UX CASE STUDY REPORT

DM7916
UX, UC And UI Design

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Can good UX design reduce high basket abandonment rates in the travel industry?

Introduction

Internet has definitely had a major impact in our life on the way we communicate and go about every-day tasks. We have gotten to a point in which internet is used in most instances of our day, such as work, studying, marketing, business, learning or entertainment and therefore, basing all our commercial and social activities through the screen. (Kumar, V. ,2018).
Thanks to the rapid expansion of the internet and network technology, anyone, from big businesses to individuals, can sell/offer goods and services all around the world and in a matter of minutes. This is why, electronic commerce is progressively overtaking street retailers and have become an important part of our daily life (Statista, 2017). [Figure 1]

Traditional retail is far from dead: However, e-Commerce is on the rise

Development

U.S. Offline retail and e-Commerce sales proportion in percentage

|	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Offline retail	95%	94%	94%	93%	92%
E-Commerce	5%	6%	6%	7%	8%
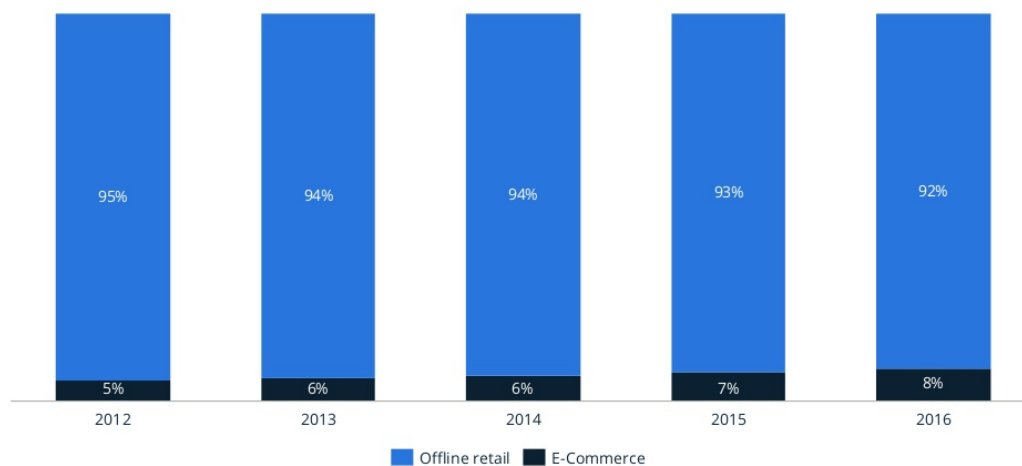
Source: US Census Bureau

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[Figure 1]

The amount of people using this service online is rapidly increasing. According to (Law, T., 2019). It is estimated that currently one fourth of the total population

(7.7 billion people) shops online and it is expected to increase to 2.14 billion digital buyers by 2021. [Figure 2]
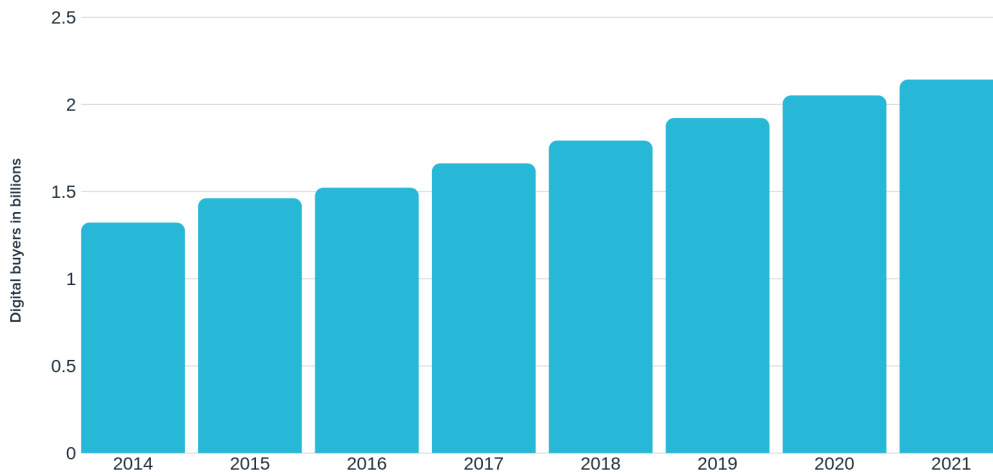
[Figure 2]

