



**Enhancing the user onboarding experience on
vacation rental management system, Futurestay**



Overview/Problem Statement

Futurestay is a SaaS platform which helps users book properties online and property managers manage their bookings.

In this project, as an UX Researcher, I was tasked at helping the engineering and **product team in understanding the users' painpoints** while using the software and also **testing some of the software features**.

Process

During my internship, I conducted user-research using four different methods:

- Usability studies
- Card-sorting
- Surveys
- Interviews
- Mobile app design



I. Usability testing : Process Test Plan

Objectives

1. Obtain user feedback on the different functionalities present in the Futurestay's software.
2. Observe the users' pain points while using the software.
3. Come up with recommendations for the tech team to improve on the UI.

To further the process of unmoderated usability testing: **tasks, pre-tasks/post-task questionnaires** were uploaded on usertesting.com.

Users: 5 (Property managers recruited by usertesting.com)

Time period: 2 weeks

Tasks employed in the usability tests:

1. Add property information to Futurestay
2. Check your property information
3. Do whatever to get the property live

I. Usability testing: Process

Study implementation:

Tasks employed in the usability tests:

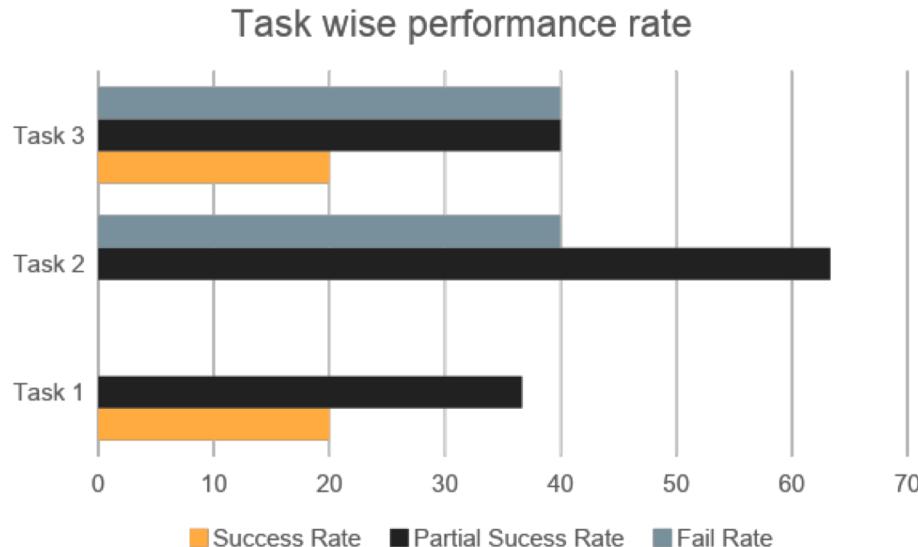
1. Add property information to Futurestay
2. Check your property information
3. Use the software to get the property live

After users completed the unmoderated usability tests, we coded the usability tests followed by calculating metrics such as **users task performance, task-wise performance rate and time spent by user per task.**



