

SKI HARRIS- ONBURG



HELPING JMU
STUDENTS DISCOVER
SKI RESORTS NEARBY



HOW MIGHT WE IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS TRYING TO DISCOVER SKI RESORTS NEAR HARRISONBURG?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) How do you currently find where to go skiing?
- 2) Describe your ideal ski trip to a resort near Harrisonburg?
- 3) If you are going to a resort, what would you want to know about it beforehand?
- 4) What factors limit you from going skiing?
- 5) In what ways could we improve your experience on the app to discover new ski resorts around Harrisonburg?



RATIONAL FOR APPROACH

When I thought about how to address the design question, I brainstormed important factors that a user would want to know when looking for places to ski around Harrisonburg. Due to the thrill of going down a mountain and the agility that skiing requires, I feel as though college-aged students make up a wide portion of the demographic who like/would like to ski. Conveniently, JMU is located in the heart of Shenandoah Valley where numerous ski resorts are easily accessible and who also offer student discounts. When thinking, I realized that many incoming students, especially those who are out-of-state, do not realize all their options on where they can ski. Therefore, I **hypothesized that students with different backgrounds, experience levels, and schedules would like an easier way to discover ski resorts near Harrisonburg.**

I decided to interview 5 people directly using open-ended questions in order to get the most amount of information that I could. I chose this option over a survey because through interviewing I was able to ask follow-up questions which led me to see what parts they were really passionate about.

When asking interviewees my research questions, such as to describe their ideal ski trip, I was able to a really good grasp on their primary motivations and goals. Through these interviews I was also able to get a lot of logistical questions answered, which only made my research more fruitful. With this information I was able to have a substantial bank of information that I was able to analyze.

SELECTION RATIONALE

The primary goal for this app is to help JMU students discover ski resorts around Harrisonburg. To make this app successful, I knew I had to get an idea of who made up the user base.

To choose who I would be interviewing, I wanted to be diverse in my approach. I wanted to focus both students who ski regularly but also those who have never been but are interested in going. The goal of this app is to be helpful to both subsets of students.

I ended up selecting 5 students:

- **2 individuals who skis regularly**
- **1 individual who skis occasionally**
- **2 individual who have never been been skiing but want to go**

I also kept in mind when selecting interviewees to select people with differing demographics such as gender, major, age, etc. More importantly, I tried to interview people from different hometowns to see how people from different areas find out about skiing in the Shenandoah Valley. Similarly, I interviewed people of different schedules, extra-curriculars, financial flexibility and social obligations.

Through these interviews I was able to get a good gage of what different types of people were looking for and what I could better in the app to make it easier for students to find places to ski near Harrisonburg.



INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

NAME, AGE, MAJOR, HOMETOWN

Background questions

- 1) Technology Experience Level
- 2) What does your typical week look like?
- 3) Extra-curriculars
- 4) Experience level skiing

Research questions

- 5) How do you currently find where to go skiing?
- 6) Describe your ideal ski trip to a resort near Harrisonburg?
- 7) If you are going to a resort, what would you want to know about it beforehand?
- 8) What factors limit you from going skiing?
- 9) In what ways could we improve your experience on the app to discover new ski resorts around Harrisonburg?

RAW INTERVIEW NOTES

HANNAH SWEENEY, 19, COMMUNICATION SCIENCES AND DISORDERS, MECHANICSVILLE VA

1. Intermediate
2. All classes are asynchronous with the exception of one class being on zoom, so school-work is pretty much self-paced. A lot of free time because of this towards the night on weekdays and days on the weekends. Social obligations some weekends
3. Sigma Kappa Sorority
4. Never have been, just have never gotten the opportunity to since living far from the mountains in hometown
5. Usually finds through friends who go skiing recommendations
6. Go skiing alone on a non-busy day and learn how to ski very well. Is looking forward to the adrenaline rush of skiing itself and just trying something new.
7. If you could rent equipment and if they offer ski lessons
8. Cost and transportation are not limiting factors for going, she can't think of any
9. Find times where the resort is busy/and not busy, the best rate she could get

JENNIFER ANNE, 19, MEDIA ARTS AND DESIGN, RICHMOND VA

1. Intermediate
2. Has class and work in the mornings but afternoons and nights are pretty free. Weekends are the time with most free time some nights occasionally social obligations.
3. Tri-Delta sorority and JMU Bookstore employees
4. Intermediate at skiing
5. Usually just looks up on the internet.
6. Get there in the morning with friends, ski all day, eat lunch there, ski at night, stay in a lodge with friends
7. Would like to know about conditions of the slope before (very icy or melted or slope closures).
8. Does have a car so transportation is not an issue, however, cost of rental equipment and cost of lift ticket plays a big factor. Would only go if resort has a student deal or student-discounted pass.
9. It would be helpful if the app could find incentives for the cheapest resort nearby and also scan for coupons

