

Note-taking: Hotel (Mobile)

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Session 1

Context

Participant is a civil servant based in Dublin. Usually accesses the internet on his phone, but also uses a laptop. Uses broadband internet.

Apps:

- LiveScore
- Weather
- News

Reasons for booking hotels:

- Family holidays
- Destinations, including Ireland, Lanzarote, Poland, and mainland Spain

Hotel booking apps:

- Booking.com
- Trivago
- Love Holiday
- AlphaRooms
- Initially says doesn't have a preference, but later seems to prefer Booking.com as it's a trusted brand for him.

Recent scenario:

- Traveling to Lanzarote for pleasure
- Party of 4 which included 2 kids
- Used AlphaRooms due to **reliability, brand-name recognition, and free cancellation.**
- **Small refundable deposit. This was especially important due to the pandemic.**
- Booked in February
- Chose a particular hotel based on:
 - **Price/value for money**
 - Child-friendly (pools, kids' club)

- It was what came up as recommended/had good reviews based on a Google search of the Playa Blanca area
- Filtered for family, all-inclusive package, and the distance from the airport/main town
- Did not have worries/concerns as it was through a **trusted brand**
- Free cancellation (especially because of the pandemic)
- He did compare to other sites, but this hotel was the best value
- The booking was a good experience. He is still waiting for his refund, but assumes all is well based on how other interactions with this brand have gone.

Scenario 1: Dublin → Barcelona [Barceló App]

Goals for booking:

- June 12 - 19
- Payment on arrival with option to cancel
- Breakfast included
- Find a seaside/city center hotel

Behaviors:

- User quickly finds the book now button. **[positive]**
- Comments on "stay with us" hashtag
- User comments that the video of a swimming tropical fish is pleasant and puts him right into the "holiday mode." **[positive]**
- After typing "Barcelona" in the search bar, the user clicks on the Barcelona location, which has 4 items.
- User then looks over the hotel options above
- User **misses an option** to select seaside as a search parameter at the bottom of the scroll. **[issue]**
- When asked how he would find one by the seaside, the user says "**on this, I wouldn't know**" **[issue]**
- He says that to him, "mar" would mean water, but this is just a guess
- Participant gives up on the search screen and returns to the homepage, but seems to get more **frustrated** as he scrolls quickly through the page and is only able to find generic offers. He mentions now knowing if these offers are talking about Barcelona.

- Participant unsuccessfully tries to look in the top-left menu to see if he can search for a seaside hotel that way. He says "there's nothing there that's sticking out" in terms of helpfulness in his search
- He ends up returning to the search page and explains that Barcelona is a big city and he's not super familiar with it.
- He says that the only way that he could be sure about the location is "clicking into each hotel" as there is "no way to filter it"
- He ends up selecting the first hotel in Barcelona. **[issue]**
- The data-selector spends **a lot of time loading each new month**. The user mentions that this is "**a bit slow**" getting to the month of June and **clunky to use**. **[issue]**
- The data-selector also shows pricing based on date, but it is **showing Great British Pounds** and the user will need to convert it to Euros. **[issue]**
- There is horizontal overflow once the user has entered his dates, and he scrolls side to side quickly. **[issue]**
- The results page is still in Pounds, which the user comments on immediately. He is **not sure if he will need to convert**, or if the app will handle this for him. **[issue]**
- The user is **pleased to see the TripAdvisor** reviews, and mentions that he always checks TripAdvisor before booking. **[positive]**
- Says **"looks a nice hotel from the pictures"**
- He thinks that the images look like the heart of the city, but he still isn't sure what part it's in.
- While talking, the user is scrolling the gray menu with rooms, maps, offers, etc. He mentions offers specifically, but since this prompt is about fixed dates, is not able to spend much time on this thought.
- Quickly spots the free cancellation policy **[positive]**
- He scrolls quickly through the available rooms and says "all very easy to navigate" **[positive]**
- After selecting a room and offer, he feels that he's got all the parameters he's supposed to. He likes that the cancellation and prepayment options are spelled out right with the offers. **[positive]**
- Easily finds continue button to get to checkout page while on the additional offers page.

