

UX Research Report

Research Prompt

Conduct a user research study to compare the user experience of two different products or services in the same product category (e.g. two mobile apps, two websites, two consumer devices), and recommend improvements based on the findings

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Abstract

1. (delete before submit) Does the abstract provide a concise summary of the research problem, methods, results, and conclusions? Does it provide enough information for readers to understand the purpose and significance of the study?

This report will explore the user interaction features that are deficient during Expedia's checkout process. It aims to investigate the reasons that cause the insufficient order completion and what improvements Expedia can implement as a first-tier travel booking service provider. The goal of this study is to unpack the reasons that users choose to quit the checkout process and understand their pain points from their perspectives. The research study would be conducted through interviews and usability tests which mainly recruited participants from NYU. As a result, these younger users have expressed their insights upon the unsatisfied experience from three main sectors: Services, Design, and Technical issues. Many of the priorities that users hope to increase their efficiency in travel booking processes are missing on Expedia. Therefore, Expedia has lost its significance in offering travel services and eventually resulting in a loss of customers.

Introduction

Global tourism rebounded strongly after the pandemic. While online travel booking platforms have become a more convenient way for travelers to book flight tickets, hotels, and car rentals, Expedia has now gradually lost its popularity among travelers. This has reflected the user engagement rate of Expedia as it has now become a "price reference site." We want to put more focus on Expedia to give effective feedback. The objective of this study is to increase order complement, revenue, and user engagement on

Expedia. We want to elevate the brand image of Expedia to expand it from a price comparison website to a platform as people's top priority when it comes to travel trip planning. The findings and insights from this research will help us to understand why users decide not to complete orders on Expedia and what features could help improve user retention on Expedia. Moreover, it gains us a better understanding of the lacking features that are lacking in Expedia in comparison to other travel booking services. In the end, the goal is to provide recommendations for the interaction design on Expedia and improve it to be more intuitive and user-friendly based on users' opinions.

Research Questions

1. What factors contribute to users quitting the checkout page, and how can these issues be addressed to help increase the likelihood of completing an order?
2. Which features of Expedia are attractive or unappealing to users? Why is that?

Literature review

(delete before submit) Does the literature review provide a comprehensive and critical summary of relevant research studies and theoretical perspectives? Does it demonstrate an understanding of the key concepts and debates in the field? Does it identify gaps or inconsistencies in previous research that the current study addresses?

From our literature review, even though Expedia is a US-based company and it has the top 2 ranking in the US. but it still has not become the most preferable website for American Users. It is relatively less competitive when people want to travel abroad

Methodology

- Data collection:
 - Methods: interviews, usability tests
 - Sample size: 12 for interviews/usability testing.
 - Location: US
- Instruments:
 - [Interview](#)
 - [Discussion Guide](#)
 - [Task List](#)
- Target: The research subjects will be frequent travelers who have booked/attempted to book travel accommodations on Expedia.
- Sampling:
 - Interview and usability testing: convenience sampling
- Recruitment:
 - Ask our friends if they have used Expedia then we asked them if they want to be our participants. We will be transparent about the purpose of our study and the potential impact it would have on improving the digital experience and interaction on the checkout page of Expedia. We would inform participants what to expect during the interview and usability testing and how their feedback would be used. We will be sending out updates to participants on the progress of our study and any improvements that have resulted from their responses.
- Schedule:
 - Interview: online From March.1st.2023 - March.7th.2023

- 1 Week
- User Tasks:
 - During the usability testing, participants will be asked to search the hotel and reserve a room and then to the checkout page to fill in the information.
- Quality:
 - Interview scripts/Discussion guide/Data analysis plan will be reviewed by a professional expert to ensure validity and reliability.
 - Usability testing and interviews will be recorded. And they will be analyzed by us to make sure of the accuracy of our observations and users' task completion rate.
- Data Analysis Plan:
 - We will delete the information that is missing from the dataset
 - Interviews: thematic analysis to identify the themes and patterns from the data
 - Usability testing: observation notes and task completion rates
 - Approaches:
 - Thematic analysis
 - Thematic analysis was conducted through affinity mapping to find out if common phrases/words/themes appear repeatedly and then we organized them into groups and then put them into themes.
 - We then examined the behavior of participants like how they interact with the overall website and checkout page and what they like/dislike about the specific element/feature on Expedia. Then we could have an in-depth understanding of users' experience on our checkout page so we can inform improvements on the design of

