

K A Y A K

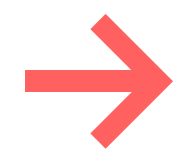
A Usability Study



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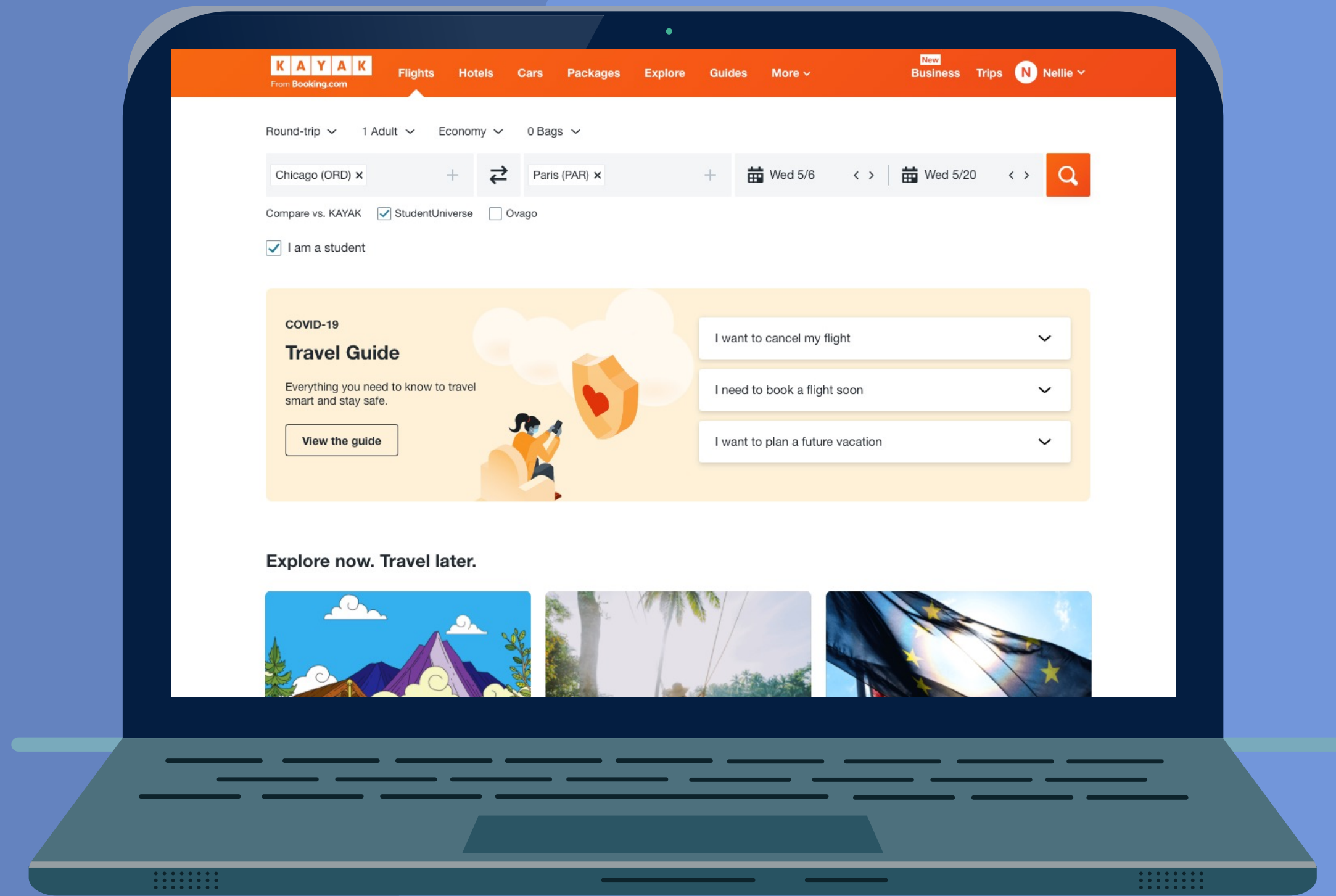


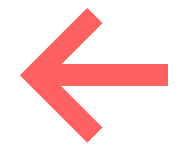
Executive Summary

When it comes to digital experiences, user research can help us determine if a product is user-friendly, if it can accomplish the actions it was designed to complete, and if it meets the user's expectations for it.

By gaining a better understanding of the existing, quantifiable performance and usability of Kayak.com, we can identify areas where the user experience may be improved and define a roadmap to address development opportunities.

This report will review our research goals, approach, test subject demographics, outcomes, and recommendations.