The number one reason for people to choose this method over street retailers is the ability to access what you need at any time of the day. In second and third place are: being able to compare prices (54%) and the online low costs (46%). (Law, T., 2019). [Figure 3]
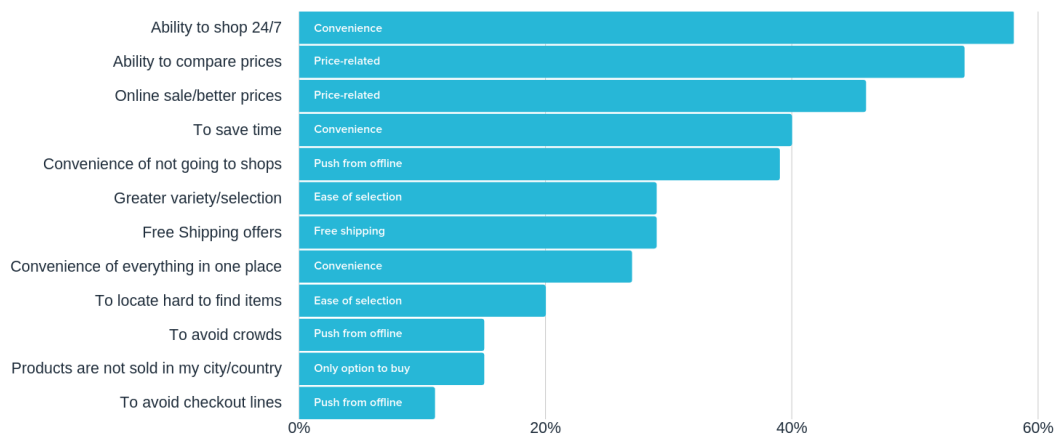
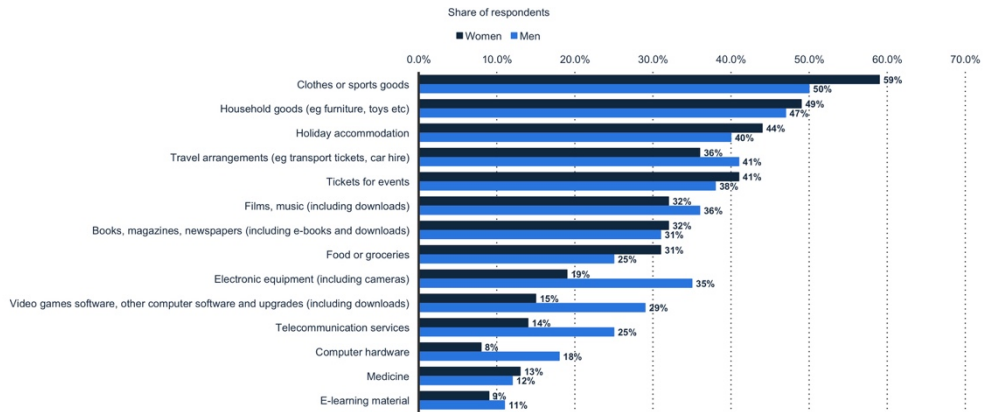Source: Global Online Consumer Report, KPMG International, 2017

[Figure 3]

This might be why, only within Great Britain, the third and fourth most purchased goods or service by online shoppers are holiday accommodation with an average of 48% of online shoppers and travel arrangements with a 38.5% (Statista, 2019).
as the ability to organize your own holiday at any time during the day and avoiding paying extra commissions on travel agencies make it appealing and convenient. [Figure 4]

Goods and services ranked by share of men and women who purchased online in Great Britain in 2018

Most popular goods purchased online in Great Britain 2018, by gender

Share of respondents

■ Women ■ Men

| | 0.0% | 10.0% | 20.0% | 30.0% | 40.0% | 50.0% | 60.0% | 70.0% |

- Clothes or sports goods — 59% / 50%
- Household goods (eg furniture, toys etc) — 49% / 47%
- Holiday accommodation — 44% / 40%
- Travel arrangements (eg transport tickets, car hire) — 36% / 41%
- Tickets for events — 41% / 38%
- Films, music (including downloads) — 32% / 36%
- Books, magazines, newspapers (including e-books and downloads) — 32% / 31%
- Food or groceries — 31% / 25%
- Electronic equipment (including cameras) — 19% / 35%
- Video games software, other computer software and upgrades (including downloads) — 15% / 29%
- Telecommunication services — 14% / 25%
- Computer hardware — 8% / 18%
- Medicine — 13% / 12%
- E-learning material — 9% / 11%

Note: United Kingdom (Great Britain); 2018; 16 years and older; 1,800**
Further information regarding this statistic can be found on page 57.
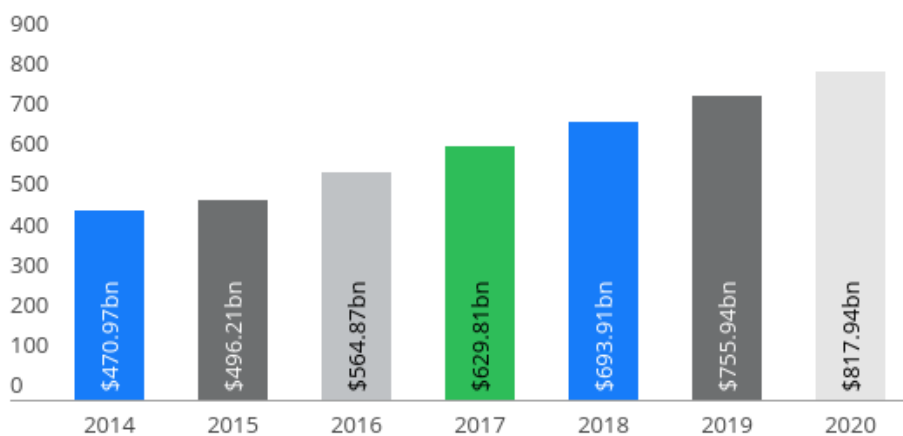**Source(s):** Office for National Statistics (UK); ID 275976

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Gender

[Figure 4]

All of this has influenced the travel market making it exponentially grow and be worth $629 billion only in 2017 and is predicted to reach almost $818bn by 2020. (Charlton, G., 2019). [Figure 5]

Global Online Travel Sales (2014 - 2020)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	$470.97bn	$496.21bn	$564.87bn	$629.81bn	$693.91bn	$755.94bn	$817.94bn

[Figure 5]

