

2021

Analysis of TripAdvisor Web Design

Based on Shneiderman's 8 golden rules

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2021-03-28



Summary

BCIT UX Counseling has been commissioned to analyze the website TripAdvisor for proper and improper design practices. Analysis will be based on Schneiderman's 8 golden rules and will also include recommended solutions for improper design.

TripAdvisor exhibits excellent design practices in offering informative feedback, preventing errors, and permitting easy reversal of actions. Minor improvements can be made with designing dialogs to yield closure, reducing short-term memory load, and keeping users in control. Major changes, however, must be made to these areas:

- website consistency, and
- seeking universal usability

Inconsistent layouts are used when displaying locations of different themes. Having different layouts can cost users a lot of time getting familiar with TripAdvisor.

TripAdvisor does not accommodate new users. Tools for explaining the site features are not immediately apparent, and a convenient option to tour the websites many features does not exist.

Most of the 8 golden rules are applied well by TripAdvisor, but improvements to the website's consistency, universal usability, and user control are highly recommended.

Introduction

TripAdvisor has made a request for analysis of their website to BCIT UX counselling. The purpose of this report is to investigate whether TripAdvisor has good UX design based on Schneiderman's 8 golden rules and suggest proper modifications.

There are two major parts in our report: The analysis and conclusion & recommendation. In the analysis section, we analyze the TripAdvisor's website according to Schneiderman's 8 golden rules one by one. In the conclusion & recommendation, we conclude the results of our analysis and make some desirable suggestion

Analysis

Overall, the TripAdvisor sight looks impressive and professional at first glance. However, our team has evaluated the application interface design in this section. Our analysis will go through the eight golden rules item by item and point out which parts of the TripAdvisor UI are good and which parts need to be improved.

I. Strive for consistency

Schneiderman's first golden rule for website UI, "strive for consistency" involves using the same shapes, icons, colours, wording, and framework throughout an app's UI; the purpose is to allow its users to gradually feel more familiar with the digital terrain and be able to maneuver around more confidently (Wong, 2020) [1]

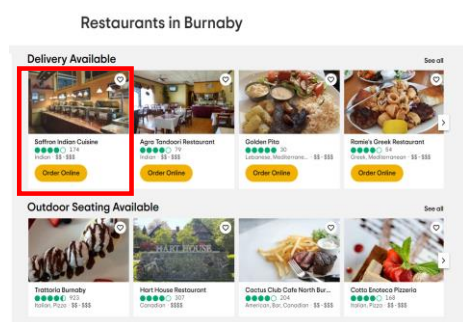
Although TripAdvisor displays consistency very well in areas such as color scheme, frequent use of box-like shapes in design, and naming conventions of features, it is quite inconsistent when it comes to layout.

The webpage detailing restaurant options displays each restaurant inside a small box (https://www.tripadvisor.ca/

Figure 1) while only showing the overall user rating for each restaurant. In contrast, the hotel webpage displays each lodging option in a very large, rectangular display while a lot more detail such as pricing, hotel features, and discount opportunities are shown (

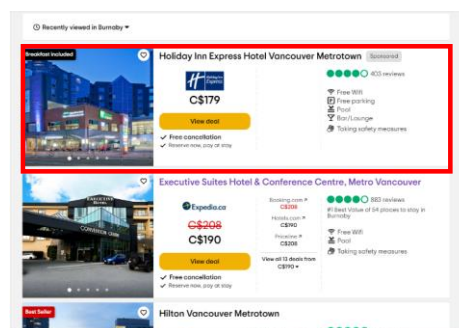
https://www.tripadvisor.ca/

Figure 2).



https://www.tripadvisor.ca/

Figure 1 List of Restaurants



https://www.tripadvisor.ca/

Figure 2 List of Hotels

TripAdvisor displays inconsistent layouts not only between its restaurant and hotel displays, but also within its many other categorial options such as cruises, vacation rentals, flights, and more.

To reduce inconsistency, every display for a location should be held in the same shape container whilst providing similar amounts of information.