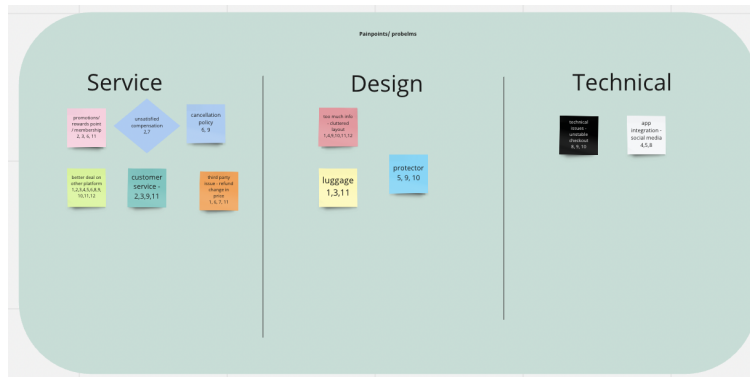
the checkout page. And also we would know what features/elements our competitor did well and we could learn from.

Results

Participant	Gender	Age	Occupation	Role	Experience with Expedia	Perspective on improving engagement and retention	Travel frequency	Priorities
p1	F	23	Student	User	periodically	less credible third parties, travel information deficit, no price secure	3 times / year	suitable time cheapest ticket with the most direct flights
p2	M	29	Civil Engineer & student	User	7 years	less credible third parties, poor customer services, unsatisfied compensation, no price secured	3 - 4 times / year	destination & duration of the flights for hotel: the location price
p3	F	21	student	User	9 months	poor customer services, unclear luggage policy, unclear luggage policy, less price secured, unnoticeable sorting/filters	4 times / year	picky with airlines price
p4	F	19	student	User	3 months	less price secured, unnoticeable guest check out/ filters/ sorting	1 / year	the price reviews - bad reviews location
p5	F	20	student	User	4 months	annoying addons reminders, no price secured, unknown unsuccessful checkout	4 times / year	For flights: price for the hotels: comments - safety issues

p6	M	29	System Engineer	User	periodical ly	less credible third parties, unnoticeable filters/ sorting, cancellation policies varied, no price secured	4 - 5 times / year	Price Airline - membership: SkyMiles club, access to lounge times convenience Luggage distance
p7	F	20	student	User	3/4 years	unsatisdeied compensation, cancellation policies varied, no price secured	3-4 times a year	time price if carry-on bag included
p8	F	20	student	User	1 year	unstabled/ slow checkout, no price secured	1-2 a month	price
p9	M	22	student	User	about 2 years	unstabled/ slow checkout, no price secured, poor customer services, cluttered layout, hidden reviews, annoying addons reminders, unnoticeale sorting/filters, cancellation policies varied	4-5 times a year	Price customer support
p10	F	20	student	User	3 years	unstabled/ slow checkout, annoying addons reminders, difficult to find filters, no price secured	3-4 times a year	Customer review price location
p11	F	20	student	User	half a year	no seat selection, no price secured, unknown unsuccessful checkout, unclear luggae policy, cluttered layout	3-4 times a year	availability, price service quality

p12	F	21	student	User	more than 1 year	hidden reviews, cluttered layout	more than 10 times a year	promotion
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Theme 1: Services

Service is the theme that participants react the most. It's okay for us to make mistakes. But it's important to provide good service so users would think we are reliable and the user retention rate will increase.

Top-Line Finding: Expedia is less credible in the user's eyes.

- Due to the fact that Expedia is a third-party website that offers hotel and flight reservations, people have trust issues with that and are more willing to book on official websites
- Users are only using Expedia as a price comparison site rather than making actual purchases.

Key Insights:

- The services that users receive don't meet their expectations after they make a reservation. Customer service is difficult to reach out and the compensation is unsatisfying.
 - Cancellation policies are more stringent compared to the official travel provider
 - Expedia exclusive services are not attractive to users
 - Book directing is preferable by users rather than Expedia as it has no guarantee of equal rights and benefits
 - Customers are worried that if they booked the services on Expedia, they may not receive the equal rights and benefits when they book on official websites.
 - Users would only become long-term customer if they can subscribe to their membership and receive rewards points.
- Expedia's customer service is hard to reach because they only have virtual assistance
 - Trust issues occur when users cannot obtain the confirmation information they need when they completed the order. This causes the users to go the extra step in asking for clarity through customer services
- Expedia has lost its competitiveness in offering good deals while price advantage is significant in user's choices making

Supporting Quotes:

- P2 “ I think that call also took quite a long time, because the time difference it took a long time for them to pick up...in order to explain all these things, I have to pay quite a lot for the International call... I can't say this is a smooth experience.”