Source: Statista, 2018

Despite all the progress that the travel industry has made in the lasts years through e-commerse sites, it still holds the highest basket abandonment rate compared with any other online industry. More than 80% of orders are abandoned instead of being purchased. (Statista., 2019). This opens a debate as to why this might be happening. Several articles and research believe the main reason for this huge revenue loss could be blamed on bad UX design. So, through this Case Study, this subject will be explored and analysed to determine whether it is possible to improve the basket abandonment rates using good user experience design. [Figure 6]
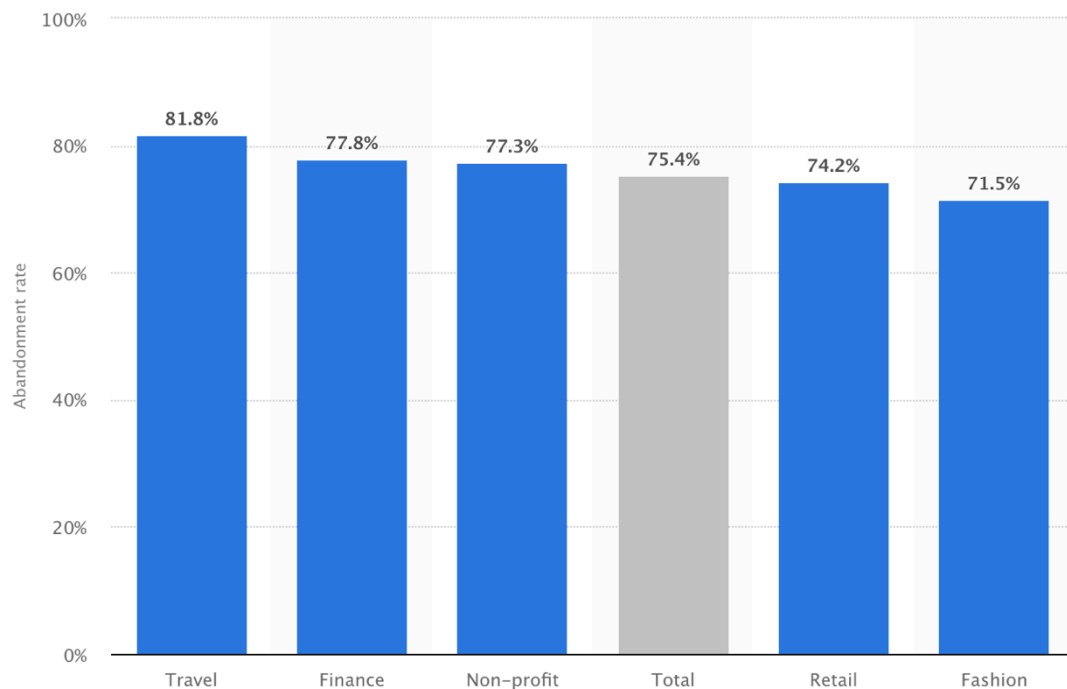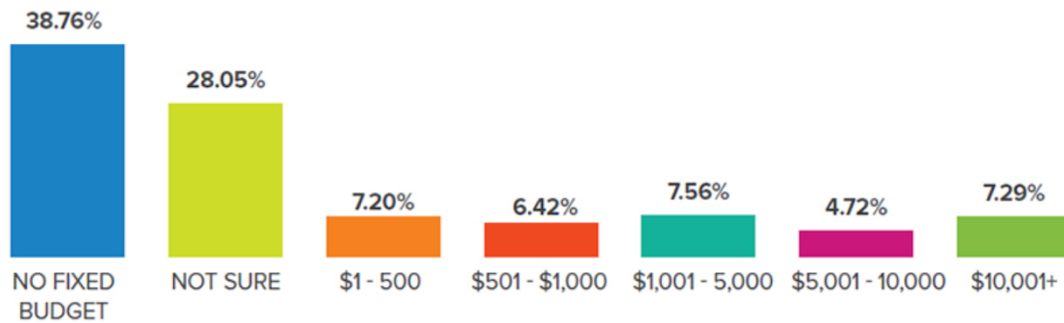

[Figure 6]

© Statista 2019 ⚑

Background research

"In this constantly connected world we live in it is imperative that brands ensure that they deliver a seamless online experience regardless of device." - *Melanie Harrison, MD, Goodman Fox*

This quote highlights the importance of user experience in any online site. It is taken from an article written by Rob Harrison who quotes part of Melanie Harrison presentation on the importance of UX to prevent basket abandonment in the travel industry. It is also mentioned how surprising it is that very little travel agencies and businesses have researched, and reacted on how to decrease this abandonment rate. (Harrison, R., 2019).The following chart corroborates with this notion, as it shows how little investment companies are putting towards improving their user experience. (Jason, 2016). [Figure 7]

AVERAGE COMPANY MONTHLY BUDGET FOR UX RESEARCH

| 38.76% | 28.05% | 7.20% | 6.42% | 7.56% | 4.72% | 7.29% |
| NO FIXED BUDGET | NOT SURE | $1 - 500 | $501 - $1,000 | $1,001 - 5,000 | $5,001 - 10,000 | $10,001+ |

[Figure 7]

All this hence it being demonstrated that for every $1 spent on improving user experience companies can expect to see a $2-$100 return, it is evident how significant and influential good UX design can be for an e-commerce site. (Harrison, R., 2019).

