

Mount Royal University | INFO 3600

Usability Report

Report 1: Canada Post

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Usability 3600 | Report 1 – Canada Post

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1: Executive Summary

On September 18th, 2021, two participants worked through a series of tasks to explore the user experience of Canada Post's current website and online services. Each participant had their own experiences and familiarity with the site, however both participants had used Canada Post within the last six months. The participant with less experience using a computer, and the internet in general, reported feeling primarily frustrated or annoyed, and was "happy to be done with this" by the final task. In contrast, the other participant, who uses Canada Post's online services almost daily for her business, was satisfied primarily and was far less frustrated when something unexpected happened. The personal relationship with the moderator and participants was an obvious influence during the test, with one participant commenting "if this wasn't for you to finish a project, I would have stopped after the first hiccup".

Positive feedback:

"The website is pretty easy to navigate, I will use it again!" said one participant. The red menu ribbon on the homepage was a cornerstone to the experience, whenever a participant become unsure, lost, or confused, they returned to the homepage and immediately checked the ribbon for a solution. The top menu bar provided a more detailed and precise path to what they were looking for. When one participant became frustrated and stuck mid-task, he resorted to using the search bar, which "works exactly like I thought it would! I like a good search bar; it knew I wasn't going to look for much longer".

2: Issues

Critical Issue:

The single most significant issue was the "Delivery Standard" missing from the "International Shipping Rates" page. Both participants got stuck at this step and quit the task after multiple failed attempts. One participant discovered the information during a task later in the test, but the initial failure was significant enough that they "would not have spent more time on the site had it not been for this test". Instead, they would simply switch to a different shipping company, such as UPS, which displays the estimated date of delivery within the shipping rate quote.

Recommendations:

The delivery estimate for an international surface shipment is a static value, unrelated to the information entered to generate the rate estimate. Therefore, it should be prominently displayed, especially during the international rate estimation process. The existing whitespace in the panel generated during a rate estimate is an obvious candidate for the delivery information, as is the header containing the customer's entry.

Not Applicable	Tax	\$0.00
Total		\$25.30

Please note:
These prices are estimates and subject to adjustment by Canada Post.
Limitations to size, weight and coverage vary for international destinations (See [Postal Guide](#)).
Pickup is available in your area if you are a business customer. - [Request a pickup](#)

Choose your preferred service and proceed to estimate the duties and taxes

[Send a package](#)

[Fill out customs form](#) [Estimate Duties and Taxes](#)

Figure 2.1 Recommended placement to improve usability of international shipping information.

Non-Critical Issues:

50% of participants stated they would prefer to visit a post office in person instead of the time and effort spent using the website. They said they felt more confident in their package arriving as expected from the in-person interaction of the post office experience. To quote participant 2, “I could have walked over there and been back already before I figure out all this fanciness”.

3: Background

Participant Profile:

This usability test was conducted as part of the INFO 3600 – Usability class at Mount Royal University. The participants were recruited from my short list of personal contacts who had the ability to conduct a remote test in accordance with public health measures. Two participants were chosen and luckily, they happened to represent two distinct groups of typical customers for the Canada Post website, the novice and the professional.