AIDAN LOFTUS, 20, ECONOMICS, CAPE CHARLES VA

1. Intermediate

2. Has class during the mornings and afternoons but does have time during weekends

3. Delta Phi Epsilon professional fraternity, Club Swimming, Madison Union Employee

4. Above average skier, has gone many times, very confident in it

5. Goes to places that friends and family recommend

6. Would love to spend a day at Massanutten with friends from JMU because he loves being in the outdoors and being in the cold, loves the sensation of skiing down the mountain

7. Would want to know which kinds of slopes, the difficulty, and the conditions

8. Distance and weather are the two greatest hindrances to skiing. I wouldn't want to drive too far to go skiing, and also the weather around Harrisonburg has not gotten a ton of snow this past year. Also, transportation to the resorts since he doesn't have a car.

9. For him to put in parameter for what he wants in a resort to generate good resorts in the area. Shuttle system to resort.

ELLIE HAMP, 20, HEALTH SERVICE ADMINISTRATION, LANCASTER PA

1. Intermediate, but quick learner

2. Free on the weeknights and weekends, flexible because of online class. Definitely free after 5

3. No extra-curriculars

4. Wants to try something new and get an adrenaline rush down the hill

5. Ask Facebook groups or check Yelp or Google

6. Go late morning and go with a group of friends. Stay in a lodge and go to ski school. Go more for the social aspect

7. The rate of the rooms to stay, rentals, other amenities, lift ticket

8. It scary because it is a dangerous activity, be cold, cost would pose a difficulty

9. Rating of the ski resorts and testimonials.

JESSICA JONES, 20, PRE-PHYSICAL THERAPY, LORETTO PA

1. intermediate

2. Free on weekends but pretty busy with class during the week

3. Theta Phi Alpha sorority

4. An expert skier. Has been skiing all her life and is a ski instructor at her ski house in West Virginia

5. She's been going to the same ski resort her whole life, but since moving to Harrisonburg she's just being trying all them out to see which one she likes best

6. Waking up early for a solo ski in the morning with not long lines for the lift and having fresh powder and all the slopes open

7. Wants to know the conditions of the slopes (icy or powdery), wait of lifts, the weather, ranges of slopes (how many black diamonds etc.)

8. No limiting factors. Has equipment already and can get in places for a discount since she is an instructor and student

9. Give hour by hour updates of ski conditions slopes, estimated lift time, condition of the snow, etc.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS

From the interview process, I was able to analyze the data to find patterns of behavior and what JMU students need in to discover ski resorts near Harrisonburg.

All the schedules of the participants lined up, regardless of extra-curriculars, with weekday nights and weekend days being free. This was most likely due to JMU's decision to move all classes online which led to most classes meeting asynchronously. All participants stated their ideal time to go skiing would fall in this free-time time period.

The participants answers varied on where they usually find where to go skiing. Hannah and Aidan rely on family and friend recommendations while Jennifer and Ellie rely more looking up places on the internet such as Google or Yelp and then comparing the resorts from there. Jessica goes for the "trial and error" approach where she likes to try the resorts herself and judge from there. Jessica is able to do this because she receives discounts due to her ski instructor pass, however Ellie and Jennifer cannot because they are more cost stringent.

As stated before, cost of rentals, lift-tickets, lodging etc. played a hinderance to some participants. Skiing is not a cheap activity. Likewise, some participants stated transportation as another hindrance, as most ski resorts are in a 30-minute radius from Harrisonburg. An uncontrollable factor was expressed as Aidan said the weather has recently been a hindrance due to low amounts of snow in Harrisonburg.

There were also multiple motives of going skiing that became evident through this process varying for social entertainment, exercise, getting an adrenaline rush, and improvement on ski skills.

These findings and the recommended features that each interviewee requested were crucial to make an app centered on helping JMU students discover ski resorts nearby.



SARA SIGNETTIE

A TYPICAL WEEK

Sarah's typical week consists of going to class in the mornings and afternoons on weekdays and going out on weekend nights with her sorority sisters. Because of her flexibility due to online classes, Sara really wants to venture out and try new hobbies. She really wants to try and learn to ski because all her friends go.

