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Assignment #2

Website and Scenario

The website I found for my heuristic evaluation is Expedia.com. This website fits well with my group's topic, as it is a travel website. Expedia.com allows a possible user to book, plan or check out the best deals for a possible vacation, flight tickets or the latest deals on travel packages. Another website that is quite similar to Expedia.com and could be compared to is Travelocity.com, both have a very similar website style and format and their theme is traveling.
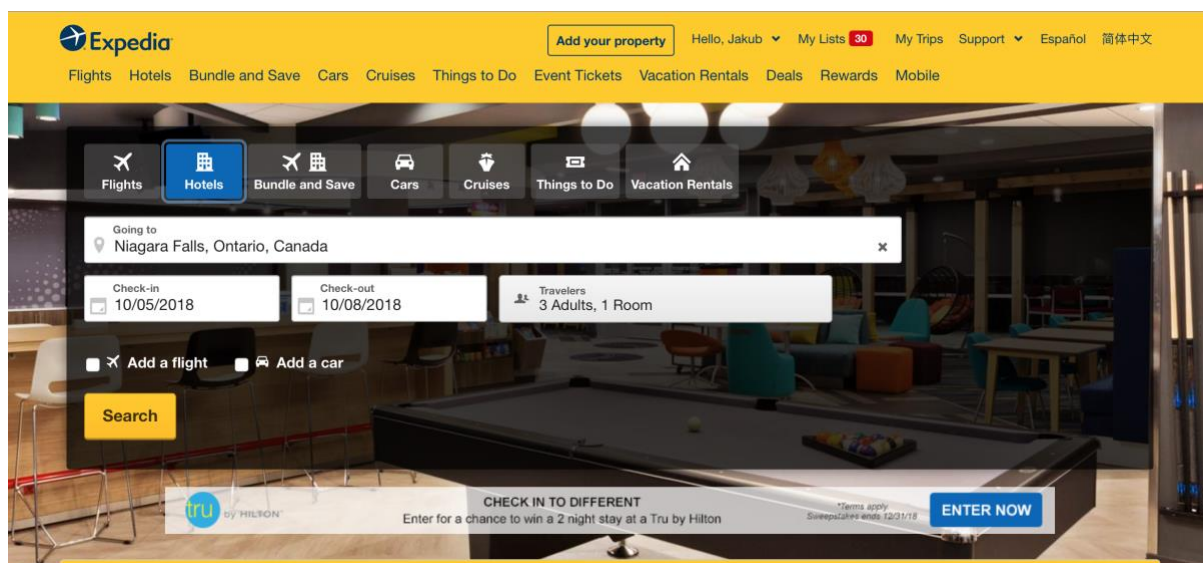
My scenario was to go on Expedia.com to purchase a weekend gateway to Niagara Falls in Canada. I had to go on the website and look for a good hotel deal with breakfast included, a swimming pool and free parking on site. In order to book this trip, I had to begin on the first page of Expedia.com and input all of the information related to this trip, the arrival day and departure day. While completing all of the steps, I had the Nielsen Norman Group, "10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design" article in reach to figure out if Expedia.com violates and of the heuristics, and if there are any usability flaws as well.

Usability Flaws and Heuristics

Before entering all of the information needed to book my trip I noticed the first flaw on Expedia.com, there were two menus. At first this was confusing to me, as a user I though there were two menus but maybe they were consisting of two different contents within those menus. It turned out that both menus had the same content. This was the first flaw I encountered on the website which violates the **aesthetic and minimalist design heuristic**. The additional menu is unnecessary as it contains the same content as the centered or main menu. The additional menu is redundant, and it might confuse the user like myself with trying to decide which menu to use.

Later on, as I figured out the menu bar, I wanted to go ahead and change the language to polish. Doing that turned out to be difficult as it was nowhere to be found. As a user, I felt that this type of an option should be clearly visible to me, and it wasn't. This was the second flaw I found on Expedia.com. The website only displayed two languages on the top right corner of the website, which was confusing to me as, it made me think there is only two languages that the website could be translated to. Then, I scrolled all the way down to the bottom of the website to see if I could still change it to the polish language, and I found many other languages including polish that Expedia.com offers which were all located on the bottom of the webpage. To me, as the user this was the biggest flaw I experienced. This flaw also violated the **recognition rather than recall heuristic**. Every user that would go on Expedia.com should have the option to change the language they feel comfortable in, and this option to change that should be clearly visible. If I didn't speak English I would probably leave the webpage and try to book on another site.

Finally, once I filled out all of the information such as arrival, departure, number of rooms and number of travelers, I was directed to the next site with hotel availability. All of the available hotels came up then, I had to choose additional preferences which were the swimming pool, free parking and free breakfast. After, I added the additional options then some hotels disappear, but a good chunk was still available for me to see. Then, I encountered another flaw as I noticed the website gave me results with hotels that were already booked, and that was very confusing. This flaw violated the **consistency and standards heuristic**, since the website gave me different content that I requested, and this caused me to be a little annoyed to see something I would like to book, but I cannot book it because it is already booked and unavailable. For some users, this could be upsetting, as they may see something that is booked, and they cannot have it themselves. This also could be a potential waist of space that other available hotels could fill I, which were located on further pages.

Recommendations

While I liked the overall layout and style of the Expedia.com website, I do have a few recommendations. The first, and one of the most important recommendation in my opinion should be removal of additional menu. Instead of having two menus with exactly the same content I would just create one menu. If a user goes on a website, they can go directly to one menu without being confused with another, while trying to figure it out if there is different content in the other menu or not. My recommendation to fix this flaw would be to redesign the menu tab by removing it and keeping the centered menu that Expedia.com already has. This solution would prevent users to become confused with two menus.

Looking for a way to change a website to another language shouldn't be so difficult and should be easily findable. I encountered this to be difficult and annoying task as I had to scroll all the way down to the website in order to change the language. My recommendation for this flaw would be to add all of the languages that were found on the bottom of the page to the right top corner, where it is clearly visible for the user. Creating a drop-down menu with all of the languages that Expedia.com offers would be very useful and accessible. A possible user wouldn't have to wonder around the website trying to find an option to change the language. Moreover, if a drop-down menu would be available and a user could see it right away then there are bigger chances of that user staying the website and keep on browsing, which also causes more trafficking and possibly more profit to Expedia.com.

Furthermore, all users come to Expedia.com for one purpose, to book either, a flight, a hotel or vacation package. If that is the case the results that they should be receiving from the website itself is only of the available and bookable material. For some users, it might be upsetting that a website is showing this great deal and it appear in the results, but they cannot book it anymore because, "Sorry, you're too late." I do not see a point of wasting the space on the search result, if Expedia.com could offer other available flights, hotels and packages. My recommendation for this flaw would be to completely remove the hotel choices that are already booked, as they aren't really needed, because what fun is to look at something if a user cannot book it anymore, even if they wanted to.