Yelp Groups: Real-life connections

Problem Statement: Making Yelp More Sticky

"Yeah, I go on Yelp to find where to eat for dinner, but that's usually about it"

1 Yelp mostly offers individualistic experience

2 Yelp **lacks a community** for casual users (non-elites, new users, etc)

3 Yelp stands as an **information application**, rather than an interactive application

Lack of Stickiness

Yelp has built a loyal user base that utilizes Yelp when searching for local businesses, but no further – **meaning Yelp itself doesn't necessarily create a need to come back to the app**

People can message, check profiles, look at reviews, but **there's no centralized section to build a community as a group**

Current Community Features: Yelp Talk & Yelp Elite

"Unless I'm looking for restaurants, I don't really use Yelp because it's not interactive"
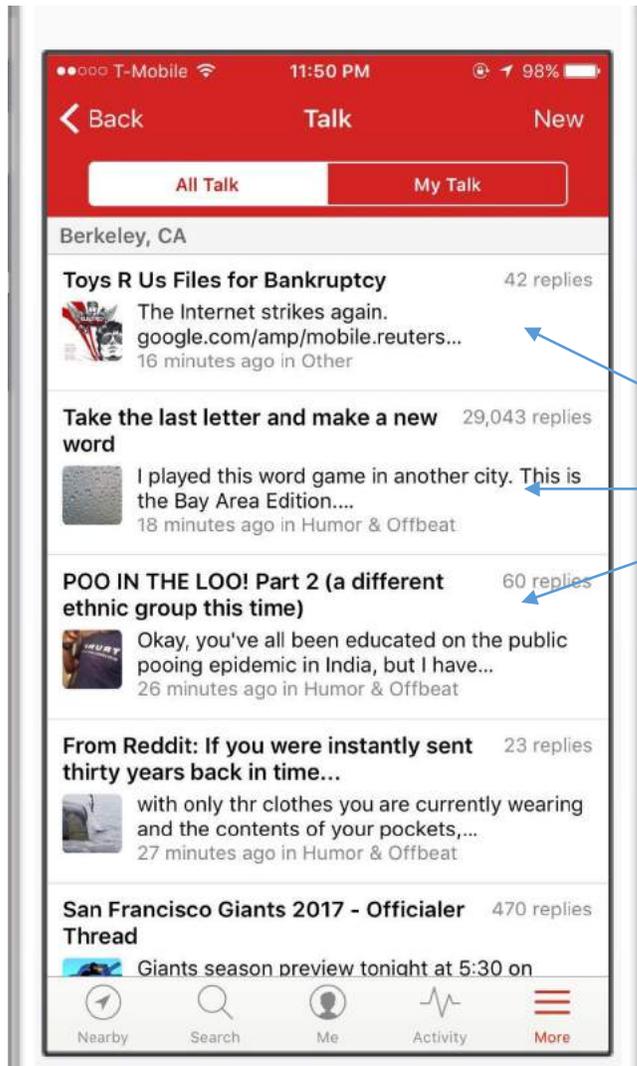
Screenshot of Yelp Talk

Yelp Talk

Yelp Talk is disorganized and difficult to find real topics of interests to discuss about

Many of Yelp Talk's threads are **irrelevant** to Yelp, not allowing for useful conversions

Yelp Elite

Yelp Elite is too limited and requires large amounts of reviews and time to join

Successful at creating meaningful communities and leading events, but no way for casual users to do the same

Yelp needs to combine Yelp Talk's element of common usage, along with Yelp Elite's element of creating meaningful communities that meet in real life

Solution: Yelp Groups

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"I love eating brunch and meeting people, so I joined the "Berkeley Brunch Goers" group!"

Create Friend Groups

- Users can make exclusive groups with their friends, organizations or smaller teams

- HBR found that **groups went to 90% more outings than they would have alone**[1]: Yelp can theoretically increase event attendance using this mindset

