Usability Test Report: Tallinn Traveller Tours

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June 6, 2013
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Section 1

Executive Summary

For those travellers looking to book guided tours of a foreign city, whether it is fun and funky, or one that shows the historic beauty of the town, Tallinn Traveller Tours is an informative and effective tour-booking website.

Collaborating with our clients from the site, we completed usability testing to observe actual users interacting with Tallinn Traveller Tours. The client asked us to aim our testing to evaluate accessibility, design and aesthetics, and user experience.

Through our observation and usability testing, we evaluated how effective and efficient the website is. In this report, we have described our methods of testing, discussed our results and presented our final recommendations. We hope to provide both positive feedback as well as improvements that could be made to the site so the clients can ensure their site is easily accessible, fresh, and entertaining. Most importantly, the website needs to be effective for booking guided tours in Tallinn.

Through the testing, we learned that the Tallinn Traveller Tours site is overall very attractive and easy to use with a few minor issues. Positive notable comments included:

- 3 out of 5 participants said they were “very likely” or “highly likely” to book a tour with Tallinn Traveller Tours
- Ease of navigation and booking process

Notable usability concerns we observed during our testing were:

- Issues with the phrase “complete booking” in the booking process
- The distinction between the daily and private tour tabs
- Drop-down boxes when choosing a time for a tour
- Some tours not showing up on the main “walking tours” page

Through our usability testing, we hope to provide positive feedback and recommendations to possibly improve the usability of the Tallinn Traveller Tours website.
Section 2

Introduction

Tallinn Traveller Tours is an international website aiming to engage younger, low-budget travellers, as well as experienced travellers, in guided tours led by locals. The main attraction comes in when those travellers are looking to experience a foreign city with the help of a local.

During the initial Skype meeting with Ulane Vilumets, we gained valuable information about what the company would like to achieve through the usability testing. We then established these main objectives:

- Evaluate the accessibility of the website
- Assess how users felt about the overall design and aesthetics
- Provide an overview of the user’s experience while using the website

Our team then conducted usability testing on the Tallinn Traveller Tours website. This report includes more detailed descriptions and explanations of our project, testing methods and user profiles. We will then summarize our findings and make recommendations of suggested solutions to the usability concerns raised during testing.
Section 3

Methods

Heuristic Evaluations
In order to test the usability of the Traveller Tours website, our team first conducted our own heuristic evaluations of the website, followed by five test participants engaging in a usability test.

A heuristic evaluation, according to the Nielsen Norman Group, "involves having a small set of evaluators examine the interface and judge its compliance with recognized usability principles." (http://www.nngroup.com/articles/how-to-conduct-a-heuristic-evaluation/) By looking at the website with guidelines such as visibility of system status, consistency and standards, and user control and freedom, our team was able to find different information than what we found during our usability testing.

There are 10 general principles for interaction tested during a heuristic evaluation. The three most notable principles found in our evaluations are listed below, with the positive findings following them.

1. Visibility of system status: The user is always aware of their location on the website. Because of the clear headings on each of the pages, the site is easily navigable.
2. Match between system and the real world: The different translations to Spanish, Russian, Estonian and English allow the site to be seen and understood by users speaking different languages.
3. Recognition rather than recall: Information like pricing is available on both the initial page and the individual tour description pages. This keeps the user from having to remember the pricing. Instead of forgetting and having to click back to the previous page to look what the price was, the information is on multiple pages.

The main recommendation based on our heuristic evaluations is in regards to the principle of help and documentation. Currently, the website does not have a help/FAQ or search function. Having these would ensure that if the user had any problem they would be able to correct it themselves instead of getting frustrated and finding a new tour site to book with.

Usability Testing Description
For our usability testing, we used a protocol-aided testing method to gain information. Our participants were given a scenario and task list to follow during the tests. By the use of this testing method, we could address accessibility issues and other problems associated with the site's navigation and overall usability. We were also looking to gain opinions about the aesthetics and overall design of the website.

User Profile
The five users targeted in our testing included college students, roughly 18-25 years old, all of whom were interested in international travel and seeing parts of a city that are unique and unlike
the typical tourist trap. All participants we recruited had experience using the internet, and previous travel experience, both internationally and within the United States.

Environment & Materials
The tests were conducted in a conference room at Michigan Technological University during the week of May 20-24. We utilized the Morae usability testing software made available to us by the University. The Morae software allows us to video record the participants voice and facial expression as well as mouse tracking while they are interacting with the site.

Our team created a number of written materials to aid our usability tests, including an orientation script, scenario and task list, pre-test and post-test questionnaires, and others. All of these materials can be found in the appendices (Section 6).