Research Goals

1. Gain a high level understanding of where users begin the process of booking travel arrangements.
2. Review the current user experience when completing travel arrangements using Kayak.com.
3. Evaluate Kayak.com toward identifying service bottlenecks and/or opportunities.
4. Gain a deeper understanding of user needs and perceptions with respect to fulfilling travel needs.





User Survey Data

03

of 3 users prefer to book travel arrangements online.

03

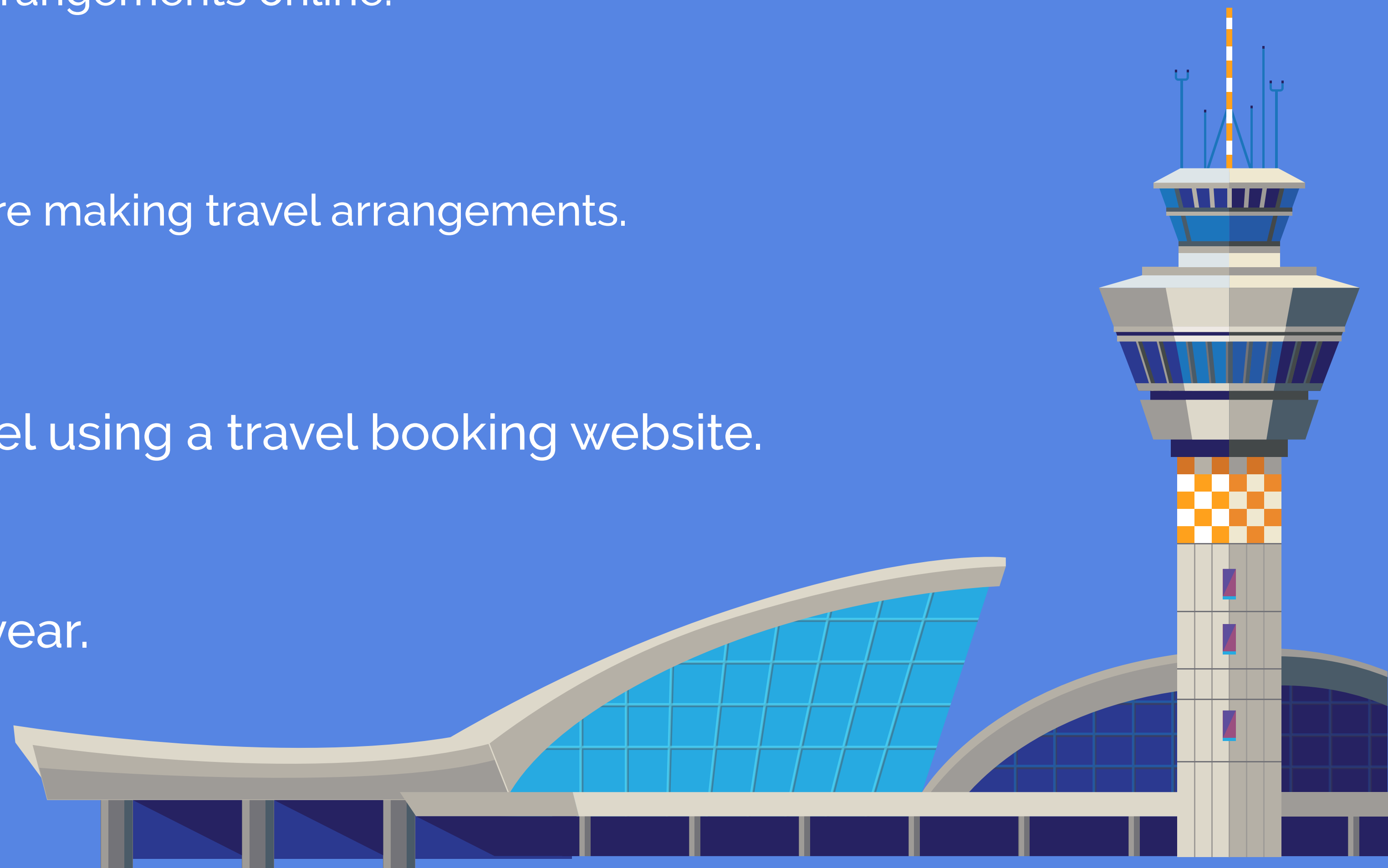
of 3 users comparison shop before making travel arrangements.

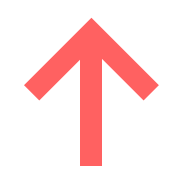
02

of 3 users prefer to book travel using a travel booking website.

01

of 3 users travel only once a year.





