

NOTES, FINDINGS FROM PRE-TEST, TRACKLINES TESTING
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Participants: Angus, Rupinder, Chris, David, Paula, Geoffrey

We pre-tested on our team (above) who was very familiar with the Tracklines research questions, general archaeology of the Tracklines – i.e. that there are “navigational” sound elements followed by narrative stories at certain points, triggered by GPS. Most of this group on the day of testing did not know what the sound “triggers” would be or where they would occur on the trail or how the narration would be created. These were creative elements that the sound team (Geoffrey, David) worked on the previous day and a half. We were also not generally aware which visuals would come up and at what point on the trail. (Chris and Rupinder and Angus were aware of this).

We taped our debrief for hours. This is a short synopsis of user comments.

User comments and related hypotheses or things to consider testing:

1. Because the entire experience takes place on the trail and the trail is so well marked, users (and many of us) did not necessarily view the sound cues as navigation so much as cues that a story was coming. In fact, many of us integrated the sounds into the overall experience of the trail.

It seems it would be a good idea to test *how* users view these sounds, before asking them if they understood them as navigation or aesthetic experiences, etc.

(note: The sound navigation is designed with the approach arc followed by a “hook” sound; do we need the hook? This iteration didn’t really use the hook, so there aren’t pre-test findings here.)

2. We had very different reactions to the visuals in regard to how they interacted with the sound and though we liked them aesthetically a lot, some of us weren’t sure that they added to the experience of the trail walk and some of us felt that looking at the phone was a distraction or we felt compelled to look at it and didn’t want to. Question: what were the users experiences/readings of the visuals?

3. Overall, the team liked and some were surprised at how much we enjoyed the trail walk. We are *not* an objective audience, clearly. Yet, particulars: we enjoyed the geology story due to how it was presented (audio aesthetics, mixing, sound effects on narrative; sound “navigational” preludes to narrative and some noted overlaps between the audio nav and the sound background to the narrative.

4. There seemed to be long breaks between some audio experience and many of us wished there were another experience during the transition from one point to the next. Having said that, many commented that silence was important to us; we enjoyed the silent breaks, when they didn’t take a long time on the trail. We liked anticipating that

another sound/experience would come; question; how long is the desired time between experiences?

5. Power issue raised: the question of who carries the phone becomes relevant when there are visuals; we can hear from a distance, but we need to come to the phone carrier when we want to see the visual on the phone. Some noted that friends will share easily or huddle but others won't necessarily be so comfortable in huddling together.

6. Most of us enjoyed the sounds that day for their aesthetic value. Will users try to/would they enjoy working out whether sounds are meant to guide or have meanings that relate to the narrative? (This is a relevant question for any future iterations that call people off to tangent trails and need to guide them there; it is also an issue for the field section of the trail, where individuals face a fork and need to choose the fork to the right/through the field. We didn't do this because we weren't hailed to do so... another question; how to hail at this point?

7. Some of us stopped when we heard a sound and others didn't want to and were annoyed if the person holding the phone stopped. Do users want to generally keep moving or do they want to stop? Is it important to users?

8. Related to this; we had six people using one phone; what is the largest group that can comfortably use one phone? (it's a problem because we can't hand out multiple phones as the sound would overlap and not necessarily be in sync.

9. Regarding stories: a lot of us couldn't follow the narrative description of the landscape in front of us and were disappointed to not be able to because we didn't know where north was. Is this the experience of other users ?

Other questions that were raised

Group discussed created this list of things to consider testing or at least to consider as the project goes forward:

- a) Whether repeated audio codes are required in order for users to understand how to get to the narrative stories.
- b) Does recognition of a sound (i.e. when its repeated in the experience) make users more comfortable and if so, do they like being more comfortable?
- c) Whether users want to know where the end is—in some way (i.e. telling them there are 5 stories and then the end; telling them it ends at section x of trail; telling them nothing)
- d) After the story users didn't get a cue to move on; will this be a problem—will they move on?

Comments for future iteration development

- e) Many of us liked the idea of there being more advanced layers that cue users to surprise experiences on smaller tangential trails, especially if they take a few steps into those areas to investigate something they find interesting.
- f) Comment on images: images should work at a glance (from an angle) because that's how users in groups are looking at them on the phone
- g) There was a recommendation to use time-lapsed photography to show images being discussed by the narrative (ie the mountain in front of you.)
- h) Could designate direction by making a visual map on the phone or turning the phone into a compass.