BRIEF

EXAMPLE

Usability Test Brief for Ontario Parks Website

URL: https://www.ontarioparks.ca/en

Andrei Navumau

Executive Summary

This usability test is designed to evaluate the user experience of the Ontario Parks website, specifically focusing on the search functionality, the online reservation process, and the site navigation. The goal is to assess whether users can easily find key information, reserve park spaces, and navigate through the site without confusion. Insights gained from the test will help identify potential usability issues, improve user flow, and enhance the overall experience for visitors looking to reserve campsites, view park details, or plan their visits.

This usability test brief serves as a structured plan to assess how well the Ontario Parks website performs in terms of user experience. By focusing on critical tasks and collecting quantitative and qualitative feedback, the test will identify key areas for improvement and provide actionable insights to optimize the site's usability for future visitors.

Scope

The scope of this usability test will focus on three key areas of the Ontario Parks website:

1. Search Functionality – Specifically, how well users can find parks, campsites, and activities using the search bar.

2. Reservation Process – The steps required to successfully reserve a campsite or other facility on the site, focusing on ease of use and clarity.

3. Navigation – The main navigation elements, such as the menu and park listing pages, to assess whether users can easily access relevant information.

What will not be tested:

- Content readability or design aesthetics.

- Mobile app performance (this test focuses only on the desktop version of the site).

- The accessibility of the website for users with disabilities, although that would be an important follow-up test.

These features are critical as they directly impact users' ability to find information quickly and perform essential tasks (like reservations), and they align with the main goals of the website.

Questions

The primary questions driving this usability test are:

1. Can users quickly find and use the search bar to locate parks, activities, or campsite availability?

   - This matters because the search functionality is central to helping users find information quickly. If the search process is confusing or inefficient, it could lead to frustration and abandonment.

2. Is the reservation process intuitive and error-free?

- This is a key concern for the site, as a complicated or unclear reservation process could drive potential visitors away. We need to ensure users can successfully complete the reservation flow without excessive steps or confusion.

3. Do users understand the website's main navigation structure?

   - The website's usability hinges on whether users can intuitively navigate to the most important pages (e.g., park listings, reservation system, activity information). A confusing navigation menu can lead to user frustration and increase the likelihood of task abandonment.

4. How long does it take for users to complete the core tasks (searching for parks, booking a campsite, and navigating the site)?

   - This matters because long task completion times indicate possible usability issues in the user flow, which can discourage users from returning to the site.

Participants

We will test 5 participants who fit the following demographic profile:

- Age: 25-45 years

- Sex: Any

- Education: Some college education or higher

- Income: Middle-income bracket

- Tech Savviness: Comfortable with online reservations and basic website navigation

Participants will be recruited from a mix of friends, classmates, and colleagues. This group is appropriate as they are potential users of the site—people interested in outdoor activities, booking campsites, and visiting provincial parks.

Methods

The following methods will be employed during the usability test:

1. Heuristic Evaluation: To check for major usability flaws based on established usability principles, including Nielsen's heuristics. The focus will be on issues like visibility of system status, consistency, and error prevention.

2. Discovery (Task-Based): Participants will be observed while completing typical tasks on the website (e.g., searching for a park, making a reservation). Observing their behavior will help identify usability issues not immediately apparent.

3. Benchmarking: We'll compare task completion time and user satisfaction with existing data (if available) or industry standards to gauge the website's effectiveness.

4. Moderated: The test will be moderated, meaning a facilitator will provide participants with tasks, ask follow-up questions, and guide the session. The moderator will also observe user behavior and note any difficulties faced.

Metrics

The following metrics will be tracked:

1. Task Completion Rate:

   - Metric: Success/failure rate for completing core tasks (e.g., searching for a park, making a reservation).

   - Why it matters: Ensures users can complete essential actions on the site without issues.

2. Time on Task:

   - Metric: How long participants take to complete specific tasks, such as searching for a park or completing a reservation.

   - Why it matters: A long task time indicates potential usability barriers that might frustrate users.

3. Error Rate:

   - Metric: The number of errors participants make while completing tasks (e.g., choosing the wrong park or not completing a reservation).

   - Why it matters: A high error rate indicates the interface may not be intuitive or is prone to mistakes.

4. User Satisfaction:

   - Metric: A 5-point Likert scale survey question asking users about their experience with tasks, such as "How easy was it to make a reservation?"

   - Why it matters: Direct user feedback on how satisfied they were with the process provides insight into areas for improvement.

5. Critical and Non-Critical Errors:

   - Metric: Recording any major issues that prevent task completion, as well as minor issues that might cause frustration.

   - Why it matters: Critical errors directly impact user experience and may cause task abandonment. Non-critical errors provide context for smaller adjustments to improve the overall usability.

 Schedule & Location

- When: Testing will take place over a 3-day period, between November 6 and November 16, 2024. Each test session will last approximately 45-60 minutes.

- Where: All testing will be conducted remotely using video conferencing software (e.g., Zoom) to share the screen and observe participants.

 Equipment

- Device: Participants will use their personal computers or laptops to access the website.

- Operating System: Windows 10 or macOS, as these are the most common platforms for desktop browsing.

- Software: Zoom for remote testing, Screen recording software for session capture, and a Google Form to collect user satisfaction ratings post-test.

 Scenarios

The following tasks will be given to the participants to test their interaction with the website:

1. Search for a specific park (e.g., "Algonquin Park") using the search bar.

   - Focus: Search function usability, accuracy of results.

2. Navigate to the "Reserve" section and attempt to reserve a campsite for a weekend in the summer.

   - Focus: Reservation process usability, clarity of information.

3. Find information on activities or events at a specific park.

   - Focus: Site navigation and information architecture.

These tasks represent key actions users are likely to perform when visiting the Ontario Parks website and will help determine the website's overall usability.