Team Roles & Responsibilities
The usability tests involved the three main roles of recorder, operator, and moderator, each of which was held by a member of our team. The recorder was tasked with recording notes on each participant’s actions, while the operator made sure the equipment ran smoothly (including preparing and operating the Morae software). Finally, the moderator interacted directly with the participants.

Task & Scenarios
Our participants were given a specific task to complete during the tests. Based on our client’s needs, we drafted a scenario and task list for our users to follow during the testing. The full scenario and task list can be found in the appendices (Section 6).

Evaluation Measures
The evaluation procedure was largely based on observing the participant as he/she used the website for the first time and made decisions based on the information available.

First, the users each completed a pre-test questionnaire. He/she was then instructed to visit the website and go through the steps of booking a tour, while narrating their thoughts. After the test, a post-test questionnaire was given, asking about their experience on the site. All notes, including the audio and videos, were later reviewed. The discussion of our test results as well as the recommendations we would like to make based on the results are presented in the following section of this report.
Results & Recommendations

Through our testing, we found that the site has several positive aspects that stood out to our users. 4 out of 5 users found the color choices and aesthetics of the website to be attractive and appealing. In the end, 3 out of 5 users said that they were “very likely” or “highly likely” to book a tour if they were to visit Tallinn, with a fourth saying they were “moderately likely” to book a tour. None of the users had any problems booking a tour. Some user comments were:

- Design is “very appealing. I like the interactive clouds.”
- The photos “drew me in and made me want to learn more about the tours.”
- The tours “look like a lot of fun! I think I’d get an authentic experience.”

Although we received a lot of positive feedback, we also were given a lot of responses in regards to usability concerns.

Booking Process
The most serious issue we observed was one user believing there would be more steps in the booking process. The user expected to input payment information before finalizing their booking and clicked on the “complete booking” button without realizing it would schedule a tour.

A possible fix for this problem would be to have the button say “continue” instead of “complete booking”. When clicked, instead of booking the tour, it would initiate a pop-up window to notify the user that by proceeding they will be scheduled for a tour, and explains how they will be contacted and how payment will be collected. The complete booking button could then be relocated to this pop-up window.

Daily vs. Private Tours
A second usability issue we observed was users not understanding the difference between daily tours and private tours. This ambiguity between daily and private tours led several of our users to book a private tour instead of daily tour. It sometimes took several trips navigating between the tour description and the booking page before they realized what the issue was.

Suggested solutions include placing a small description beneath both daily and private tour tabs, as well as beneath each tour description.

To make the descriptions more effective, a different color text or tab could be used to make it more eye-catching. One color option would be to use the yellow from the calendar. For example, when the user selects a date on the calendar, the date changes to yellow. This color could also be implemented in other parts of the website to carry consistency throughout.

Tour Time Drop-Down Box
A third concern caused by this confusion was trying to choose a different time for daily tours.
Most of our users attempted to set the time for their tour using the calendar next to each tour’s description. The calendar has a drop-down box underneath it for selecting the time of the tour. In the case of daily tours, this box is grayed out and can’t be interacted with. Users became frustrated when the drop-down was not interactive.

Suggested solutions:
- Have a functioning drop-down box with only one time offered
- Add a notice beneath the drop-down box, informing the user that daily tours leave at a set time during the day
- Eliminate the drop-down box and display only one time for the daily tour with no clickable properties

Tour Visibility
Another usability concern is that some tours are not always visible from all parts of the site. In our usability testing, users did not find the Tallinn Pubcrawl and Tallinn Free Tour on the main menu; it only showed up after clicking the detailed description of one of the other walking tours. Since then, the issue with the Tallinn Pubcrawl has been resolved, and it now shows on the main tab for walking tours. The free tour does not.

While the absence of the free tour from the main page is intentional, one user was upset when they found that it wasn’t advertised on the main page and thought it was a problem with the website. The absence of the Tallinn Pubcrawl on the main page gave the same impression, in addition to hiding a unique tour that the user was interested in.

During our second meeting with the client while in Tallinn, we learned that the free tour was intentionally absent from the first page. Because the absence of the tour on the main page was a concern raised in our testing, we felt it was necessary to draw attention to it.

Photos and Videos
The final usability concern our users encountered was a lack of photos as well as videos on some tour descriptions. Unfortunately, videos often went unnoticed when they were featured.

