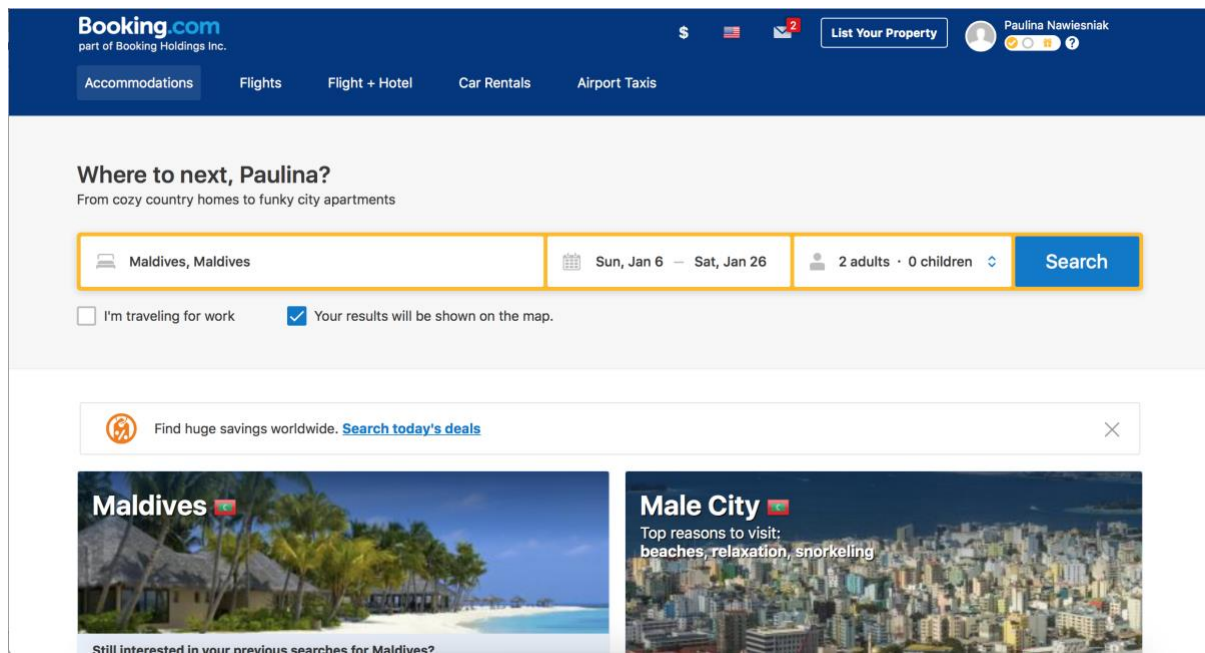Paulina Nawieśniak

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Website Description and Identification

The website that was evaluated for this representative user test was Booking.com. This website is a travel-based website with different travel options. A possible user can choose from booking a vacation package, a hotel or a flight on Booking.com. If a user has special preferences, they can use filter menu with many different options to find their desired search, quicker. Moreover, this website compares to other travel websites that can be found online, a few of them include, Expedia.com, Kayak.com. or TripAdvisor.com

Characteristics of the User Tester

The user chosen for this representative user test of Booking.com was an adult male, in their mid 30's. This user is capable of navigating through different media and website platforms without having a problem, which makes this user a tech-savvy participant, as far as the computer experience. Moreover, this user also previously used different travel websites when trying to book their own trips in the past, but this user did not previously used Booking.com. Overall, I can say that this participant knows how to use the computer and has some knowledge on how travel websites work, respectively.

The Testing Method

The testing method that I used for the representative user test was "Concurrent Thinking Aloud". I choose this method because it would give me the ability to capture what is my user thinking while they are navigating on Booking.com. Now what does that mean exactly? The

"Concurrent Thinking Aloud" method would allow me to listen to my participants' comments and their thoughts by thinking aloud while performing their tasks that were given to them by me. During my orientation script I had asked my user to freely express any frustrations, confusions or excitements while they were navigating on Booking.com website. Moreover, in order to make my user feel more comfortable while performing this method, I had also demonstrated this technique to them with another unrelated source first. I did this, so my user wouldn't feel awkward thinking aloud in front of me. This demonstration was to enhance this method that I choose for this test and to see if my participant would be okay with it. This demonstration also helped my participant, by making them feel more comfortable and relaxed. Lastly, I also made my user aware that I will be recording them so I could incorporate their thinking aloud dialogue in to my analysis later on.

