Booking.com
Usability Study Results

By Team 'Book-Yeah!'
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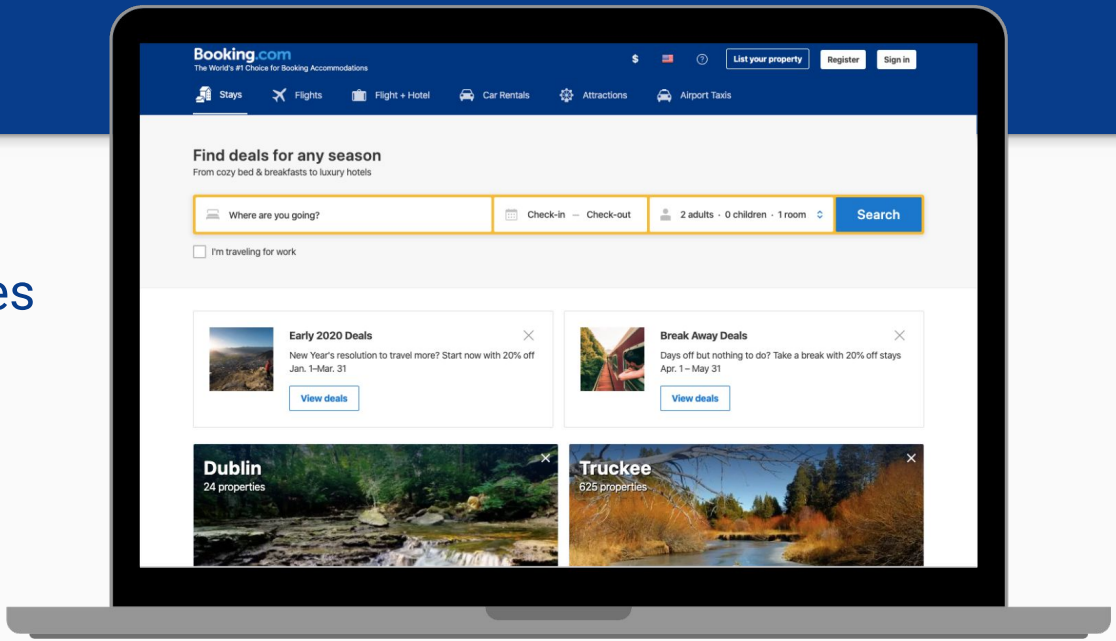
Product

Booking.com is a travel booking website that provides a one-stop shop for users to find, compare and book lodging accommodations, flights, and more.



Target Audience

- Ages **18 - 35**
- Budget travelers
- Considered “**travel savvy”,** booking travel one or more times a year
- New to **Booking.com,** ideally haven’t used it more than two times in the past year
- Comfortable using desktop browsers

Usability Challenge

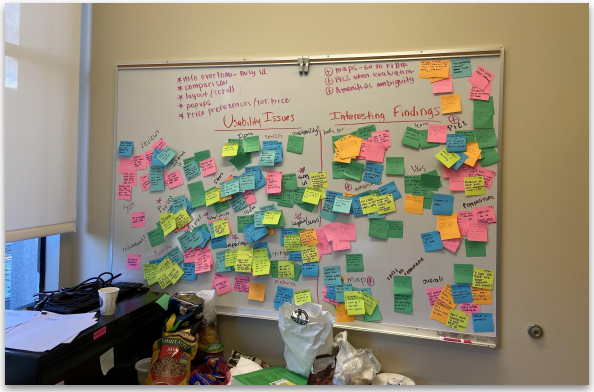
- **We studied the lodging search and reservation process in Booking.com**.
  We were interested in what may be deterring users from completing bookings.
- **Goals:**
  - Observe participant behaviors when searching and comparing accommodations
  - Identify frustrations and pain points in current booking tools
  - Capture overall sentiment and impression of Booking.com
- **Research Questions:**
  - How easily and successfully do participants **search for accommodations**?
  - Can participants **easily and successfully find the information** they need to make a decision?
  - Do participants understand how to **compare and filter lodging accommodation options**?
  - How easily and successfully do **participants book and confirm accommodations**?
  - What **obstacles do participants encounter** while using the Booking.com website?

