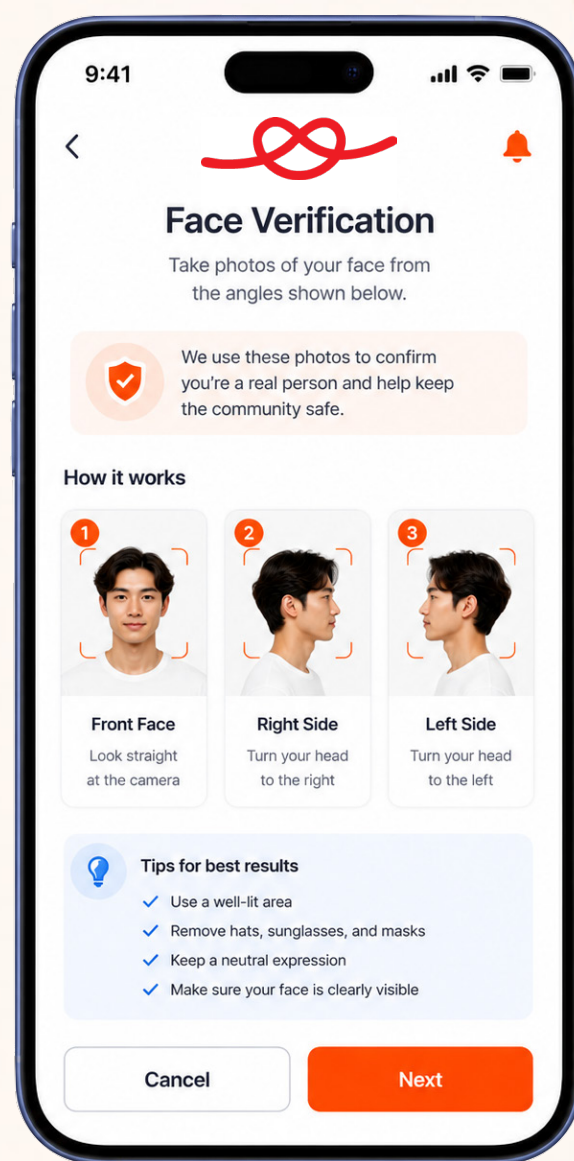
Personal Profile & Verification

Identity verification is optional and can be completed later from the Profile or Notifications page. Verified users receive a badge that helps others feel more confident when planning a trip together.

“Verification makes identity more visible, but trust is still built through communication and repeated interaction.”

The profile also includes identity verification. Users can choose to provide government ID information, complete face verification, and receive a Verified Traveler Badge after the information is confirmed. This badge appears on the profile and helps other users recognize that the person has taken additional steps to verify their identity.