Tasks & Goals

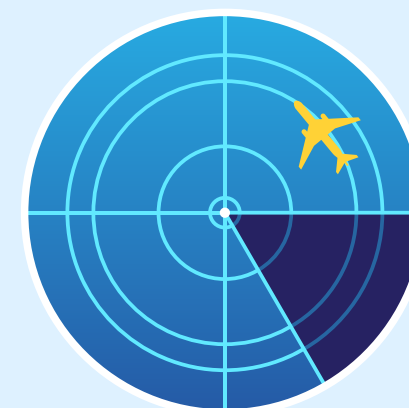
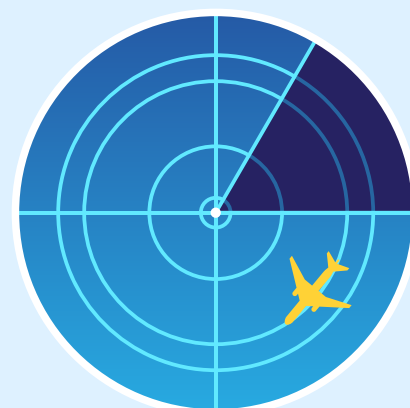
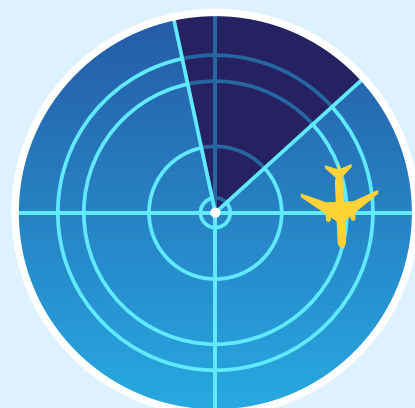
Task 1

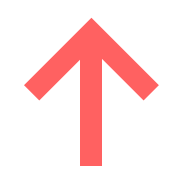
You have decided to go on vacation and would like to find a flight to Paris, France. You will leave the afternoon of May 6th and return the evening of May 20th, 2020. Can you find the best deal using Kayak.com?

GOAL:

The goal of this task was to observe where customers begin when using kayak.com to book airfare and to test the process of locating and comparing flight options.

The use of “best deal” was also to gather information of what customers consider a “good deal” (price, number of stops, etc.) when booking travel arrangements.





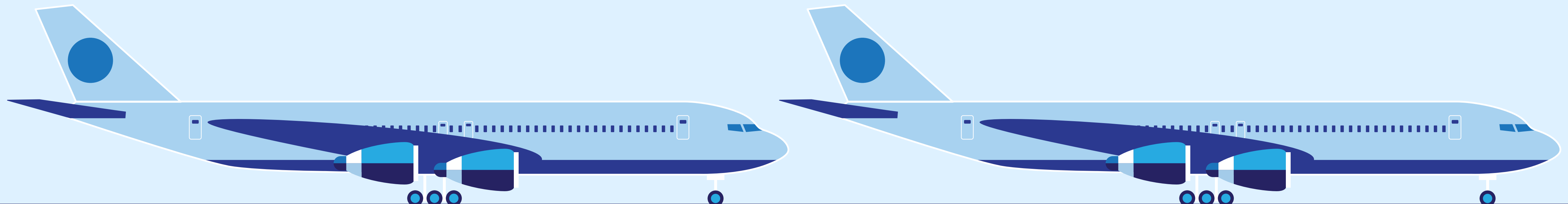
Tasks & Goals

Task 2

Imagine you are flying to Paris from Chicago on the afternoon of May 6th and returning the evening of May 20th. You would like to depart from and return to O'Hare International Airport. You would like a flight with no more than one stop and an airline that will allow you to check one bag for free.

GOAL:

Airlines are not only highly varied but offer a wide variety of amenities; some for free and some at a cost. They are, however, rarely the same across the board. The goal of this task was to expand on the previous task and test the location of filtering options to determine whether customers are able to easily narrow down and modify selections when provided a variety of data that may appear quite similar.