Participant Details

- 6 Total participants
  - Includes Pilot
- 2 female, 4 male
- Ages 25-35
- Seattle Residents
- Have used Booking.com less than 3 times in the last year
- Value budget when booking travel
- Friends and family of the researchers

Testing Details

- **Testing occurred over 2 days:** 1 hr scheduled sessions w/ 1 hr of debrief in between
  - Began w/ a pilot session
- **In-person, moderated usability testing**
  - 1 moderator : 1 participant
- **Controlled testing environment** in Sieg hall at the University of Washington campus
  - Testing room with desktop computer
  - Screen recording using Zoom to capture participant interactions and facial expressions
  - Video recording to capture body language
  - 3 observers located in viewing room next door recording notes



Data Collected

- **Pre-study questions**
  - To understand travel habits and activity
- **Observer perceived difficulty rating per activity**
  - Observers ranked severity of tasks
- **Likert after each task**
  - To measure ease or difficulty of completing the task
  - Very difficult - Very easy (1-5)
- **Qualitative insights from probing**
  - Eg. What was most impactful in choosing that accommodation?
  - What did that make you think or feel?
- **System Usability Score post-test**
  - Understand overall perceived usability
- **Post-study questions**
  - Participant feedback / Propensity to use booking.com

TL;DR

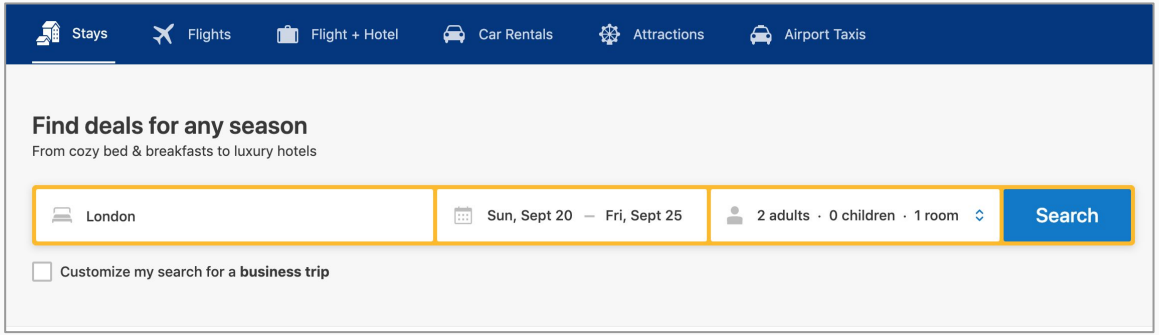
- **Study Findings:**
  - Though usable, Booking.com's site is very busy, distracting and overwhelming
  - Too many pop-ups = friction & participant frustration
  - Participants experienced challenges comparing different accommodations
  - The hierarchy of information and tools do not match participant mental model

- **Recommendations:**
  - Overall simplification of UI
  - Hide non-critical information / make critical information more prominent
  - Make accommodation side-by-side comparison easier
  - Leverage what is working well by featuring map and photos