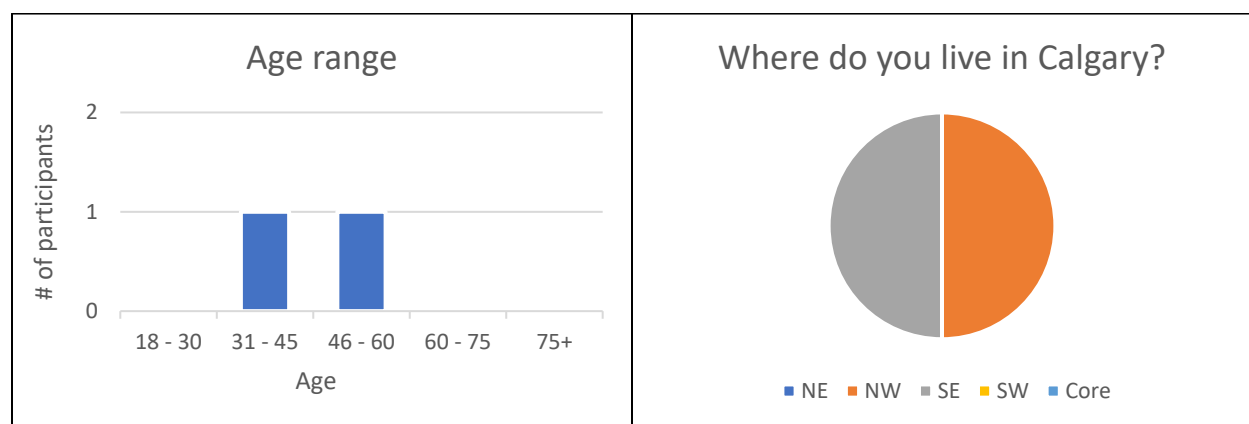


Figure 3.1 Zero overlap between participant's age or location.

Recruitment:

Both participants were recruited from my personal contact list last minute due to sudden onset of public health measures related to the pandemic. The requirements to participate were: 1) has access to a computer, 2) has a working internet connection for that computer, and 3) is available for roughly half an hour on Saturday, September 18th via Discord. I compensated them each with a verbal promise of a coffee or food delivery once it is safe again to meet in person.

Pre-activity questionnaire:

	What is your profession or title?	Do you consider yourself Tech-savvy?	Are you familiar with Canada Post?	Have you used Canada Post online?	How many times per year do you use Canada Post?	What do you typically use Canada Post for?
P 1	Business Owner	Yes	Yes	Yes	>8	Personal & business
P 2	Construction Forman	No	Yes	No	4 – 8	Personal

Table 3.1 Participant's responses to the questionnaire show differences in both familiarity with the service and computers in general.

Equipment:

The test was conducted remotely using Discord's screen sharing and video chat. This platform was chosen due to the participant's familiarity with Discord – it was already installed, and they knew how to

use it. The physical equipment used for this test was the participants own home computer using Google Chrome on Mac or Windows.

4: Findings

Post-session questionnaire:

What one thing would you change about the Canada Post site?

- *"I think they should put the arrival date right beside the price when you run an estimate, it seems ridiculous that it's buried away somewhere else!" (Participant).*

What did you like best?

- *"I like how easy it is to track my shipments, I also like how quickly I can print off a return label. It saves me a lot of time" (Participant).*

What did you like the least?

- *"That international shipping page was a pain in the butt. I can't believe they think that is easier than going to the post office" (Participant).*

Would you use this service again based on your experience today?

- *"Based on today? No, probably not, but I don't think I would use it anyway. Just not the way I send mail to people" (Participant).*

How satisfied are you with the following? [5, satisfied – 1, dissatisfied]

	Homepage	Store locator	Shipping rate tool	Online store	Support options
P1	5	3	4	5	-
P2	5	4	1	5	-

Table 4.1 Participant's reported satisfaction with each area of the site they tested

Performance metrics by participant:

Three performance metrics were measured: time spent by task, completion of task, and satisfaction by task. Overall, the difference in technical ability, familiarity with the service, and general familiarity with modern internet, such as complexity rules for passwords and verifying your email. The participant with higher technical proficiency who uses Canada Post's online services frequently had a clear advantage and completed more of the tasks, significantly quicker, and with more accuracy.

