

ASSIGNMENT 3: USABILITY TESTING

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1 Introduction

This document outlines the set-up of a user-based evaluation conducted through user testing sessions. The primary goal and purpose of this evaluation is to assess the usability and functionality of the home page of Memory Lane Event Planning's website. By analysing user interactions and behaviours, the aim is to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the design, features and navigation of the home page, to help to refine and improve the overall user experience.

The following headings and subheadings are covered in this document:

1. Recruitment:

- Participant selection
- Number of participants
- Relevance of chosen participant group
- Other considerations in the recruitment process

2. Context:

- Test objectives
- Test location
- Required personnel
- Pre-test considerations
- Other factors to consider

3. Test/Evaluation Measure:

- Evaluation method and instrument used
- User test tasks
- User test questions

2 Recruitment

2.1 Participant Selection

Below is the participant selection criteria:

1. I identify individuals who closely match the target audience of Memory Lane Event Planning. This includes people who have weddings, milestone birthdays, anniversaries or any other significant event coming up, as they are more likely to engage with upscale event services to plan their special occasions. Selecting participants who are actively looking to get such events planned, ensures that their feedback is directly relevant to the website's purpose and functionality.
2. Additionally to the target audience, I seek out individuals with some background or familiarity in event planning, as they are likely to offer valuable insights into the website's usability and functionality based on their existing experience with event planning and how they interact with their clients..
3. I also consider a diverse range of participant demographics, taking into account various factors such as age, gender, occupation, and geographic location. This approach reflects the broad range of potential clients for Memory Lane Event Planning, where the target audience is those who have an interest in upscale event services, rather than a specific demographic profile.

2.2 Number of Participants

Research shows that a large sample size is not needed for user testing as just 5 participants uncover 85% of usability issues (Stack, 2024). However, due to the diverse target audience of Memory Lane Event Planning, I am recruiting 8-10 participants. This larger sample size provides a more comprehensive overview of usability issues, behaviours and trends among different types of users.

2.3 Relevance of Chosen Participant Group

Overall, this particular group of participants qualify for the user test due to their direct relevance to Memory Lane Event Planning's target audience and/or their potential to provide valuable insights from experience with real-world event planning scenarios. Their selection ensures that the user-based evaluation captures a diverse range of perspectives and experiences, leading to a more accurate and reliable evaluation of the home page's usability, functionality and overall user experience.

2.4 Other Considerations in the Recruitment Process

2.4.1 Sourcing Participants

To recruit a diverse demographic of participants that match the participant selection criteria, I use online platforms such as social media channels (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok) and online forums related to event planning. These platforms have posts or groups where people actively discuss, seek or give advice on planning upscale events. By messaging people on these platforms, I can directly reach the relevant participants who are in the process of getting their events planned or planning events. Additionally, I also attend industry events, conferences, or networking sessions where event planners and their potential clients gather, providing me with in person opportunities to introduce the user testing and invite people to be participants.


2.4.2 Invitation Message for Participant Recruitment


Below is a message that aims to invite the sourced participants to partake in the user testing sessions for the home page of Memory Lane Event Planning's website.


"Hi there,


We're conducting user testing sessions for the home page of Memory Lane Event Planning's website, and we'd love your input! We're looking for individuals who are interested in utilising event planning services for planning their special upcoming occasions or have previous experience with planning significant events.


Here's what you need to know:

 **Location:** The sessions are conducted online, so you can join from the comfort of your own home. Alternatively, if you would prefer an on-site session, sessions are held at 123 King Street, Waterford.

 **Time Commitment:** The session will be approximately 30 minutes in duration.

 **Incentive:** As a token of our appreciation for your time and valuable feedback, you'll receive a €20 one-for-all gift card.

 **Confidentiality:** Your privacy is our priority. All information shared during the session will be kept confidential.

 **Who Will Be Present:** Our team will include a moderator who will guide you through the session, as well as a UX designer and a note-taker who will oversee the session.