II. Seek universal usability

Schneiderman's second golden rule for website UI, "seek universal usability" involves building a user interface that accommodates "the widest range of reasonably possible users" (LeBlanc, 2016) [2].

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The many features in TripAdvisor are very straightforward to understand; the naming and labels for each button and option are clear enough that most users of novice to expert experience can navigate through them.

The review feature also accommodates for individuals who may have never used a reviewing application before by providing prompts (

<https://www.tripadvisor.ca/>

Figure 3) to write about.

Draft

Golden Pita
9630 Cameron Street, Burnaby, British Columbia V3J 1M2, Canada

●●●●○ Very Good

Title of your review
Summarize your visit or highlight an interesting detail

Your review (100 character minimum)
By sharing your experiences, you're helping travellers make better choices and plan their dream trips. Thank you!

When did you travel?
Select one

☐ I certify that this review is based on my own experience and is my genuine opinion of this restaurant, and that I have no personal or business relationship with this establishment, and have not been offered any incentive or payment originating from the establishment to write this review.

Submit

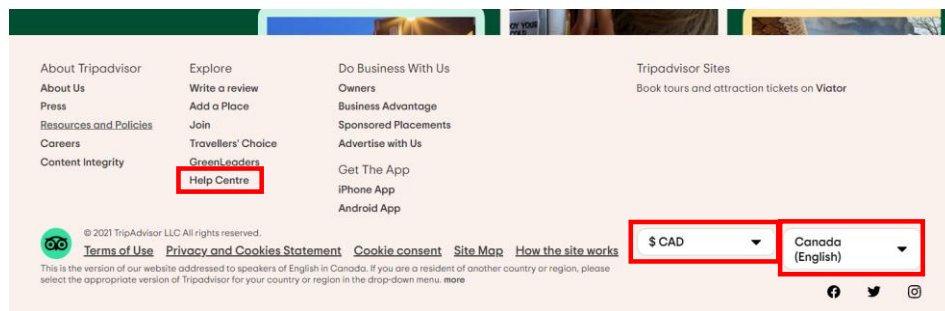
<https://www.tripadvisor.ca/>

Figure 3 Review panel has writing prompts

Furthermore, when users scroll down the front page of the website, there are options for changing languages and currency, as well as a help centre feature for those having trouble traversing the app (

<https://www.tripadvisor.ca/>

Figure 4).



<https://www.tripadvisor.ca/>

Figure 4 Bottom of Trip Advisor's main page

However, having so many features can be overwhelming for new users, and the help center can be hard to locate.

We recommend providing new users an option for a concise tour of the website's many features, as well as relocating the help center feature to a more immediately visible location. Some of the many features offered at TripAdvisor, such as flight scheduling or rental cars, cannot be found immediately upon entering their website. Providing a short tour to new users will help point out where these features are, as well as other features they may have not known about. Relocating the help center feature to a more visible location is very important, as this tool provides a comprehensive guide on all TripAdvisor 's facilities.

III. Offer informative feedback

Schneiderman's third golden rule for website UI "offer informative feedback" involves creating understandable and clear feedback for every user action, minor or major. This enables the user to be constantly aware that their choices are being registered (Wong, 2020) [1].

批注 [TT4]: I note that TripAdvisor is using Cd'n spelling; we should do no less.

TripAdvisor provides sufficient feedback to its users when they require it. Every clickable button/feature is accompanied by some form of minor feedback, allowing users to know for certain whether they have or have not clicked on them.

For instance, once a user has finished submitting a search query, they are provided with a loading sign (

<https://www.tripadvisor.ca/>

Figure 5), as well as a visual of their web page being loaded using animated grey squares and rectangles (

<https://www.tripadvisor.ca/>

Figure 6).