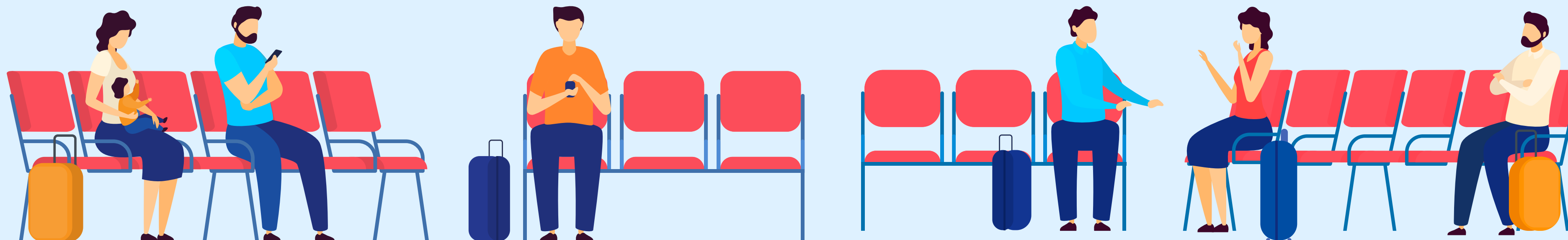
Tasks & Goals

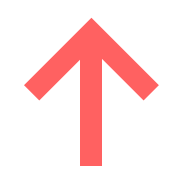
Task 3

You will need to book a hotel while in Paris. You would like to stay in the Montmartre/Sacre-Coeur district at a place with a good review and free WiFi that costs less than \$150 per night. Can you find what you need using Kayak.com?

GOAL:

Like airlines, hotels are also highly variable and feature a wide variety of amenities that may change their price point dramatically. They are also complicated by location. Many of us have, in the past, selected a hotel and found out it is no where near the fun things to do in town. The goal of this task was to determine whether customers are able to not only book a hotel but do so using a highly specific location with highly specific selection and pricepoint criteria.





Tasks & Goals

Task 4

You are taking 2 weeks off in June of this year. You have a budget of \$3000 to spend on airfare, accommodations, and a rental car (if wanted). Starting again from Chicago and taking your budget into consideration, find three trips you could take.

GOAL:

This task is to test discoverability. Almost everyone has some dream vacation in mind they would love to take and most of us could tell someone right now where we'd go if we had the time and money. This is intended to give customers a fairly broad set of parameters and allow them to explore the site and find things that interest them.



Outcomes

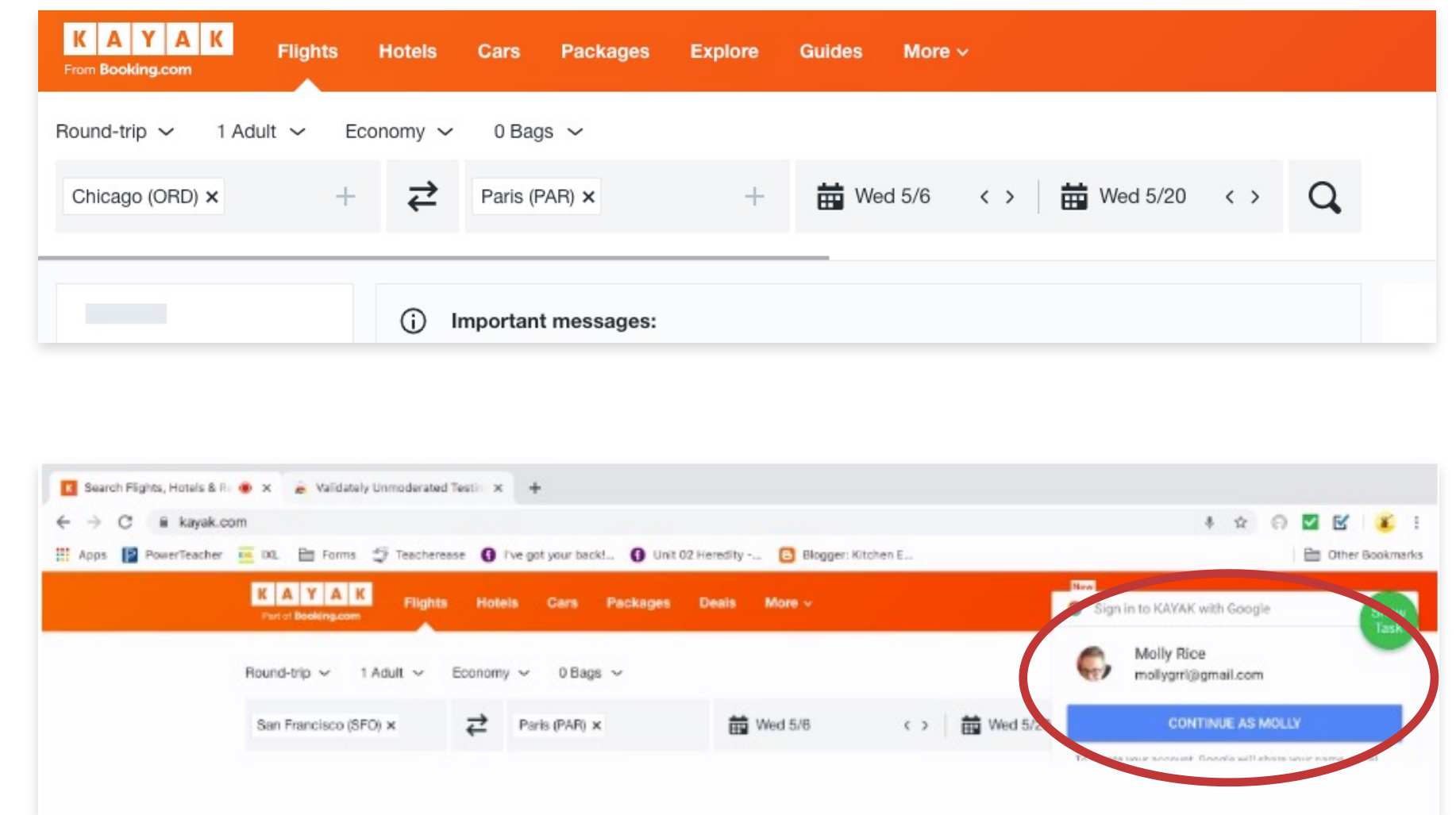
Task 1: Two out of three users were able to use the search parameters to locate a flight they considered to be a good deal.

