

Flight Search View of Qatar Airways App Prototype for iOS

There is a picture kept popping up in my head, though it was not an interface I use everyday. The certain version of the app which contains that interface might hardly be found in app store, but the clean, clear, coherent and elegant feelings that the interface gave me stuck in mind. It makes me excited to analyze the interface of Qatar Airways App prototype for iOS.

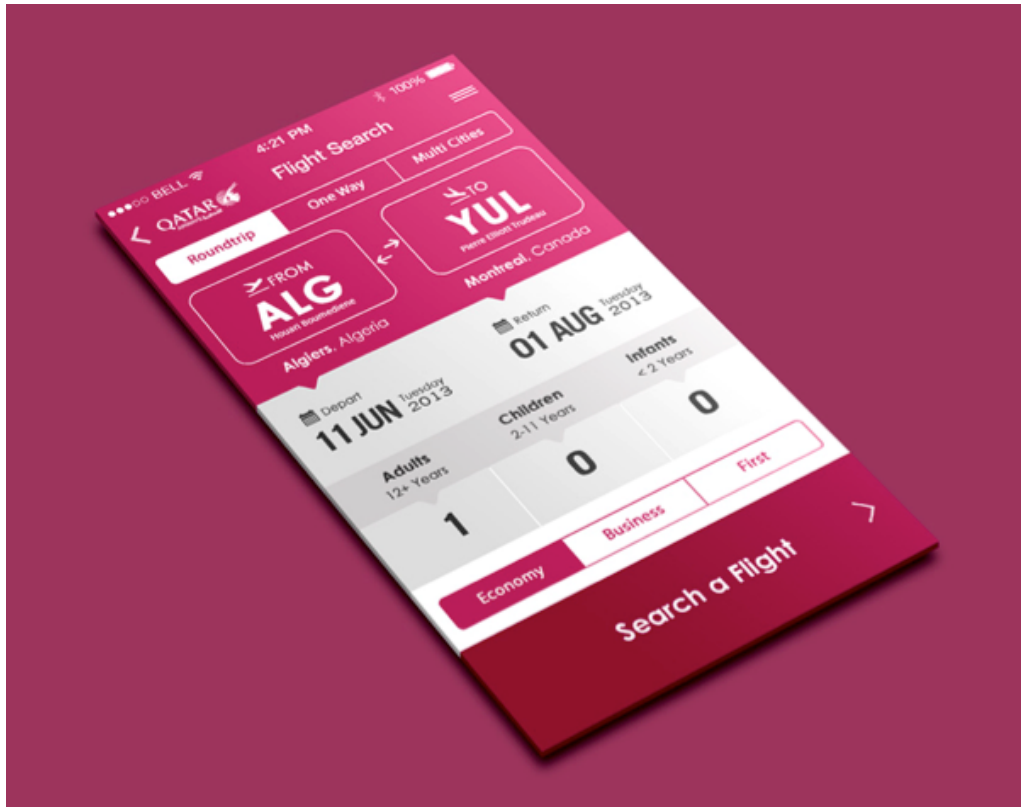


Image 1: Prototype of Flight Search View ¹

I was introduced to the interface from an article¹ summarizing the popular design styles in 2014. I call it Flight Search View. Since I could not find any Qatar Airways app version contains the interface, and current version has a quite different interface than the one I found, I consider the interface as a prototype.

General Comment

Developing an interface for airlines app could always be a tricky one, because there are sophisticated information and lots of steps to finish a task which always confuse users easily. It is astonishing to see an interface like this. It is clean, clear, coherent and elegant. With this first impression, I will explore the beauty of this interface using Five Layer Design Theory introduced by Jesse James Garrett³.

