Facilitator's Guide for Usability Evaluation of Flight Booking Sites

Comparing Effectiveness, Efficiency, and User Satisfaction between CheapOair and Kayak

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[Note: The purpose of this document is to guide the facilitator. The questions and tasks contained herein may not be asked as written. The facilitator often draws on participant comments and the natural flow of the testing process to determine the flow of the session. While the facilitator will try to follow the order of the guide, many times tasks will come up ahead of time or in a different order. The facilitator may allow the order of the tasks to change in order to let the process flow naturally.]

Pre-Test

Confirm receipt of signed informed consent form
Start recording

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this evaluation. Do you have any questions for me before we get started? We will be looking at an existing website today. We'll be asking you to try out a few things with the site and want to get your thoughts about it. Feel free to make comments as you go if you'd like, but don't feel obligated to do that. Mostly, you should act like I'm not even with you. If there is something about the site that I'm interested in, I may stop you and ask you about it. You may already have some experience with this site and you may not. Either way is OK.

There are a few things I'd like you to keep in mind while we work.

First, this is not an evaluation of you. This is an evaluation of the website you will be working with today. Since we are evaluating the website and its design, that means you can't make any mistakes. After I ask you to try some things on the website, I'd like to watch as you attempt to complete the task to see if you have any difficulty. I am here to help if needed, but I'd like to see if you can accomplish the task on your own first. Feel free to ask questions if you'd like, but I may try to avoid answering them at first.

The second thing I would like you to keep in mind is that I didn't design the website you will be working with today so you can't hurt my feelings. I want you to feel free to tell me what you like and don't like about the design as you see fit. If there are areas of concern or things you don't like, I want you to feel free to talk about them. That way, we might be able to figure out a way to make the site better.

Finally, if you're ok with it, I'd like to record this session so I don't have to take notes while I'm working with you. Your image, the screen, and audio will be recorded. Is it ok if I begin recording now?

Tasks/Questions

Background

When was the last time you traveled?

- What prompted you to take the trip?
- Where did you go?
- How did you plan your trip?
- What travel, lodging, transportation did you need to book?
    - How did you do that?

We're going to be looking at the travel-booking website, [CheapOair or Kayak]. Please open your web browser and navigate to [cheapoair.com or kayak.com]. You're welcome to click through the navigation and explore for a minute.

- What things would you expect to be able to find or do using this site when planning for a trip?
- Have you used a site like this before?
    - [If yes] When was the last time? What did you use it to do?
- As you look at the page and through the menus, is there anything you're surprised to find?
- Does this site provide everything you would need to book travel? [If not] What's missing?
- [Did they notice they could book flights, rental cars, and hotels? Did they notice **Bundle and Save** or **Packages**?]

Info Seeking Tasks (LIVE SITE)

Task 1: You're planning an upcoming trip. Find round-trip flights from Reagan National Airport in DC to either of the airports in Chicago (Midway or O'Hare) for 2 adults flying coach/basic economy departing 7/27 and returning 7/31 on American Airlines (both ways).

- [Were they able to find the airline filter?]
- [If using CheapOair]
    - Did they:
        - Use the "search preferred airline" option to limit the results to American Airlines?
        - Use the Airline filter on the results page?
            - Were they surprised by the airline filter behavior?

- Did they notice it didn't limit the results to American Airlines?
    - Did they know to use the airline table at the top of the page to filter by American exclusively?
  - [Were they able to find the option to exclude alternate dates?]
- [If using Kayak]
  - [Did they use the Airlines filter to filter results to only show American?]
  - [Were they able to find the "Only" option on the Airlines filter?]

Task 2: Pick the flight that will get you to your destination the earliest.

Follow up:
- [If using CheapOair]
  - [Did they try to use the Landing Time filter? Were they able to narrow it down to the actual earliest flight?]
- [If using Kayak]
  - [Did they try to use the Landing Time filter? Did they notice it wasn't returning the expected results?]
  - [Did they use the sort options to sort by earliest landing at the destination?]

Task 3: What if you're interested in finding the cheapest flight available? What would you do?

Follow up:
- [Were they able to find/verify they were looking at the "cheapest" sort option?]
- [Did they notice the sort option for "recommended" or "best" flights?]
- What does ["recommended" or "best"] mean to you in this context?
- How do you think [CheapOair or Kayak] determine what is ["recommended" or "best"]

Task 4: How much would it cost to check two pieces of regular-sized luggage on the cheapest flight?

