

Web design for user experience: Virgin America website 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-centred design and how it improves user experience are the main purpose. For this aim, <https://www.virginamerica.com>, which is the website that gained the 2016 Best User Experience Award from The Webby Awards, has been studied as a case study.

Keywords: Web design, user experience, Virgin America.

1. User experience

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. Websites 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 or 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-centred design and how it improves user experience are the main purpose. For this aim, <https://www.virginamerica.com>, which is the website that gained the 2016 Best User Experience Award from The Webby Awards, has been studied as a case study.

3. Findings

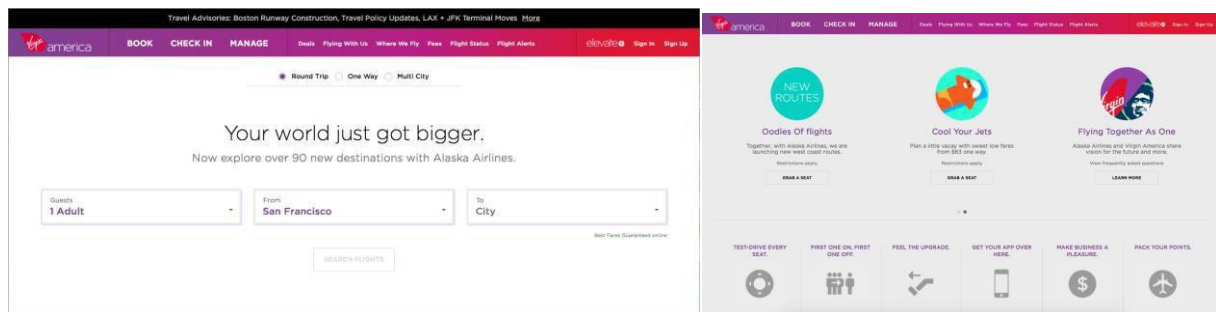


Figure 1. Home page

First, landing on the home page (Figure 1), the visitor can either choose to browse the website by adult, child passenger or just as someone who needs advices about travelling. Instead of only grouping people by their age, Virgin America recognises 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 care 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 six times harder when the logo is placed in the centre 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.

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