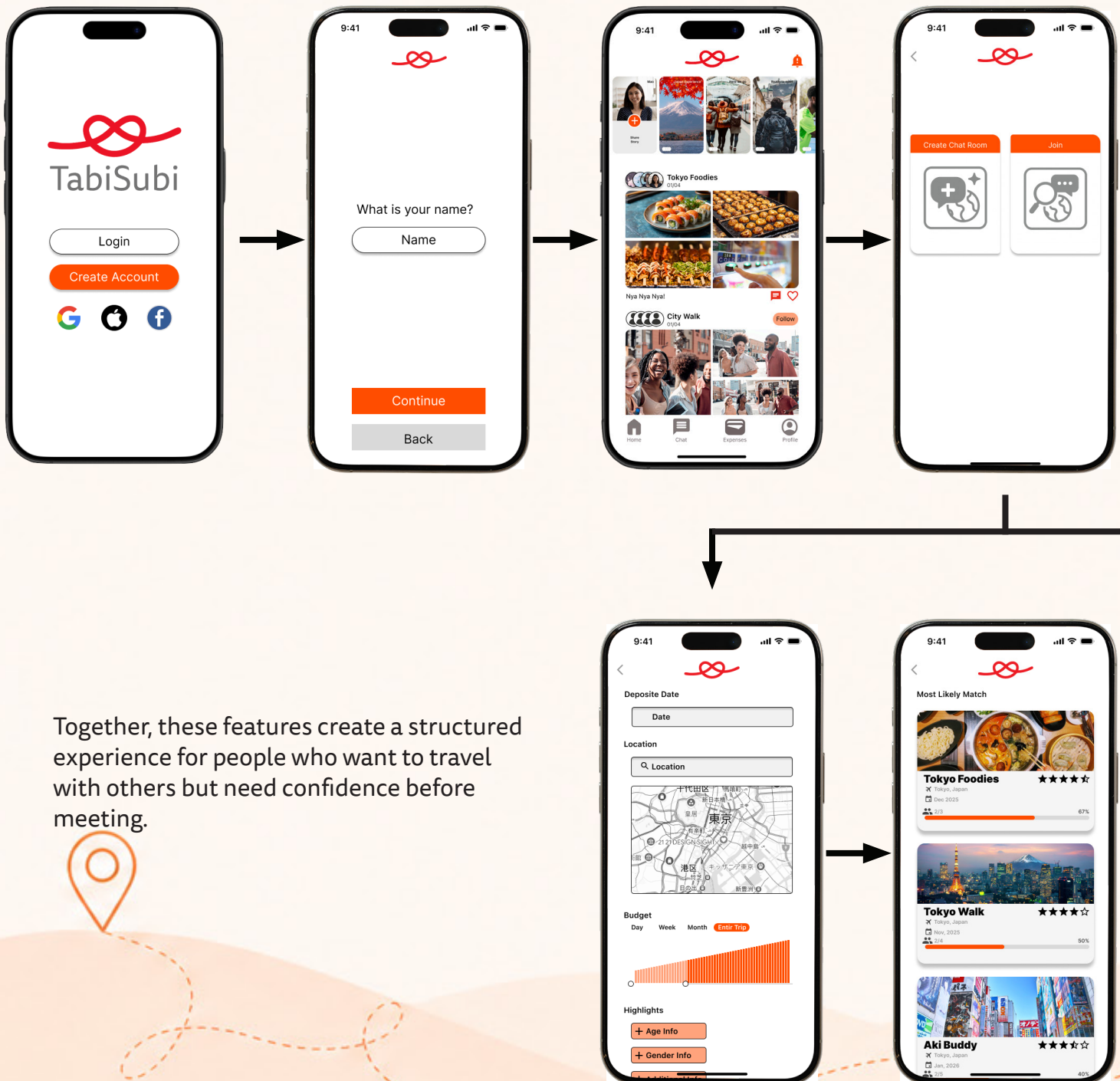




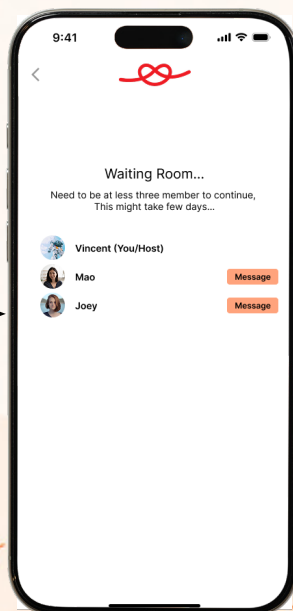
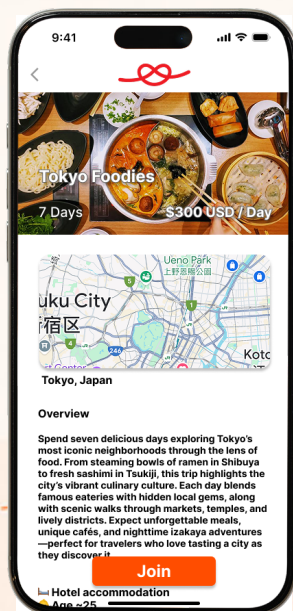
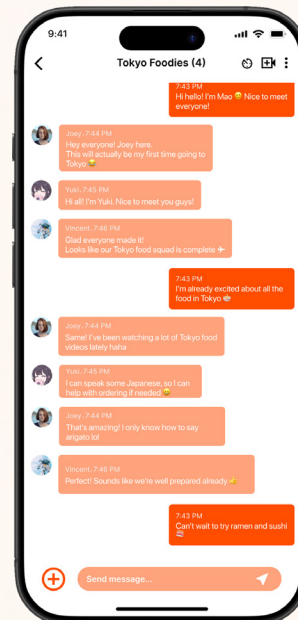
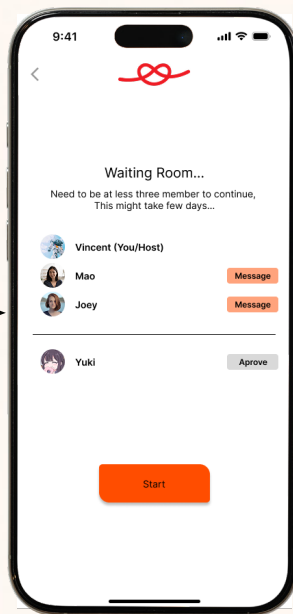
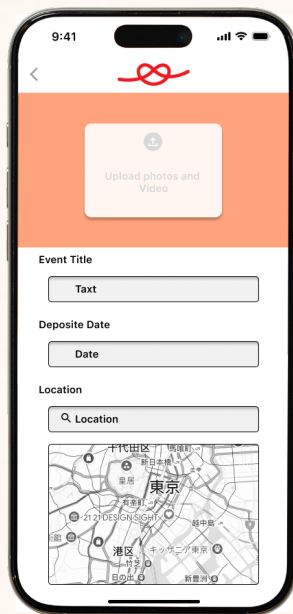
"Optional verification gives users a visible trust signal before they have reviews or travel history."