Final Thoughts:

- Easy to navigate **[positive]**
- The **calendar was too slow, would rather go straight to date** as opposed to wait for each month to load. **[issue]**
- User **doesn't like the additional offers at the end** and says "I've put in what I want, can we just get through it now?" He'd rather decide when he arrives. **[issue]**
- He says he **would have had to do his research** before using this app to book a hotel, as it isn't obvious how to fine-tune the location. He still isn't 100% sure where it is. **[issue]**

Scenario 2: Dublin → London [The Doyle Collection App]

Goals for booking:

- Book a twin room from Friday to Monday on either the 2nd or 3rd weekend in April 2021
- Area not specified
- Breakfast included

Behaviors:

- User is initially impressed with the date selector because he can **quickly scroll through the different months**. [positive]
- User gets frustrated when the **dates are difficult to select**. It takes him several tries. During wrap-up, he says that he "**nearly put in the wrong dates**" because of needing to select the arrival and departure separately. [issue]
- Finds the "rate details" dropdown
- Chooses the cheapest offer that includes breakfast, is **confused by the other offers** after quickly scrolling through them. [issue]

Final Thoughts

- "**A bit harder to navigate**" since you have to put in arrival and departure separately. He says that he nearly put in the wrong dates because of how complicated it was. [issue]
- Appreciative of the copy on the hotel page itself, it helped him figure out the location. [positive]
- There were **no reviews** on this app, so this user would have had to do external research in this scenario as well. He would definitely not check out without checking on TripAdvisor's reviews. [issue]
- User says that some of the offers didn't seem like good deals, which was confusing. [issue]

Session 2

Context

Participant is an account manager based in Dublin (city center). Usually accesses the internet on his phone, but also uses a laptop and a PC at work. He's been working remotely so mostly laptop and phone. Uses broadband internet.

Apps:

- News
- Spotify
- Netflix
- Lots of other apps
- Booking.com

Reasons for booking hotels:

- Weekends away with his girlfriend
- Business trips (rare)
- Friends
- Destinations, including England, Scotland, Wales, Germany (Berlin), Bahamas, and the US (FL, New Orleans)

Hotel booking apps:

- Booking.com
- Trivago
- Hotels.com (just to check price against others)
- **Prefers Booking.com as he's a Genius loyalty member and feels as though this means good deals** (he does admit that this may not be the actual case)
- Has also mentioned that he likes to support local business, so he will sometimes do his search online, but actually book by calling the hotel directly so that the larger booking site doesn't take a cut of their profits.
- Uses Booking.com to find smaller hotels he would not have known about otherwise

Recent scenario:

- Taking his girlfriend on a special birthday trip last January
- Used Booking.com
- 3 nights in Edinburgh
- He usually searches first by location, then by value by rating
- Location is important because "you don't want to be outside the city or have bad transport links"
- Like the "distance from center" filter on Booking.com
- This time he specifically wanted to find a spot near the Edinburgh Castle
- Checked 5 or 6 in his price range, then compared amenities (breakfast, type of room, best-looking-photos)
- Prefers more modern hotels
- Didn't have any concerns because has always had a good experience with Booking.com. Has used in Thailand, Singapore, lots of foreign countries and never had a serious issue. Any issues in the

past have been solved quickly (1 hour) and with minimal effort on his part.

- Once thing that he is now doing differently is calling the hotel directly to see if they can give him the same price as Booking.com because it allows him to make changes to room easier and without resulting in fees for the hotel. He learned this while booking a stag party for 15 friends and when they needed extra beds, the hotel was going to have to work with Booking.com to do it.