I. Usability testing: Analysis/Results

Task performance rate



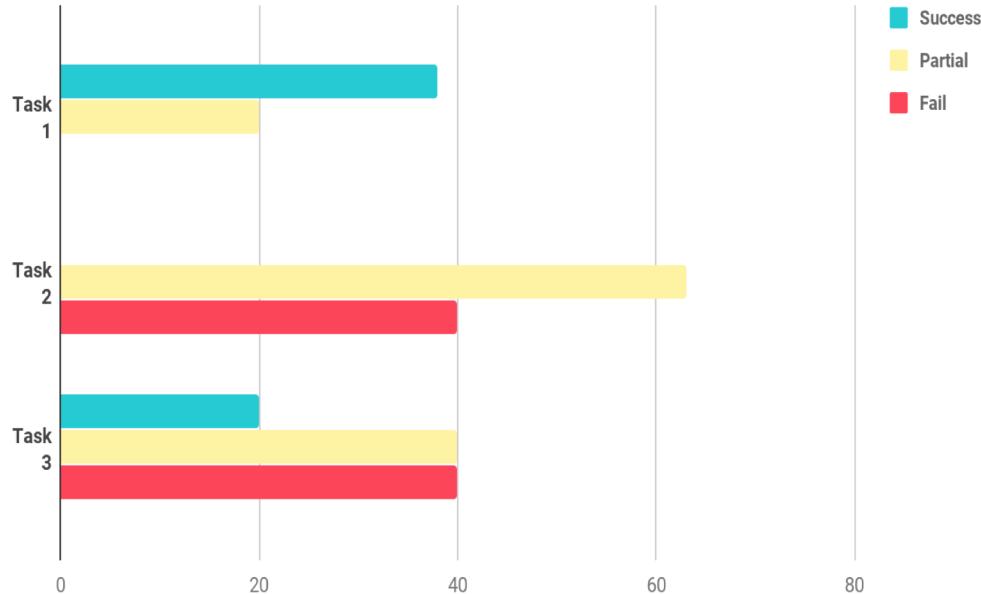
Users' pain points : Issues

- No fail rate in Task 1-“Add property information to Futurestay.”
- High partial success rate for all the tasks -- adding property info, check property info, and setting property live.
- Same fail rate and partial success rate for Task 3 - “Do whatever to get the property live.”



I. Usability testing: Analysis/Results

Task Wise Performance Rate



User pain points : Issues

- No fail rate in Task 1 - “Add property information to Futurestay.”
- High partial success rate for all the tasks
- Same fail rate and partial success rate for Task 3 - “Do whatever to get the property live”

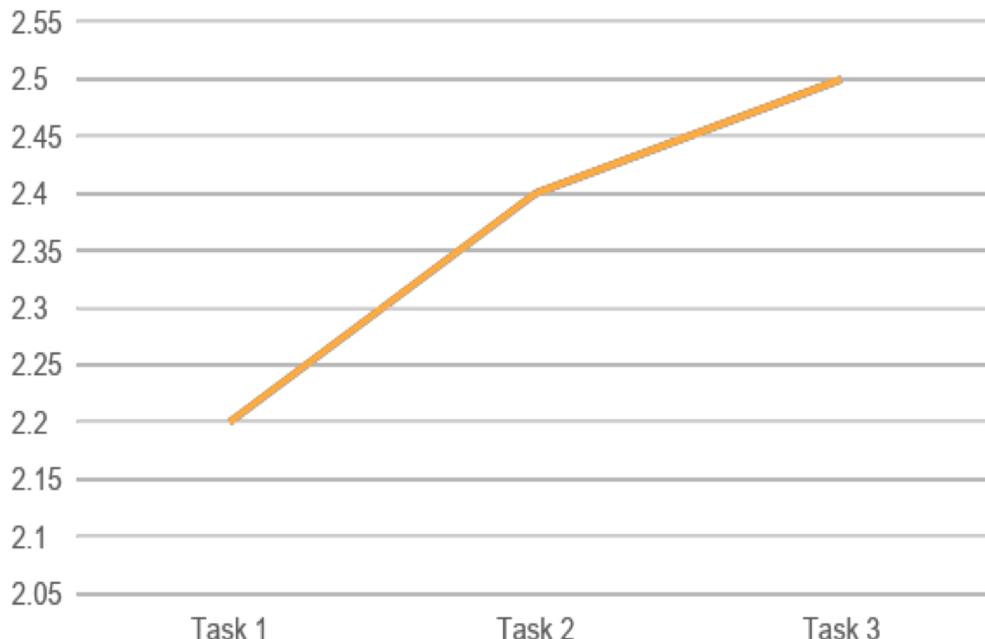


I. Usability testing: Analysis/Results



Time on Task

Avg time (min) vs Task



Potential reasons:

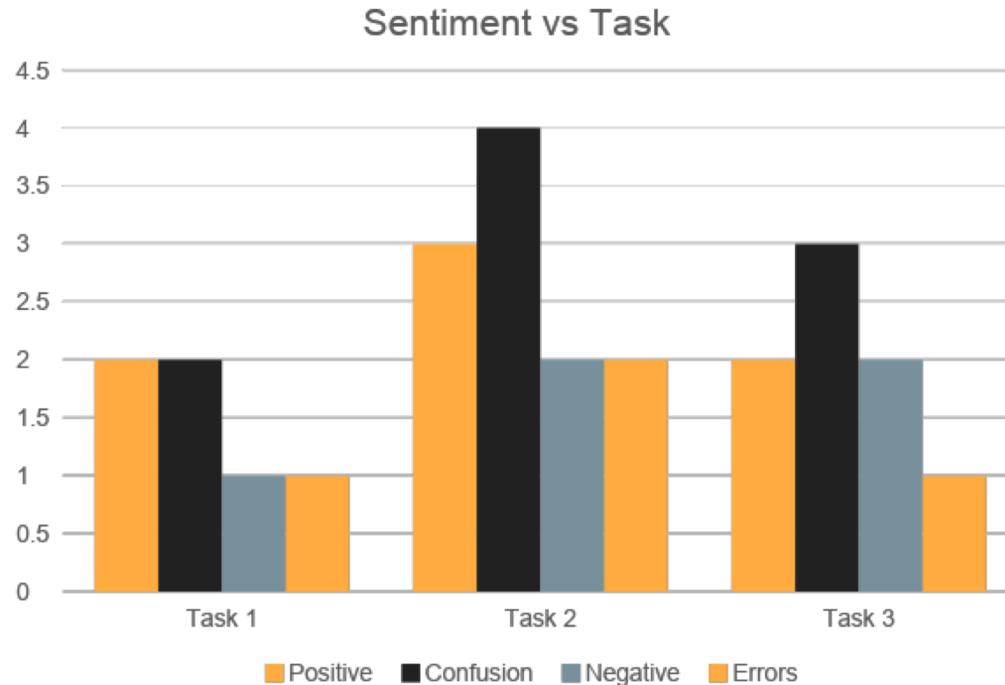
- Too much time spent to understand the task description and updating property information page : Task 3 - “Do whatever to get the property live.”
- Prototype was confusing to use -- different placement of different option in the business



I. Usability testing: Analysis/Results



Sentiments vs Task



Highlights

- Displaying users' feedback per task
- Users' positive, negative, confused, feedback along with errors made by users



I. Usability testing: Analysis/Results

Interface recommendations

- Avoid using jargons such as channel/dashboard
- Instead of channel maybe use website

The image consists of two side-by-side screenshots. On the left, a smartphone displays the Futurestay mobile app. The app's header reads "futurestay" and "Seamlessly connect your business to global travelers". Below the header are three circular badges: "VRMA INNOVATION AWARD WINNER", "BATTLE GROUND WINNER", and "TOP TRAVEL STARTUP 2015". A red callout box with the text "What does a channel mean?" is overlaid on the app's interface. On the right, a laptop displays the Futurestay "Sign Up" page. The page has fields for "First Name" (Amy), "Last Name" (Pond), and "Email" (j@gmail.com). Below these fields is a section titled "Do you have properties on any of these channels?" with checkboxes for Booking.com, HomeAway, Airbnb, VRBO, TripAdvisor, and Expedia. There is also a checkbox for "Agree to our terms and conditions" and a "Connect to my Free Dashboard" button. A red callout box with the text "What is a dashboard?" is overlaid on the sign-up page.





Welcome to Futurestay!

It only takes a few minutes to set up your Dashboard. We will walk you through it.

Next



- Some PMs are not familiar (referred them as Bird's nest/ paperclip) with the Airbnb and HomeAway logos
- Can either be a label or a way you could have the channel names come up while hovering on the mouse on the logos

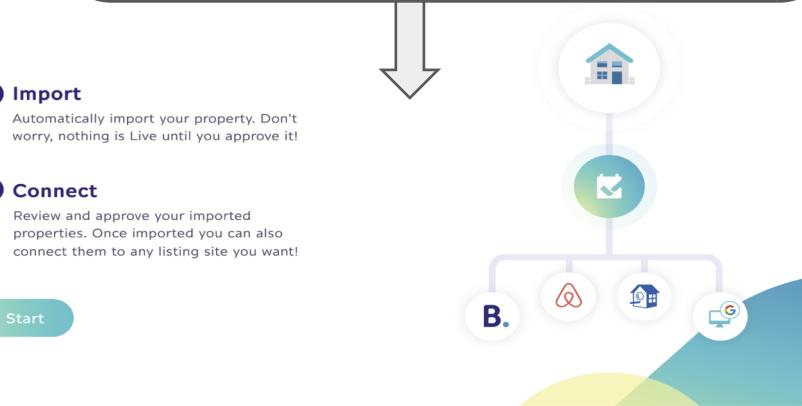
1 Import

Automatically import your property. Don't worry, nothing is live until you approve it!

2 Connect

Review and approve your imported properties. Once imported you can also connect them to any listing site you want!

