



User Research Report

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Executive Summary

This presentation focuses on the user research results from three comprehensive interviews with ideal user participants. The following slides describe how this user research project was conducted, how the data was extracted, what the results were.

Key Recommendations for following actions:

- Focus more on the deals and specials that come with booking directly on the Marriott site.
- Needs more information about rewards membership brought to the surface.
- Users believe that flight & hotel brokers provide better deals than booking direct. Website needs more language up front that counters that belief.

Background

The overall goal for the project is to enhance the user experience of customer-facing digital assets that represent Marriott International Inc. It was agreed among both parties that user research would be a valuable effort because it produces concrete and actionable evidence to accurately support design decisions.

Based on the business goals provided by the Marriott International Inc. stakeholder team, comprehensive design goals and questions were created for interviewing participants from targeted user groups. This presentation describes the user research process, how the data was extracted, what the results were, and what actions are recommended.

Business Needs

The following business needs were created in response to the top five business goals for digital properties provided by the Marriott International Inc. stakeholder team.

- To enhance the communication of incentives for booking a hotel directly from Marriott online compared to going through other vendors or means.
- To make users more aware of the brands within the Luxury and Lifestyle collection categories in order to increase reservations.

Business Needs Continued

- To raise awareness of the Marriott Rewards loyalty program to increase new memberships through the website.
- To provide the deals or information needed for users to successfully complete a transaction throughout the shopping cart process.
- To enhance the popularity of the Hotel to Flight package on the websites.

Primary User Research Goals

1. To understand how clear and effective widgets, features, labels, and content are with communicating to the users.
2. To understand the points of view of different user groups and their behavioral patterns in response to Marriott.com and reserve a hotel.
3. To understand user mental models regarding their view of the process steps and preferred information architecture.
4. To understand other methods for users to book a Marriott hotel and how to convince users to prefer booking online.

Research Methods

Interview Plan

Based on the user research goals, a list of generic User Research Questions were developed to help with learning how the goals can be met.

Example Questions:

1. How do users normally reserve a hotel if not online and why would they consider it to be more convenient?
 - Trying to learn: New ways to design the website that can compete with the other methods to reserve a hotel

Research Methods Continued

Example Questions:

2. What user groups qualify for rewards but would not consider becoming a member due to the unwillingness to find more information about the program?
 - Trying to learn: If more information needs to be presented about rewards front and center to boost membership among skeptical customers.
3. How do users shop around for deals when booking a hotel online?
 - Trying to Learn: To gain a strong understanding of online shopping for hotel reservations and if it causes users to abandon shopping carts in the website reservation process.

Additional questions were included that related to the example questions in order to help extract more detail about the user experience.

Research Methods Continued

The user research questions were followed by a short list of hypotheses about how the questions will be answered. The purpose of the hypotheses is to ensure that these questions are accurately targeted toward providing answers that will help achieve the user research goals.

Example User Research Goals:

- Users may have had issues booking hotel rooms online in the past because they do not turn out as advertised.
- People who reserve hotels for business or high luxury hotels most likely feel qualified for rewards and believe they would benefit from it.

Research Methods Continued

Interview Guide

- An interview guide was drafted to help conduct the interviews. They included the questions from the user research plan and additional questions that would help with probing the participant for detailed feedback.

The Interviews

- Three people were interviewed: A man in his late 20's, a man in his late 30's, and a man in his 60's. All three have traveled for both business and pleasure.
- The interviews began with an introduction, including the request for the participant to sign a consent form for being recorded on video.

Research Methods Continued

- The introduction was followed by three additional phases that included warm-up questions, the main body of questions, and cool down questions.
- Each interview was wrapped up with appreciation given toward the participant, saving all recorded files, and four quick takeaways written down about the interview.

Data Analysis

Reviewed the videos recorded from the interviews, sliced out all the insightful examples using video editing software and rendered them into smaller clips that were then labeled and categorized into four major folders:

- Behavioral Patterns
- Labels and Widgets
- Mental Models for preferred IA (Information Architecture)
- Direct booking

Data Analysis Continued

- Interview clip data was also sub-categorized according to patterns and any other relationships they had with the other content.
- Patterns and content about user preferences were also recorded from the card sorting exercises. The results were categorized among the video clips in the Mental Models and Labels & Widgets folders.

Research Results

- Preferred content to be prominent at the website entrance:
 - Deals & Packages, Find a Hotel, and View & Manage Reservations
- Shopping carts are normally abandoned because users have to begin this process to get a legitimate price that can be compared to rates from other vendors.
 - “Especially if I bid on Priceline and get it”
- Users are not interested in signing up for the rewards program with the information given on the home page. They believed that they do not use Marriott’s services frequently enough and that it would take a great deal of brand loyalty to take advantage of the rewards program.
 - “I might look to see benefits available that’s not linked to frequent use.”

Research Results Continued

- Users did not trust the flight & hotel combo as a good deal compared to what other vendors offered:
 - “I believe Kayak would be more aggressive to get me a good deal than Marriott site would.”
- Users normally stay at hotels while traveling for business and pleasure. Most of the time they fly to their destination.
- Even though the users shop around for the best deal, they prefer to book their flight and hotel in one transaction.
- Users find the deals and packages available on the website to be the most valuable incentive for booking directly through the vendor. This goes for booking flights as well.

Research Results Continued

- Business travelers tend to get the better deals because of the long term stays but they don't use very many services available.
 - “I got to stay one night for free while I was away on business because I found a packaged deal.”
 - “They gave me a free night stay because I was there a week and since I was there on business I was gone most of the days and it was just me so I was not using their services as much.”

Research Results Continued

- All users have had unsatisfactory experiences because they booked their hotels online. The following list contains examples of new rituals the users take to avoid making this mistake again.
 - Visitors do not book online while on road trips because they are never sure if they will arrive early enough to get their money's worth.
 - “I don't want to spend \$200-300 bucks just to sleep.”
 - Visitors will not book a hotel without images of the rooms and legitimate credibility in the brand

Research Recommendations

- Focus more on the deals and specials that come with booking directly on the Marriott site.
- The website needs more information about rewards membership brought to the surface:
 - “Are the rewards based on frequency or by a point system?”
 - “Two designated spots on the website for rewards but does not communicate any benefits for being a member.”
- Display the brands of the Marriott collection in a way that is more categorized from luxurious to economic.
- It is risky to compete with more aggressive booking vendors like Kayak or Orbitz. Hotel & Flight may not be worth the effort unless there are packaged deals that come with it or if it says “Book on Marriott.com today. If you find a lower available rate, we'll match it + give you 25% off” like it does when the user views hotel rates.

Research Recommendations

- Users will still come to the site to see if booking directly is a better deal, so the site should communicate this answer front-and-center.
- Consider showing concrete prices for booking a hotel before the user has to go into the shopping cart phase.
- Cater to users on road trips who need a room right away (mobile version).
- Display a legitimate rating system or a guarantee that the experiencing everything Marriott has to offer will be pleasantly memorable.
- Sympathy discounts for visitors who are staying very briefly, like 2am check-ins, or people visiting on business who will be gone all day long.
- Users believe that flight & hotel brokers provide better deals than booking direct. The website needs more language up front that counters that belief.

Research Recommendations

- Needs more of a direct communication toward business visitors on the website comparable to vacationers.
- Communicate that “Meetings and Events” is for booking an event, not checking up on an existing one the visitor may be attending.
- “Experiences by Marriott Packages” is a broad label that is easily misunderstood. One participant thought it could possibly be an African safari.
- Consider a bidding feature similar to Priceline.

Research Recommendations Continued

Video of major takeaways:

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