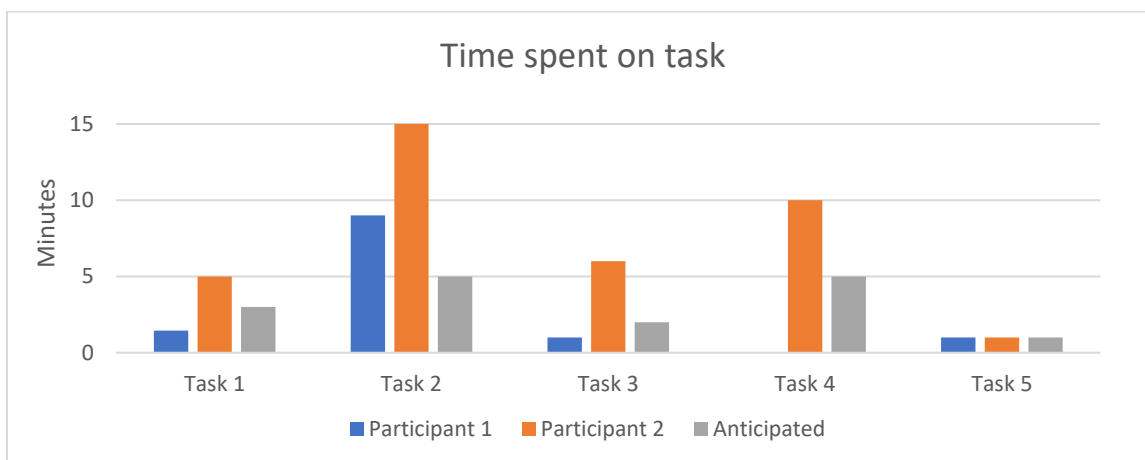


Figure 4.1 Time spent per task varies considerably between participants, potentially related to their familiarity with the service and computers overall.

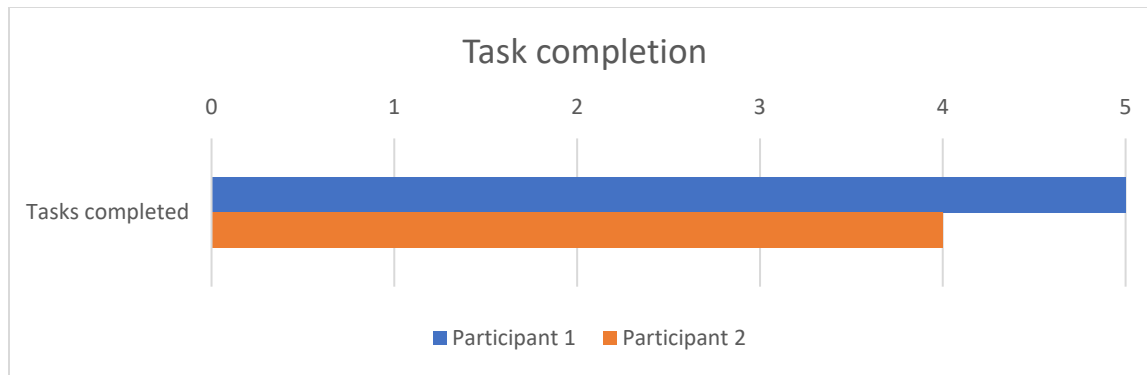


Figure 4.2 Every task was completed except for task 3, identified as the most critical failure within the test.

After each task, participants were asked how satisfied they are with the website, its functionality, and their ability to complete the task. The second task had a significant negative impact on moral, with both participants reporting dissatisfaction and frustration with their unsuccessful attempts to find the estimated date of delivery. While one participant's satisfaction bounced back, the other had become obviously flustered and discouraged by what he assumed was his "old man tech skills", causing him to resort to using the search engine to complete the next task.