Prototype Summary

The prototype focuses on the core moments that help users move from discovery to trust. Each feature supports a different part of the pre-trip experience: inspiration, lightweight account creation, matching, communication, video familiarity, financial clarity, and profile-based verification.



Together, these features create a structured experience for people who want to travel with others but need confidence before meeting.



The prototype is organized around the major features that make trust easier to build.



06

Exhibition

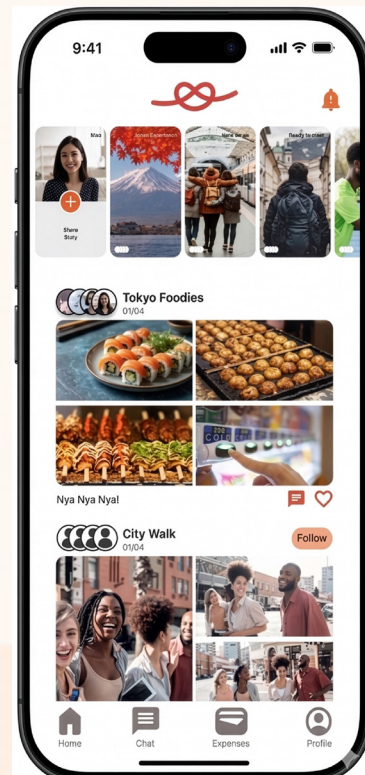
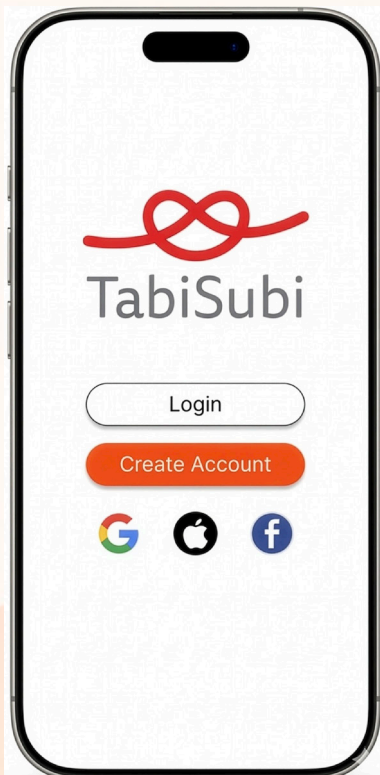
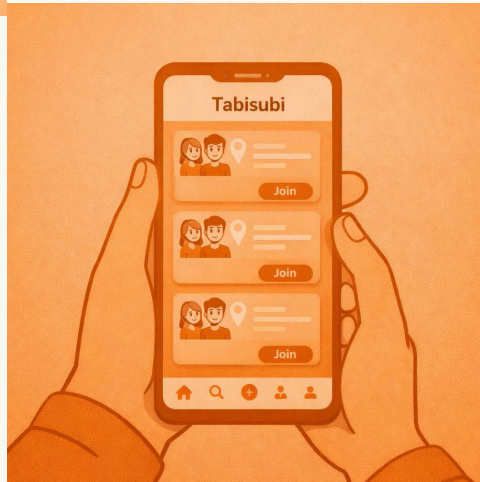
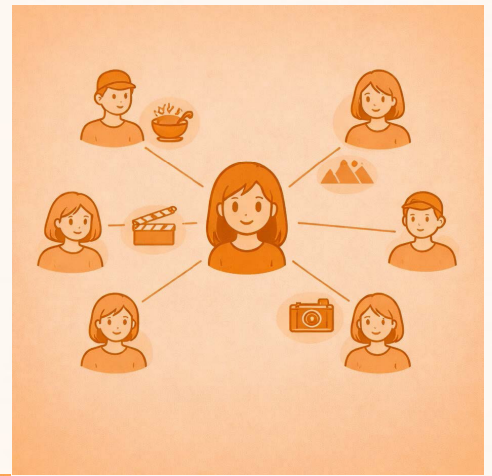
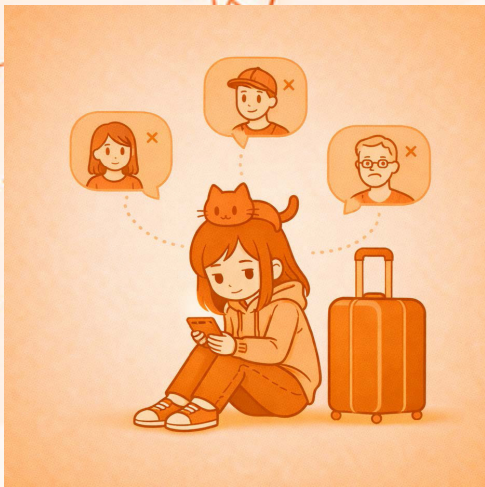
The exhibition translates Tabisubi from a digital prototype into a physical experience that communicates the project's central theme: building trust between strangers before they travel together.