Rob Harrison's article also highlights the importance of user experience as a conversion factor. Keeping track of conversion rates does not only allow site owners to know what happens once people are visiting a website but also measures how many potential customers have failed to convert into revenue. Moreover, it is a great parameter to assess whether the UX strategy is working. (Nielsen, J., 2013). For example, the following graph shows conversion rates in travel sites: (Hurley Hall, S., 2019). [Figure 8]
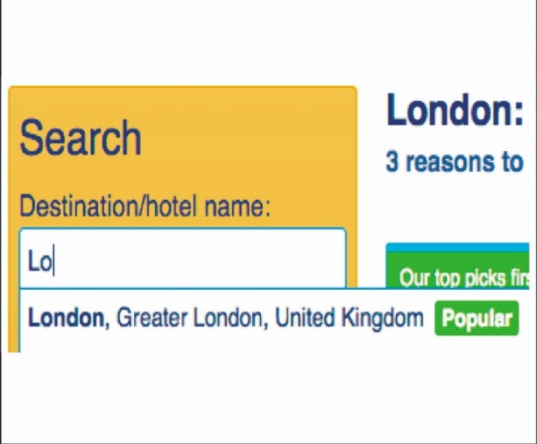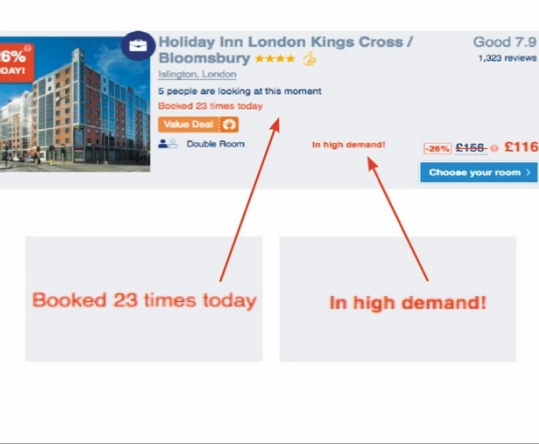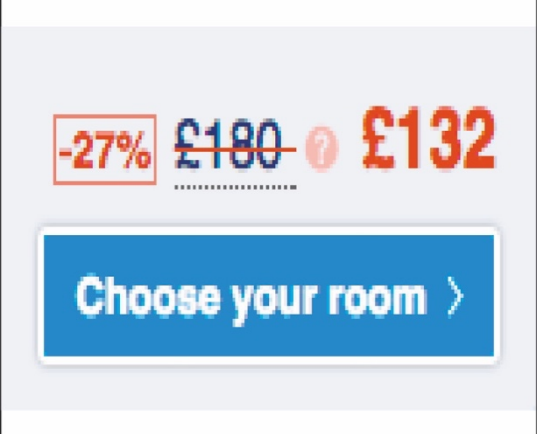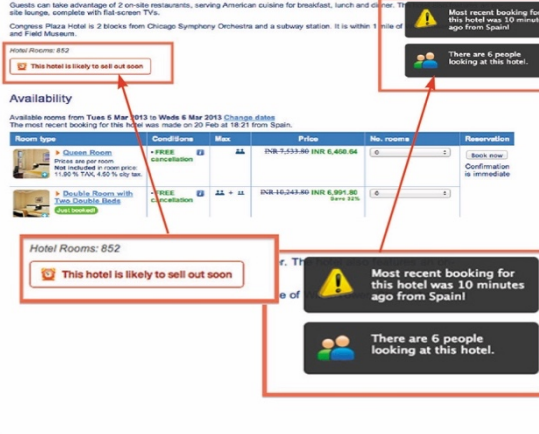

Figure 6: Global Conversion Rates for Accommodation Bookings Made on Desktop and Mobile – Global Average and Selected Key Sites

Desktop Conversion rate   Mobile web conversion rate
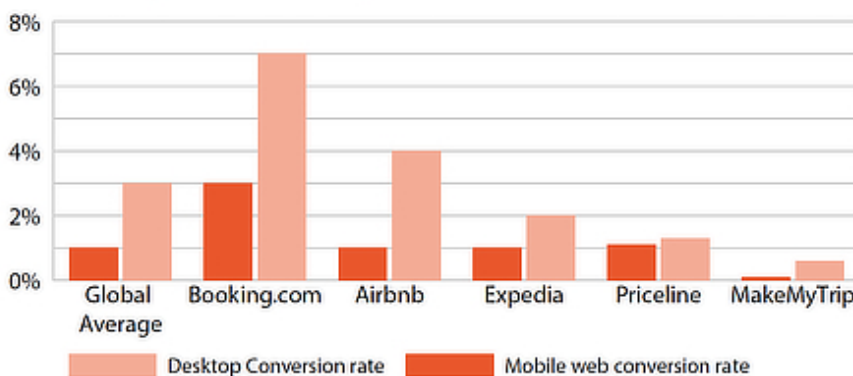
Source: Jumpshot, 2016

[Figure 8]

It is obvious that *booking.com* seems to have the best conversion rates compared to other famous travel websites such as *Airbnb*, *Experia* or *Priceline*. Philippe Aimé (Aimé, P., 2019) analyses the reasons as to why Booking.com has better conversion rates by engaging the user in experiencing different tricks like cognitive ease, scarcity effects, end anchoring or social proof. [Figure 9]

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Booking.com reason for high conversion rates

Cognitive ease - ease for brain to process information	Scarcity effects - makes people worry there is less left so feel impulsion to get it quick.

End Anchoring - The price now seems more reasonable when previous price was your point of reference.	Social proof

[Figure 9]

On the other hand, the next table [Figure 10] shows the cognitive friction users come across when shopping online and the most common reasons on why they usually abandon their basket. The information has been gathered from several different resources which also gives an explanation on how these issues can be fixed.

