

# Exercises: Week 1

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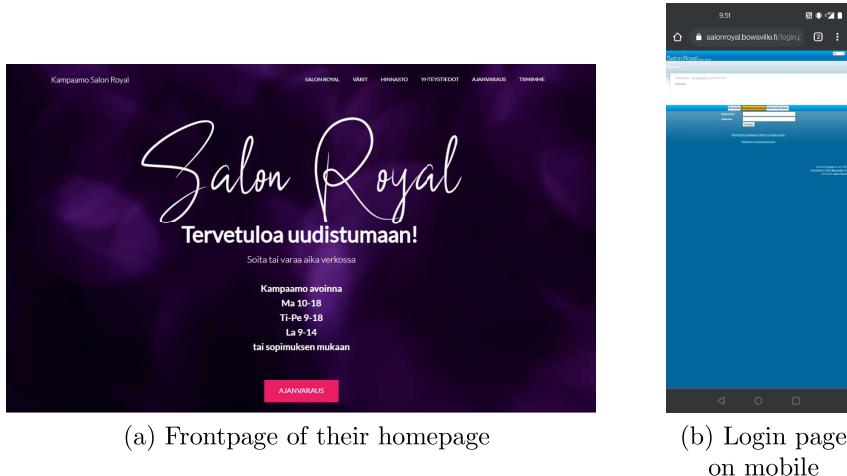
14/09/2021

## Part I **User research proposal**

### **Salon Royal Barber Shop Booking**

For this exercise I chose a barber shop booking website I use monthly. It has caused me slight frustration, especially because of its confusing user interface. The main problem this site has is its lack of instructions and confusing design choices. It should be noted that the company using this site bought a template from a software company, and just did slight edits to support their business model. While I understand that a small company might not have the money to invest in very detailed website, the company has chosen to employ their own site instead of using the portals (e.g. Timma.fi) widely available in their field.

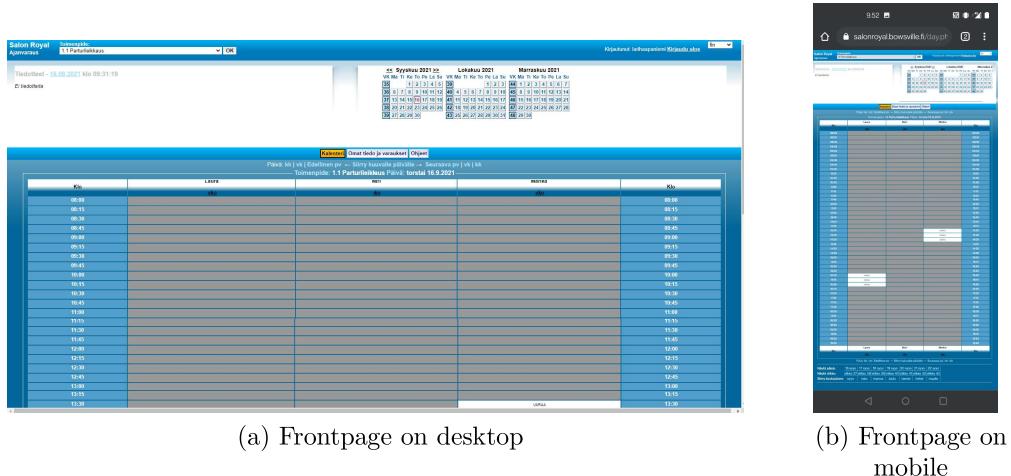
The site is used by a barber shop called Salon Royal, which clientele seems to consist of young adults based on my empiric observations. For this reason, it would seem fair to assume most of the bookings are made using the website. The website can be found at [salonroyal.bowsville.fi](http://salonroyal.bowsville.fi), but it cannot be accessed without logging in. I will go through the usability problems using pictures and explanations based on my observations on what seems to be wrong with the design.



(a) Frontpage of their homepage

(b) Login page on mobile

Figure 1: The color scheme difference when going from their homepage to booking website is already quite drastic, and looking at the software company providing them this site allowed for a change of color. On top of this, the login page is poorly scaled on mobile, while being tolerable on desktop (not in picture, but looking at Figure 2 a) can give you an idea).



(a) Frontpage on desktop

(b) Frontpage on mobile

Figure 2: To see the same amount of information as in mobile, the user has to scroll the site, which should not be required in such a simple frontpage.



Figure 3: Closer look at the haircut options they provide, note that the language was changed to english, but only couple of elements changed language. Also there is no explanation what the color scheme means at different options (not even in help).