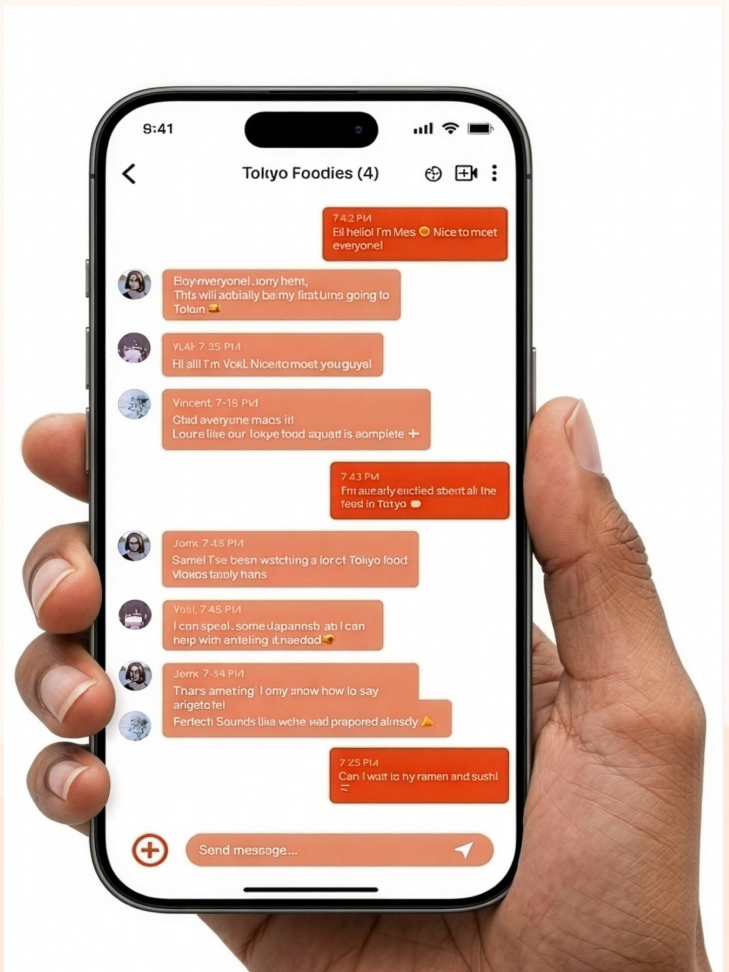
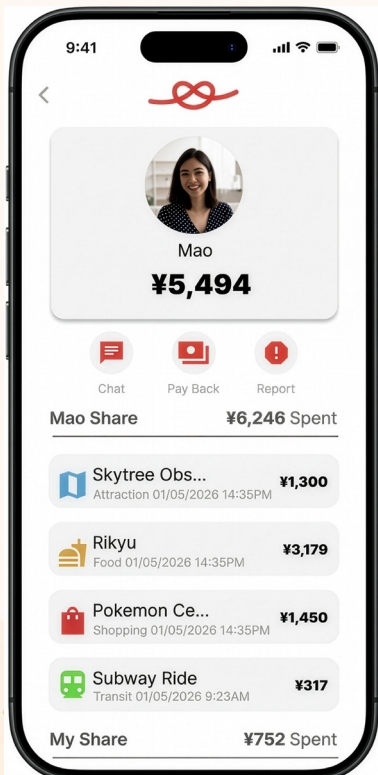
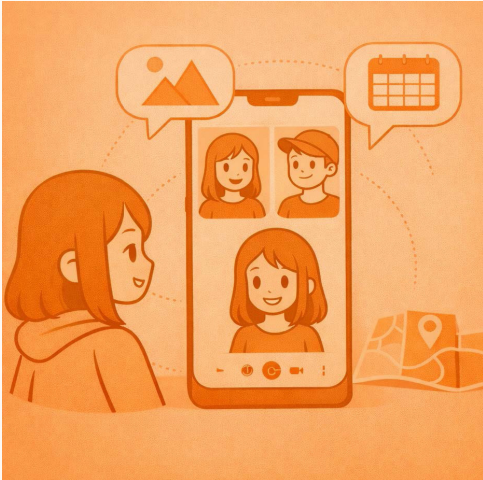
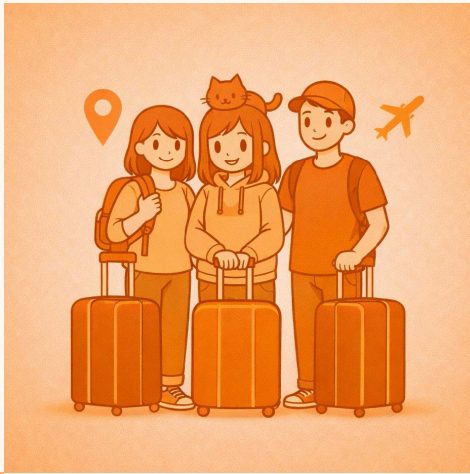
The exhibition presents Tabisubi as both a product and a trust-building experience..