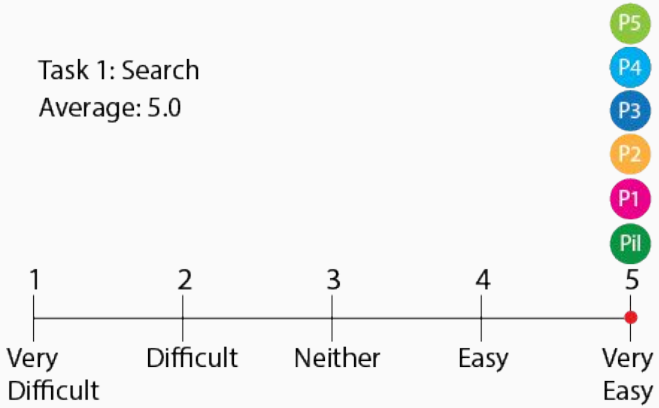
What Works Well

Search for accomodations

- **6/6** Participants found search to be easy and intuitive

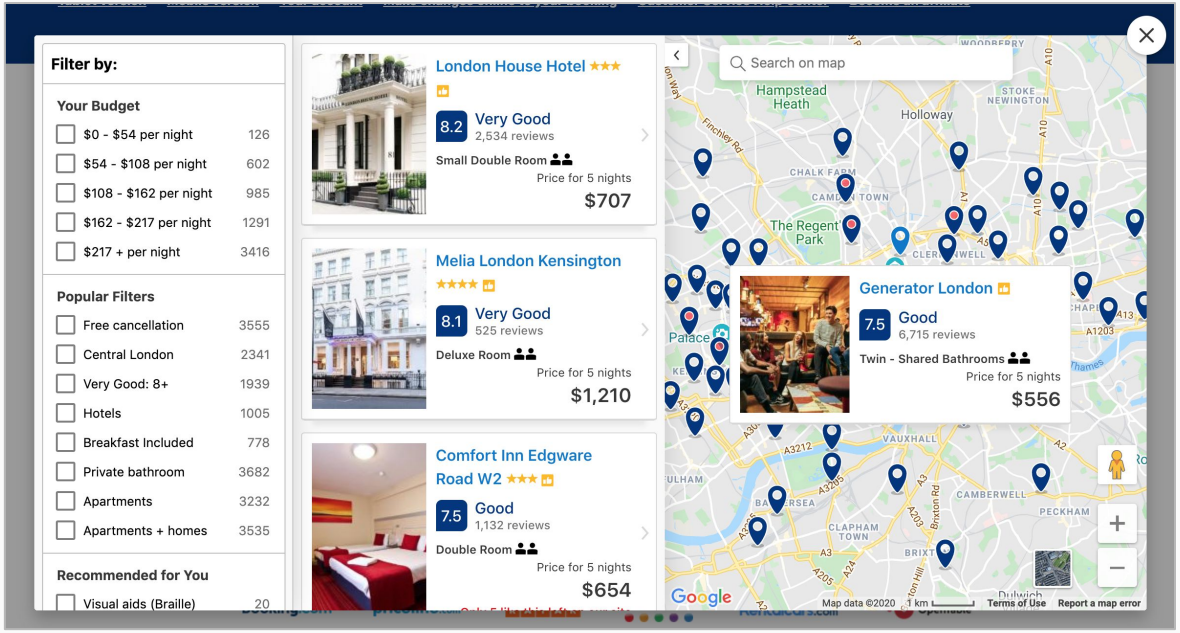


- All participants rated this task as Very Easy in the post-task questionnaire



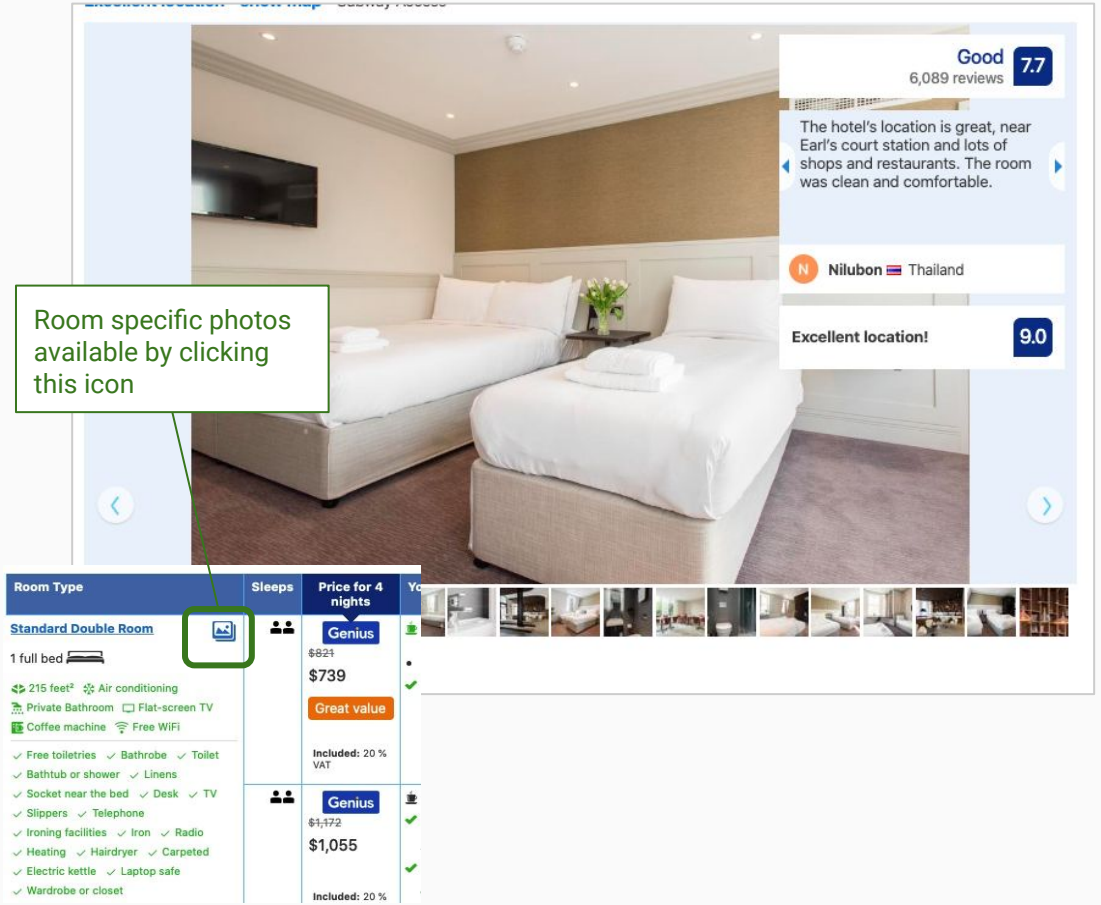
Integrated accommodations map

- **6/6** study participants preferred using the map to directly compare lodging search results