In two instances, the modal inviting the users to log in to google obscured the search function (Fig. 1). This caused one user to fail at this task and ultimately navigate away from the site completely in an attempt to complete their search.

The two users who did complete the task each commented on the amount of time it took for Kayak.com to finish comparing fares and identify present options at the lowest price point.

One user commented she did not feel the results provided insight into “good deal” considerations beyond price– like the option to check bags for free and/or flights with limited connections.

Fig. 1:





Outcomes

Task 2: For this task, users were asked to indicate the time of day they would arrive/depart and to select a flight with no more than one stop that would allow them to check a bag for free.

On Kayak.com, this is done by selecting from a variety of options from the left hand menu options (Fig. 2).

One of three users was able to indicate they wanted no more than one stop; but none of the users managed to successfully modify the time of departure or arrival.

Users were frustrated by the Fee Assistant feature, as it served to recalculate the airfare to include baggage fees instead of identify airlines that don't charge them. On kayak.com, the "price breakdown" feature provides this functionality (Fig. 3). Unfortunately, none of the users located it.

One user received notification that no matching flights could be found and was unable to complete the task.

Fig. 2:

Fee Assistant ⓘ

Carry-on bag

- 0 +

Checked bag

- 0 +

Stops

☐ Nonstop

☒ 1 stop \$560

☒ 2+ stops \$660

Times

Take-off

Landing

Take-off from ORD

Wed 6:00 AM – 8:30 PM


Take-off from PAR

Wed 2:30 AM – 10:30 PM

Fig. 3:

Flexible option


☐



3:50 pm – 9:30 am⁺¹

Aer Lingus

☐




10:10 pm – 2:00 pm⁺¹

Aer Lingus

Best

Cheapest


☐



7:30 pm – 1:05 pm⁺¹

Icelandair

☐



2:15 pm – 6:20 pm

Icelandair

Price Breakdown

Ticket price

\$688

Carry-on bag

Add

Checked bag

Included

Up to 62in total dimensions. Check the exact weight allowance on the airline website

Total

\$688

\$688

eDreams

View Deal

1 stop

10h 35m

KEF

ORD - CDG

\$565

StudentUniverse

Economy Light

View Deal

Economy Standard

\$790

Economy Flex

\$1000



Outcomes

Task 3: Each of the users were able to locate a hotel with WiFi under the price point of \$150.00.

Not all of them were able to locate a hotel in the Montmartre/Sacre-Coeur district of Paris– as indicated by the task. In one instance, a user resorted to trying to compare hotels using the map function after received a long list of unrelated choices for Montmartre/Sacre-Coeur.

All of the users were able to set the wifi only preference, but only 1 of 3 users identified it in the Freebies section immediately at the top of the menu bar (Fig. 4).

Each of the users was confused by the difference between star ratings and review score.