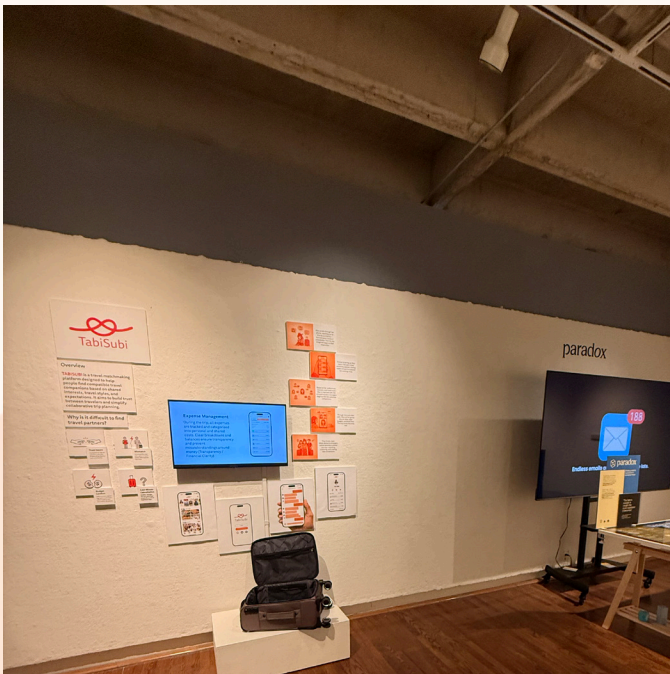




The display is organized as a clear narrative, beginning with the problem of solo travelers who want companionship but face uncertainty when meeting new people. Research insights and the trust framework explain the key challenges of safety, compatibility, and commitment. Final app screens demonstrate how Tabisubi addresses these concerns through verification, communication, and collaborative planning.



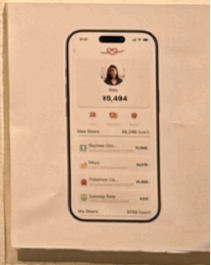
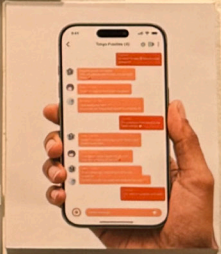
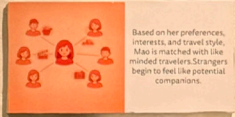
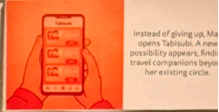






Overview
TABISUBI is a travel matchmaking platform designed for people finding travel companions with similar interests, expectations, and budgets to collaborate on travel plans.