- **3/6** participants were skeptical of using filters to determine location
- **Recommendation**: Consider making maps the default search result experience



Lodging photos as an evaluation tool

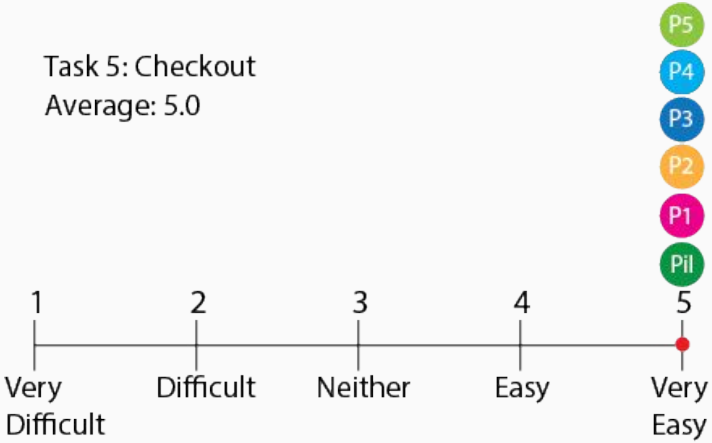
- **4/6** participants said photos were important in their decision making
- **3/6** valued room specific photos and thumbnail options to quickly scroll through
- **Recommendation**: Make room specific photos more discoverable