Start



- Maybe adding info such as "Set up your Dashboard in just 2 steps;" "few minutes" may be misleading



User pain points

The screenshot shows a web page titled "Futurestay's Onboarding" with a URL like <https://www.futurestay.com/onboarding/screen/53140107>. At the top right, there is a user profile for "zaraa03" (36 - male - \$80,000 - \$99,999 - United States) with a 5-star rating. Below the profile, there are buttons for "Finish later" (with a note "Your progress will be saved") and "Import to Dashboard". A callout bubble with a yellow emoji face asks "What is a dashboard?". Another callout bubble with a yellow emoji face asks "Where are your properties listed?". A text input field has a placeholder "Copy and paste one or more property URLs" and a note "Psst! Importing from our partners gives best results!" followed by icons for Booking.com, Airbnb, and Expedia.

-How does the property get imported?
-Can I add two or more URLs at a time?
-Confusing as the property already imported in the prototype



User pain points

Import Properties

Finish later

Your progress will be saved

Import to Dashboard

Where are your properties listed?

Copy and paste one or more property URLs

Psst! Importing from our partners gives best results!   

- Apart from knowing where are their properties listed; we also want to ask them to add the property URL in simple text.
- What is the max limit of adding URLs, and would it show all the properties on the same page.
- So, “more” is how much much?



User pain points



◀ 1 of 5 ▶

Import Properties

Add your property information to Futurestay.
⚠ Don't forget to think out loud.

Finish later
Your progress will be saved

Import to Dashboard

Copy and paste one or more property URLs

Pssst! Importing from our partners gives best results!

Are these the properties you want to import?

Cozy 2 Bedroom Apartment
2 bedroom, 1 bathroom apt.
homeaway.com/listing/120495/cozy-2-bedroom-apartment

Happy Home on the...
2 bedroom, 1 bathroom apt.
airbnb.com/listing/120495/happy-home-on-the-beach

The word dashboard may be too loaded; we can only import one property at a time to the dashboard; but add several (more than one) properties on the “Import Properties” page.

enu </> Handoff

User pain points : Discoverability issues

The image shows a screenshot of the Smart Connections mobile application. At the top left, there's a navigation bar with a blue checkmark icon, the text "Smart Connections", and a "Bookings" button. Below this is a dark grey header section with the letters "B." and two "OFF" toggle switches. The main content area has a white background. It displays a message "Your properties were imported" above three house icons, each with a teal checkmark. Below these are two buttons: a teal rounded rectangle labeled "Go to Dashboard" and a white rounded rectangle with a teal border labeled "Review imported properties". At the bottom, there's a dark grey footer section with a "Upcoming Schedule" header, a "TODAY" button, and a calendar grid showing dates from "Mon 21" to "Sun 27". A large, semi-transparent light grey callout bubble originates from the "Review imported properties" button, containing two user pain point descriptions.

-Is it possible to have the snippet of the properties imported instead of FS logo

-There should be a way to let the users know the properties imported; how many of their properties have they added info. about and how many do they need to add info.

-Say, if they have imported 10 properties, if they are adding info for the first property, then 1/10 properties they have added info



User pain points : Typography issues

A panel headline missing?

A1 Happy Home with Furniture

Preview

Properties Rates Connections Reservations Web Build Check your property information

Manage Pricing & Stay Rules

Base Nightly Rate Required

*Enter Base Nightly Rate (your target gross earnings)

USD 80.00

Listing Rate Displayed to Travelers as:

\$65.00 per night ✓

Full Rate Breakdown:

- our service markup (included in listing rate)
- credit card processing fee
- your payment (after credit card fee)

Online Payment

Deposits or Full Payment:
Choose between requiring a deposit or full payment. When a user pays a deposit, the remainder of their balance will be automatically charged to their credit card before their check-in date. They are required to select the date of the balance payment when booking.

Pay in Full - Full Balance Required to Book

Minimum/Maximum Stay Requirements

Check in and Check out

Save

?

**-There should be a way to let the users know what is the panel.
- Obviously the \$80 and \$65 prices are wrong.**



User pain points : Typography issues

A1
Happy Home with Furniture

Preview

✓ Prices and Stay Rules
✓ Photo Gallery
✓ Amenities
✓ Details and Description
✓ Rooms Details
✓ Address and Map **Completed!**
✓ Lease and Agreements
✓ Reviews

Set Live

Complete property information before setting it Live

Your Property's Address, Display Settings & Privacy

Enter your property's full address: your address is not displayed to travelers until after a booking is completed, unless you choose to reveal it on map.