If you're interested and available, please let us know your ideal date, time and location, and we'll get back to you with further details.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Best regards,

Emma (UX designer for Memory Lane Event Planning)"

2.4.3 Participant Support and Accessibility Considerations

- I take into account the accessibility requirements of confirmed participants to ensure that the testing environment accommodates various needs, such as providing assistive technologies, e.g. screen readers, or making appropriate accommodations for participants with disabilities.

- I offer support and guidance to confirmed participants throughout the testing process. This includes providing clear instructions, addressing any concerns or questions they may have, and ensuring that they feel comfortable to provide honest feedback.
- I verify that confirmed participants have access to the necessary technology and resources required to participate in the user testing sessions, whether it be online or on-site. I provide guidance or assistance with any technical setup or troubleshooting to ensure a smooth and seamless testing experience.
- I adhere to ethical guidelines when conducting user testing, ensuring that participant rights, privacy, and confidentiality are respected at all times. I obtain consent, (see consent form below), from participants prior to the start of the testing sessions and address any concerns or ethical considerations raised during the process.

2.4.4 Participant Consent Form

“Thank you for agreeing to participate in user testing sessions for the Memory Lane Event Planning website home page. The purpose of this test is to gather feedback on the usability and functionality of the home page. Your participation will involve exploring the home page, performing tasks, and providing feedback on your experience.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the test at any time without consequence. Your identity and any personal information collected during the study will remain confidential. Data collected will be used for research purposes with the aim of enhancing the website’s home page only. Testing sessions will be recorded for analysis and review.

By participating in this study, you acknowledge that you have read and understood this consent form.

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____”

3 Context

3.1 Testing/Evaluation Objectives

In summary, the home page includes a navigation menu at the top of the page, an automatic carrousel of event photos and associated testimonials with arrows located on the left and right of the images to switch to moving the images manually, introduction information about the company, the type of events/services offered, and call-to-action buttons for going to the gallery page or to the contact page to inquire.

Based on these features here are the testing objectives for the home page:

1. Effectiveness of the carousel:

- Assess the ease of use and intuitiveness of the arrows/buttons for navigating through event photos.
- Evaluate the impact of an automatic carousel when the arrows are not in use: Do the users have enough time to read the testimonial included? Do they lose focus on the introduction text when the image changes?
- Measure user engagement with the carousel to determine its effectiveness in capturing user interest and attention.

2. Clarity of introduction and event/service information:

- Assess the clarity of the company's mission/introduction statement.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of the amount of information provided, making sure it strikes a balance between being concise and informative.
- Determine the clarity of information regarding the types of events and services offered by the company, ensuring it is easily understandable to visitors.
- Assess the accessibility and visibility of the search bar for locating specific events or services.

3. Visibility and usability of call-to-action buttons:

- Assess the positioning, clarity and understanding of the labels used for call-to-action buttons.

- Measure user engagement with call-to-action buttons and track conversion rates of users who successfully can navigate back to the home page once clicked on.

4. Overall user engagement and satisfaction:

- Gather feedback of users' initial impressions of the home page layout and design.
- Evaluate user satisfaction with the overall user experience.
- Identify any pain points and areas for improvement.

3.2 Testing Location

The user tests are primarily conducted online. This ensures flexibility and accessibility across the diverse participant selection e.g. conducting the tests online allows people from different locations to take part without the need for travel. However, on-site tests are also conducted for those who are more comfortable with in-person interactions or for those who are not familiar with using / setting up the required online services that would be involved in the remote user test. Both remote and on-site testing sessions are moderated.

3.3 Required Personnel

- The **moderator** leads the test sessions and provides instructions/tasks to participants, in an unbiased manner. They guide the participants through the process, observe their interactions with the website, and encourage any thoughts, opinions or feedback.
- As the **UX designer**, I am also present during the test sessions to observe participant interactions and gather insights into their experiences. By being present at the user test, I aim to further understand the end users' behaviours and needs. However, I remain neutral during the sessions to avoid bias.
- A **note-taker** is also present to document key observations, feedback and any issues encountered during the test sessions. This documentation is referenced for further analysis and refinement of the home page after the user testing.