The User Tasks

The user tasks that I assigned for my participant consisted of going to the Booking.com website and booking a romantic, honeymoon, gateway trip for two to Maldives. I had some specific requirements which included, the exact budget and the exact days for this trip. The budget for this trip was no more than, $10,000 and this trip would be no longer than three weeks, and it had to be booked from January 6th until January 26th, 2018. The only change that was made to my user tasks that compares to the previous assignment included, an additional task of inputting the payment information and choosing the right room for the accommodation. I have also disregarded the spa package from the tasks given previously. In addition, my user in the previous assignment was a female and now my participant was a male.

During my orientation script I also told my user that they are given 30 minutes to complete the tasks I gave them, and if they do not finish in time I will have to stop them once the 30-minute timeline passes. Moreover, I just assured my participant that I am not testing them, so there is not right or wrong result for this test, rather I just want to see how the website is working as far as usability and design. Lastly, I kindly asked my participant to raise their hand when they are finished completing all of the tasks that were given.

The following are my user task that were given to the participant to complete:

1. Go to Booking.com website.
2. Fill out all of the information given, the exact location (Maldives), the budget ($10,000) and the dates of travel (01/06-01/26/18).
3. Choose from the variety of different hotels to find the best choice for a romantic, honeymoon, gateway for two people.
4. Choose the room for accommodations.
5. Proceed to the payment and fill out the credit card or payment information.

Detailed Analysis of the Representative User Test

My user did not encounter any problems when completing the first task which was going on Booking.com website. Then, my user went on with the second task by filling in the location, the travel dates and the number of travelers. Then, my user didn't see the budget input option of the first page and said, "The budget option will most likely be on the next page like it is on other travel website I previously used." This showed me that my users did previously use other travel websites, since they knew that. Next, my user went to the next page, to encounter

his first problem with Booking.com. Instead of listed hotel results, Booking.com page showed all of the results as a map. At this point my user was confused as he though aloud, "What is this? Why is there a map and not a list view like in Expedia or Travelocity? This makes no sense I don't understand". My user decided that instead of trying to close the map menu, it would be an easier way if they re-do the entire tasks all over. My user simply overlooked the "Close Map" tab that was located on the top right corner of the site. If my user found this tab, he wouldn't have to re-do the entire task all over. Then, my participant looked at the time and said to himself, "Ok let's do it over, maybe I missed something", and my participant proceeded once again.

Now, the second time, my participant went to Booking.com website, with more caution, he scanned the website first. For a good minute, my participant stayed quiet, I took a note of that as I thought he was probably trying to think it through what went wrong the last time. Then my user though aloud, "Oh okay, here is the problem I had the filter on that would show my results would be shown on the map, and I didn't notice that." The participant unchecked the map results to receive the list results. Next, they filled out the location, number of travelers and dates of travel, once again. Next, all results came up on the new page and my user than expressed their excitement, "Finally, this makes so much more sense". Once the website showed as a list results for all of the hotels my user was able to filter their budget in to the price. Unfortunately, this is where my user encountered the second problem on Booking.com. In order to insert the budget, my participant was calculating aloud how much would the cost of the stay be per night. My user commented, "Why do I have to calculate this if there should just be an option to input my budget or something like that". Booking.com did not have the option to fill in a traveler's budget, instead it has a rate per-nigh filter. My user though aloud, "Alright $10,000 divided in to 21 is approximately much more than the prices given here. Hmm, I guess I'll choose the most expensive rate per night and see my results then". I think that if Booking.com had different filter options for the price my user wouldn't encounter this problem. Finally, once he was done calculating, my participant successfully received their results, and the second task I gave them was competed. My user was able to freely choose from the variety of choices Booking.com provided them with, at that moment. While working on the third task I was surprised that my user took in to the account that this was a romantic, honeymoon, getaway for two. The way my user expressed his though on that was, "Ok so I have all of these hotels here, and a quite big budget, so I just have to find something cozy and romantic for two". Given that there very different prices starting from $6,000 my user focused on the more expensive accommodations rather than the cheaper ones, as long as he was within the budget of $10,000.