Why is it different?
Travel partners



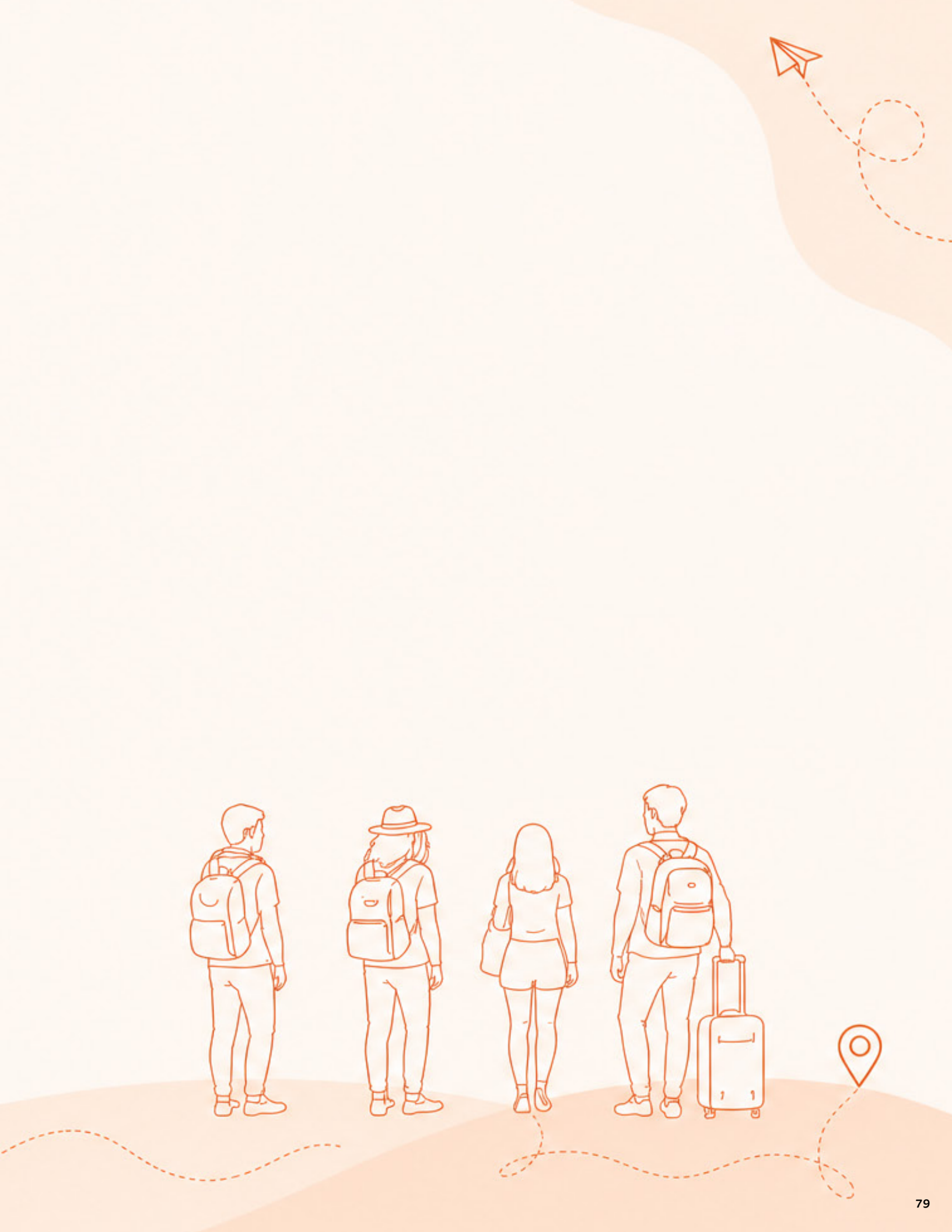


07 Reflection

Before people travel together, they need to trust each other.

Designing for trust is designing for human connection.