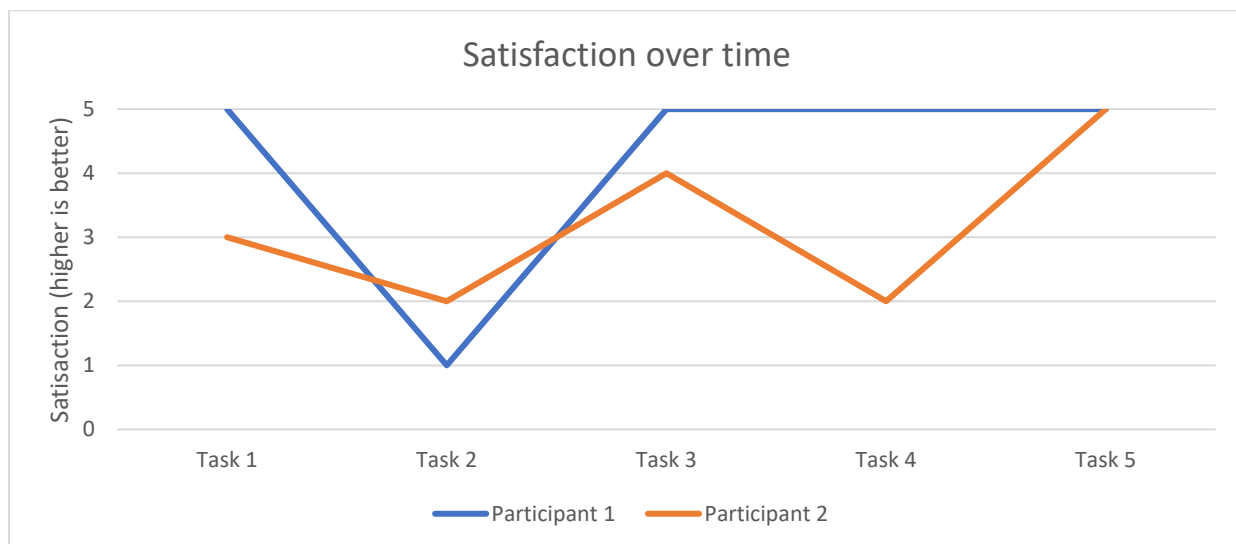


Figure 4.3 Participant satisfaction with the service as they progressed through each task. With 5 being the most satisfied, and 1 being completely dissatisfied.

Findings by task:

Participants were asked to complete five tasks using Canada Post's website. Canadapost.ca was loaded in Google Chrome on the participant's home computer. Each task began on the main homepage, then participants thought aloud as they walked through what they expected to find with each decision they made on the website. Participants were encouraged to try multiple ways to complete the task, emphasizing the dynamic that they could do no wrong during the session, they are not being tested.

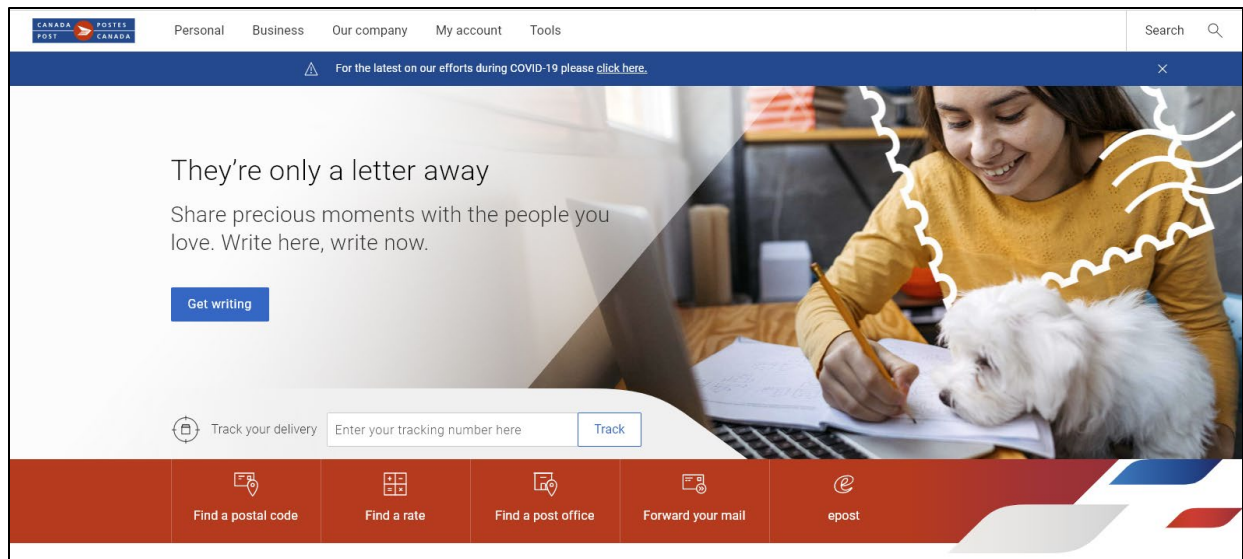


Figure 4.4 The Canada Post homepage, the starting point for each task in this exercise. The red ribbon menu across the page became a cornerstone for participants to navigate the website.