3.4 Considerations Before Commencing the User Test

- I ensure that the online platform used for remote participants is configured and tested thoroughly before the test sessions. I also verify that all participants have access to the platform and have had time beforehand to get familiar with its features and functionality.
- I arrange the on-site location, ensuring it is equipped with the necessary technology and facilities for conducting the test sessions. Furthermore, I confirm any additional requirements are set up, such as seating arrangements, lighting, and accessibility accommodations.
- I provide clear instructions to both online and on-site participants regarding the test session plans, including how to access the online platform, join the session, and participate in the evaluation activities. I also make sure to address any questions or concerns they may have beforehand.
- I ensure that the moderator conducting the test sessions is familiar with the test procedures and objectives. Additionally, I provide any necessary guidance or support to ensure they can effectively lead the sessions.
- I brief the note-taker on their role and responsibilities to ensure they understand the information they need to document and how to do so effectively without disrupting the flow of the sessions.
- I have plans in place for potential technical issues or disruptions, both online and on-site. I make sure there are backup options for internet connectivity, equipment failure, and other unforeseen circumstances to minimise disruptions to the test sessions.
- I ask participants some pre-test questions to gather demographic information, assess their familiarity with similar websites or services, and understand their expectations and preferences regarding the website being tested.

3.5 Additional Considerations

3.5.1 Considerations for During the User Test

- The moderator and I avoid explaining the design or insights about the design to the participant, as doing so can introduce bias into the results of the test.
- When participants inquire about how a prototype or design is intended to function, the moderator and I redirect the question back to them. This encourages participants to think independently about their interactions with the design and provide valuable insights into their own perceptions and expectations.
- The moderator and I keep discussions focused and avoid deviating from the test script to maintain consistency across all participants. However, if a significant issue arises during a session, it may become necessary for us to go off script to guide them further.

3.5.2 Considerations for After the User Test

- I ask participants some post-test questions to gather feedback on their overall impressions of the website and specific usability issues encountered.
- I schedule a debriefing session with the moderator and note-taker to discuss and analyse key findings, observations, and insights gathered during the testing sessions.
- With the help of the team, I categorise the most significant issues identified during the test session, ranging from low to high criticality, to determine the priority for addressing and refining them.

4 Test/Evaluation Measure

4.1 Evaluation Method and Instrument Used

Moderated usability testing is used as the primary method for evaluating the Memory Lane Event Planning website's home page. The chosen instrument for the test is a walkthrough. This method and instrument include the involvement of a moderator who guides participants through a series of tasks and scenarios while observing their interactions with the home page.

The following are utilised to assist with and capture the moderated walkthrough testing sessions:

1. Pre-Test Questions

2. Session Plan:

A session plan is made to outline the objectives and goals of the user test, the moderator's role in the testing session (instructions for introducing the session, explaining tasks to participants, probing for insights, etc), and the actual tasks, instructions and scenarios the participants are asked to follow and complete.

3. Prototype of home page:

The home page prototype being tested serves as the key tool for the user tests, enabling participants to interact with it as they complete the tasks and provide their insights into its usability and functionality.

4. Observation Notes Template:

A structured template is used for documenting observations, feedback, and issues encountered during the testing session, which helps to make sure all the important data is noted and put into specific categories.

5. Recording Equipment:

Video cameras for in person tests and screen recording software for online tests are used, with the participants consent, to capture the testing sessions for later review and analysis.

6. Post-Test Questions

The method of moderated usability testing was chosen due to its controlled approach in gathering qualitative feedback from participants interacting with the home page.

Moderating the sessions allows for the participants to be guided through predefined tasks and scenarios, allowing for real-time observation of their behaviour, reactions, and pain points. This method offers valuable insights into the usability and functionality of the home page, helping with the identification of areas for improvement. The choice of utilising the walkthrough instrument further enhances the effectiveness of moderated usability testing.