Sara is very adventurous but is nervous because skiing is a dangerous sport. She would need a ski instructor to help her. Sara also needs to go to whichever resort costs the least. She is a student paying for her college so she only has a set amount of money she can spend. The app needs to help her compare rates of every ski resort nearby but also search for coupons and offer incentives for money off. Sara is not particular about conditions or slope sizes, but she wants to get the best deal.

GOALS

Sara wants to learn how to ski because she has never been. She wants to feel the adrenaline rush of going down the mountain. Through ski school she hopes she does not have to miss out on another ski trip that her friends always go on. Sara hopes to find a resort that is in her budget because she wants to rent a house for a weekend so all her friends and her can have a good time. Sara currently searches the internet and goes on websites like Yelp compares resorts prices, but it is very inconvenient and wants a "one-stop-shop" place where she can browse the resorts rates, rent equipment, and book houses.



Age: 19

Major: Communications

Hometown: Pittsburg, PA

Technological skills: Intermediate

"I've never been skiing but I've always have wanted to go. I want to plan an affordable trip with my friends I just don't know where."

- Is cost stringent
- Has a lot of free time during weekends and late afternoons
- Wants to make going skiing into a weekend trip with friends



RYAN RECARDI

A TYPICAL WEEK

During the week, Ryan has class in the mornings and is free at night and on weekends. Since it is almost wintertime, Ryan cannot wait to start skiing again. Last winter Ryan completed his Ski Patrol training and now is allowed to patrol anywhere in the country for free.

The biggest difficulty Ryan faces is that he doesn't have a car so he can't drive himself to the resorts. He has a lot of free time so is flexible for him to go whenever but it is usually difficult for him to find people to ride up to with to the mountain. Ryan is very shy and does not like the idea of riding in a car with someone he doesn't really know and having to make conversation for 30 minutes.

Ryan used to ski competitively in High School and needs to know the difficulty and conditions of the slopes so that he can go to practice at the best resort. He only usually goes off the recommendations of his family and friends. He also needs know if the resorts offer a shuttle system to JMJ that can pick him up and drop him back up. Finally, he would like to know when the busiest times are and try to go when it is less crowded.

GOALS

Ryan wants to figure out the most effective way to find out about the conditions and difficulty of each resort in his area and also if they offer rides to and from JMU. He can't wait to get back out in the peace and quiet of the mountains and feel the brisk air on him in the great outdoors.

Age: 20

Major: Economics

Hometown: Richmond, VA

Technological skills: Intermediate

"I love to ski! I really want a place I can easily compare conditions and slope difficulty between different resorts."

- Has own equipment
- Does not have a car
- Has a lot of free time during weekends and late afternoons
- Free entry to ski resorts

USER GRID

The Problem: How might we improve the experience of students trying to discover ski resorts near Harrisonburg?

Solo skiers	Find a resort with small hills, good for beginner skiers, and the best time to avoid crowds	Find a resort with both easy and difficult hills, good for intermediate skiers and the best time to avoid crowds.	Find a resort with hills suitable for expert skiers, and the best time to avoid crowds.
	Find a resort with small hills, good for beginner skiers, and be able to connect with others if they want.	Find a resort with both easy and difficult hills, good for intermediate skiers and be able to connect with others if they want.	Find a resort with hills suitable for expert skiers and be able to connect with others if they want.
Social skier	Find a resort with small hills, good for beginner skiers and be able to connect with others who want to go skiing together.	Find a resort with both easy and difficult hills, good for intermediate skiers and be able to connect with others who want to go skiing together.	Find a resort with hills suitable for expert skiers and be able to connect with others who want to go skiing together.
	Beginner skier	Expert skier	

User stories

- As a user, I want to be able to find a resort with easier slopes so I don't get caught in something harder than I feel comfortable with.
- As a user, I want to be able to check to see the business of the resort to make sure I can avoid crowds and get my adequate skiing practice in.

USER NARRATIVE #1

As a user, I want to be able to find a resort with easier slopes, so I don't get caught in something harder than I feel comfortable.

Sara has never been skiing but has always wanted to go. Her friends always went on trips last winter and Sara vowed this year that she would not miss another trip. This past weekend she ventured to Massanutten Resort because she Googled "ski resorts near me" and Massanutten was the first resort to pop up. After class one day, Sara drove 30 minutes and was so excited to go. When she arrived, she went to rental window, rented all her equipment, and went out to hit the slopes. As she was walking out, she saw a sign on the door that said the only slopes open were the black and blues which stood for intermediate slopes and expert only slopes. Sara was petrified. Instead of leaving, she went to the help desk to see if they were holding any Ski School lessons. Unfortunately, because the easy slopes were closed, the resort was not holding lessons. Sara was extremely frustrated as she drove all the way there, rented all her equipment, and wasted all this time and money. She was so irritated none of the employees she had talked to getting her lift ticket and rentals and felt she had been taken advantage of. She expressed her anger to the help desk but they apologized but said all their information had been posted on their website and social media sites. Sara then began to get mad at herself for not checking the website and drove back to JMU with a bad taste of Massanutten in her mouth.