Scenario 1: Dublin → Barcelona [Barceló App]

Goals for booking:

- June 12 - 19
- Payment on arrival with option to cancel
- Breakfast included
- Find a seaside/city center hotel

Behaviors:

- User quickly finds the book now button. [positive]
- Thinks it looks like a **"nice travel app"**
- User comments that the video of a swimming tropical fish encourages him to puts him in mind of different countries and encourages him to **"think ahead" about his future vacation.** [positive]
- Comments that the search is **pretty standard** for what you expect to see on most websites (location bar, guests, discounts)
- User notes that search bar has placeholder text that mentions location, hotel, theme. Since he doesn't know the name of the hotel and **doesn't think that "seaside" would be counted as a theme**, he searches by Barcelona.
- User scrolls through the results and determines that the top of the list is hotels that include "Barcelona" in the address
- Mentions that he **doesn't know why there are 2 Moroccan hotels listed under the Destinations section.** He says that he figures the hotel brand is just showing all the places that they have hotels. [issue]
- User is not a fan of the search results that included hotels with Barcelona in the name/including hotels in Morocco. He says **"I'm searching for Barcelona. It's not really necessary for me to see six hotels in Morocco."** [issue]
- Scrolls down a bit further and discovers that "beach" is a theme, but **decides to stick with his search for Barcelona when he sees that there are 78 hotels under that theme**, since it likely

means that it is grouping all that brand's beachside hotels in all locations. **Goes with the 4 hotels in Barcelona instead.**

- Mentions that needing to tap the arrival and departure date on the calendar is standard for these types of sites.
- User carefully double-checks that he has booked for two adults, as he thinks that **the people icon that has two people of different heights makes it look like he's booked with children.** [issue]
- User quickly scrolls through the results page and thinks that they all look nice. He says that the **first thing he is drawn to is the TripAdvisor score.** [positive]
- **Likes the 4.5 TripAdvisor score**, though he does take this with a grain of salt. He does also check **how many reviews there are total.**
- **"The picture is what draws me in sometimes**, if it's a beautiful reception or the room is beautiful. As I said before, I like modern designs."
- **First tries the compare feature to find seaside**, but then decides to use the map search to find a beach-side location, saying "I suppose that's faster than comparing two hotels and then reading through the list under the hotel" [issue]
- Goes ahead clicks book on the map. He at first says that he's never looked at the map before to see where a hotel is, but thinks about it further and remembers that he has.
- User doesn't see the "close" icon for the sign up popup, and **thinks he has to sign up** to continue with his search. [issue]
- He does mention that there is still sign up/login CTA at the top of the screen even after closing the popup
- He scrolls through all the available rooms, then clicks on the first one to get into the room details. He finds "view more rates" and clicks to open to check on cancellation + breakfast.
- He finds the room rate that satisfies his parameters, then scrolls back up to view the lowest price. **"I always like to see the difference in price like should I pay now and pay less, or should I pay later and pay more."**
- Upon clicking the "book" button, he mentions that the add-ons page has the room details/price at the top of the page.
- Scrolls through the extras and mentions he wouldn't want a personal trainer on holiday
- Mentions that the bouquet of flowers might be nice if it was for his girlfriend's birthday. Goes ahead and adds and sees the green checkmark confirmation as well as the "remove" option. He finds this process **"very straightforward, it's simply clicking into the one that you want and adding it to your existing booking."** [positive]
- Easily finds the continue button to complete the booking
- His overall impression was that the app was very user-friendly. He liked the action images at the beginning of the different locations, search was simple/straightforward
- He says he's never used a hotel group's search before, more of the aggregator sites.

- Mentions that a good experience in one hotel could spark his interest in finding sister hotels.
- **"I could see myself using this to be honest. For example if I had a good experience in one hotel and I was able to search similar hotels in different cities."** [positive]
- He understands now why the hotels for different locations were popping up in the initial search
- Pretty much the same as [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com) for the room selector itself
- Very simple
- Searching by Barcelona was a pain point "I don't really need to see the hotels in Morocco when I'm searching for Barcelona." [issue]
- Recalls that one of the search categories was hotels with the name Barcelona in it and one of them was locations, doesn't remember the third (themes). He understands why it's there, but felt that it was unnecessary.
- Mentions that as far as he knows, [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com) doesn't allow you to do add-ons. "That's a nice thing, especially if you're booking a nicer accommodation...it's more of an experience." Didn't think the prices were too outrageous either. [positive]
- Doesn't have a good feel for what the hotel he booked actually looks like because the first image was of the pool/beach
- **"There was nothing that I was looking for that I couldn't find"** [positive]
- **"There didn't seem that much information about the hotel"** ... he thinks maybe he missed it when he went straight for the room [issue]
- Surprised to see the moving images on the homepage ... **"it gives you lots of beautiful locations and makes you want to visit them"** [positive]
- Surprised by the add-ons because had never seen that before through an app before (only at hotel itself) [positive]