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	Reasons for basked abandonment	**Suggestions to fix issue**
1	Complicated checkout process	· Create simple buying path · Step indicator process · Customer should know how many steps left to go.
2	No guest check-out option	· If information really necessary, collect after purchase
3	No information about items prior to check out (i.e. total price calculation)	· Have all the information available before checkout
4	Call to action hard to understand / website navigation too complicated	· Make clear what they need to do (steps they need to follow)
5	Basket not easy to edit / change items	· Preview items, cost and shipping fees and total checkout · Availability to remove items without leaving basket
6	Basket is hidden	· Make basket in every page available · Access to basket only one click away
7	There are other links to click, distracts from completing purchase	· Avoid displaying unnecessary links
8	Can't save products for later consideration	· Maybe add liked item folder/saved items
9	Poor customer service	· Add 24/7 chat
10	Price shown in foreign language	· Let customer choose currency · Use customers local currency

Information gathered from several different resources. Listed in order of most *reappearance* and also noted suggestion given by each article on how to solve issue.
Sources: (Bannister, K., 2019), (Charlton, G., 2017), (Rosin, T., 2018), (Gilliland, N, 2017), (Da Cambra, S., 2019), (Wróbel-Konior, S., 2019).

[Figure 10]

After comparing both tables, it is even more apparent that by simple good use of UX, buyers are more likely to feel less frustrations and therefore complete their purchases. It is also important to note, that overall, for good conversion rates and low basket abandonment, consistency throughout the user experience is essential. This will ensure that the user is happy and feels like the navigation on a specific website has been satisfactory, resulting not only in much more repeated purchases and loyal customers but also will attract further potential clients on a regular basis. (Mangles, C., 2018).

Since not every traveller has the same interests or necessities, is also important to make sure that their user experience while purchasing, matches what the user/buyer need when they need it, therefore allowing a website to reach a larger audience. "Responsive design is good, but Adaptive Design is where the smart money is – **one size does not fit all**." *Melanie Harrison, MD, Goodman Fox* (Harrison, R., 2019)

By creating different personalities, we can *compare* how each personality would work in different circumstances.

*In efforts to either get hold of the entire keynote presentation made by Melanie Harrison (Director) or even better/further manage to interview her, I sent an email to her company's address called *"goodmanfox"*; which is an award winning UX and CX agency in London. Unfortunately, I have still not received a reply. * [Figure 11]

Hi Melanie,

I hope this email finds you well. I know this might be a little far fetched but thought I should try. My name is Valeria Aguilera, and I am currently studying an MA in Digital Media Practice at the University of Winchester. During my module for UX/UI design, I came across a very interesting article written by Rob Harrison on the importance of user experience in the travel industry (link attached bellow), which quotes parts of your keynote presentation. This article inspired me to base my Case Study on *how can UX design help reduce the amount of basket abandonment within the travel industry*. I am very aware that you will probably have no time to spare but I unfortunately could not find your keynote presentation online and I thought it would be amazing to get some insight from you as it would be a great part of the research for my work.

Thank you,
Valeria Aguilera.

http://www.goodmanfox.com/foxy/user-experience-travel-industry/?fbclid=IwAR0GqGM8NBxSGn1XDnHKvyQyj_-9B9RRA0ArlXoqwL3YxGAF1C66PE0tgcE

**The importance of user experience in the travel industry**
www.goodmanfox.com

The importance of user experience in the travel industry

[Figure 11]

Aim 1

Ashley Griffin-Didow wrote a very interesting case study (Griffin-Didow, A., 2018). in which she talks about how by creating travel personalities, a travel ecommerce website can match people to trips not only based on factors like age, location or relationship status but based upon deeper meaning and a better determinant of "like-mindedness". Creating a personalised search is also essential nowadays in the digital industry as "74 percent of customers feel frustrated when website content is not personalised". (Burgess, L., 2019). This method will be used to prove Melanie Harrison's point on how adaptive design is more efficient than responsive design on avoiding basket abandonment and reaching a larger audience. The following diagram is a modified version of Ashley's personalities wheel, as it has been based on the idea of two very common travel personas; a solo adventurer (Sarah) and a Mother (Lilly) traveling with family (husband and two kids). [Figure 12] link: http://tiny.cc/prtx5y and [Figure 13] link: http://tiny.cc/5rtx5y
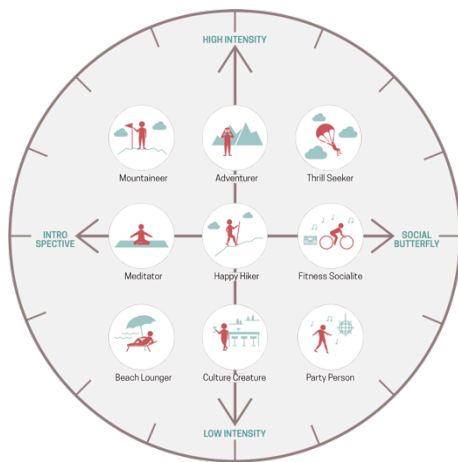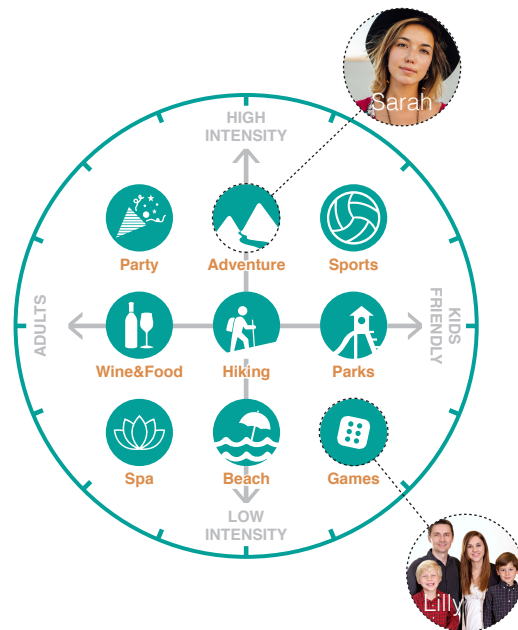
[Figure 12]