After Sara's steam had worn off and her friends wanted to plan a group ski trip in a couple weeks, Sara wanted to give skiing a second try so that she could attend the trip with them. She wanted to learn from her fiasco of a trip that happened last time but didn't know how to find a better resort. She texted her friends whom she would be going on the ski trip with and they recommended an app that used her location to browse ski resorts near her and that offer real time updates on the slope's conditions and slope closures. Sara was thinking of trying to go to Massanutten again but looked on her app and saw that the bunny hills were still shut down. Sara ended up looking into Wintergreen, which was about an hour away. The app indicated that it had all the beginner slopes open and on the "Slope Saver" feature on the app, Wintergreen showed special deals that it was offering. Wintergreen was offering free Ski School. Sara thought that was such a great deal and a great way to learn in a comfortable environment. She ended up learning the basics of how to ski and had a great day. When it came time for Sara and her friends to go on their weekend trip, Sara was so excited she got the opportunity to go. As she did last time, she went on her app before to look at the difficulty and discounts, and also went to the friend feature to see if any of her other friends were going to go too. She found that her friends from UVA had also scheduled a trip. Sara ended up having the best time, skiing on slopes that she was comfortable with, with great weather and conditions, and with great friends.

USER NARRATIVE #2

As a user, I want to be able to check to see the business of the resort to make sure I can avoid crowds so I can get my adequate practice in.

Ryan has skied all his life and is looking forward to skiing this winter. With a ski patrol badge under his belt, he can now ski for free all over the country. Because Ryan is of such a high caliber, he wants to ski at resorts with difficult and unique slopes that can challenge him and be of good practice. Currently he goes to resorts recommended from his family in the area and friends on campus. Lately, however, these recommendations have not been up to Ryan's expectations. Ryan is a solo skier and likes to go to resorts for practice, not to wait in lines for the lift. He is disappointed because he had to Uber all the way to Wintergreen (which was an hour away), because he doesn't have a car, and when he went, the lift line was around 45 minutes. He was frustrated with himself because he really wanted to avoid the crowds so he could practice the double black diamond. Although he did not waste money on rentals and lift-tickets, he was irritated that he spent all this money on the Ubers for no practice.

After talking to his roommate about his struggle, his roommate recommended to look at this app that compared different ski resorts lift wait time and also included a ride-share option. Ryan was so amazed he had never heard of the app before since he's been skiing since forever but definitely was willing to try it. He realized that the app would make sure he could find the resort nearby with difficult slopes but also low crowd volumes. He also realized he would never have to waste money using Uber to get to and fro ski resorts again. Ryan was so irritated about his last experience at Wintergreen, he wanted to check out more resorts nearby. He ended up looking at Ski Shenandoah and he found the results he was looking for. He saw that Ski Shenandoah was at a 10% capacity rate and has a 0-minute wait time. This was music to Ryan's ears. He also went to the ride-sharing feature and was so pleased that they were offering a shuttle departing from JMU after his class ended in the afternoon and to Ski Shenandoah and back when the resort closed. Ryan ended up having such a productive day, with the opportunity to practice slaloms and ramps on the double black diamond and spending no money.

DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

- 01** **The app must have all basic information about all the ski resorts in the area** (hours, pictures of the slopes, typical busy times, rental information/price, house booking information/price)
- 02** **The app must have social network feature to be able to link up with friends** on the app and see the activity of who of your friends are there/who or your friends are going/when your friends are going.
- 03** **The app must show the lowest rates at all resorts nearby** and also The app will offer coupons exclusive to the app.
- 04** **The app must have real time updates** of all ski resorts nearby such as slope conditions, usual ski lift traffic, slopes open, and weather at the top of the mountain.
- 05** **The app must have a ride sharing feature** to coordinate people going to and from JMU to resorts.

VALUE PROPOSITION

Describe your perfect ski trip and we'll help you find it.

Do you wish you could go skiing more often? Browse through different features including filters to choose your desired price range, level of difficulty, slope conditions, real time updates for slope conditions and weather changes, a ride sharing feature, and a social network to be able to link up with friends who are also going skiing all in one place to plan the perfect ski trip.