This method allows the moderator and I to observe participant behaviour and reactions first-hand with the actual home page design. Moreover, the walkthrough method ensures consistency and reliability across testing sessions, as participants navigate through the same set of tasks and instructions using the same prototype design, ultimately contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the home page's usability and functionality.

4.2 Tasks for the User Test

Here are the tasks that the moderator instructs the participants to do during the test:

1. Start by navigating through the home page to view the content and features.
2. Navigate back to the top of the home page screen.
3. Take a moment to read the introduction information about the company.
4. Use the arrows to look through the carousel of event photos.
5. Read the testimonial quotes associated with the event photos in the carousel.
6. Explore the types of events/services offered.
7. Use the search bar to find a specific type of event.
8. Click on the button to visit the gallery page.

9. Navigate back to the home page from the gallery page.
10. Click on the button to inquire about event planning services.
11. Navigate back to the home page from the contact/inquire page.

4.3 Questions for the User Test

Below are a variety of open and closed-ended questions used to assess the usability of the home page during the pre-test, test, and post-test sessions.

4.3.1 Pre-test Questions

Before the test begins, to ease participants into the testing process, I talk with the user over a coffee for 10 - 15 minutes to discuss more about them, their expectations and preferences through pre-test questions. In addition to basic demographic questions, these questions include:

1. On a scale of 1 (not familiar) to 5 (very familiar), how would you rate your familiarity with using event planning websites?
2. Have you visited the Memory Lane Event Planning website before?
3. What features do you typically look for in an event planning website?
4. What frustrations have you experienced with event planning websites in the past?
5. What would make you choose one event planning website over another?

4.3.2 Test Questions

During the user test, while it's beneficial for the moderator to just read out the tasks and let the participants lead the interaction, there are cases where asking open ended questions can draw valuable feedback. Here are some questions aimed at encouraging discussion and gathering insights into the participants' experience with the home page:

1. How are you feeling as you navigate through the home page?
2. What are your thoughts on the layout and arrangement of the content?
3. Are you finding it easy, at a glance, to locate the information you're looking for?
4. Can you describe your experience with interacting with the carousel of event photos?

5. Are there any elements on the home page that are confusing or unclear to you?

4.3.3 Post-test Questions

Following the user testing session, participants are asked to share their reflections and insights through a series of post-test questions. These questions include:

1. Did the company's introduction information convey its mission effectively?
2. Were you able to view each event photo and associated testimonial adequately before the slide transitioned?
3. Did you find the manual navigation arrows/buttons on the carousel intuitive to use and easy to navigate between?
4. Did you find the search bar effective in locating specific information or services on the home page?
5. Did you feel motivated to click on the gallery or enquiry buttons? Why or why not?
6. What additional information would you like to see included on the home page?
7. What improvements would you suggest to enhance the usability of the home page?
8. Which aspect of the home page, if any, did you find most frustrating or distracting?
9. How would you rate the accessibility of the home page?
10. On a scale of 1 to 5, how visually appealing do you find the design of the home page?
11. Overall, how satisfied are you with your experience on the home page?

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the user-based evaluation process outlined in this assignment involved various key aspects, including participant recruitment, test context, testing/evaluation measures, and additional considerations for enhancing the user-based evaluations effectiveness.

Carefully selecting participants who closely match the target audience, ensuring a diverse representation, and conducting the evaluation in a hybrid online and on-site setting, help to gather relevant and accurate insights into the usability and functionality of the home page.

Utilising a moderated usability testing approach, supported with a walkthrough, facilitates the gathering of qualitative data to assist in improving the user experience of the home page. The questions listed and asked during the evaluation sessions play a key role in gaining valuable feedback from participants and contribute significantly to understanding their experience and preferences. Ultimately, this user-evaluation testing approach gathers insights into what needs to be refined on the home page design to better align with the needs and preferences of the target audience and to improve the overall user experience.

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