Web design for user experience: Virgin America web site case study

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Abstract

Web usability is the ease of use of a website. Some goals of usability are the presentation of information and choices in a clear and concise way, a lack of ambiguity and the placement of important items in appropriate areas. On the other hand, user experience is something more than usability. It includes each and every experience that the users have while using the service. And of course, usability rules affect the user experience. In this study, understanding the principles of user-centered design and how it improves user experience is the main purpose. For this aim, https://www.virginamerica.com, which is the web site that gained the two thousand sixteen Best User Experince award from The Webby Awards, has been studied as a case study.

Keywords: Web design, user experience, Virgin America .

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1. Introduction

Usability and profitability are two sides of the successful websites. Simple usability improvements can create increases in the profitability of the websites. Likewise, usability improvements can greatly improve productivity and job satisfaction in a work environment. Usability goals are business goals. Web sites that are hard to use frustrate customers, forfeit revenue, and erode brands. Executives can apply a disciplined approach to improve all aspects of ease-of-use. The user experience development process is all about ensuring that no aspect of the user's experience with your site happens without your conscious, explicit intent (Garrett, 2017). Simply by starting with user experience reviews to assess specific flaws, anyone may understand their causes. Then fixing the problems may become easier.

2. Aim of This Study

In this study, understanding the principles of user-centered design and how it improves user experience is the main purpose. For this aim, https://www.virginamerica.com, which is the web site that gained the two thousand sixteen Best User Experince award from The Webby Awards, has been studied as a case study.
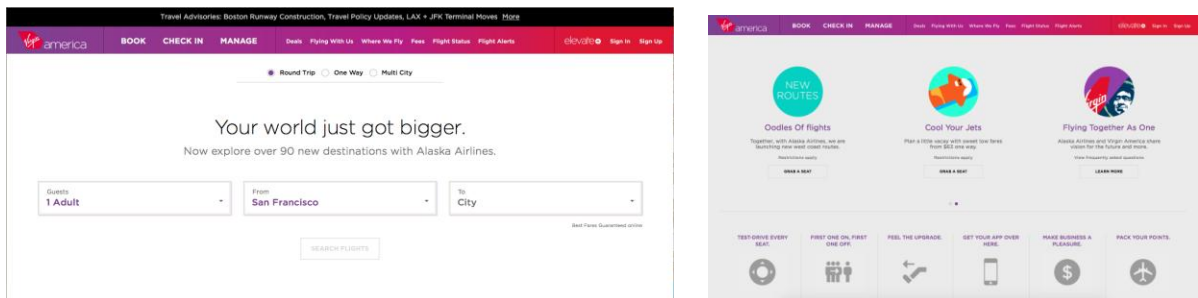
3. Findings

Figure 1. Home page

First landing the home page (Figure 1), the visitor can either choose to browse the website by adult, child passenger or just someone needs advices about travelling. Instead of only grouping people by their age, Virgin America recognizes their visitors as travellers from certain places. For example, if you are looking for a certain destination, you don't even care about all the other destinations they also offer. This website allows the visitor to browse their page according to the visitors' very specific goal. And all pages cares about the user experience more than anything else. We see a very fresh and modern design. Users use visual thinking as the major part of their thinking process (Stolley & Brizee, 2015). On the other hand, the layout of the site is in line with what most of us know about websites. At the top left, there is the logo telling us where we are. Getting back to the homepage is about 6 times harder when the logo is placed in the center of a page compared to when it's in the top left corner.

On the top right, there is the sign in and sign up link. Next to it, there is the top navigation menu featuring the central content categories of the site. Below, a search field, allowing us to search the site

for the flights we are looking for. Then, there is a visual header that gives travel advisories. When scrolling down, there are three links with fresh design. The site is very clean and easy to navigate at first sight. The familiar layout helps people to quickly find what they are looking for.
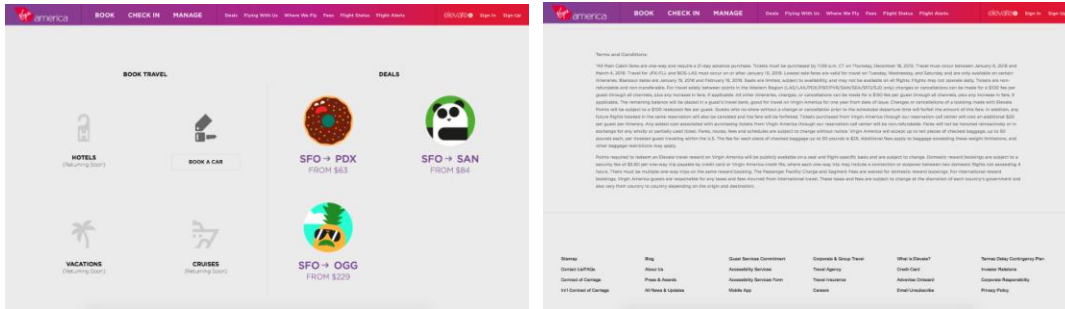

