Industry
Travel
Location
San Francisco, CA

Hotwire, an Expedia, Inc. company, provides hotel bookings, car rentals, and airfare to customers through a variety of digital experiences, including the web and native mobile apps.

Pauline Marol is Hotwire's Lead Product Manager for Site Optimization, and leads an optimization program supported by a team of more than seven designers and developers. They are chartered with improving conversion rates on Hotwire.com's desktop and mobile web properties by running over 120 experiments each year. This task has merited one of the company's four KPIs and CEO sponsorship.

Pauline Marol
Hotwire

At Hotwire, mobile apps and mobile web experiences are a core part of how travelers book flights, hotels, and car rentals. Travel customers' research and booking needs are uniquely mobile, and their on-the-go experience should help them meet their goals quickly and seamlessly. According to a June 2014 study by Google, 45% of leisure travelers and 55% of business travelers completed bookings via a mobile website.

Optimizing for Mobile Web

When Pauline and her team worked with Hotwire's Cars line of business to optimize various elements of their conversion funnels, the mobile web experience rose to the top of her prioritized queue of experiment ideas. The experience hadn't been updated for several years, and they hypothesized that redesigning the Cars product pages would improve conversions.

The goal of the experiment was to update the look and feel of the car detail pages in order to improve the click through and conversion rate metrics. Visually, the designers on the team focused on making the page experience feel more like the Hotwire app—when the original page was designed, Hotwire didn't even have mobile apps!

Hypothesis

The team's hypothesis was: "If we refresh the design of our car mweb product then we can increase our Car mobile conversion rate because we will be able to provide a better visual and interaction experience to our mobile users."

Many of the friction points on mobile had already been accounted for in the mobile app experience, and the team thought that introducing that consistency to the mobile web experience would be a straightforward win.

The Experiment

They kept the experiment simple and tested the control against one redesigned variation. As you can see below, the experiment doesn't focus on a single element of the experience but instead takes a *big step away from the baseline.* There were no major usability changes on the page, and most of the information presented to the user was the same. However, this was a big overall change, showcasing an example of optimizing for the global maximum.

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Car rental details

$19⁹⁵
per day
$46.79 total
▶

Economy
Hotwire Hot Rate

Location: Los Angeles Intl. (LAX)
Location: Counter in airport; Shuttle to car
Pick up: Thu, Dec 18, 10:30 PM
Drop off: Fri, Dec 19, 10:30 PM

Rental agency accepts credit card and debit/check card deposits.

Price for 1 days $19.95
Taxes and fees: $26.84
Trip total: $46.79

Seats: 2 adults, 2 children
Cargo: 1 large, 1 small suitcase
Miles: Unlimited
Models: Chevy Aveo, Hyundai Accent, or similar**
Features: Automatic Transmission, Air Conditioning, Air Bags, AM/FM Stereo

Some reminders

- **Your account will be charged at the time of booking** for the full rental amount, including all tax recovery charges and fees.

- The agency requires a credit/debit card in the driver's name for deposit. The amount varies and can't be used on your card until you return the car.

- Bringing you rock-bottom priced rental cars means **bookings are final (no refunds, no changes)**.

- You can add drivers at the counter for a charge.

Continue ▶

Hotwire Reference # 13624330587

∗∗ The makes/models shown are examples only. We are unable to guarantee a specific make/model. Actual makes/models are subject to availability and vary by supplier.

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Economy

HOT RATE

$**19**⁹⁵ per day

✓ Unlimited miles 🧳 x 2 🧍 x 4 ❄ Ⓐ

Chevy Aveo, Hyundai Accent, or similar∗∗

Continue

Trip Summary

📍 **Los Angeles Intl. (LAX)**
Counter in airport; Shuttle to car

📅 **PICK UP**
Thu, Dec 18, 10:30 PM

📅 **DROP OFF**
Fri, Dec 19, 10:30 PM

Booking info

Price for 1 days	$19.95
Taxes and fees	$26.84
Trip total	**$46.79**

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Reminders

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- The agency requires a credit/debit card in the driver's name for deposit. The amount varies and can't be used on your card until you return the car.

- You can add drivers at the counter for a charge.

Continue

Hotwire Reference # **13624330587**

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The control experience (Left) was stale and needed a refresh. The variation (Right) mimicked the look and feel of Hotwire's mobile apps.

The Results

The variation beat the control experience. This experiment was the Hotwire website optimization team's largest winner last year.

After this energizing win, Pauline and her team are focused on refinement once again, brainstorming ways to iterate on their new modern look and feel and to apply the learnings from the experiment to other lines of Hotwire's business.

Discovering the optimal experience for each customer requires a holistic view of every interaction with the customer throughout their conversion journey.

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