Task 1:

1. Find the nearest post office to your home.
2. Record the store location and the time it opens on Monday morning

The first task was straight forward and both participants completed it quickly. The red ribbon in the center of the page was effective in guiding their navigation, they both knew to use it intuitively. The map pane itself presented some confusion about 'zooming in', as both participants tried to use the mouse wheel to zoom in to their area after their search for 'Calgary'. The city map was easily navigated by both participants by using the buttons found within Google map's pane.

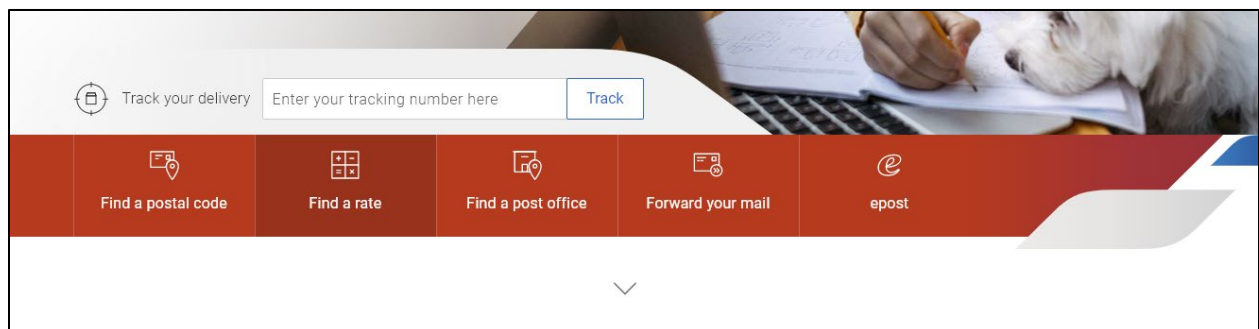


Figure 4.5 According to a participant, "the menu ribbon across the homepage was easy to spot and use"

There was a moment of hesitancy about what to enter in the search field. With both participants inquiring to the moderator about "what" they were expected to enter. Confused by blank search field, one participant returned to homepage assuming he had clicked the wrong button or as he said, "the page probably didn't load right". Regardless, they both entered 'Calgary', which ultimately produced the same result, but required more steps compared to entering their own addresses.

Figure 4.6 Both participants expressed uncertainty about what to enter in this search bar, "Is this for my address? Or city?"

Task 2:

1. Find out how much it costs to mail a hard covered book to someone in Melbourne, Australia. (The package should travel by surface).
2. When would you expect the parcel to arrive?

The book specifications were provided by the moderator (23 x 11 x 3 cm @ 1kg). Generating the shipping quote was quick and relatively painless, despite some minor confusion when using the drop-down menu to select the target destination (they were looking for Melbourne, instead of Australia). However, the page containing the shipping rate quote did not display the estimated arrival for their package, which confused and completely derailed both participants. After returning to the homepage, and re-entering their entire shipment again, neither participant could produce the arrival date. One participant completed the entire duties and taxes section hoping to produce a delivery estimate, again without success. While the other participant conceded and moved onto the next task, completely frustrated with himself.

Item Details Edit details					
From	To	Length	Width	Height	Weight
[REDACTED]	Australia	23.00 cm	11.00 cm	3.00 cm	1.000 kg

With Solutions for Small Business, the more you ship online, the more you save.* [Sign up](#) now to save up to 36% on domestic shipping and up to 57% on international shipping. [Show minimum online savings](#)

You have 6 choices [Print](#)

Small Packet™ - International Surface - \$25.30

Figure 4.7 The rate was easy to find, however neither participant could find when their package would arrive.