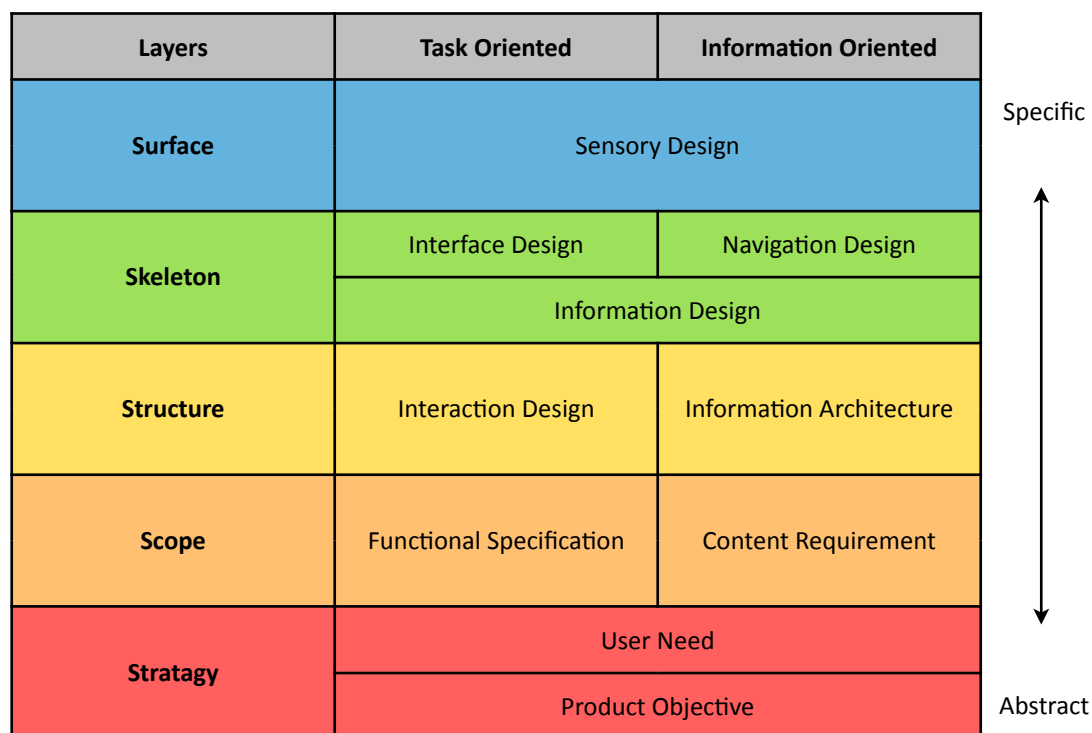


Chart 1: Five Layers Design Theory³

Surface Layer

The surface layer gives users a clean and clear impression. Within those sophisticated information one user has to provide to search a flight, the single color scheme with gradient grape theme provides the fundamental feeling of clean by filling most scale with a single color without much lines and segments. The gradient theme color also contributes to provide an active and relaxing feeling.

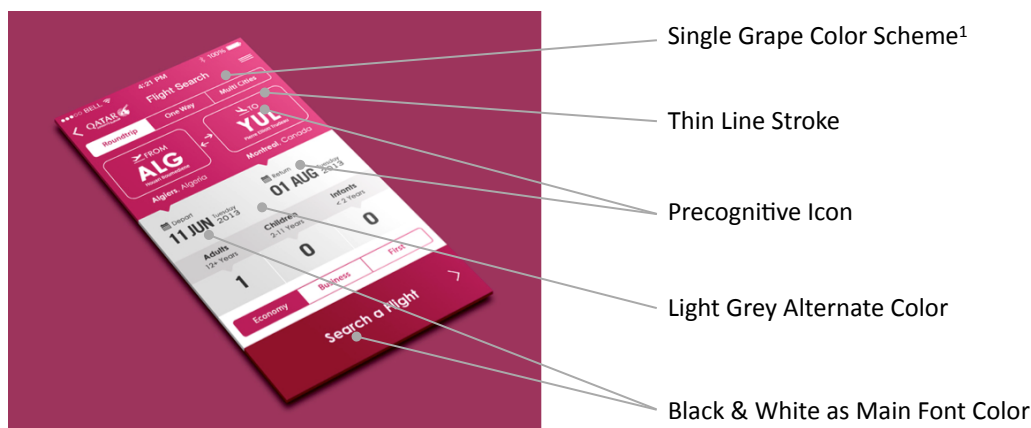


Image 2: Surface Layer Elements

The entire interface only have four major colors: grape, white, black, and grey. The combination of those colors compliments each other, and most importantly, emphasizes the clear feeling. Using light grey as alternate background color, one could easily separates the interface in two major segments and see the grey part as a supplemental area using his contrast feeling. In the mean time, little icons such as the plane icons in location buttons and the calendar, help the user to understand the meaning of the button with visual aids. Using same font in different sizes indicates the priority of importance of certain information and keeps the uniformity. The thin line strokes around segmented control and location selection button outlined the certain content perfectly without rudely interrupting the coherence of the whole interface.