Purpose

Connect people meaningfully through real-life meet-ups
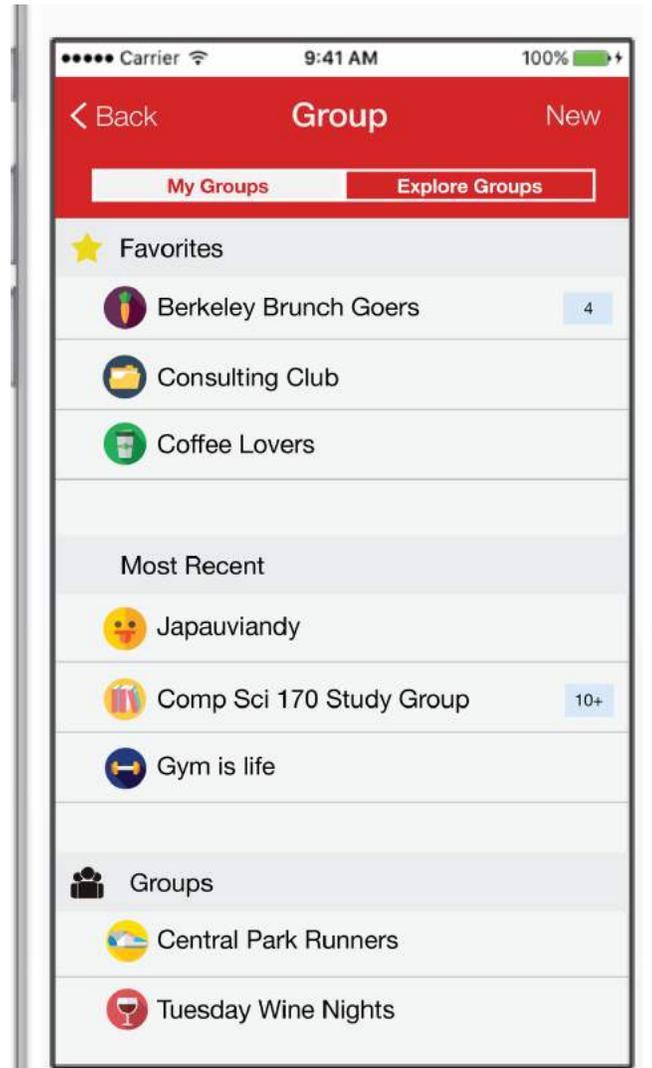
Mock up of product

Join New Communities

- **Users can join inclusive groups** based on different interests, hobbies and locations

- People who are traveling or moving to new homes can utilize Yelp to **find groups of their interest**, which is the best way to be integrated into a new community [2]

Purpose

Attract and maintain new users through real life meet-ups

Solution: Yelp Groups

"We hang out every Tuesday and decide on a place to eat every week on Yelp"

Socialize

- Facebook makes **people feel connected** [3] by allowing them to be in groups, comment on group posts, and **share their thoughts**

- Users can share photos, create meeting times, comment and react to each others' posts directly on Yelp

Purpose

Create a social media platform within Yelp to increase engagement
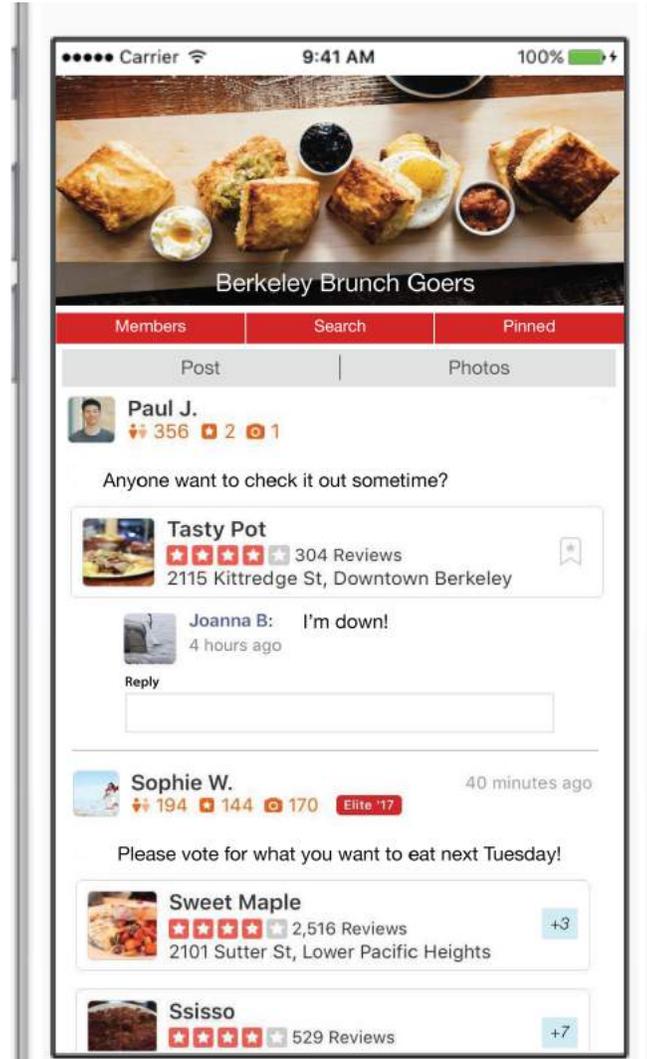
Mock up of product

Leverage Yelp's Data

- Users can utilize all the restaurants and events already on Yelp and **recommend them to each other**

- This **combines people's needs** to find possible restaurants, decide on a location, schedule a time and share their thoughts

Purpose

Make Yelp a standalone app that address all aspects of event planning

Market Validation

1 Billion

Facebook Group Users

Facebook Groups is one of Facebook's most sticky features.

