Design for Interaction – Lab 7: Navigation Design

Your task today is to analyse the navigation design of some airline websites. You should look at each of the sites below as a part of this exercise:

British Airways: www.ba.com
Jet2: www.jet2.com
EasyJet: www.easyjet.com
FlyBe: www.flybe.com
Ryanair: www.ryanair.com

Obviously, all of these sites have the same basic purpose, and so many of their features will be similar. However, there are also significant differences in the ways in which users can interact with the various sites, and the ways in which information is presented. You should consider the following issues:

- All the sites allow you to search for flights. Try searching for something specific – for example Glasgow to London on a particular date (note that some of the airlines don't fly this route; in these cases try an alternative journey). How much flexibility does the search allow? Can you prioritise results based on price? Can you look for flights a day on either side? Some sites give you a popup calendar to help you select dates – how do these differ from one another? What happens when you do a search and there are no available flights?
- Each airline allows you to look at the available destinations on a route map. How do these differ between the sites? Do they all provide the same level of interactivity? How does a global airline like BA, with many more flights and destinations, keep the map usable?
- All the sites allow you to book a flight by going through a series of stages leading up to the final payment and confirmation. For each, go through the sequence up to (but not including!) payment. How many steps are involved? What happens at each stage? What extra options are available to the customer in each case, and how are they implemented? Consider the range of interface elements used at each step.
- What additional features does each site offer? How do these fit in with the airline's target market?

As the list above suggests, your analysis should be quite detailed. Don't simply go through the sites mechanically ticking off each feature, but try to think about why each site is designed the way it is. For example, why are certain additional booking options available on some airlines and not others, and how has the greater complexity of BA's flight network affected the design of its website?

You should take notes as you go through this exercise, and when you have finished compile these into a report detailing what you have found and drawing appropriate conclusions. This exercise may form a part of your assessment portfolio for the module. If so, you should expand your analysis to incorporate at least one other global airline (KLM, Lufthansa, etc.) and compare its design choices to those of BA.