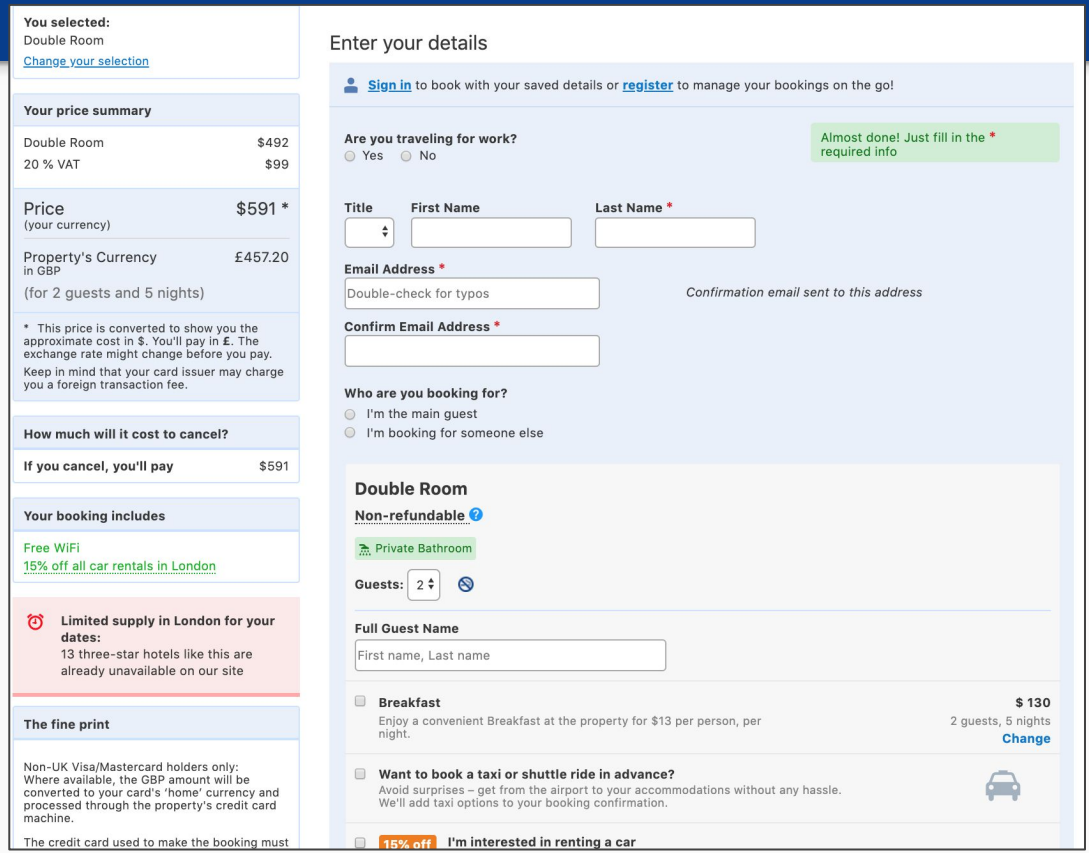


Entering details for Checkout

- **6/6** Participants found the checkout process easy and straightforward, and scored it as Very Easy in post-task questionnaire

Task 5: Checkout
Average: 5.0





Opportunities for Improvement

Severity Rating

Dumas and Redish Scale

Level 1: Prevents task completion

Level 2: Creates significant delay and frustration

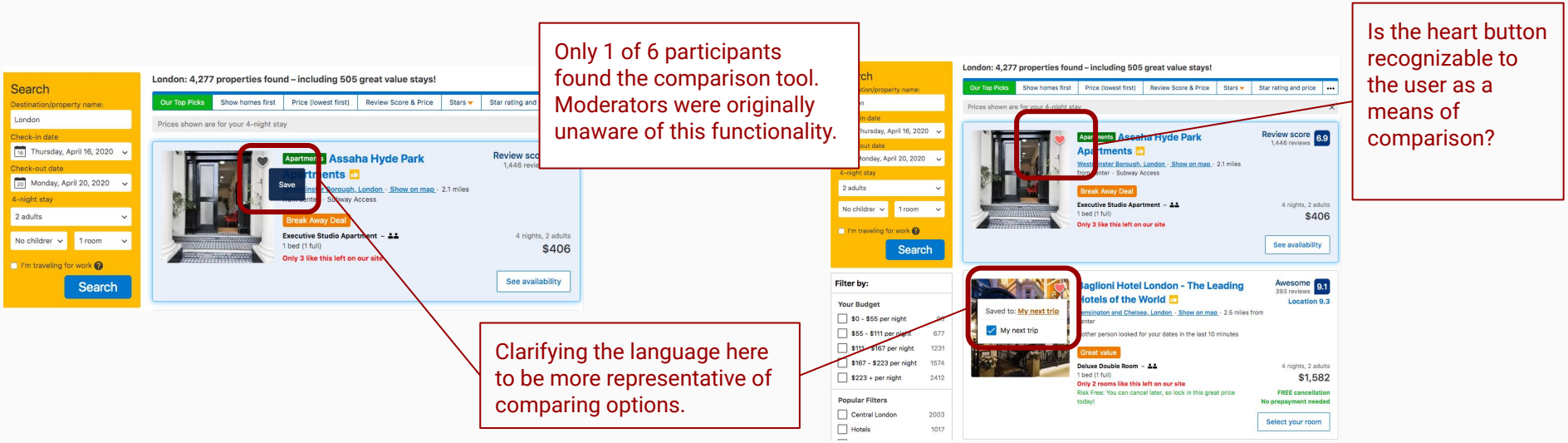
Level 3: Problems have a minor effect on usability

Level 4: Subtle and possible enhancements / suggestions

Primary Usability Challenges

Enhance the discoverability of the comparison tool

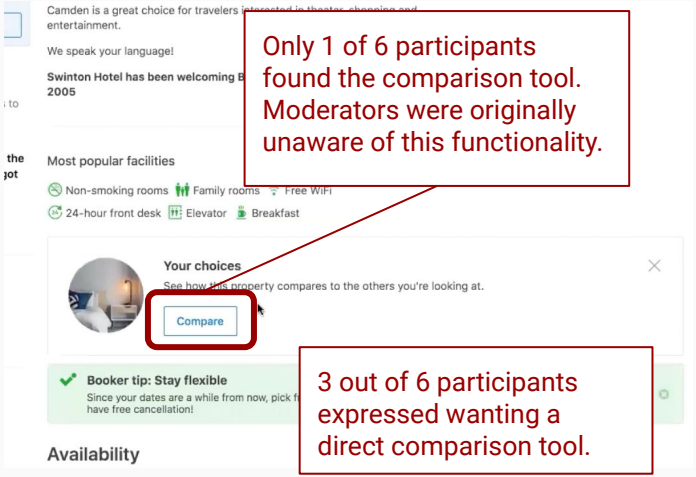
Interface Challenge: Accommodation comparison tool is not discoverable and the copy is unclear.