Task 3:

1. How could you create a return label if you needed to ship back the delivery to a retailer?

This task was influenced by the previous question, meaning both participants were feeling flustered and embarrassed (despite the moderator reassurance that they were not being tested). Once again, familiarity with the site was a huge advantage, taking that participant less than a minute to complete, she mentioned “I do this at my office at least once a week, it works great!”. Unfortunately, still frustrated by the previous task, the other participant was quick to use what he was familiar with, the search bar. He entered the term “return” and instantly found what he was looking for, “return items purchased online”.

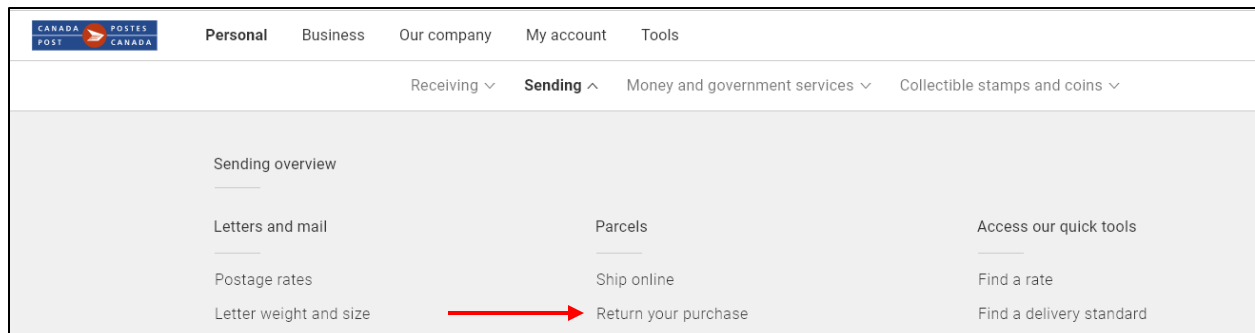


Figure 4.8 The participant who regularly uses the Canada Post website completed this task in under a minute

Task 4:

1. Sign up and create a personal profile at Canada Post.

Due to the remote nature of this session, one participant was already signed into their Canada Post account, which could be avoided by using an incognito tab (the moderator forgot). The remaining participant created a new account using their personal email address, albeit stubbornly after struggling to enter a password which complied with the required complexity rules. This password was unfortunately written down wrong, requiring the participant to reset the password before they could finally access their account. Again, these situations can likely be attributed to the participant's unfamiliarity with the internet and modern web services in general. For example, in response to why the password complexity was needed, the participant stated, “this whole song and dance is to keep someone who doesn't exist [a bot], from stealing something [the account] that doesn't even exist yet?”. The moderator empathized.

A screenshot of the Canada Post sign-up form. The form is titled 'Username and password'. It has three main sections: 'Username', 'Password', and 'Confirm password'. Each section has a text input field and a 'Show password' link. Below the 'Username' field, there is a red error message: 'Enter a username that contains letters and/or numbers. It can also include 1 period and/or 1 underscore.' Below the 'Password' field, there is a red error message: 'Enter a password that meets all listed requirements.' Below the 'Confirm password' field, there is a red error message: 'The password and confirmed password don't match. Enter the same password in both fields.'

Figure 4.9 The less technically experienced participant encountered trouble with the complexity of the password criteria

Task 5:

1. Choose a nice international stamp to put on your package for Australia.

This task was a fun and casual way to finish this session. It was low stress, easy to find, and both participants expressed fondness for the places featured on the stamps. The participants immediately knew where to go as the stamps are prominently advertised in multiple locations around the site as they progressed through the earlier tasks.

