
Streamlining the VISA website

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Abstract

This project was designed to address the issues of new immigrants to Canada regarding the online application for Visa, Permanent residency and Citizenship. The idea was to streamline the website and ease the process for them. This problem space has been supported by the surveys, interviews and observational studies conducted in the beginning of the project. We have changed some of the layouts of the website in order to help the users distinguish each section easily and reduce the time spent on the website.

Author Keywords

New immigrants; Streamlining; Visa website;
Government; Online Visa application

ACM Classification Keywords

H.5.2. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI): User Interfaces: Screen Design.

Introduction

Canada is a large growing developed country with 33 million people, but with a birth rate of only 1.6. Skilled immigrants offer the labor market more resources to improve our economic status. New immigrants also enrich our society with their diversity. Young children and postsecondary students coming into Canada also gain many valuable skills through Canada's education system. Considering the large part that immigration plays in the upkeep of the country, there is an

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Statistic	Value
Min Value	2
Max Value	7
Mean	5.00
Variance	3.00
Standard Deviation	1.73
Total Responses	13

Table 1. Responses from Online questionnaire survey.

Question: How would you rate your overall experience using the Canadian Citizenship website?

increasing awareness of challenges that newcomers face when they settle down in Canada. When asked what the greatest challenge was after coming into Canada, newcomers answered that settling needs to be made simpler and easier.

Problem Space

People often experience difficulties in obtaining a visa [1]. The suggested solutions from the article are direct changes to the visa application process itself. Our secondary research supports that the visa application system requires changes. The visa application problem is not only restricted to visitor visa applications. Newcomers such as children and adults pursuing postsecondary education or professional experience face many barriers. Regardless of whether new arrivals in Canada are studying or looking for work, they all need to apply for a visa in order to stay in Canada if they are not permanent residents or citizens.

Stakeholders

- Visa, permanent residency or citizenship applicants
- Family members of visa, permanent residency or citizenship applicants
- Businesses who aid in visa, permanent residency or citizenship applications
- Immigration and Citizenship department of Canadian Government
- Canadian citizens who are affected by the immigration system such as employers and schools that receive international students

Target Audience

Our target user is identified as immigrants who use the Canadian Citizenship website to apply for Visa, Permanent residency or Citizenship. After conducting the research on users' impressions of the Canadian Citizenship website, we found out that the majority of respondents had a negative impression of the website (Table 1). While some users found the website relatively usable, others voiced a wide variety of complaints relating to the ease of use and navigability of the website. Our study focused on the negative impressions of the users and tried to redesign the Canadian Citizenship website accordingly.

Research Methods

We conducted online survey questionnaires, in person interviews and observational studies to identify the user needs. While the online survey questionnaires and interviews were conducted on the users who have used the Canadian Citizenship website, observational studies were conducted on the people who have never used the website before.

- Online Survey questionnaires mainly asked the users who have applied for Visa through Canadian Citizenship website how much they like the experience of using the website.
- In person interviews mainly focused on revealing the details of the negative impressions the users had from applying for Visa through the website.
- Observational studies asked the participants to follow a course of processes such as applying for the work permit.

Participant Selection

We selected the participants from University of Toronto according to whether they have used the Canadian Citizenship website or not. Thus, the participant pool for the online survey and interviews will be generally characterized by being young adults who have used the visa system in the past 5 years.

User Needs

The identified user needs regarding the Canadian Citizenship website from the researches are as follow:

- To minimize obstacles when applying for permits
- To have a user friendly interface
- To ensure that key links are accessible and not hidden
- To leave the user with an overall good impression of the system
- Explanation of acronyms used on the website

Experience Map

The experience map of the application process on Canadian Citizenship website is made by referring to the responses from interviews and observational studies (Figure 2).

Key Principles

The guiding principles which we wanted to focus on when devising the solution design of Canadian Citizenship website's interface.

Intuition comes first.

The user should never question "what do I do next" for the sake of completeness or excessive functionality.

Make decisions based on user intent.

Structures and hierarchies should highlight the most important things to the user, not the most important things to the system.

Do not hide behind acronyms.

Always have explanations readily available to someone who is missing part of the picture.