Recommendation: Consider enhancing the discoverability of the accommodations comparison tool by making it a default and making it available across the experience. Consider clarifying the title and purpose of the “save” button.

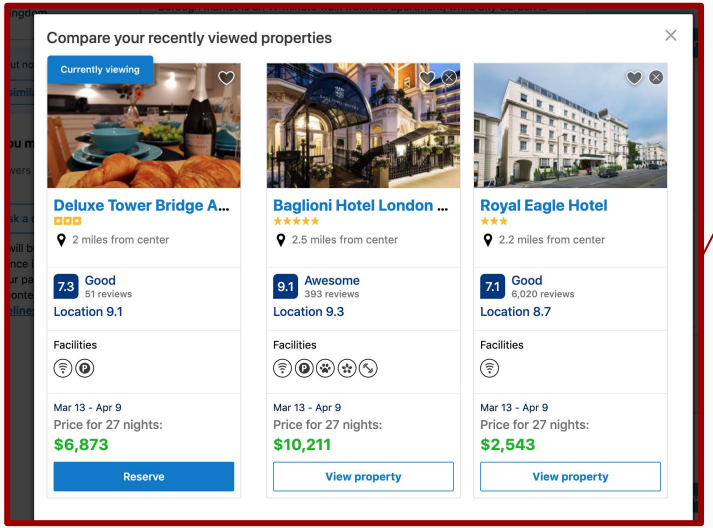
Enhance the usefulness of the comparison tool

Interface Challenge: Comparison tool lacks detailed information per accommodation.



Only 1 of 6 participants found the comparison tool. Moderators were originally unaware of this functionality.

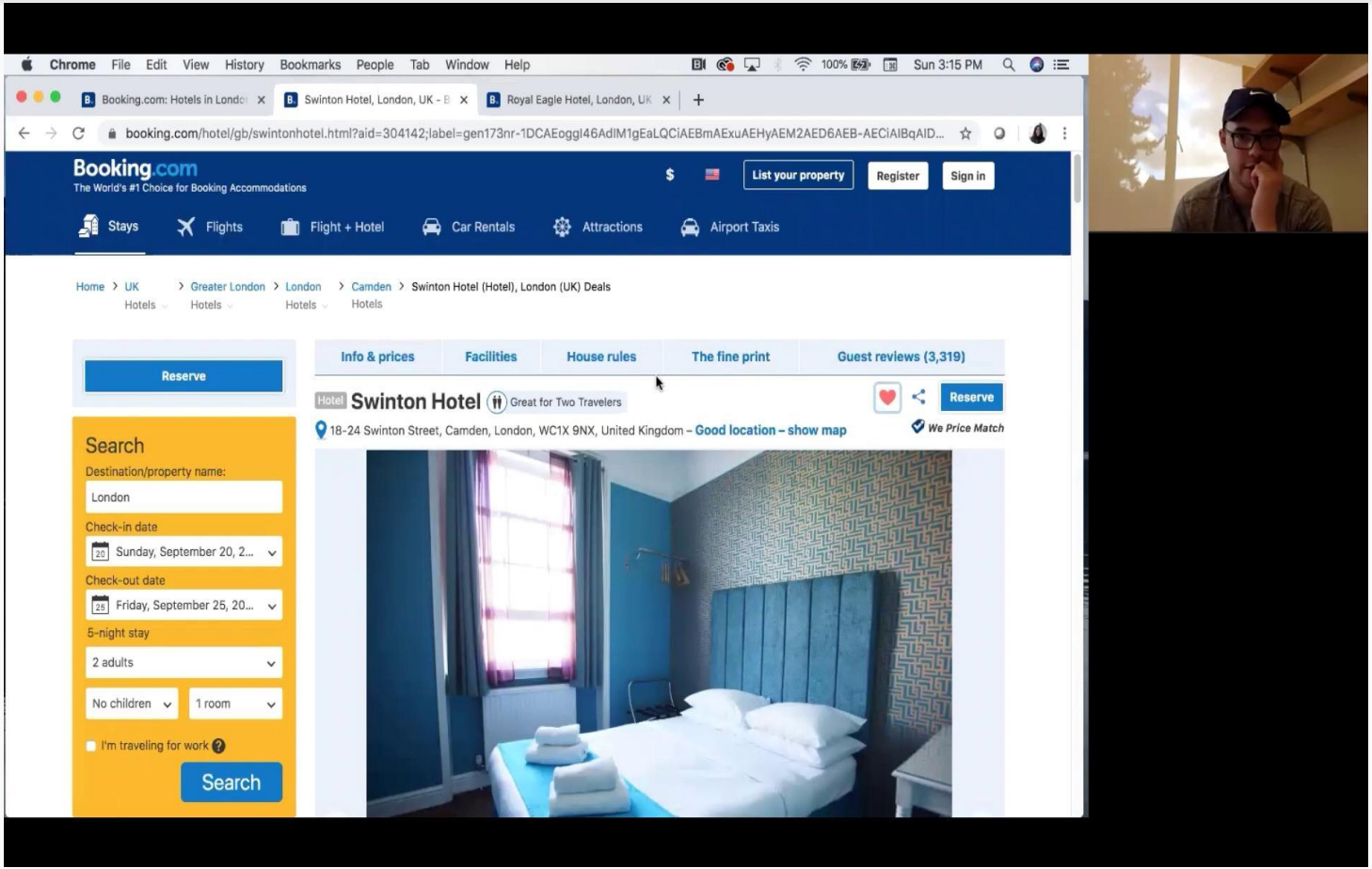
3 out of 6 participants expressed wanting a direct comparison tool.