Suggested solutions:
- Organize a way for tour participants to submit their own photos and videos from the tours
- Have tour guides take photos and videos during tours to put on the website
- Make the distinction between photos and videos more apparent, possibly with color or a rollover effect
Section 5

**Conclusion**

Through our usability testing, we gained feedback that helped us understand the positives and the potential usability concerns of the Tallinn Traveller Tours website. The usability tests provided a number of things in the website that should remain unchanged, as well as some that could be improved.

Our users gave positive feedback on the following things:
- The quality of photos and videos
- The navigability and locations of information

While generally positive, our users also raised several concerns during the usability testing, including:
- Ambiguity between daily and private tours
- Users believed there would be more steps in the booking process, including an online payment option
- Confusion with trying to choose a different time for a daily tour
- Lack of photos on some tours
- Videos were not noticed or were unavailable for some tours
Section 6

Appendices
Pre-test Questionnaire

1. Please specify your:
   Age:
   Gender:

2. Please list any languages you speak, and indicate whether you are fluent, can communicate only in writing, can communicate only while speaking, know enough to get by, or only know a few phrases:

3. How often do you travel, both internationally and domestically?

4. Where have you travelled to?

5. Which adjectives best describe your travelling style? (please circle those that apply)
   Adventurous   Experienced   Traditional   Conventional   Open-minded   Exotic   Inexperienced
   Popular   Original   Solo   Group   Flexible   Local-Focused
   Attraction-Focused   Relaxed   Exciting   Other:

6. What is the likelihood that you would take a guided tour while travelling?

7. Are you more inclined to take a day-trip or a walking tour while travelling?
Orientation Script
Hello (participant) and thank you for deciding to participate in our usability testing today. My name is (moderator) and these are my colleagues (recorder and operator). As you know, we are going to be testing the usability of the Traveller Tours website which is used to book tours in and around the city of Tallinn, Estonia.

While you are engaging with the Traveller Tours website, we would like you to speak aloud any thoughts or comments you have and to talk your way through what you are doing. This is useful because we will be taking note of your responses and can make recommendations for the site because of your comments and suggestions.

Please remember that we are not testing your abilities, but the accessibility and navigability of the Traveller Tours website. If you would like to pause the test at any time, please let me know and we can take a break. If you would like to stop the test for any reason, please let me know that, too.

Do you have any questions before we begin?
Scenario and Task List

“You are a college student looking to book a tour of Tallinn, Estonia. We would like you to use the Traveller Tours website to work through the process of booking both a walking tour as well as a day excursion. After establishing your budget, you have allotted $200 (USD) to use towards tours of the city. Browse the tours, choose one or more that you like and work through the motions of booking the tour, but do not submit any payment information at the end.”

Please complete the following tasks:
1. Please search to find your way to the “Traveller Tours” website by searching on search engine of your choice.
2. Navigate the site to find a tour or tours you’re interested in.
3. Go through the motions of booking a tour once you’ve made your decision, but do not enter any credit card information at the end.
Post-test Questionnaire

1. What is the likelihood of you taking a guided tour like the ones described on the site while travelling?

2. Which do you feel more inclined to take--a day trip or walking/biking tour--based on how the information was presented on the Traveller Tours website?

3. Did you come across any difficulties (including but not limited to confusing terms, accessibility issues, etc.) while using the site? Please explain.

4. What did you find appealing about the Traveller Tours website?

5. What did you find unappealing about the Traveller Tours website?

6. Please indicate your level of satisfaction based on your experience using the Traveller Tours website.

1 (Very dissatisfied)
2 (Moderately dissatisfied)
3 (Neutral)
4 (Moderately satisfied)
5 (Very satisfied)
**Note-taking Sheet**  
*(printed version allots more space for notes)*

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Usability Test Video Permission Form

I hereby give my permission to be videotaped as part of my participation in the ______________________________ [website name] usability test conducted on ______________________________ [date] at Michigan Technological University.

Only my first name may be reported in association with the session results.

I understand and consent to the use and release of the video recording to the students and instructor of the HU4690 (summer 2013) class at Michigan Tech University and to the client. I further understand that the video recording and any highlights extracted from it may be used for review by the client and by the HU4690 class. Representative video excerpts may also be used within presentations to the client, to future classes at Michigan Tech, at professional meetings, and as part of research.

I give up any rights to the video recording and understand that the recording may be used for the purposes described in this release form without further permission.

I understand that if for any reason I do not want to continue I can leave at any time during this recording session. I can also deny consent at any time.

If you have any questions about this form or this usability test, please contact Dr. Marika Seigel at maseigel@mtu.edu.

______________________________
Printed Name

______________________________
Date

______________________________
Signature