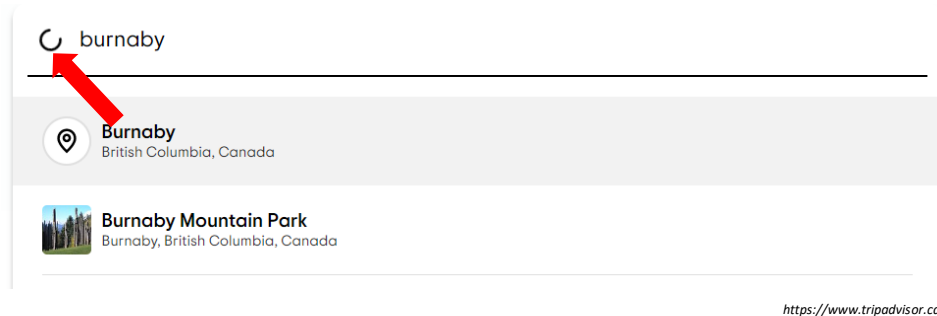


Figure 5 loading sign

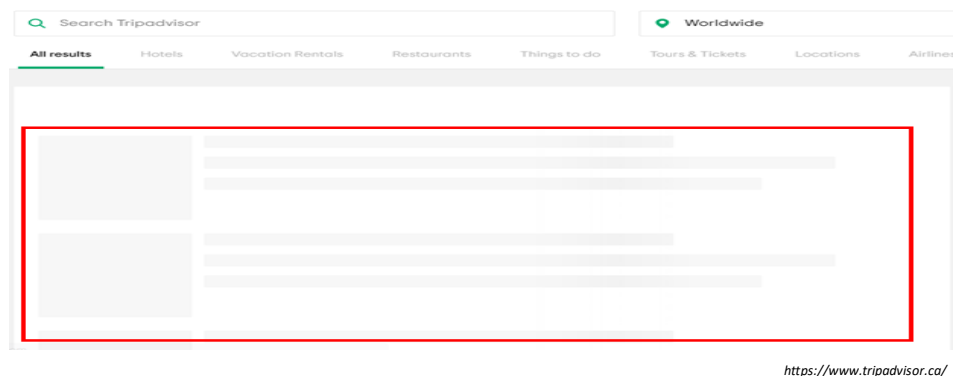


Figure 6 Visual of webpage being loaded using grey squares and rectangles

There are many examples of excellent minor visual cues given when your mouse hovers over a clickable item; text is underlined, images light up, and icons receive borders around them.

Overall, TripAdvisor excels in providing proper feedback to its users, and there are no noticeable issues.

IV. Design Dialogs to Yield Closure

Yielding closure means providing informative feedback for users when an action is about to finish, relieving uncertainty and stress. Moreover, at the end of each action, a yield closure gives a hint for users about what they should do next, signaling what is about to be shown if they follow this guidance (Malviya 2020) [3].

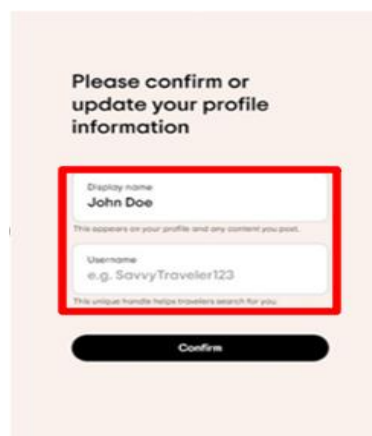
Some functions in TripAdvisor provide excellent closure, while some do not. For example, TripAdvisor yields closure twice whenever a user makes a comment. When someone finishes creating a comment, the website will provide an alert box reminding users to check and confirm their profile name (

<https://www.tripadvisor.ca/>

Figure 7). Next, when the user confirms their profile name, there will be a message shown in the page indicating that the comment was successfully posted (

<https://www.tripadvisor.ca/>

Figure 8).