[Figure 13]

It is important to highlight that travel companies need to invest in data analysis for establishing more quadrants like this one, for the placement of activities or interests within their axis developing coherent sets. Therefore, for a specific set of activities these axis should represent relevant and meaningful features which can be matched to an individual's profile. They should be the result of an extensive analysis, similar to the analysis undertaken by Ashley Griffin-Didow in her study, where the Personality Wheel has two axis: ¨ Physical Activity Intensity ¨ and ¨ Personality Type Preferences ¨. In my case, for the purpose of showing the prosed methodology I'm arbitrarily using the following axis: ¨ Physical Activity Intensity ¨ and ¨ Activity Family Friendliness ¨ for positioning the activities of my set.

Additionally, the positioning of the actives in quadrants also depends on the characteristics of the individual (this is, his profile). It is easy to see that for example; for a middle-aged person the activity of ¨ Hiking ¨might be in the center of the proposed quadrant. However, for an older person (with an age above 75) from a ¨Physical Activity Intensity¨ perspective, this activity might need to be placed higher up in the ¨ High Intensity ¨ range of that axis.

Hence there also is a decency on the data values collected in the individual´s profile and the positioning of the activities within the quadrant for a specific activity set.

Going back to my use cases, on one hand there is Sarah Carter, she is a young adventurer found on the high intensity pole of the personality wheel. She is very open minded about the specifics of her flights, as long and she is able to get on

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one which allows her to meet her friends at their desired destination on the same day. Her frustration has been not to be able to have the fully confirmation of the booking right there and then after purchasing the flight, leaving her unsure if she must now book a new one and/or if her money will be back in her account. [Figure 14] link: http://tiny.cc/1wtx5y and [Figure 15] link: http://tiny.cc/fztx5y

[Figure 14]

[Figure 15]

On the other hand, is Lilly Thomson, a stay-at-home mum wanting to book a package holiday together with her husband and two boys. She can be found at the bottom right of the personality wheel. She is looking for a low intensity holiday as well as with kid-friendly activities. They have chosen to book online as it avoids travel agencies extra costs, so she needs to find a travel website that will allow her to book all at once instead of separately. She has little experience booking trips online, so she would like the process to be simple and easy. Her frustration is having to take a long time to gather every one's information and fill all the passenger and contact forms for every member, she would much rather be able to fill the forms later on. [Figure 16] link: http://tiny.cc/fytx5y

Persona 2: Lilly Thomson

"We are planning on taking the kids on a nice relaxing vacation. I am doing all of the reservations online, as its cheaper this way. We want to book a package-holiday, so we don't need to worry about booking everything else separately. We have a very tight budget and I am no expert on the internet, so hopefully it's straight forward."

Age:
37

Ocupation:
Stay-at-home mum

Status:
Married

Location:
London

Flights for:
4 people

Explanation
Since they are 4, booking process should be easy and simple. The package holiday should include flights, transfers and accommodation. All must fit within family budget.

Goals
To buy a package-holiday for four through internet. It should be simple and pretty straight forward. As a busy mum, she wants to plan and buy everything as soon as possible.

Frustrations
Several forms must be filled in for each member of the family before being able to complete booking. This makes it very complicated, as she needs to organize for all members.

[Figure 16]

Aim 2

By using the suggestions gathered from several different resources, shown in the table above (in Background research section) and identifying user groups and goals, an "optimised" task model version has been created for each persona. Following these tips, each task model shows an upgraded version of what the purchase process and user experience should be in order to avoid abandonment and gain user satisfaction. It shows the steps and logical

activities that each user specifically needs to achieve their goal as quickly, efficiently and as simple as possible.