Tabisubi began with a personal and social question: why do so many people want to travel with others, but still end up traveling alone? At first, I understood this as a problem of finding people. If a platform could simply connect travelers with similar destinations, then perhaps more people would be able to travel together. However, through research, interviews, and design development, I realized that the deeper issue was not only about discovery. The real challenge was trust.

Traveling with someone is different from chatting online or joining a casual social group. A travel companion affects a person's safety, schedule, budget, comfort, and overall memory of the trip. When someone chooses to travel with another person, they are making a decision that includes emotional, practical, and physical risk. This is especially true when the other person is a stranger. Because of this, the design challenge became more complex than creating a matching platform. It became a question of how design can help people feel safe enough to move from uncertainty toward connection.

Through the interview process, I learned that people evaluate potential travel companions through many small signals. Shared interests can create the first reason to talk, but shared interests alone are not enough. Travelers also care about lifestyle compatibility, budget expectations, communication style, group size, travel pace, and personal boundaries. They want to know whether someone is real, whether they are respectful, whether they will fol-

low through, and whether the trip experience will feel comfortable. These concerns shaped the foundation of Tabisubi.

The final design uses multiple layers of trust-building rather than relying on one single solution. Identity verification and face verification help users feel that another person is real. Compatibility scores help users understand whether expectations align. Group chat and conversation prompts help members communicate before meeting. Required video calls provide another layer of familiarity and safety. Deposits help signal commitment and reduce last-minute cancellations. Shared expense tools reduce financial confusion, while reviews allow trust to continue after the trip ends.

One of the most important lessons from this project is that trust cannot be designed as a single feature. A badge, a profile, a rating, or a video call may help, but none of them can fully create trust alone. Trust is built through a sequence of clear, consistent, and meaningful interactions. Each step gives the user more information, more confidence, and more control. In this sense, Tabisubi is not only a matchmaking system. It is a guided trust-building journey.

This project also changed the way I think about user experience design. I learned that usability is important, but usability alone is not enough for social products. When a product involves strangers, safety, identity, money, and real-world meetings, the designer must consider emotional comfort, vulnerability, and accountability.

The interface must not only be easy to use; it must help users feel informed and respected. It must communicate when something is optional, when something is required, and why each step matters.

Tabisubi also reflects my belief that many people today are looking for meaningful connection, but they need safer and more intentional ways to begin. Travel can create strong friendships because people share time, place, memory, and discovery. However, those relationships need the right conditions to begin. By helping users understand compatibility, verify identity, communicate clearly, and commit gradually, Tabisubi creates a path where strangers can become companions with greater confidence.

Looking forward, Tabisubi could continue to grow in several directions. Future development could include stronger safety partnerships, more detailed review systems, AI-supported group recommendations, local host verification, travel insurance integration, and post-trip community features. These additions could help the platform move beyond one-time trip matching and become a long-term travel friendship network.

In the end, this thesis proposes a different way to think about travel companionship. The goal is not simply to help people find someone going to the same place. The goal is to help people understand who they are meeting, why they might be compatible, and how trust can be built before the journey begins.

Tabisubi shows that design can help transform uncertainty into confidence, and strangers into trusted travel companions.

Designing for trust is designing for human connection.



Appendix

The appendix contains supporting materials that document the research and design process in greater detail. These materials provide additional context for how insights were collected, analyzed, and translated into the final design solution.



Appendix A — Interview Guide

Research questions and interview prompts used during participant interviews.

Appendix B — Screening Questionnaire

Google Forms questions used to recruit study participants.

Appendix C — Participant Overview

Summary table of all interview participants, including age, occupation, and location.

Appendix D — Affinity Mapping

Screenshots of sticky notes and theme clustering used to synthesize research findings.

Appendix E — Empathy Maps

Selected empathy maps showing what participants said, thought, felt, and did.

Appendix F — Compatibility Radar Charts

Visual comparisons of participants' personality, interests, lifestyle, and budget preferences.

Appendix G — Competitive Analysis Matrix

Detailed comparison of Facebook Groups, Tinder, Discord, and Travel Buddy.

Appendix H — User Flows

Complete flows for onboarding, matchmaking, verification, deposit, and expense management.

Appendix I — Wireframes and Early Concepts

Initial sketches and low-fidelity explorations.

Appendix J — User Testing Materials

Task instructions, feedback forms, and selected participant comments.

Appendix K — Design Iterations

Before-and-after comparisons showing how the design evolved.

Appendix L — Exhibition Materials

Poster layouts, booth renderings, and presentation assets.



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