<https://www.tripadvisor.ca/>

Figure 7 Confirm profile name

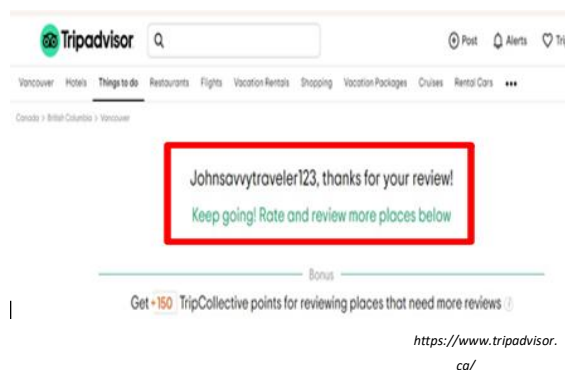


Figure 8 Comment closure

However, it is unpleasant to see that there is no closure for question posting. There is no informative feedback after the questions are submitted. The submitted questions are directly displayed in the Q&A section and the user would not know whether they have successfully posted the questions or not until they check the Q&A. This is a not good experience as the pages for writing questions and review questions are separate. It is better to tell users that the submitted questions are posted and give them the link to the page where their questions are displayed.

V. Prevent Errors

Even though no one likes being told they are wrong, UI designers have to make the application point out the errors because humans make mistakes.

If a user makes a mistake, the application should prevent the user from exploring the next step which would further destroy the user **experience (Wong 2020) [1]**.

The UI interface should prompt simple and intuitive messages to help users correct their actions. TripAdvisor has done a great job in error prevention. For instance, in the payment page, the users have to input their information such as name, card number and address. These are crucial personal information to make a payment, so zero error is tolerated. In the name input field, only letters are allowed and all the other symbols will cause an error (<https://www.tripadvisor.ca/>

Figure 9).

The image shows a web form with two input fields. The first field is labeled 'Last Name *' and contains the text '123**'. Below the field is a red error message: 'Please use letters only'. The second field is labeled 'Credit/debit card number *' and contains the text '21'. Below this field is a red error message: 'Enter a valid card number'. Both fields have a red border and a red information icon (i) in the bottom right corner.

<https://www.tripadvisor.ca/>

Figure 9 Name input error

<https://www.tripadvisor.ca/>

Figure 10 Number input error

In addition, in the credit card number input area, only valid digits are allowed (<https://www.tripadvisor.ca/>

Figure 10).

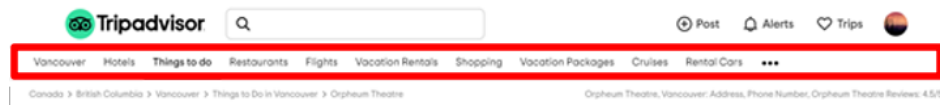
With these measures, TripAdvisor can ensure the users enter valid personal information to book and pay for an activity, prevent failed payment and potential financial loss which may make users frustrated and even burned up.

VI. Permit Easy Reversal of Actions

Every web application should allow the user to undo their previous actions (Wong 2020). Sometimes users may want to re-enter data, go back to the last page to explore something different, or sometimes they may just want to stop trying something they are not familiar with.

TripAdvisor is excellent at reversal of actions. There is a fixed navigation bar on every page (<https://www.tripadvisor.ca/>

Figure 11), that means whatever subpages users are visiting, they can go back to the main page to explore other contents.



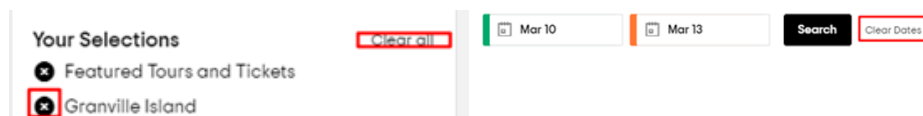
<https://www.tripadvisor.ca/>

Figure 11 Fixed navigation bar

Apart from that, everything is opened in a new page. That means users can just easily click on the page tab to go back to the previous ones.

Finally, in the travel planning section, there are a lot of search criteria to select from, and it is very handy to select or remove a certain search criterion as shown in the <https://www.tripadvisor.ca/>

Figure 12.



<https://www.tripadvisor.ca/>

Figure 12 Action reversal option

VII. Reduce Short- term memory load

Since human can remember limited amount of information, it is a good website that has an interface which is simple and makes users recognize than recall information while using the site.