Follow up:
- Is there any other information you would want to know about fees? Is any of that information here [looking at fees page]?

Task 5: What if you didn't have specific days you wanted to travel but were able to depart any day between 7/24 and 7/30 and return any day between 7/28 and 8/3—How much would the cheapest flight cost?

Follow up:

- **[If using CheapOair]**
  - [Did they notice that CheapOair searches for flexible dates by default?]
  - [If they filtered by the exact date before, did they notice they needed to flip it back?]
  - How flexible is your schedule when you travel? [Is +/-3 days departure/return the right level of flexibility?]
- **[If using Kayak]**
  - [Did they notice the option to choose flexible dates in the depart/return fields in the original search?]
  - How flexible is your schedule when you travel? [Is +/-3 days departure/return the right level of flexibility?]
- Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you were interested in traveling on a specific weekend/week/month/etc. but thought you might get a better deal if you waited to book it?
  - What did you do in that case? Have you seen anything so far that would help do that?***

Email Alert Sign-Up (LIVE SITE)

Task 6: [***If the participant describes setting up alerts during Task 5 discussion] What if you were interested in taking this trip but weren't sure you would be getting the best deal if you bought tickets today. What would you do?

Follow up:
- **[If using CheapOair]**
  - [Were they able to find the option to "Get fare alerts"?]
  - I won't ask you to give CheapOair your email address for this study but I'd like to know how important this feature would be to you. Would you be willing to sign-up for an account to receive price alerts?
- **[If using Kayak]**
  - [Were they able to find the option to "Track prices"?]
  - [Were they surprised by the track prices toggle not doing anything when first clicked? Did they toggle off and on again? Did they get to the point where the modal finally appears?]
  - I won't ask you to sign up for an account for this study but I'd like to know how important this feature would be to you. Would you be willing to sign-up for an account to receive price alerts?

Task 7: [Show participant example of confirmation screen] If you sign up for price alerts, can you explain what's going to happen next?

Follow up:
- What information would you expect to receive as a result of signing up for this?

Info Seeking Tasks (Email)

Task 8: Let's assume you've received this price alert email. [Show participant CheapOair or Kayak price alert email] What did you learn?

Follow up:
- [If using CheapOair]
  - [Did they see the notification that the price increased?]
  - [What did the participant think of the other flight options listed in the alert?]
  - [Did they notice the flexibility in flight dates on other flights?]
  - [Do they have a sense of what criteria went into creating the alert?]
- [If using Kayak]
  - [Do they understand what criteria went into creating the alert?]
  - [Did they see the notification that the price has stayed steady?]
  - [Did they read that Kayak predicts prices will go down over the next week?]
  - [What did the participant think of the other flight options listed in the alert?]
  - [Do they have a sense of what criteria went into creating the alert?]
- What advice does the email provide about how to get the best price available?
- Is there any information you feel like you're missing?
- If you were no longer interested in receiving this alert, how would you prevent it from being sent in the future?

Post-Test

Administer the SUS ([Webform](#))

Now that you've looked at the site a bit, I'd like to get some feedback about it. I'm going to read you 10 statements. For each one, tell me if you agree, disagree, strongly agree, strongly disagree, or you feel neutral about the statement.

1. I think that I would like to use this system frequently.
2. I found the system unnecessarily complex.
3. I thought the system was easy to use.
4. I think that I would need the support of a technical person to be able to use this system.
5. I found the various functions in this system were well integrated.
6. I thought there was too much inconsistency in this system.
7. I would imagine that most people would learn to use this system very quickly.
8. I found the system very cumbersome to use.
9. I felt very confident using the system.
10. I needed to learn a lot of things before I could get going with this system.

Post-Test Interview Questions

Great, now I'd like to ask that to you about it.

1. What did you think of the site, specifically the information it provided you?
2. What did you think of the site functionally it provided you?
3. What things did you like most about the site? *[probe separately on content, graphics, and flow]*
4. What things did you not like about the site?*[probe separately on content, graphics, and flow]*
5. Is there anything missing you expected to find (information or functionality)?
6. What additional features do you think might be useful for a website like this?
7. Have you ever signed up for email alerts on a website? If so, what do you think of this capability?
8. Would you be likely to access this site on a mobile device, like a smartphone or tablet? If so, for which parts of the website? (e.g., searching for flights, booking flights, getting flight information)
9. What surprised you the most today?

Wrap up

OK, we're done. Are there any questions you would like to ask me about the website or about today's experience that I did not ask you about? Thanks again for your participation.