*Country: U.S. *Region: Florida

Map & Streetview Display: Display Map and Street View on Property Page

*Street Address: Apartment # (optional)

Address Privacy: control how travelers see your property on map

Display exact address

-Unsure why the “Completed” option is placed in an odd manner
-Is there a reason why only “Address and Map” and “Prices and Stay Rules” option is available on the prototype

533 15th St Miami Beach, Florida View on Google Maps

Map Satellite

Google © 2019 Google Terms of Use Report a problem

Save

Map data ©2019 Google Terms of Use Report a map error



User pain points: Information Architecture issues



A1
Happy Home with Furniture

Preview

Prices and Stay P...
Photo Gallery
Amenities
Details and Descr...
Rooms Details
Address and Map
Lease and Agreements
Reviews

\$65.00 per night.

Full Rate Breakdown:

- our service markup (included in listing rate)
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- your payment (after credit card fee)

Set Live

Online Payment

Deposits or Full Payment:
Choose between requiring a full payment or a deposit to book your property.
When a user pays a deposit, the remainder of their balance will be automatically charged to their credit card before their check-in date. They are required to select the date of the balance payment when booking.

Pay in Full - Full Balance Required to Book

Minimum/Maximum Stay Requirements

Check in and Check out

Save

U

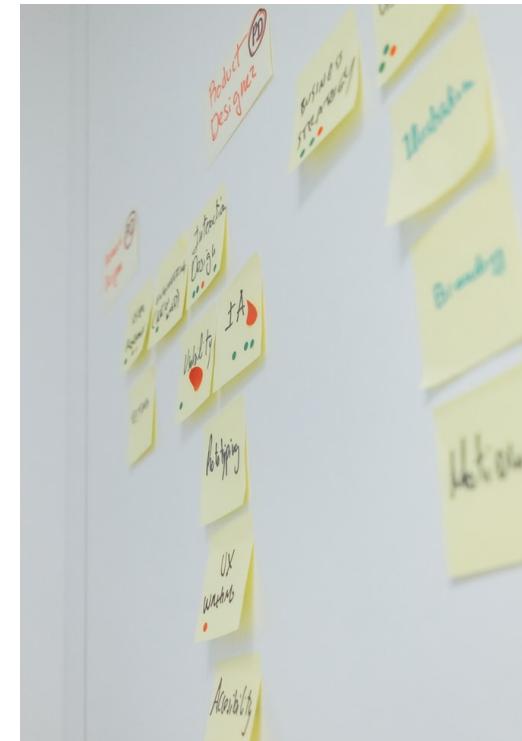
-Why is the Set Live Option unavailable but present on this page?
-How is Save and Set Live different?

-Major issue, it was difficult for the users to figure out the difference between the two Save and Set Live



Specific User Feedback with quotes

- Positives : “I loved the website” (Beagleton) – clean, clutter free, good use of white-space, less crowded
 - Negatives: “How to sign up” (Beagleton) or “How to set the property live” (Beagleton) – Unsure what is a dashboard; Set Live option present but unavailable; unhappy with the prototype
 - Errors: “The prototype was misleading” (zaraa03, Beagleton, Atrium) – Prototype did not have lot of functionalities; task description as unclear; a section for property information with a headline would be nice.





Design Recommendations

- On the properties page, there needs to be a headline on the left-hand side such as the name of the property and then sub-categories should be present
- The icon “Set Live” should be present in a different color to distinguish it clearly compared to the other icons
- The content present under “Online Payments” should be abridged and can be expressed with minimum content
- On the import properties page, it wasn’t clear how many properties can be uploaded on the input box.
- The participants from the usability study weren’t sure how did the properties in the prototype. So, its important to let the users know how to get the link for their property.



II. Card sorting

- Context: From the usability studies results, it **was found the settings page** also required **structuring** keeping in mind **the information architecture** of the page





II. Card sorting

- **Process:**

- We firstly created the cards, which were essentially the categories present on the property(s) page using the software named OptimalSort
(<https://www.optimalworkshop.com/optimalsort>)
- Firstly, researcher along with the mentors created 27 cards based on the different categories present on the properties page
- After the cards were created on the software, a study link was generated. Here is the link <https://512q2c8c.optimalworkshop.com/optimalsort/7ixsi21g-0>
- Before, sending the link to the users, **a pilot study** was designed and minor modifications were made based on revisions
- The link was sent to **users who have either used a vacation rental softwares** such as Futurestay, Airbnb, Homeaway, or Booking.com.