Applications and product features that **provide a platform for communities** to meaningfully engage with each other are **gaining more popularity** [4] ; thus, groups are an ideal way to increase engagement on Yelp

Case Study: Airbnb's Experience

Airbnb discovered that users wanted to be part of local communities [5] and thus launched "Experience", a way for travelers to plan short activities.

"Beyond social benefits of a **hyper-personalized and more intimate experience,** [Experience] generated **brand value** and opened up **new monetization paths**.

Supply (and engagement) has increased ~38% since debut. Net, Airbnb's seen a promising start." [6]

Yelp users want Groups

Support Groups for Children by B. M. C.
Do you know of any groups in the east bay for children
11/2/2013 by B. M. C.

Running Groups by Cathy C.
I was wondering if anyone could recommend
11/3/2007 by Cathy C.

Acting in drama groups? by lawrence C.
Hi, I've just moved into the Castro from England
3/5/2009 by lawrence C.

* Screenshots from Yelp Talk

In Yelp Talk**, people are showing high interest in group functionality**, many often based on location and interests.

The success of Facebook's Group and Airbnb's Experience highlight strong market validation, and Yelp Talk's threads regarding group functionality show a need from the consumers for a Group feature

Adoption Strategy

yelp

"I joined because Yelp suggested useful groups for me based on my past reviews & interests"

Group Suggestions	Discounts	Alerts

1

- Utilize Community Managers to manage bigger groups in focused cities

- Based on user's history and information, suggest specific groups

+

2

- Offer discounts or special promotions for creating or joining groups of more than 5 people

- Offer experiences similar to Yelp Elites where active groups can be invited for exclusive events

+

3

- **In-app notification** of the new feature launch

- Alerts when many of the users' friends use Groups

- Have a system of alerts and reminders to keep users in loop for their groups

Benefit & Business Feasibility

"We saw an ad for a new brunch cafe nearby, so we used Yelp to immediately reserve!"

Majority of Americans reported regularly doing things in groups (e.g. sharing a meal, watching movies, going to sporting events) as opposed to doing them alone[7]

Increase Stickiness

Community Engagement

Groups is the social media aspect Yelp needs to be sticky. Wired reports that having **more ways to engage with friends and followers makes an app much stickier** [8]

Increase Transactions

More Reservations & Orders

Groups are more likely to reserve to ensure their spots – due to plans being made in Yelp, Yelp can **leverage its reservation & order-ahead functions.**

Better Ad Placement

Local Businesses

Yelp could give **non-intrusive advertisements** by suggesting different places the group is interested in. The activity in the group would give Yelp **more data to match groups with useful businesses, creating a positive advertisement experience.**

Measure of Success

Overall

- Lower Bounce Rate
- Higher Stickiness

Specific to Groups

- Higher Ad Click-Through Rate
- Higher Reservation & Order-Ahead Rates
- Higher Daily Active Users

Risks & Technical Mitigations

"I love planning meet-ups on Yelp Groups because it's so simple and well-built!"

Risks	Technical Mitigations

1 Users can't find the right groups to join

1 **Use Geo-Search** and user preferences to accurately rank specific groups based on age, past reviews / events, interests, etc and suggest the most relevant groups to the users

2 Users already using other platforms might not convert

2 Link Yelp profiles to phone numbers and Facebook, and allow importing of contacts and Facebook groups to easily populate Yelp Groups. **Create an API where Group users can send polls or information to other platforms**

3 Users still will use other messaging platforms to finalize plans

3 For long-term scalability efforts, **integrate a simple chatting system** within Yelp Groups so that members can speak to each other in real-time

Yelp Group will need support to jump start different groups, but is fully capable of scaling due to its loyal user base

Appendix

Slide 4:
1. http://time.com/4553305/workout-competition-exercise-motivation/
2. https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/07/real-trouble-making-friends-middle-age/325837/

Slide 5:
3. https://blog.bufferapp.com/psychology-of-facebook

Slide 6:
4. https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/news/2016/01/27/facebook-groups-reaches-1-billion-users/79414710/
5. https://www.airbnbcitizen.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/MillennialReport.pdf
6. https://skift.com/2017/03/27/this-is-what-airbnb-trips-hosts-really-think-of-airbnbs-newest-product/

Slide 8:
7. Putnam, R.D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster
8. https://www.wired.com/2017/03/these-failed-apps-discovered-a-hidden-rule-of-the-web/