While my user navigated through all of the different options they were given, they finally settled on the hotel of their desire and also completed the third task I gave them. Then, Booking.com took them to the next page where they were able to complete the fourth task they were given, which was choosing the room. During this task my user only expressed their though as, "There are many room options here, but I guess I'll take the room where you can see the sun set, so it's kind of romantic for this gate away". I realized that this was definitely the right choice and without a problem my user completed their fourth task and started the fifth task right away.

On this last step, my user encountered his third problem with the website. As he clicked on, and choose their desired hotel, he wanted to proceed to the next page to make the payments, unfortunately the website kept on loading for a good 3 to 4 minutes. This made my user definitely frustrated and a little afraid as they said, "Why is this loading for so long? I wonder

if all of the information I just fill out will disappear…it better not disappeared". Moreover, this wait time was wasting my users time to complete his task. Through my observation I can state that, Booking.com had a loading issue and maybe if that didn't happen my user wouldn't encounter this problem. Thankfully and finally Booking.com website loaded after a while, and my user was able to fill in all of the payment information in to the website, making this my user final and last step of the tasks he was given. After they completed the booking, my user raised their hand to make me aware that they were finished with the test. My user finished all of the tasks in 27 minutes.

Possible Design Recommendations

The first design recommendation I have for Booking.com is to remove the automatically checked box with the map view results. This might be confusing to many users that want to go through the website fast and without any confusions. Because of this checked option my user, as well was confused, that they received their results as a map view, instead of a regular list view. I am aware that this box is right under the location search, but many times we as the users overlook small things like this small box. As users we want to get to our desired locations on the website as soon as possible. If results come up differently we might get confused or simply frustrated. Some users may even go to another website instead. I would suggest and recommend that this automatic option is definitely turned off or made bigger in order to be more visible to all users. Moreover, I feel that Booking.com should let their users choose this option on their own, if they would like the map view or the list view instead of setting it up automatically.

The second design recommendation I have for Booking.com is a creation of a new filter menu for the budget. Booking.com already has a filtered menu for the "price per-night range" but I believe that it would be much more efficient and easier for a possible user to just be able input their full price range budget that they would like to devote for their desired booking. Instead of trying to figure it out and calculate your budget, by dividing it in to the number of days that a user will be staying at a certain location just to get the price per-night range. This seems like way too much work and if someone really is interested in booking their gateway, they would prefer to have it all right in front of them, where they could insert their full budget range. My user had to, as well make some calculation, to see which price pre-night option would be right for him. My recommendation for Booking.com would be to create a totally new side menu for the price only. The price ranges would start from $0-$1500, $1500-$3000, $3000-$4500, $4500-$6000, and so on to at least $15,000 price range. Moreover, this option would allow a user to check on as many price ranges as the user would like. There wouldn't be a limit to check on just one price range. There are many different kinds of users some have a low and some have a high budget for their travels. I believe this improvement would be good for Booking.com as it saves the users time for wasted calculations and it makes it easier to just input their desired budget.

My third design recommendation for Booking.com would include a faster load time. As I observed my user waiting for their page to load I saw that they were getting a little inpatient. Booking.com should improve their load time in order for their users not to waste their time on the waiting. All users go on travel websites because they want to book a trip without fearing that what they already selected will get crushed in a second because the website isn't loading. My recommendation for Booking.com would be to improve their website technology and loading in order for it to work faster and more efficiently. This could improve the traffic

of new users visiting the site and possibly less frustrated users that have to wait for their content to load.