- P1 “I oftentimes after knowing what flight they are, I'll go to their own website first and see if there are any deals or even if I have rewards or mileage for future trips.”
- P3 “sometimes frustrates me because I hate having to contact the customer service for such a small question.”

Recommendations:

- Expedia should add real person customer service instead of virtual assistance so users could approach to solve their problems.
- Cancellation compensation should be more generous to users -> offer compensation the customer really needs.
- Expedia should improve its reward points system -> corporate with airlines and hotels to accumulate points for users.

Theme 2: Design

Participants felt they are frustrated, annoyed, and overwhelmed when they are making reservations on Expedia. This is mainly due to the reasons that the platform layout is not intuitive and has no priorities in displaying use's desirable information

Top-Line Finding:

- Design on Expedia makes users feel frustrated when checking out
 - Too much information(filters, protector section) on the page which makes the user feel overwhelmed, and

- Some information(luggage, sorting, and filtering) are not clear so users spend a lot of time searching.

Key Insights:

- Expedia's cluttered filters and sorting design takes users too much time on searching.
- Information that is necessary for users when traveling is ambiguous and has no priority on the checkout page which leads to the trust issues that users encounter when using a third-party website.
- The protector prompt annoys people at times

Supporting Quotes:

- P3 "Expedia has not been clear not only about the baggage allowance but whatever inclusions you have. Like please make it clear so that customers can just buy without having so many questions in their head."
- P10 "when it says I protect my stay I always chose no thanks."
- P9 "It takes me too long to like the UI design. When there's too much overwhelming information... find the next step button. I got really annoyed, and I just quit the app."

Recommendations:

- Remove the green "recommended" button beside "Protect your hotel" or change it to "Optional"
- Change luggage information to icons instead of using a small line of words.

- Layout of the search page should be organized. In other words, Expedia needs to organize the filtering section and remove the sorting section, combine it with filtering.

Theme 3: Technical

Top-Line Finding: Expedia's unstable checkout process decreased user engagement

- Long loading page
- Users would like to have more payment methods choices.
- It takes too long to load the page when searching.

Key Insights:

- Users prefer to use their preferred mobile payment service such as ApplePay/PayPal rather than entering card information every time.
- Users would get impatient when loading a page takes too long.
 - Customer asks for a more stable checkout process when it's related to payment

Supporting Quotes:

- P5 "When you are allowed to use Apple Pay or PayPal or Ali pay, they can just jump to the app. So they already have the credit card or debit card info and those apps can directly use them."
- P9 "I think the overall checkout experience was fine except that it's sort of slow."
- P10 "when I was almost on the checkout page... the page suddenly back to the previous page, and it's interrupt my experience which causes me more time to check out for my order."

Recommendations:

- Technician should optimize the loading page
- Quitting unexpected, order cancellation for no reason, technical bugs needs to be defined and fixed.
- Corporate with mobile payment services like apple pay/meta pay/google pay

Conclusion

- Opportunities

- Expedia could take this opportunity to review its search layout as this will affect people's preferences in engaging with the platform. Users demand an efficient and convenient website that better assists them in searching for discounted deals. From our findings, it is notable that most of the priorities that users hope to see on travel booking websites are not fulfilled from their experience. This leads to a loss in customers and gradually ceases using the platform. Based on our findings, it is obvious that people would look for the best offer for travel reservations.

- Limitation

- The time limit will only allow us to do interviews and usability testing instead of competitive analysis so we have to change our hypothesis and prompt.
- One limitation of our study is the use of convenience sampling, which may result in a lack of diversity in the age range of our sample. This is mainly due to the fact

that our sample is significantly composed of individuals in their early twenties who are mostly college students. As a result, our findings may not accurately reflect the perspectives and experiences of older individuals. Moreover, college students' schedules might not allow for traveling more frequently. This would have a biased perspective on the frequency of travel in our study. Also, younger generations are more flexible in navigating between different platforms. It is more likely that they are not the most frequent users to a particular platform.

- The utilization of Expedia by individuals serves diverse purposes, including price comparison, direct booking of flights, and indirect booking via other platforms. It is worth noting that Expedia often appears as a suggested platform on collective websites or search engines. This reinforces the significance of price advantage as a crucial factor in selecting a platform. These characteristics predominantly define the profile of younger users on Expedia.
- During the interview there are some people who may not answer our questions honestly and may be conservative about certain problems. This is because the participants are mainly our acquaintances and might have affected their responses.

Bibliography