"For the purpose of comparing the two [accommodations] this doesn't tell me enough information." (P5)

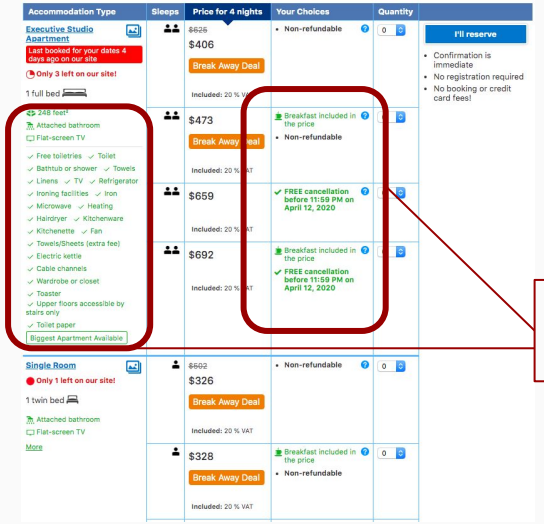
Recommendation: Consider enhancing the discoverability of the accommodations comparison tool and add more detailed information for each accommodation option being compared.

Comparison Tool Clip (P5)

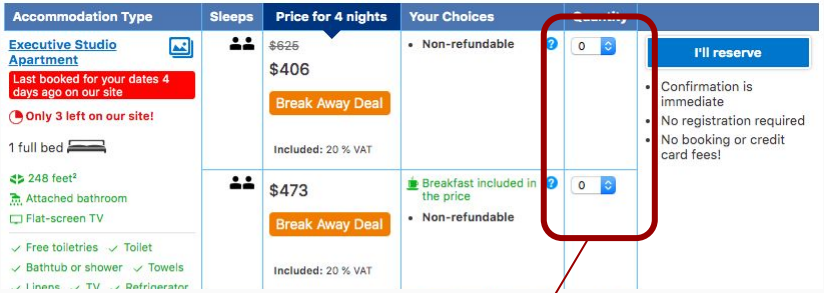


Enhance the understandability of room option information

Interface Challenge: Room option table is dense with copy and the dropdown for selecting the number of rooms is confusing.



Increase negative space to allow for easier skimming.