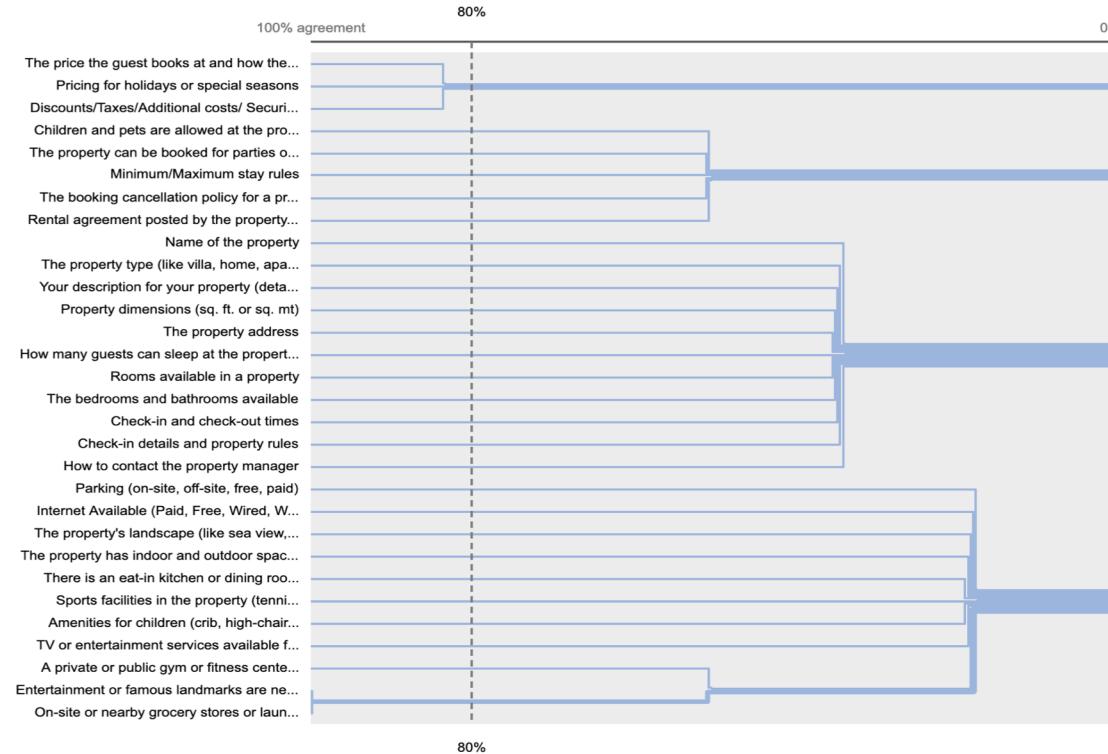
Results from Card sorting Exercises

- The study link was sent to customers to **sort the cards under different categories/groups**.
- The study was completed by six users within 6 min and 52 seconds
- Users were tasked to classify cards into: **property details, amenities, check-in/check out, pricing**
- While analyzing the results for this card sorting exercises, we made of **agreement scores** as the measure of analysis



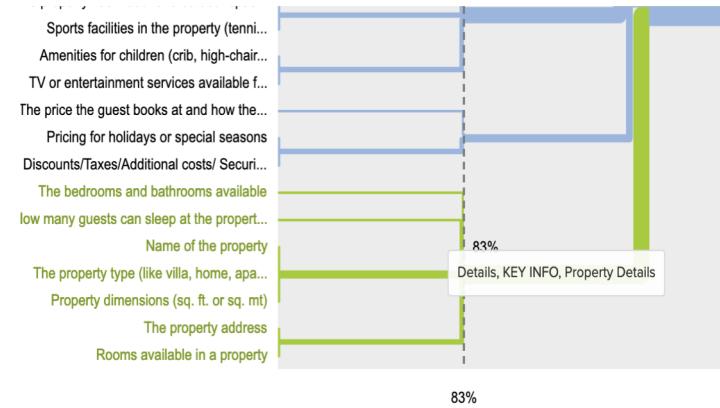
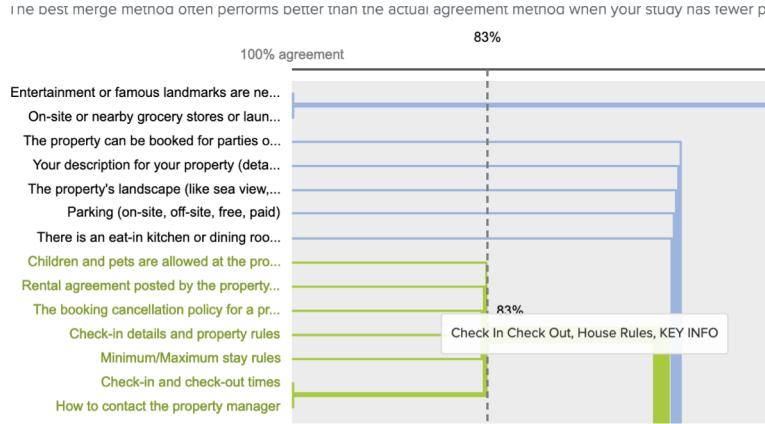
Analysis: Min/Max agreement