Figure 2. Book page

At the book page (Figure 2), there are book travel and deals titles. Book travel title includes hotels, booking a car, vacations, cruises and deals include some offers from one airport to another with cute designs.
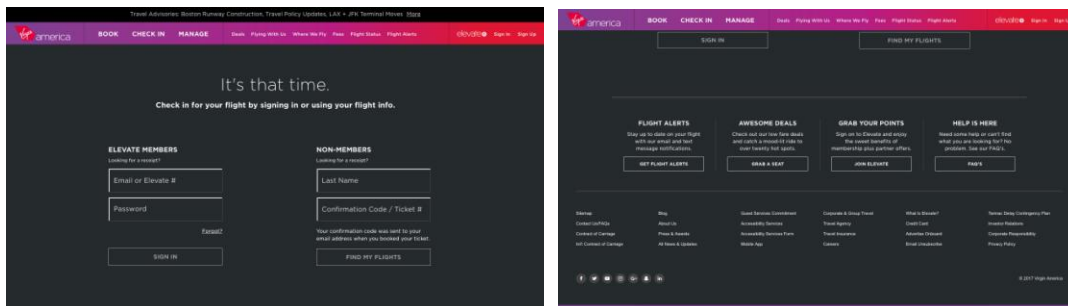

Figure 3. Check-in page

"Check in" link brings the user to an elegant black page (Figure 3) with "it is that time" heading. For elevate members and non-members, there are two forms ending with "sign in" and "find my flights" buttons.

Manage page begins with a grey "welcome" message on a pure white page including "elevate members" and "non members" areas. Elevate members simply sign in and non-members find flights with their last names and confirmation codes.
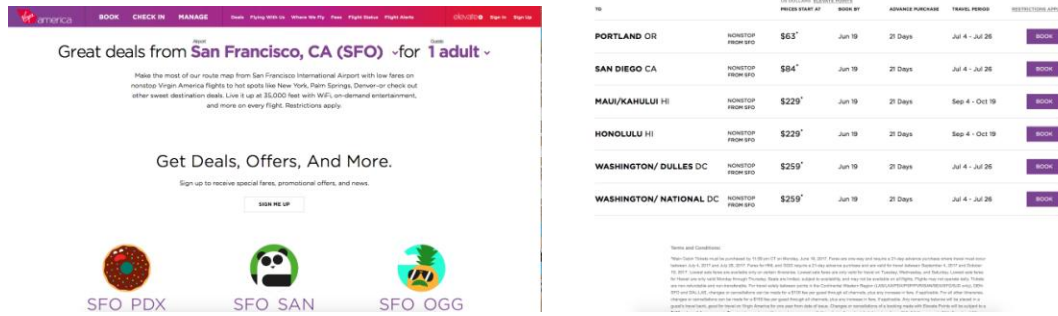
Figure 4. Deals page

Deals page (Figure 4) begins with the great deals from one point for the passengers. Categories of flights from one airport to the other ones with the information of price, date and travel periods are shown according to the airport and passenger selection.
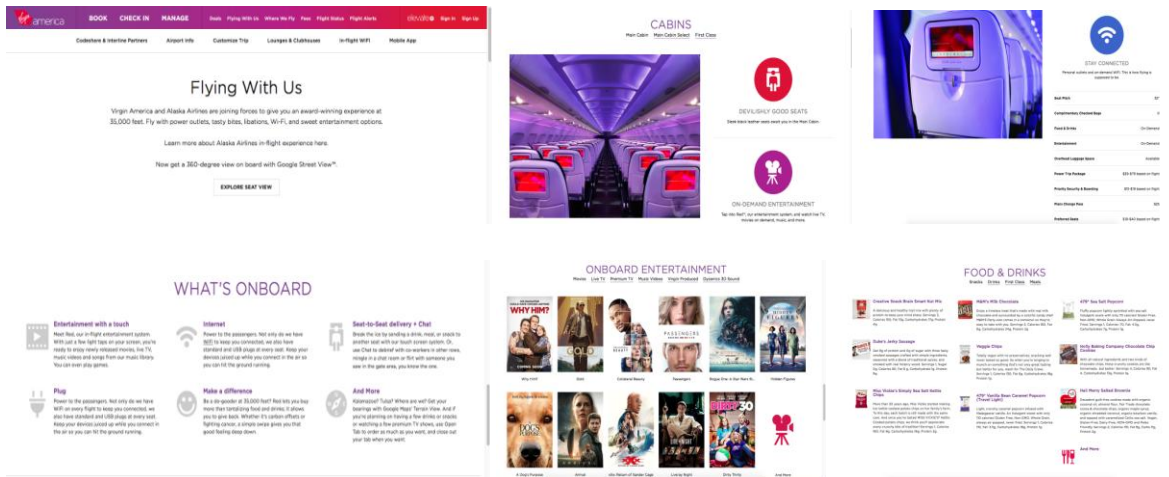

