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Hotels.com Website

USABILITY AUDIT

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Hotels.com-Introduction

- Hotels.com is a website that offers choice over 240,000 hotels in more than 60 countries. The website is present in different languages to serve the needs of the people coming from various countries and cultures. Techved was approached by hotels.com for their Thai website.

- The hotels.com websites in other languages were performing relatively well. Somehow the Thai version of the website suffered certainly because of cultural issues or language issues.

- They wanted to figure out what is it that restricts the traffic on the site and how can they make it suitable for users.

Challenges

- The Thai website did not attract much traffic as it was a very general design that did not seem to connect well with the Thai people. The design was not Thai culture specific.

- They wanted to find out the usability issues in design keeping in mind the cultural differences and the Thai users' perception.

- The challenge was to rectify the issues that come in the way of users and make it compatible for the local audience of Thailand.

- It was required to get an expert review for the website to improve the website such that it suits the target users' mindset.

- Language issues, cultural differences required major attention in order to improve the design for the target user group.

Our Approach

- We decided to address these issues with Usability Audit and thus give away an overall website review.

- The audit report is based on the following :

➢ Website walk through

➢ Our expertise in UX

➢ Web Usability best practices in the industry

➢ Known Culture specific preferences of the target user groups

We suggested an audit as the experts' review would help in looking at the flaws in the current website structure. Hence we worked in order to improve the site for the target users of the website and recommended changes that are likely to attract more visitors.

Following is a part of the final presentation made to the Hotels.com Team.

TABLE OF CONTENT

Here is an index of the audit report that lists on what basis we scrutinized the website.

1. Home Page

2. Search results page

3. Hotel details page

4. City landing page from Google

5. Scenario

6. Language issues

FINDINGS INDEX

Given below is the severity rating of the errors that were found during the analysis.

Critical error. Caused great irritation and blockages for the user.

Serious error. Delayed users in their use of the Application.

Minor error. Caused users to hesitate for a few seconds.

Good. This approach is recommendable.

Recommendations

Home Page

VALUE PROPOSITION

⚠️ The current home page is a missed opportunity to display the wide range of offerings i.e. hotels /resorts ,deals and offers .These elements will increase the user interest that leads to the increased number of online bookings on hotels.com

PRESENTATION AND DETAILED DESIGN

The hotel search form overlaps the graphics display in a manner that interferes with the seamless view of graphics on the homepage.

The search form is treated with transparent shades and leaves a visible margin to the hotel image , so that the user perceives the hotel image as continuous object

Recommendation : Consider using more effective and contemporary styles of visual design. Please refer the example on animation.

Search Result Page

SEARCH RESULTS PAGE: INFORMATION COVERAGE

⚠️ The current search result page displays the filter criteria in the order of 'Price, Ratings, Areas/Landmark, Hotel type (apartment/hotel),Facilities'. Thai travelers' preferred sequence for filtering the search results would be 'Price' 'Location' 'Hotel Type' 'Facilities'.

Recommendation : Consider changing the filters sequence as per the target users mental model about how they want to interact with the search results.

SEARCH RESULTS: PRESENTATION

The search results pages are usually information heavy and are significant for users to make buying/booking decisions. Hence they need to present the information in a well organized and visually appealing manner to the users. However the observation of hotels.com search results page indicate following points:

Total number of search results found are displayed on a secondary location, Users are likely to miss it as it is usually placed on the top along with the search criteria display.

Too many anchor points to view the related information like the hotel name, star status , ratings, reviews.

Hotel Details Page

HOTEL DETAILS PAGE: MISSING FEATURES

⚠️ Users would like to get in touch with the hotel staff/management before making an online booking .Many users come to the site and expect to get the pricing for their desired dates and room types .However no such tools are currently available.

Recommendation :Consider introducing the **'Online chat'** which can be initiated from the hotel details page to get in touch with the hotel representative. Mention the customer service email addresses where user can write their queries.
Provide a '**Price Calculator'** feature on the hotel details page , that is , in the appropriate context of the task of selecting a hotel for booking,

HOTEL DETAILS PAGE: STRENGTHS

✓ The people of Thai like to see details presented altogether. The rooms details are presented in a tabular format effectively as per the industry standards

Scenario

SCENARIO

Tom sees a list of hotels in Paris, along with their thumbnails and wants to share few of them with his wife using one of the social networking sites. Instead of sharing this page link he would prefer to share few chosen hotel links. He attempts to do that and clicks on one of the hotel names.