The actual agreement method works best with 30 or more participants and will depict only absolutely factual relationships. We call this the skeptical dendrogram.





Agreement scores: Check-in/out, house rules, and key info, property details



Agreement scores provides the agreement level between the cards placed in each category. Higher agreement score shows more participants agreed with the provided cards in a category.



Results

- After finishing the card-sorting experiments, although the agreement scores showed dispersed agreement scores.
- Here are the original cards along with the cards condensed based on the card-sorting results

<https://github.com/manasarath/manasarath.github.io/blob/master/Properties%20Page%20Card%20Sorting.xlsx>

- This issue could be resolved by recruiting more users



III. Surveys

- To further understand users' perceptions regarding the vacation rental management system and ways to resolve the product issues in Futurestay.
- The objective **for conducting surveys include identifying Futurestay's (FS) users, their perceptions about FS, specific features of FS** which the users made use of and further improvements that can be made in Futurestay.



III. Surveys

Process

- Two surveys were designed to obtain user perceptions on vacation-rental management systems.
- Surveys were designed on Google forms and the survey link was sent out to users over an email
 - Survey 1 was sent out to Futurestay users
 - Survey 2 was sent out to non-Futurestay users

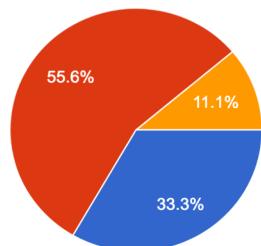


III. Surveys

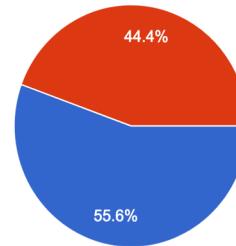
- Here is the list of survey questions:

https://github.com/manasarath/manasarath.github.io/blob/master/SurveyQuestions_FS.docx.pdf

III. Prime Surveys Results

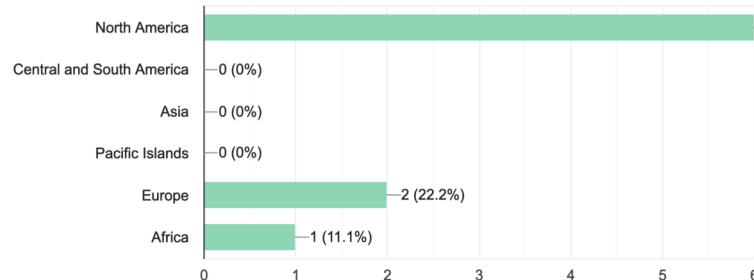


- 20-30 years old
- 31-45 years old
- 46-55 years old
- 56-65 years old
- 65+ years old