Figure 5. Flying with us page

Flying with us page (Figure 5), begins with offering a 360 degree view on board with Google street view. Below, cabin views are shown. And then the personal outlets and on demand wi-fi are emphasized. After scrolling down, on-board facilities such as entertainment, plug, internet, seat to seat delivery plus chat can be seen to support user experience more. All those architecture of information are for creating a unique experience. Page continues with on-board entertainment, food and drink options for a better ux.
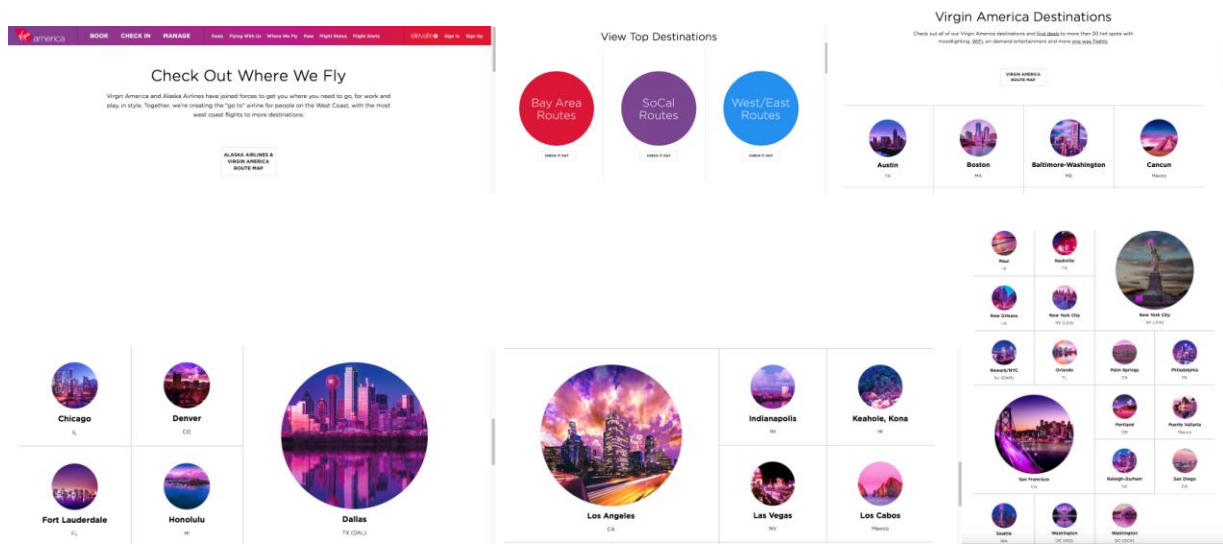
Figure 6. Where we fly page

Where we fly page (Figure 6) shows the top destination routes in red, purple and blue circles after a three lined centred info. While scrolling down, destinations can be seen with a simple web site's gradient color. It should be added that using gradient colors on web site designs is the new trend.