Fig. 4:

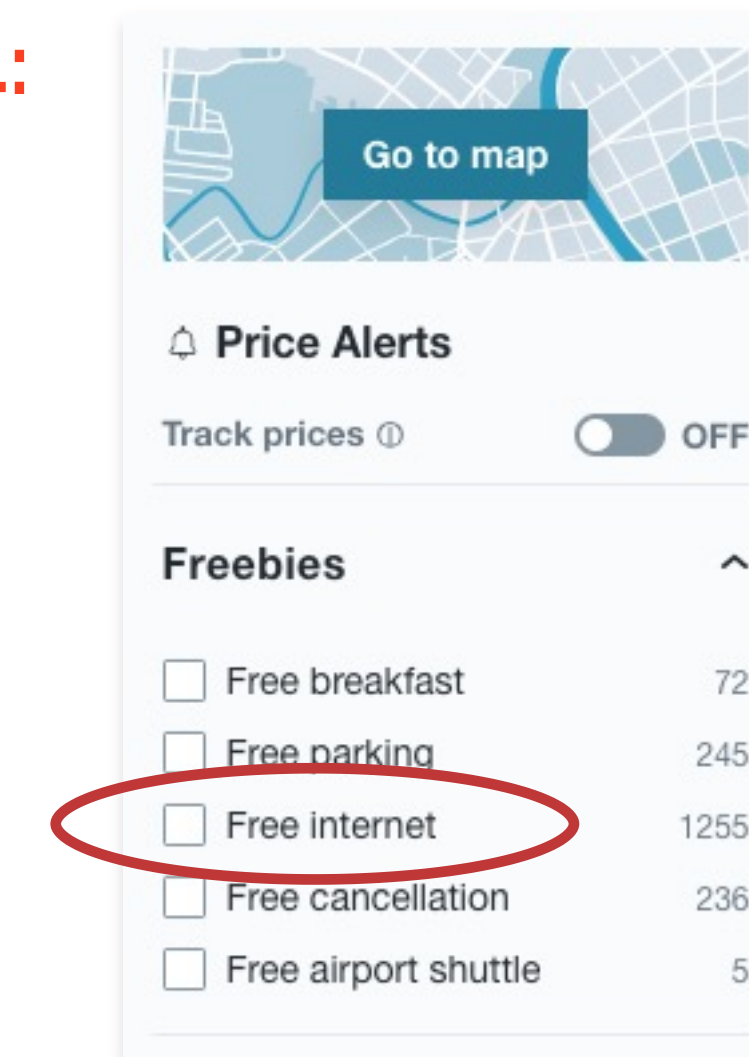
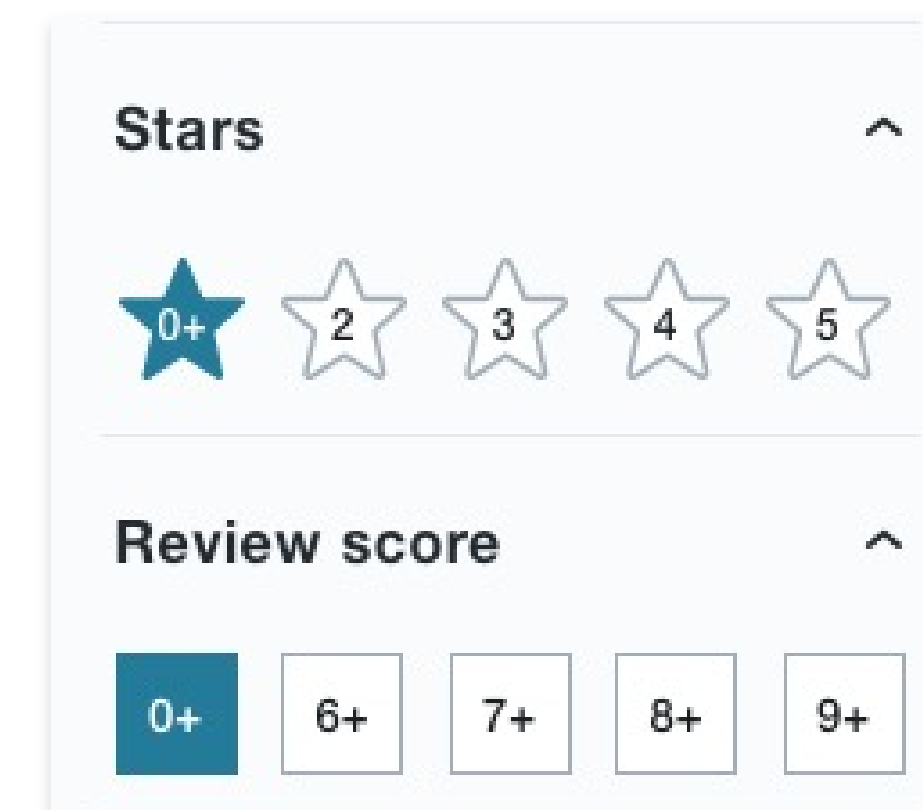


Fig. 5:

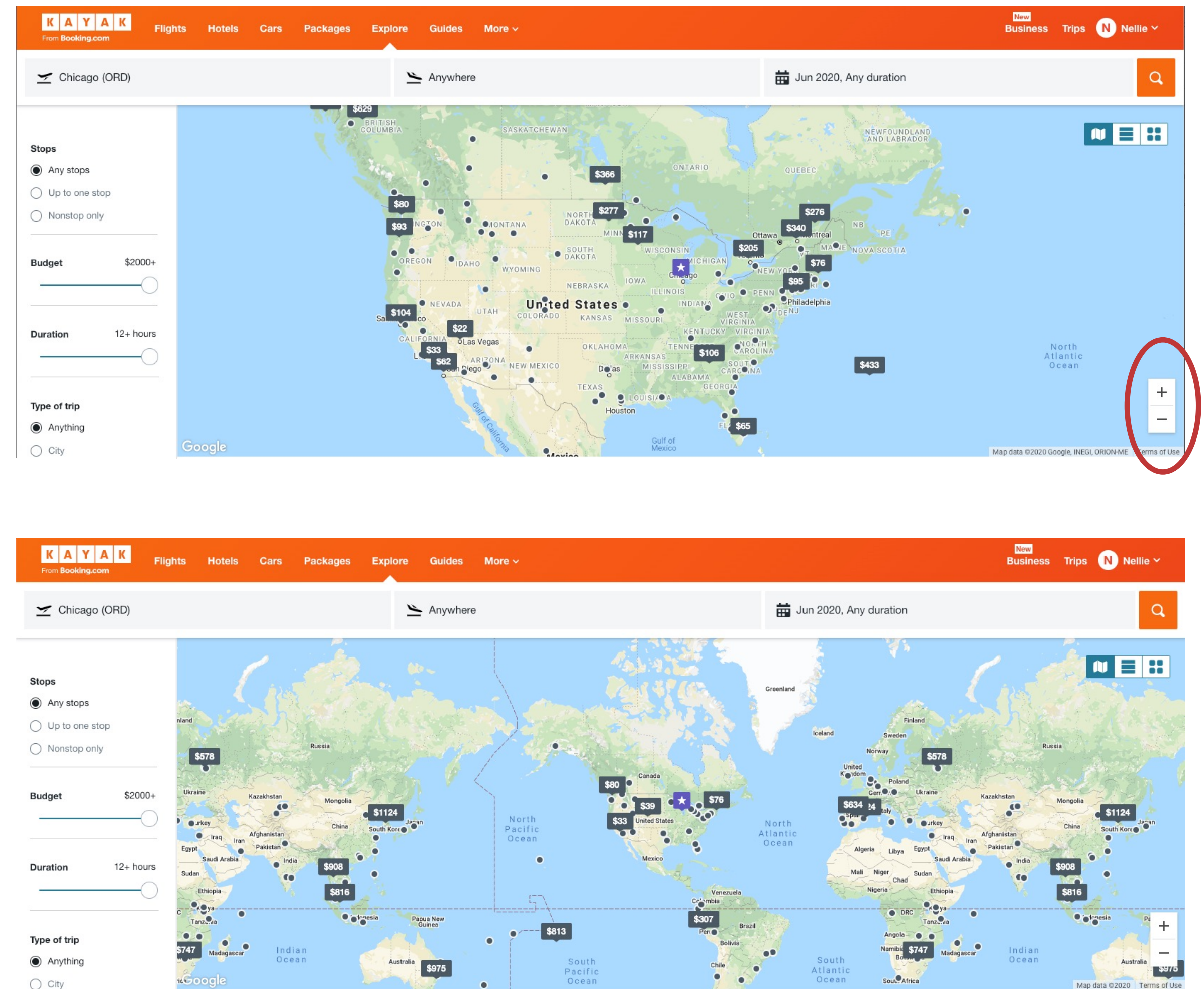


Task 4: When attempting to find vacation options with fairly open parameters and a generous price point, users seemed to prefer searching according to places they'd thought of going over using the “Explore” feature to look at a wide variety of options.

Two users were disappointed when the results provided only options within the continental US and often including obscure locations. They did not immediately realize they could zoom out on the map to view global options (Fig. 6).

After clicking back several times and being forced to start over; one user gave up on the task entirely before identifying any vacation options.

Fig. 6:





Key User Comments

What are your overall impressions of Kayak.com?

"It's cluttered and visually busy. All the unrelated ads were annoying. It doesn't seem like it's really saving you any money."

"Pretty slow. They claim to be searching other sites, so I guess that can't be helped. Although I could also search other sites."