* For both these interactive experiences, it is necessary to note, that the option of going through the purchasing process is done without the need of logging in or creating an account. Prices should also be shown throughout every step and be very clear about what is being added to the basket and what the total amount of items and price is at all times. [Figure 17] link: http://tiny.cc/61tx5y and [Figure 18] link: http://tiny.cc/l2tx5y
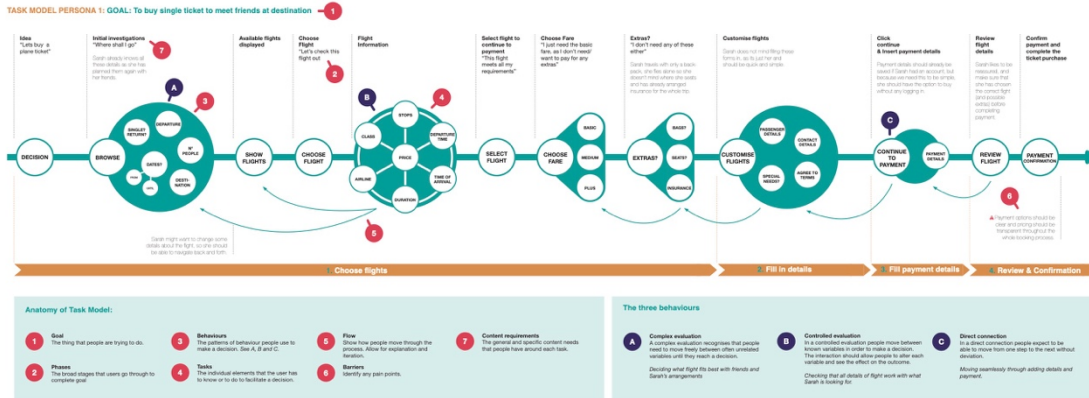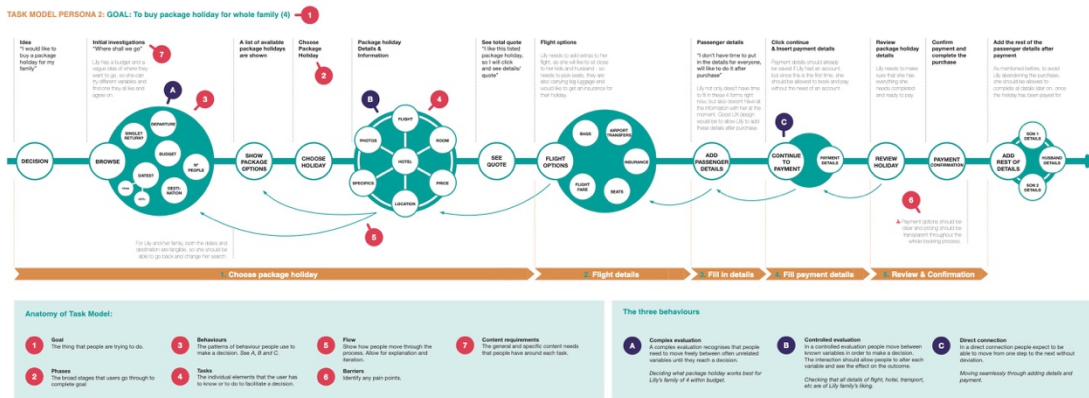
[Figure 17]

[Figure 18]

Having both these task models allows to define and very clearly visualise the different steps and interactions that each persona needs.

Methology

To be able to prove that an improved and further personalised UX design is necessary to decrease the current basket abandonment rate, each personas goal will be analysed and tested against the opposite task model's process. So, for example. Lilly's goal is to purchase a package holiday, but will she be able to do so with a UX process commonly designed for buying just a flight?

The best way to illustrate/display this comparison is by using Lego's "experience wheel" shared by Bruce Temkin in an article called "Lego's building block for good experiences". (Temkin, B., 2009). This wheel is a depiction of a customer's journey, in this case, Sarah's journey through buying a flight and Lilly's journey through buying a package holiday and detailing the activities in each step. By using this method, the emotions of the user are expressed throughout the cycle of the experience. Each wheel is divided into the same steps that each purchase process is split into, previously shown on the task models. Next to each face is a description of the step they are taking.

By using this method, we are able to analyse and see clearly both, the level of satisfaction from each persona for each activity while also seeing where they are within the cycle of experience. [Figure 19] link: http://tiny.cc/i5tx5y and [Figure 20] link: http://tiny.cc/95tx5y

[Figure 19]
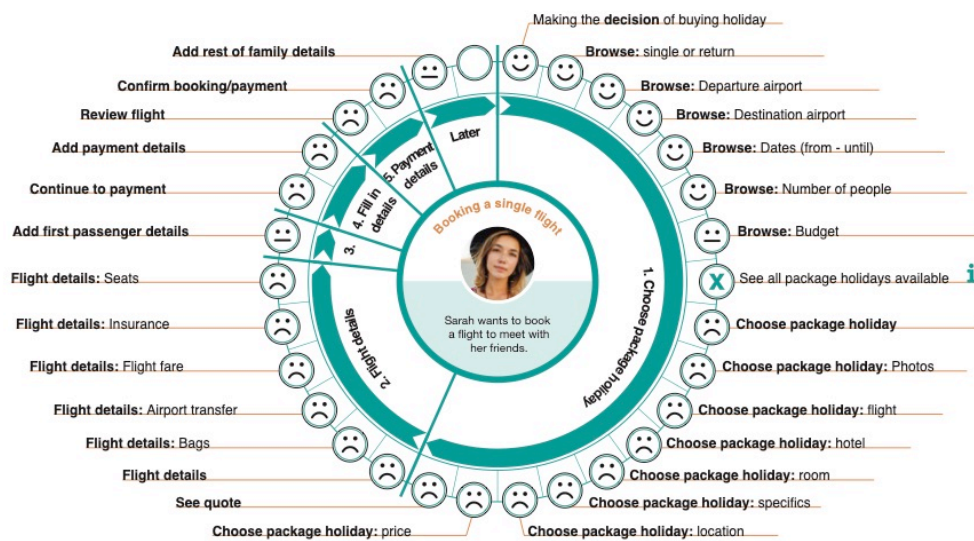
Experience Icons

☺ **Happy**
User needs these steps to fulfil her purpose.

☹ **Unhappy**
User feels like the step either doesn't apply or is missing important steps to complete their purchase.

ℹ **Information**
Lack of information or excess of information, uneccessary for user.

😐 **Impartial**
User doesn't really care or need these steps.

Ⓧ **Abandonment**
This is where user would abandon basket.

[Figure 20]

Findings

After comparing both wheels, it is very easy to see that none of the processes fully covers the personas' necessities or circumstances. In both cases, both personas showed more "unhappy" and "impartial" emotions than positive emotions throughout the cycle.