Figure 7. Fees page

Fees page (Figure 7) shows very detailed reservation/amenity alternatives including the prices. Virgin America must have known that price is always important for the user.
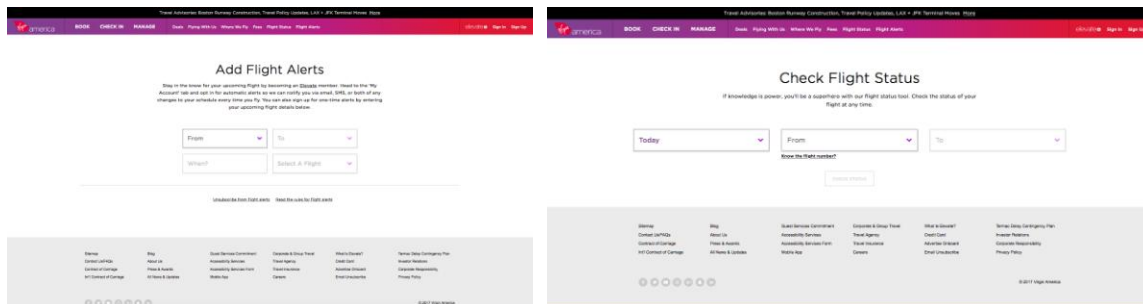

Figure 8. Flight status and flight alerts pages

Flight status page (Figure 8) offers to check the flight status from anywhere, anytime. Its modern and confidential typography makes the user feel safe. Flight alerts page (Figure 8) continues with the same layout. Users may search for a flight alert on this page.
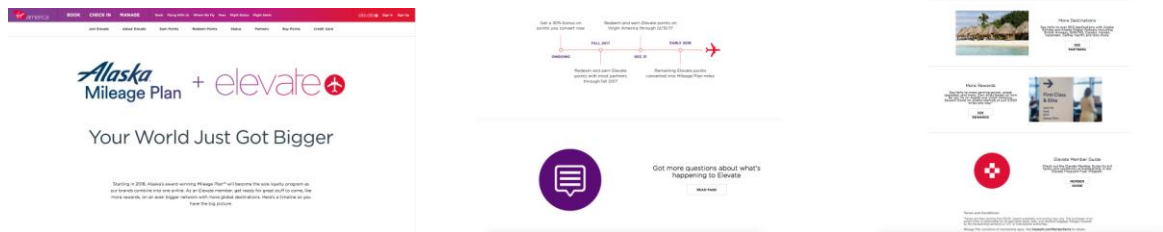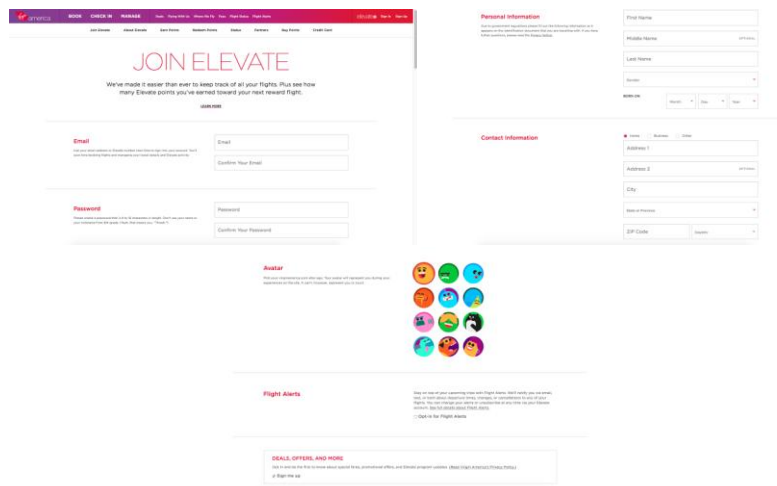

Figure 9. Elevate, sign in and sign up pages

Figure 10. Elevate, sign in and sign up pages

On the top right of the web site, there are Elevate, sign in and sign up links. Elevate links to a "your world just got bigger" title. It gives information about Alaska Mileage Plan and Elevate with less text and more visual.

Log in page brings the user to a simply red page with white typography on it. Only "your frequent flyer program" is written with black on red. And sign up link brings the user to a pure white page with the "join elevate" title with the corporate gradient color. A form asking for e-mail, password, personal and contact information continues with an avatar selection area. Avatars are remarkable with the unique and trendy illustrations.

4. Conclusion

As mentioned in UXPin e-books (2017), a clear and usable design can be achieved through focusing on simplicity, familiarity, consistency, guidance and direct feedback. Focusing on what's important; sticking to what people already know; creating a consistent experience across the entire website; do not expecting the visitors to explore the site on all their own and direct feedback is essential to any interaction. Good information architecture eases the understanding the visitors' mental models and how they would expect the designer to structure the content on the site. Virginamerica.com gained the two thousand sixteen Best User Experince award from The Webby Awards by being useful, usable, desirable, valuable, findable, accessible and credible briefly.

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