Experience History of a walled city NOW!

Designing the future of interactive & immersive guided tours

Project Overview

Emerging technology offers new perspective in creating & designing the future of human lives. Augmented Reality (AR) is a very promising technology which provides a "new view" of our world without the need to leave our physical one. Moreover, Mixed Reality (MR) and Augmented Reality (AR) can offer new types of experiences and are beginning to have significant impact on industry and society. All the above technologies with the use of contextual web can easily personalise our user's needs and make our life easier. In the tourism field, brand destination, the goal of which is to create unique tourist experiences and add emotional connection with a place, along with the increasingly rise of city break tourism are changing the way tourism is being made. It's now time to consider the combination of tourism and technology which is the next step for a complete new interactive travelling experience.

Thessaloniki is a city in the north of Greece and an excellent destination for city-breakers because of its unique history and famous night life. The municipality of Thessaloniki has recently adopted a new touristic marketing trying to convert Thessaloniki into a competitive destination in Europe.

This project is an interactive guiding edutainment experience in Thessaloniki which uses AR and MR concepts in order to enhance visitor experience, turning a traditional guiding into an entertaining, fun and learning experience.One of the priorities in the designing procedure of this application is to develop a new enhanced travelling experience in the city of Thessaloniki. Moreover, critical part for the design experience of the traveller will be to actually "live" the history of the city in the way locals lived it through the years. Another crucial part of the guiding experience will be to produce an immersive experience which will allow the visitor to getting to know the history of the city. Moreover, users will have the ability to share all this experience in social media keeping that memory alive when they get back home.

With this design I strongly believe that I will alter the traditional way of the guiding procedure, from a more learning-centered into a more "tech-entertaining"-centered method, which is what the tourism industry requests. Also this project will make the beginning of a new AR and MR guiding experience in Thessaloniki which will of course transform the city into a competitive European destination, resulting in tourism development of the city which is extremely vital for it.

What's the problem- What's the solution?

While I realised that people love interactive experiences, I also noticed that there is an absence in the use of interactive media on many guiding tours around the world. Especially in Greece, a very historic part of the world, guiding tours include: either basic media like sound installations or tablet use (where tour guides show pictures of how a place used to be in the old times) or might not at all use some kind of media. This absence of interactive media results in guiding tours that lacks joyful, exploring or even playful experiences.

I strongly believe that the key element in the rising of heritage tourism industry is to provide travellers with unforgettable experiences where they can "live" what they are actually watching using emerging technology as an ally. Augmented Reality, mixed reality elements and interactivity are the synthetic core of my design proposal.

Another considerable absence or problem in guiding tours is that there is nothing left after participants experience is over except some photos or small amateur videos during the route. While I was thinking about this problem I remembered this phrase from design.google.com

> "Digital natives don't want to be told a story, they want to play a part in it"
> - Google Design

That's the solution for my problem I said, digital natives need interactions but also they want to star in their experience. So, I strongly believe that in every interactive experience we also need to provide the participants with a memory that can be shared so they may revive it at any time later.

In conclusion, iterin is an application that promotes travellers to explore how the life of the citizens in Thessaloniki was using the motto "Experience history of a walled city NOW". Participants can interact with actors and digital media in order to experience the heritage culture of Thessaloniki. Moreover, speakers, cameras, screens, installations, performances and costumes will be used in order to produce this unforgettable experience. Furthermore, direct communication methods, which are used mainly in museum pedagogy, will be used in order to enrich the participants experience.
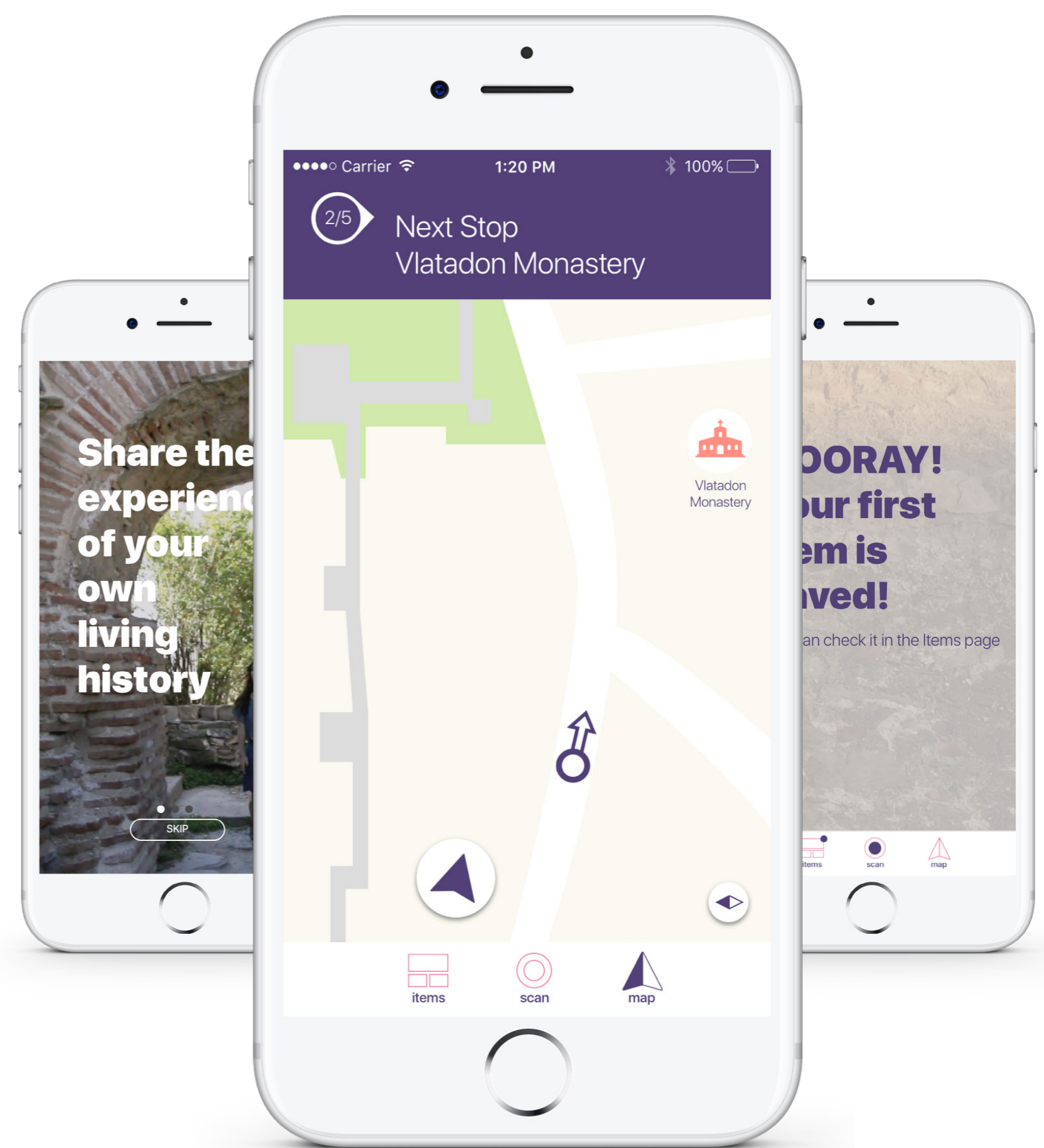
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