"Maybe if I used it more regularly and figured things out more I wouldn't mind using it. But I definitely prefer Skyscanner."

How well did Kayak.com meet your needs based on the tasks you completed?

"It was fine for doing just hotels or just flights but the packages were really confusing to figure out."

"Not great, lots of the websites looked kinda janky, referred me to websites I'd never heard of and would be uncomfortable using. I would not trust my credit card information with most of these websites. I would rather pay more and be assured that my travel plans are made, not fraudulent, and not going to result in a lot of extra time with the fraud department of my credit card company."

"I did not like that it would open multiple tabs. It would have been better if it walked me through flight, hotel, car, in some kind of order. It was just a jumble of information. There wasn't a great way to specify what I wanted in each individual portion of the package."

How easy was it to find what you were looking for with Kayak.com?

"It took a minute to figure out that I could go anywhere on the planet, I just had to drag and drop the map."

"It was a struggle. Things are not well laid out and it's cluttered. The design and coloring of the website is stupid."



Key User Comments

If you could improve the experience of using Kayak.com, what would you do first?

"Make bundling or packages easier. Make the search results appear quicker."

"So first of all: if I'm planning a potential trip and I have a lot of money and a chunk of time, it'd be nice if it would let me sort that by price or in some other meaningful way. otherwise all you see at the bottom is advertisements for your dream vacation in beautiful scenic Newark or Bemidji. Why they chose to list us destinations first when I'm spending \$3000 is beyond me. The map interface isn't intuitive. They had used drop menus and radio dials to organize the search until then. So threw me for a loop. Also: when people travel overseas there are always a ton of other expenses, so why not ask me if I want a package deal (hotel etc) estimate? Give me a flight time estimate? that way I can plan my downtime to recover from heinous jetlag. All in all these are improvements, but also: the site isn't bad. Its better than a lot I've seen."

"Make it more intuitive to use, make it so that it walks you through the reservation process. Or maybe focus on what it's supposed to do, which is verify whether you're getting the best deal on travel. I might use this site to check on rates after booking elsewhere, but based on the options provided here, I can't imagine using it as my first stop for travel shopping."





Recommendations

DO NOW:

1

UNCLUTTER!

The website interface is so cluttered, it is difficult for users to hone in on one thing that is important and either ease usage or will provide them the opportunity to save money. The clutter is also adding to customer frustration and impeding ease of use.

2

MOVE THE SIGN IN/UP MODAL.

The sign in/up modal— on some interfaces— blocks the user's ability to search, see results, and appears repeatedly. This should be placed at the end of the user workflow. Placing it at the beginning is annoying to users because they've not even had the opportunity to see if the site is of value to them. Allow the users to make selections, look through the site, and settle on their travel plans before asking them to sign in or sign up.

3

MAKE MAP FUNCTIONALITY MORE INTUITIVE.

Users were confused when attempting to use the map to select hotels, flights, and other options. It did not seem intuitive for them and was awkward to navigate.

4

STREAMLINE INTERFACE

Many of the users had difficulty doing minor things, like selecting what time they would arrive or depart. Providing more clearcut options and outcomes would make the site easier to navigate. Avoid hiding elements where users aren't anticipating them.



Recommendations

DO NEXT:

1

IMPROVE SEARCH FUNCTIONALITY

User searches often returned a significant number of unapplicable items or choices that were ridiculous. For example, one of our users called out the fact that offering them vacations in Newark and Bemidji, MN seemed silly when they were planning to spend \$3,000 on a trip.

2

CLARIFY RATING SYSTEM

The site offers both a star rating on hotels as well as a review score. This was unclear to our users. They were not sure whether to go by the review score, which seemed to be on a scale of 1-10, or to go by the star rating. It may be a more intuitive approach to remove the “scaled” approach for reviews and instead give reviewers a binary option like thumbs up or down.

3

IMPROVE DISCOVERABILITY

When invited to explore and create a sort of “dream vacation”, most users didn’t know where to begin. This was a combination of things; they didn’t seem to find the EXPLORE feature from the menu bar and they showed no interest in things like reviews and blog suggestions. Most users seemed to have an idea of what kind of vacation they wanted to take (one user was interested in beaches, another in a trip to Asia.) It might be prudent to consider a kind of travel “quiz” to tailor results to user preferences instead of overwhelming a user with options or places to look for options.

A stylized blue airplane is centered in the background, spanning across the four panels of the grid. The airplane has a large fuselage, a pointed nose, wings, a tail, and two engines. The text is overlaid on the fuselage.

Thank You

NELL RICE - KSU UXD 2020