Skeleton Layer

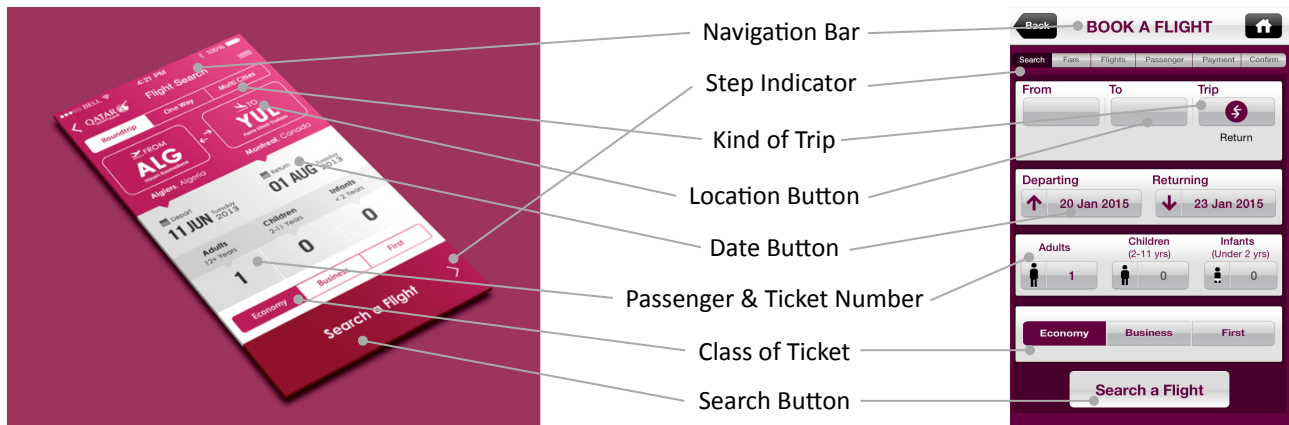


Image 3: Prototype vs Current Version(3.1) ²

I install the version of 3.1 of Qatar Airways App² to make a more sophisticated understanding of the skeleton layer of the prototype. If you find the prototype interface amazing, you may also find amazing how differently it looks comparing to the current version. The prototype and the version of 3.1 both design their interface into several segment with different approaches of the interface design. They both have segments including navigation bar, step indicator, trip kind selection, location selection button, date selection button, passenger and ticket number, selection of ticket class, and a search button. They both align their segments basically from top down. However, by comparing to the current version, we could analyze the remarkable design of the prototype and appreciate the experience it provides.

The method of steps indication, for example. The current version uses segmented control in iOS as the indicator of every step before the user could finally book a ticket, meanwhile the prototype gives an arrow to indicate the next step integrated with the search button. The method that the prototype uses is better. First, the segmented control has information that is not important to notify the user the moment one enters this interface. It is different to design a mobile app than a web page on PC. It could easily annoying the user and make him scared of the process. The arrow showed in the prototype avoids this unpleasant feeling and provides enough indication elegantly to let the user know this is the next step and it is easy to continue. Furthermore, it becomes worse when the segmented control gives the user the feeling that each segment is a button he could touch. He would be disappointed when he push the button and get no response, which will also makes him feel that he is losing control of the process which initially is the scenario which the indicator try to prevent. But the arrow in the prototype provides an interactive response to the user's operation, which gently guides the user to do the next move.

Brief Introduction to the Rest Layers

The structure layer, scope layer and strategy layer are the fundamental and relevant parts of product design. Since I only get one view of the prototype, it could be discovered briefly through the current version.

The app is developed by Qatar Airway, and the idea of this app is providing an arena for their service to passengers. Though the user experience is not a factor in this case. Passengers who is a Qatar member or what to get a discount from the Qatar have to use this app. The Flight Search View is the first view under BOOK A FLIGHT, which is the fundamental function of the Qatar Airways app.



Image 4: Screen Shots of Current Qatar Airways App²

The prototype of Flight Search View provides a good example that how little detailed design could change the entire feeling of an interface. It is important to achieve a good user experience using the up-to-date technologies, integrating the fashion of design, and make every process in a precognitive manner through psychology analysis. This is a critical process of Human-Computer Interaction.

Reference:

1. Elya, *7 Impressive Mobile UI Design Languages in 2014*, published on <http://zaodula.com/>
2. Qatar Airways App, version 3.1, current version on iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/>
3. Jesse James Garrett, *The Elements of User Experience: User-Centered Design for the Web and Beyond, Second Edition*, published by Pearson Education, Inc. Copyright © 2011 by Jesse James Garrett.
4. Giles Colborne, *Simple and Usable Web, Mobile, and Interaction Design*, published by Pearson Education, Inc. Copyright © 2011 by Giles Colborne.