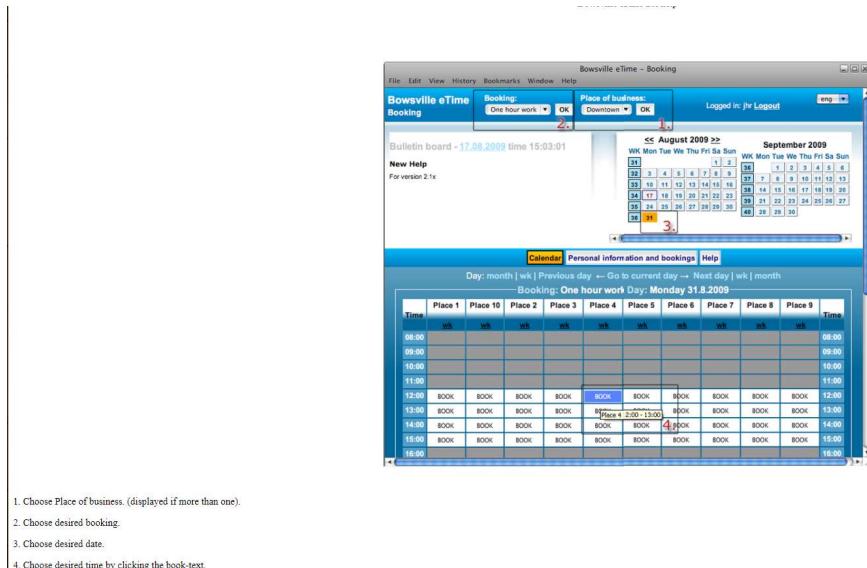


Figure 4: Speaking of the help page, it is for a different template of the site, so it is no too helpful when it comes to navigating this variation site.



Figure 5: Last thing I will highlight is the fact the fact that choosing a week from the calendar will not display a full week or guide you to a clear selection, which caused me a bit of confusion the first time. Because of the cropping, you might notice the names "Laura Johanna...", which you are supposed to interact with to see a single employee's calendar. This is in no way indicated anywhere, and as you can imagine, the font on these is quite small especially on the large screen, making it hard to even see this.

As you can see, there are a few design flaws, including the difference between language and platform, but mostly about unclear instructions and leaps that a user has to be able to make in order to understand the site. It is usually a bad sign in any case if you need a tutorial in order to operate a calendar booking site. Once you actually choose a time, the booking works quite smoothly.

## User research plan

To get an idea how this booking website should be improved, we should first see if the problems mapped above are problems worth fixing. To gather information, I would choose survey research (pp. 299-267) and log analysis (pp. 349-373). The participants could be the users visiting the website, since this is the best way to have a sample size which accurately represents the

users. One thing to note is that collecting data from the website will alienate the people that are calling to book their haircuts, which can include people who cannot operate a site in Finnish or are not comfortable with utilizing this technology. (Olson and Kellogg, 2014).

Since there are around 2-3 employees in the barber shop at the same time, and they ideally are serving on-site customers or conducting other important duties during the work hours, taking a reservation from the customer will interrupt this workflow (taking a call, adding it into the online calendar to avoid double bookings), since ideally the booking should be done on the website. For this reason I propose the following user research methods:

## **Log analysis:**

Conducted on the website in the form of A/B testing. Considering that the barbers almost always have a full day, it is fair to assume that the number of unique customers using the site per month is in the hundreds. Considering that the area around the barbershop has elementary schools, university student housing and shelter housing, the clientele also using the website is quite diverse and have different technical skills, making the sample size quite heterogeneous.

We would provide two site layouts for the users at random, the original site, and a streamlined site, that could be based on the survey (next method) or problems highlighted above. After that we track the time between entering the site and creating a booking, which variation they used, did they finish their booking and how many detours did they take. We can assume that both layouts of the site will have around 100 users, which will give us a rough idea how long it takes to create a booking, and how easily the site can be navigated.

The benefits are that we get to “field test” our new variation, get concrete user behavior instead of recalled, which might not represent the actual use case. We get different kinds of data that we can use to further improve the layout (e.g. users tended to click on booking, then canceled and booked again, because the haircut they chose was wrong, which we can help by confirming the type when the booking is done). Since the site uses login, and you must input some info about yourself, we will have more information about the user than in a common website log analysis.

There are clear issues with this user research method. First off, changing the site will make users of the original site operate the new one slower, since they are already used to the ways of the old one. Therefore we must have an

adjustment period for the users, before relying on the new data too much. It might be hard to place certain times in context since we are only observing the users keystrokes/clicks. We might think that certain user found the site difficult to navigate, since they took a lengthy pause between two clicks, while they might have just been sipping water. Also we are just gathering data from the users that are already operating the site, and that way missing on valuable data from the users that tried to use the site, but now changed barber shops/use calls to book their haircuts. For this reason we could use surveys. On top of this, the sample size we have might prove to be too small after eliminating outliers.

I assume that using this method we will hard data to prove that one design is better than the other and track problematic areas.

## **Survey research:**

Like mentioned above, we could conduct this on the website, but to gain most insight we could ask users a few easy open-ended survey questions after the haircut, for example while they are paying. This could be referred to as a semi-structured face-to-face survey. Questions would include:

- Did you use the website to book the haircut?
- IF YES:
  - Did you use this type of layout, or that one (maybe the two options could have distinct color schemes, to make it easier for the user to remember).
  - Did you find the website easy to use, if not, why?
- IF NOT:
  - Have you tried booking using the website?
  - IF YES:
    - \* If you had to mention one problem with the website, what would it be?
  - IF NOT:
    - \* What is the reason you prefer booking your haircut using other methods?

The benefits are the larger sample size (all our customers), answers from the customers we want to convert to the website, clear answers about what is lacking on the website and good supporting research to other methods of user research. There are problems too. Some customers might find the survey to be invasive, time waste or guilt, especially if they did not use the website. We are missing out on possibly new customers that changed their mind based on the website, but the amount of those can be received from the log analysis.

From this survey method we will gain highlights of the problems from the customers eyes, which we can use to reshape the site.

## References

- [1] Olson, J. and Kellogg, W., n.d. Ways of knowing in HCI. 1st ed. Springer-Verlag New York, pp.299-267, 349-373.