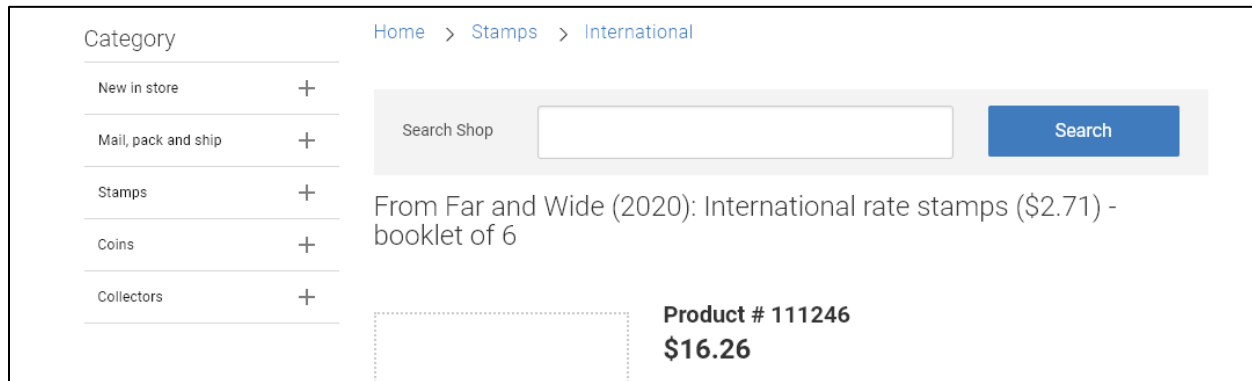


Figure 4.10 Familiar navigation elements on the left-hand side, participants mentioned the similarity to other shopping sites

5: Reflection

Moderator feedback:

The moderator could have improved the session by having a compliant password ready for participants to use, eliminating the opportunity for them to forget it in the process. Had the test been conducted in person, the browser would have been cache cleared or set to incognito, and the hardware would be identical between participants to provide a more controlled and precise testing platform. The moderator could have encouraged the frustrated participant to persevere more easily in person, perhaps to the point that they would not have resorted to using the search engine.

Test feedback:

The test was well received, despite some frustrations. However, creating the account first might be a more logical path for the user to follow because without an account you technically cannot generate an international shipping label, nor can you purchase stamps from the online store. This simple modification to the sequence of tasks might more accurately demonstrate a typical customer's actions.

Personal feedback:

As the moderator, I felt a bit unprepared to conduct the session remotely. Between software/hardware concerns and my ability to provide support, I chose to use a platform I knew both were familiar with, called Discord, instead of Google Meets. I would have liked to record the session but neither of the participants felt comfortable with that. As a result, I tried to jot down the experience as efficiently and accurately as I could, but I know that I missed some of the more nuanced behaviors due to looking away from my screen when writing. I could have recorded more performance metrics, such as: click count, click rate, time spent on each page, number of retries, number of errors, etc. I know this data would have been useful to collect and analyze but I was unprepared to do so at that time.

6: Appendix

Welcome script:

Moderator: Hi [*participant's name*]! Thank you for participating in today's session.

My name is Logan, I am conducting this activity as part of my course INFO 3600 – Usability at Mount Royal University this semester. This session should take no longer than 30 minutes, and you are welcome to take a break at any time.

To explore the usability of Canada Post's website, I will ask you to complete five specific tasks while I observe and document your experience and actions. I would like you to speak aloud as you work, tell me about what you are doing and what you expect to happen. For example, "I want to ship a package, so I guess I need to find that section, I'm scrolling around... Oh, I see a button that says, "ship now", I assume the shipping information will be there, so I click the button". Or maybe, "I see a shopping buggy, I bet that is where I find different boxes to purchase. I click that button".

The most important thing to remember is I am testing the website, not you. There is nothing you can do wrong; this test is to help me understand how a typical person might use the Canada post website.

Try to complete the tasks without using the search function. Feel free to ask me questions as you work through the tasks, but please note I may not give you an immediate answer to avoid influencing the data I am collecting. Do you have any questions before we begin?

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