Testing Lilly's user experience on Sarah's purchasing process, showed that her emotions kept between positive and neutral throughout the first stage. This is not surprising, since part of her goal was also to book a flight, so going through each step was something she was expecting. However, by the end of this section, the lack of options and information (i) to further book all the other elements of her package holiday, such as the hotel or airport transfers, forced her to abandon the process.

Whilst on Sarah's case, the abandonment occurs much earlier in the process and doesn't even carry out the completion of the first section. This was due to the excess of unnecessary information and options (i) that she did not need to go through to finalise the purchase. As soon as she filled in her desired destination and trip details, a list of additional holiday packages appeared without giving her the option of simply purchasing the flight.

Analysis & Discussion

As can be seen from de models the interactions of the users with the process are not very satisfactory to any of them and unfortunately, this is the biggest cause of basket abandonment. Surprisingly, the travel industry is greatly ignoring the importance of a well thought-through interface for users, what could potentially be the key to higher conversion rates. Many UX designers agree with the importance of investment in this subject, one of them is Megan Ellis, senior UX designer for *Nomensa*. On her article called: *"Four reasons to invest in UX design"*, she argues that "Taking a user-centred approach to design - getting to know your customer and testing ideas with them - has long been recognised as the best way to ensure that what you finally build engages them and creates a sustainable offering." (Ellis, M., 2019).
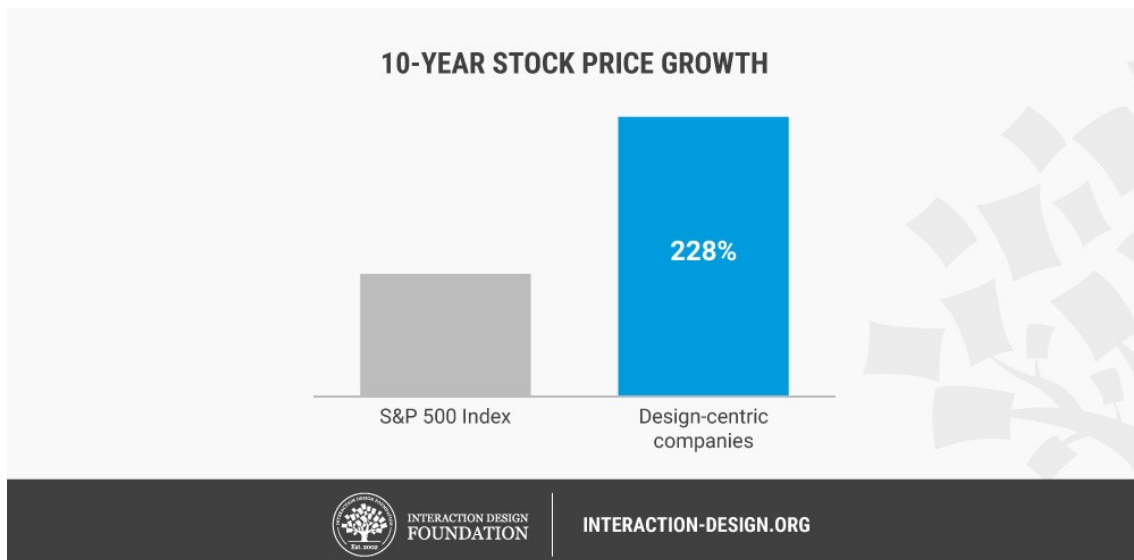
What these companies are lacking is a proper adaptive design schema for their users' interfaces, much like the strategy shown in this case study. Nowadays, most companies proud themselves of using A/B testing, but the lack of analysis of the user behaviour previous to testing usually makes one wonder how valid the results are. This is why creating a strategy by incorporating these three methodologies prior to testing could be very beneficial. (Blog., 2019). The first methodology consists of the usage of quadrants ([Figure 12] and [Figure 13]) which helps to identify the peoples´ profile that potentially would the travel website. The great thing about using quadrants, is that they are adaptable, and can be as complex or as simple as necessary, it is by using this method, that different groups of personas can be identified and used as references for an adaptive UX design, just like the use cases I proposed above for Sarah and Lilly. This would be the most important aspects for websites to cover, as it helps them understand their audience and adapt their sales strategies appropriately.

By using the other two methods; task models, and experience wheels, the designed UX can be tested and modified accordingly. This is useful for travel websites to realise how the interactions for the users sometimes are. Also how the information gathered is not always coherent and gets in the way of letting the user achieve his objective, providing an unsatisfactory experience. Unnecessary processes towards conversion, such as opening accounts and long forms, can be tested this way.

Conclusion / Recommendations

To conclude, this study confidently answers the question: **Can good UX design reduce high basket abandonment rates in the travel industry?**
It is clear that travel sites **need** to invest wisely and generously into UX design, if they want to see their basket abandonment rates decrease and their conversion rate increase. Financing adaptive design will also boost the number of satisfactory faithful users who will come back and back again to their site, producing larger number of purchases. Other ecommerce sites, like amazon, have been doing this for years and have seen a great growth in their revenue and stock price. (Dam, R., 2019). [Figure 21]

10-YEAR STOCK PRICE GROWTH

228%

S&P 500 Index   Design-centric companies

INTERACTION DESIGN FOUNDATION   INTERACTION-DESIGN.ORG

[Figure 21]

It is important that users are exposed to a simple and effective processes adapted to their needs with an intuitive interface that makes them feel reassured and confident while they interact with the site.
 According to the findings in this case study, it would be highly recommended for travel companies to implement the models and methodologies used in this case study, by imputing their own data to develop their strategies to achieve higher conversions and increase their revenue.

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