SCENARIO
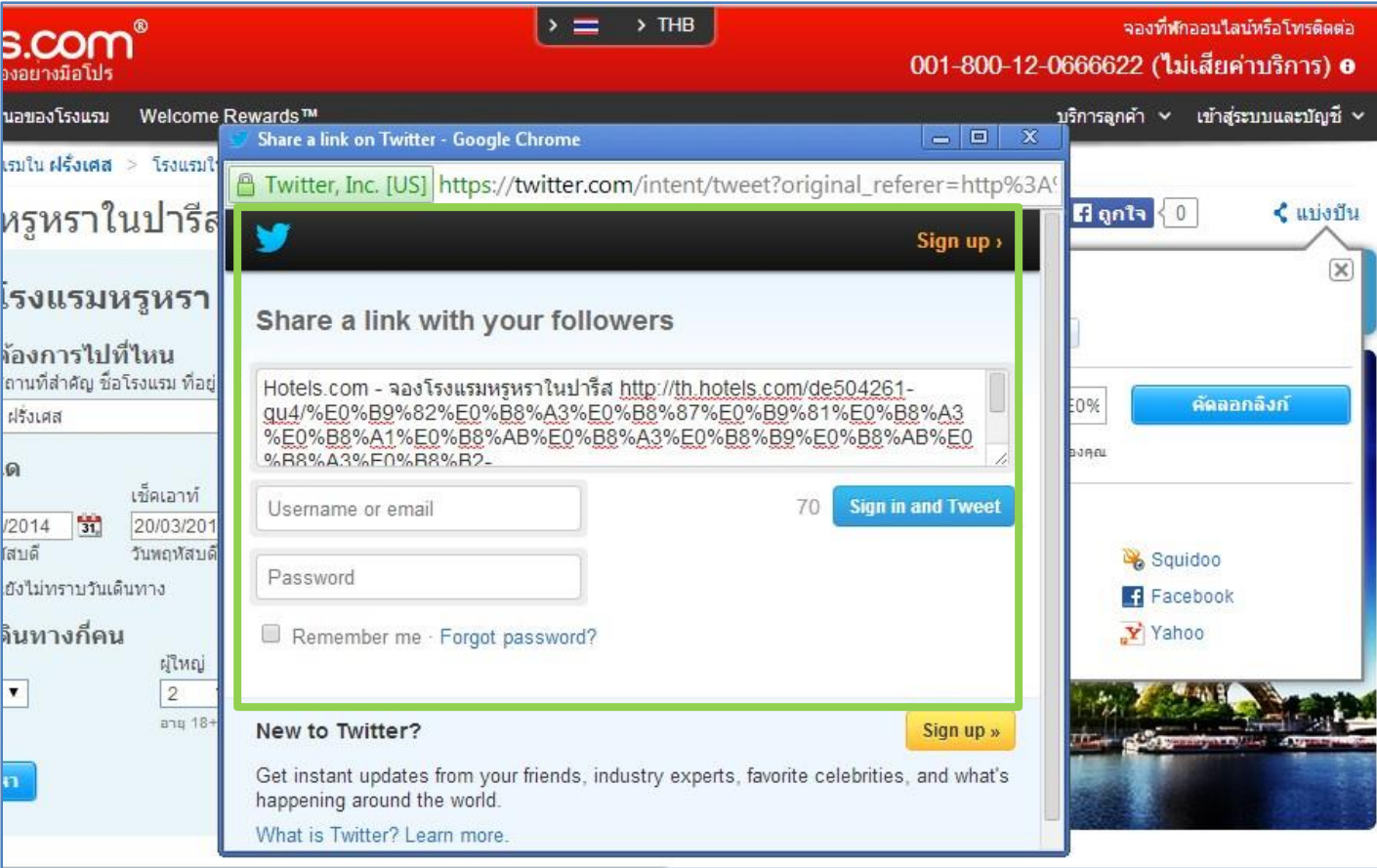
Tom enters his twitter details and shares the page link with his wife.

Recommendation :

1. Consider removing the option 'email' as Thai users do not use it so often.
2. Remove repetition of facebook and goggle+ sharing buttons as the redundancy creates clutter and confusion for the user.

Language Issues

UNUSUAL LANGUAGE

The language used is not familiar and the grammar used may be uncommon for Thai people. Instead of การยกเลิกฟรี (Free cancellation) there should be ฟรี ค่ายกเลิก (Cancellation free of charge).

INAPT TEXT

Usually Thai people would not type "โรงแรมหรูหราในปารีส", (Luxury in Paris) to make a search. They usually search โรงแรมห้าดาวในปารีส (Paris 5 star hotel).

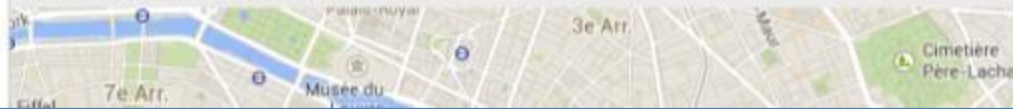Use โรงแรมหรูในปารีส or โรงแรมห้าดาวในปารีส (Luxury hotels in Paris or five star hotels in Paris.)

Thank You!

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