Modern tourists visiting new cities are not content to simply stay in a hotel downtown and see famous sights. They want to get out into the neighborhoods of the city that they are visiting and understand more of the city’s culture and everyday life. However, current guides remained focused on statistics and points, so tourists are unable to understand and find neighborhoods they would enjoy.

I propose to build neighborhood guides based on social media posts to help people understand neighborhoods. These guides will have two parts: first, they will allow comparison between neighborhoods in a new city and neighborhoods they know; second, they will add context so travelers can understand why the neighborhoods are similar. These will enable people to understand how different neighborhoods feel, and contribute to our understanding of the city as a whole. Their effectiveness will be evaluated through quantitative studies of the comparisons and qualitative studies of the site as a whole.

This thesis will provide three research contributions. First, it will provide evidence that social media can help us understand cities better than simple demographics. Second, it will show how well social media reflects neighborhoods, and what aspects are best represented. Finally, it will contribute to our knowledge of tourist information search by the development of a five dimensional model.

Committee:
Jason Hong (HCII, Chair)
Jodi Forlizzi (HCII)
Niki Kittur (HCII)
Judd Antin (Director of Experience Research, AirBnB)

In short, I’m using social media to make travel guides for the way people want to explore cities today.

Thursday, April 28, 1:30PM
GHC 6501