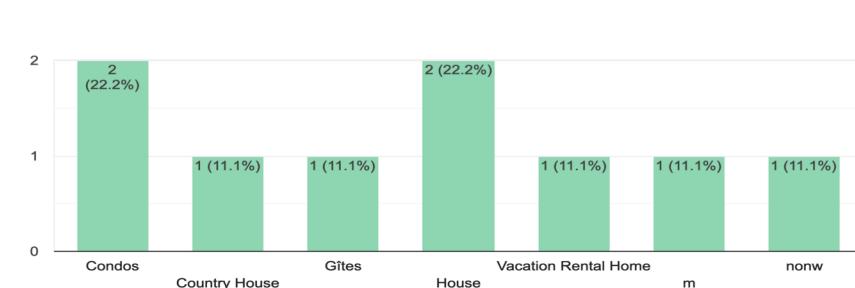


- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

Demographic features of the survey participants

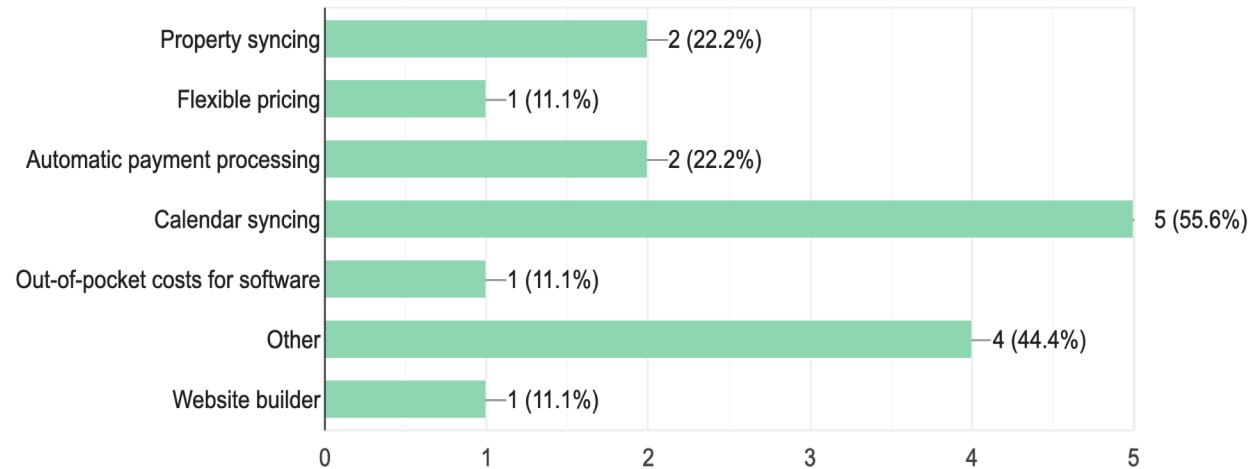


Geographical location of the users who took the survey



Type of property owned by the users who took the survey

III. Main Survey results



Specific functionalities in FS that the users find valuable



III. Surveys

- On the basis of survey results, users reported:
 - Resolve the technological issues soon
 - Promote the Futurestay website
 - Allow users to remove functionalities such as Hidden Listings and update New Listings
 - Provide better customer support
 - Having clear onboarding instructions for the users



After understanding users' painpoints, it's important to come up with user personas which would reflect on a products' different user types, user characteristics, needs and goals to gain valuable insights into user journeys, and then prototype them in future.



IV. Persona Development

- To build personas **a set of open and close ended interview questions** to understand how might users use a particular product or service.
- To delve deeper in constructing users' personas : **personal background, industry/business, role, goals, and challenges while achieving the goals as a property manager, processes that go into decision-making, objections about FS softwares/services, along with information sources** used by the users.



IV. Persona Development

- List of questions included in the interview were based on the following categories:
 - Personal Background
 - Industry and Business
 - Role
 - Goals
 - Challenges
 - Decision Making
 - Objections
 - Information Sources

Here is the complete list of questions under each of the categories

https://github.com/manasarath/manasarath.github.io/blob/master/Persona_Questions.docx



IV. Persona Development



Age
45 to 54 years

Highest Level of Education
Master's degree

Social Networks



Industry
Real Estate

Organization Size
11-50 employees

Preferred Method of Communication

- Phone
- Email
- Social Media
- Face-To-face

Tools They Need to Do Their Job

- Employee Scheduling Software
- Reporting Software
- Business Intelligence Dashboards
- Word Processing Programs

Job Responsibilities

Taking care of guest payments, tax end/ accounting, managing calendars, using website builders

Their Job Is Measured By

Customer success, hosting a guest a great experience

Reports to

None/Self employed

Goals or Objectives

Revenue generation, increase occupancy rate of his properties

They Gain Information By

Customer feedback

Biggest Challenges

- Navigating Client Relationships & Communications
- Communication
- Collaboration & Creativity
- Resources

Tools/Skills

Managing website-builder, building spreadsheets
Google sheets/docs, calendar



IV. Persona Development : Learnings

- By learning more about the fictional character (Ben) and his work as a property manager, we learnt to what extent the software can be made better to build a better vacation rental management system.



IV. Persona Development

- To build personas **a set of open and close ended interview questions** to understand how might users a particular product or service.
- To delve deeper in constructing users' personas : **personal background, industry/business, role, goals, and challenges while achieving the goals as a property manager, processes that go into decision-making, objections about FS softwares/services, along with information sources** used by the users.