Usability Evaluation

Users were asked to fill out the questionnaires and give feedbacks about the usability of our prototype after going through the cognitive walkthrough. According to the responses, all users preferred our group's redesigned website to the original. Some comments proved that our prototype served the need for the easy usage of the website when compared to the original. The type tiles helped users navigate the website easily and find out where to go to at a glance. While maintaining the necessary information given by the government, our group's design tried to get rid of the information that is not used by the users.

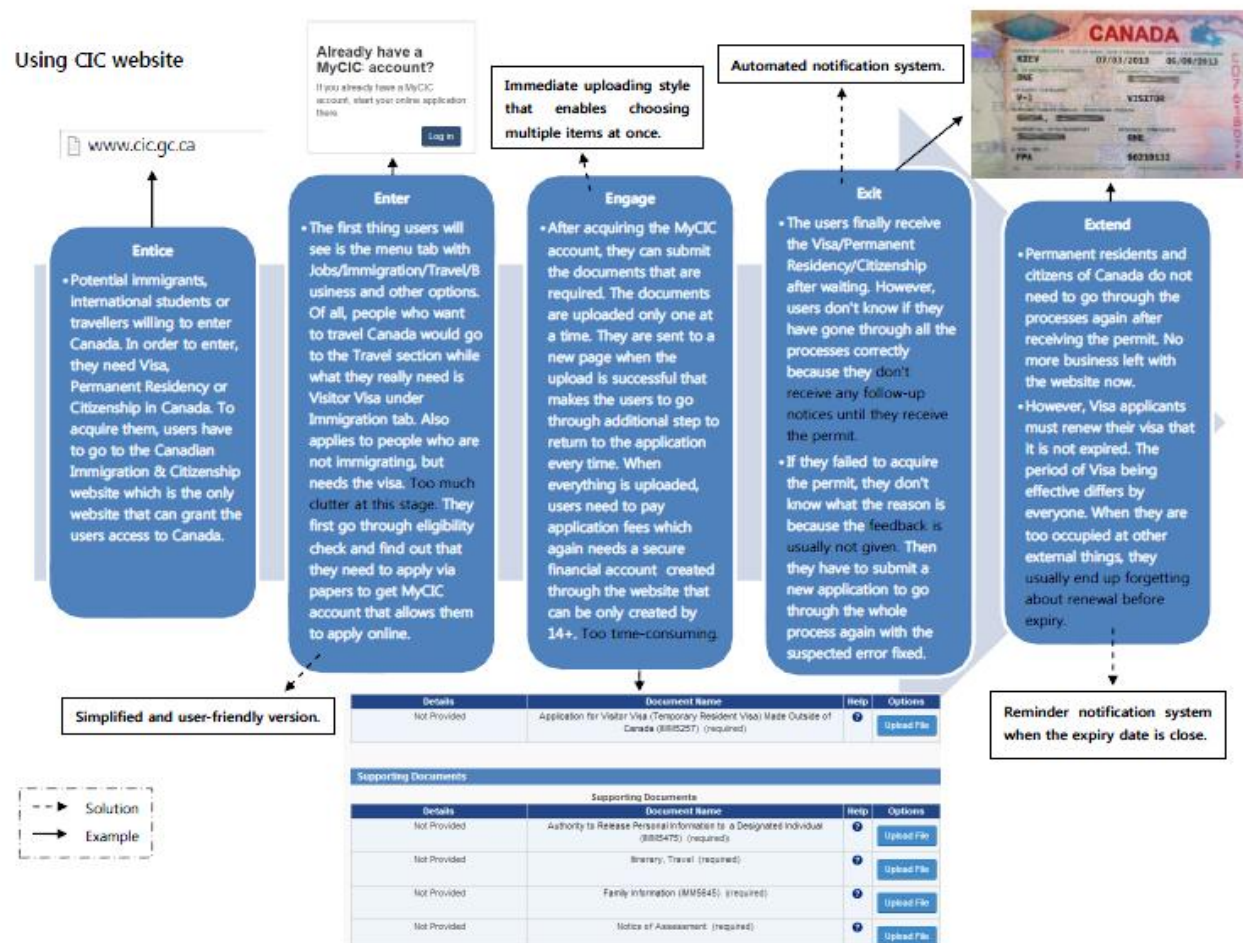


Figure 2. Experience Map

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References

[1] Sadler, C., National Roundtable on Travel and Tourism. 2012. Gateway to Growth: Modernizing Canada's Visitor Visa Process. Whitepaper by the National Roundtable on Travel and Tourism.