So, reducing short-term memory load is about helping users recognize information rather than making them recall it (Ben, 1947) [4].

TripAdvisor supports users well by providing many functions, which don't make users recall information. For example, when selecting an interesting event from "Things to do" list, users can also see the "Your Recently Viewed" and "Related events that they clicked before".

However, unlike the "Things to do" list, TripAdvisor doesn't provide "Your Recently Viewed list" for Hotels and Restaurants. That means users should remember the hotel or restaurant's name they clicked to compare the currently clicked one.

Since comparing many options is an important aspect to users, TripAdvisor should provide a "Recently clicked item list" for the restaurant and hotel too.

VIII. Keep Users in Control

Keeping users in control is making your users be the initiator of actions (Ben, 1947) [4]. If it is hard for users to control an app, there will be a reluctance to continue using it. It is very important for users to be in control so that they can feel satisfied and explore the app freely. Since TripAdvisor is a very popular app, it does a good job in this area.

However, at some point, keeping users in control means that users should not experience unexpected results. In regard to this point, users can experience an unexpected situation. When users click "View deal" to make a reservation for a hotel, suddenly the web page leads them to Expedia or other web pages (Figure 13). They cannot help going to another site. Although they can find "Expedia.ca" letter later, it is not enough to explain that users will be led to Expedia's web page.

About this problem, TripAdvisor should add a button where users can choose "yes" or "no" about going to another web page. By adding this function, users can decide whether they will explore other websites or not and this adding this function will lead to user satisfaction.



Figure 13 Process leading users to another webpage

Conclusions & Recommendation

TripAdvisor is good at following 3 Schneiderman's golden rules: "Offering informative feedback", "Preventing errors" and "Permitting easy reversal of action". Also, although it is recommended to modify some parts of its function, TripAdvisor also well follows "Designing dialogs to yield closer", "Reducing short-term memory load" and "Keeping users in control". However, big modification should be made about

- website consistency, and
- seeking universal usability.

TripAdvisor should make the most modification in regard to website consistency, especially about web page's layout. It has all different layouts in each category from hotel to flights. Also, it has to provide similar amounts of information on the display box for every category. When it has a unified layout for each category, users can feel more comfortable to explore it.

Seeking universal usability is not easy on TripAdvisor and the major reason for it is because of so many features it has. It is not easy to find flight scheduling, rental cars and help center, which is a very necessary function for the novice. So, BCIT UX counseling recommend that TripAdvisor should consider including a concise tour of the website's many features and relocate help center so that users can easily find it.

Among the 8 Schneiderman's golden rules, TripAdvisor doesn't well follow only 2 rules, "Strive for consistency" and "Seeking universal usability ". So, TripAdvisor is a website which has good UX design. However, as we addressed already, it does have some problems about website consistency and universal usability. To resolve the problem, BCIT UX counseling suggests that the following corrections should be made on TripAdvisor:

- making a unified layout on every category.
- providing similar amount of information on each layout
- including a concise tour of website's function, and
- relocating help center to the easily noticeable place.

Because TripAdvisor had been already well designed according to Schneiderman's 8 golden rules, it was hard to find the sections which needed to be modified. It focuses well on the user's experience.

However, since we found some parts that should be considered to make change, TripAdvisor is recommended to modify some parts according to what we suggested so that it can maintain their user centered design in much better way.

References

- [1] E. Wong, "Schneiderman's Eight Golden Rules Will Help You Design Better Interfaces," 8 2020. [Online]. Available: https://onedrive.live.com/View.aspx?resid=7233BF0681C549DD!8467&authkey=!AEiGObwvc_JcH5s.
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- [3] K. Malviya, "UX Planet," 4 11 2020. [Online]. Available: <https://uxplanet.org/8-golden-rules-of-interface-design-e80a17a1312f>. [Accessed 30 3 2021].
- [4] B. Schneiderman, "faculty.washington.edu," faculty.washington.edu, 1947. [Online]. Available: <https://www.cs.umd.edu/~ben/goldenrules.html>. [Accessed 30 3 2021].

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