Scenario 2: Dublin → London [The Doyle Collection App]

Goals for booking:

- Book a twin room from Friday to Monday on either the 2nd or 3rd weekend in April 2021
- Area not specified
- Breakfast included

Behaviors:

- User likes the images of the upscale hotels of the group. "They all look like nice 4 star hotels. Quite modern, quite sleek, quite well-designed"

- Quickly spots the 3 hotels in London **[positive]**
- User loves scrolling through the hotel photo carousel. He says **"I do like to have a little look at the images of the hotel ...kinda gives me an insight."** **[positive]**
- He prefers this carousel to Booking.com's. That one has thumbnails to click into, whereas here you can swipe through them. "Feels like a more modern way of doing it." **[positive]**
- User likes the hotel description, it lets him **"see a little of who they are."** **[positive]**
- Finds the hotel contact details near the bottom of the page and says it's basically all you need. He sometimes likes to call if he's interested in something specific, like a room on a high floor or sea-facing.
- User **does not investigate the + circle on his own** without prompt from tester
- User **doesn't know what the + circle will do**, he doesn't think it would be adding rooms at this stage. He wonders if it's adding another hotel or something. **[issue]**
- Once he opens the offers option, he still isn't too sure what the offers actually entail. Scrolls through quickly to scan. Selects a weekend offer.
- Doesn't know what the promo code is, says **"you assume it's cheaper than the normal thing"** but doesn't seem sure that it is actually cheaper.
- User has troubling navigating the months in the calendar. **"This could be very simple but it doesn't seem that easy to me."** Does end up figuring it's a vertical scroll. **[issue]**
- User assumes that tapping the first date and then the second will select them both. **[issue]**
- User gets frustrated when the **dates are difficult to select**. It takes him two tries. He says arrival and departure **"don't need to be two separate calendars."** **[issue]**
- Scrolls through all rooms first and then selects the first one
- Likes the description of the room and the features. Glad that it's at the top. **[positive]**
- Was expecting to see the information about the prices on this page, but since it's not, he assumes it will be on the next page.
- He says that he does appreciate that it's simple and you're not seeing a million things on one page.
- Gets to the checkout page and realizes that he hasn't checked on the breakfast. He returns to the room details page to see if it was in the hotel description.
- **Initially misses the dropdown for the rate details**, but does see it eventually and this is where the breakfast info is. **[issue]**
- He assumes that because it's a nicer hotel, some of the prepay options are not available here
- He felt like this app was high-end and he liked it
- He's stayed in one of these before and liked it a lot
- **"Fancier, more high-end hotel app"**
- The add-ons were harder to find on this app, but sometimes for the higher-end hotels it's a "more professional approach." He found that to be a plus. **[issue]**

- **Apart from the calendar, he found this app easier to use.**
- **"Not sure about the offers, not sure if I got any money off."**
- Liked the better hotel description and easy image viewing **[positive]**
- Liked that the hotel was selling itself w/ the images and the description.
- **"I wouldn't have automatically clicked that plus sign, not knowing what it was. I don't think I expected that to be there." [issue]**
- Feels like he expected more info about the type of booking at the end (price, offers, types of rooms, payments) **[issue]**
- Price was expensive
- Had never seen a collection of hotels together. Never searched this way.

Conclusions

- Users are inspired by **beautiful images/videos**.
- **Well-written copy** can be very helpful in showing value.
- Search results should be as simple as possible, and potentially just return locations. **Too many options too early may trip people up.**
- Date-selectors are often tricky to use. It's important to make sure that it's clear how to operate them and that they aren't too laggy. **It should be easy to select the proper dates.**
- **Reviews**, particularly from well-known aggregators like TripAdvisor, can be very helpful in deciding which hotel to choose.
- **Iconography should be clear.** It should be clear what they denote and what will happen when you click on something.
- **Local date formats/currencies/etc** should be used wherever possible.
- **Offers should be presented clearly** and in a way that doesn't require any extra understanding of special terms.