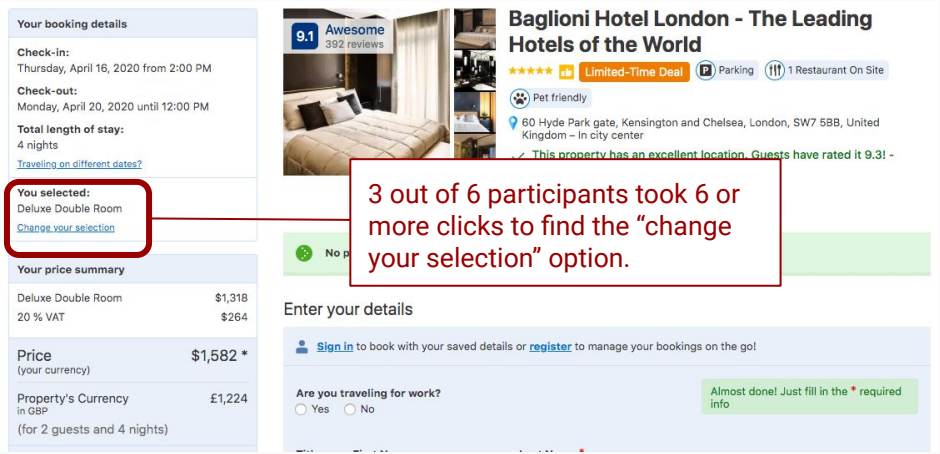


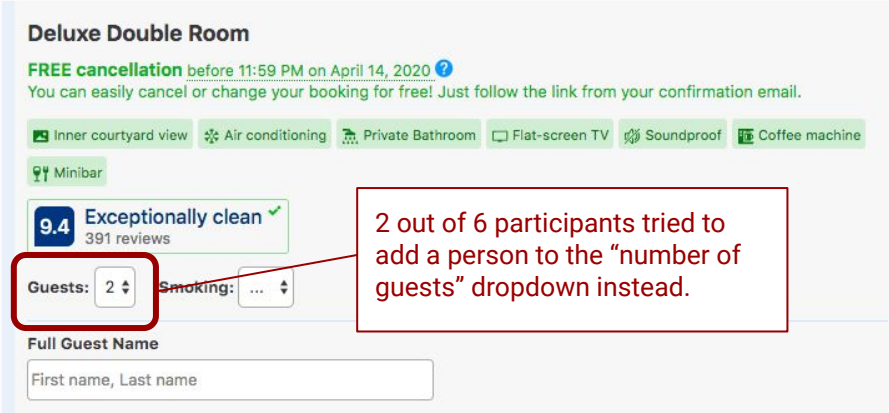
3 out of 6 participants had a moderate to difficult time selecting the room number from the dropdowns.

Recommendation: Consider simplifying room option detail in the table and making the room selection process more intuitive.

Enhance the visibility of the “change your selection” feature

Interface Challenge: “Change your selection” feature on the checkout screen is not very visible.





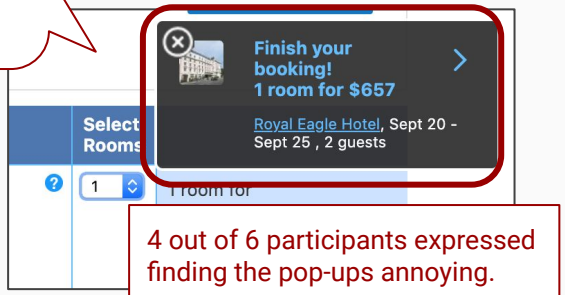
Recommendation: Consider making the “change your selection” option more visible and giving it a more prominent position on the page.

Secondary Usability Challenges

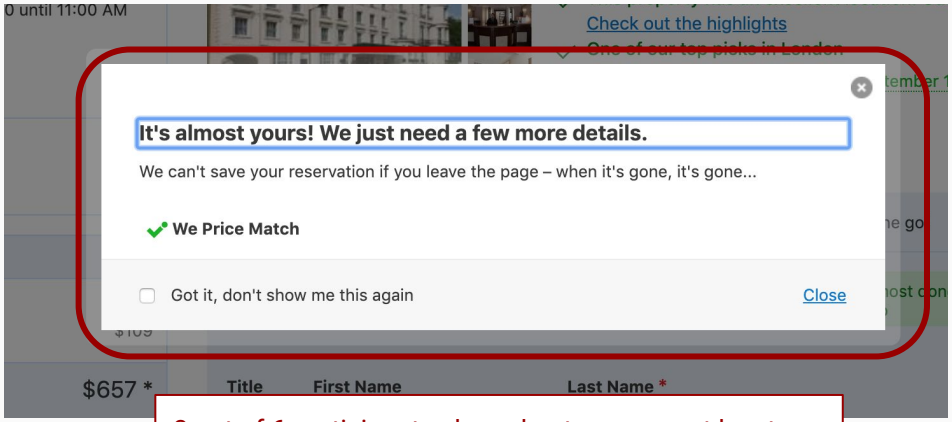
Reduce or eliminate the number of pop-ups and their frequency

Interface Challenge: There are a large number of pop-ups that frequently appear during the experience.

"I'm going to click this [pop-up] off… I never pay attention to those. They frustrate me. I hate pop-ups" (P5).



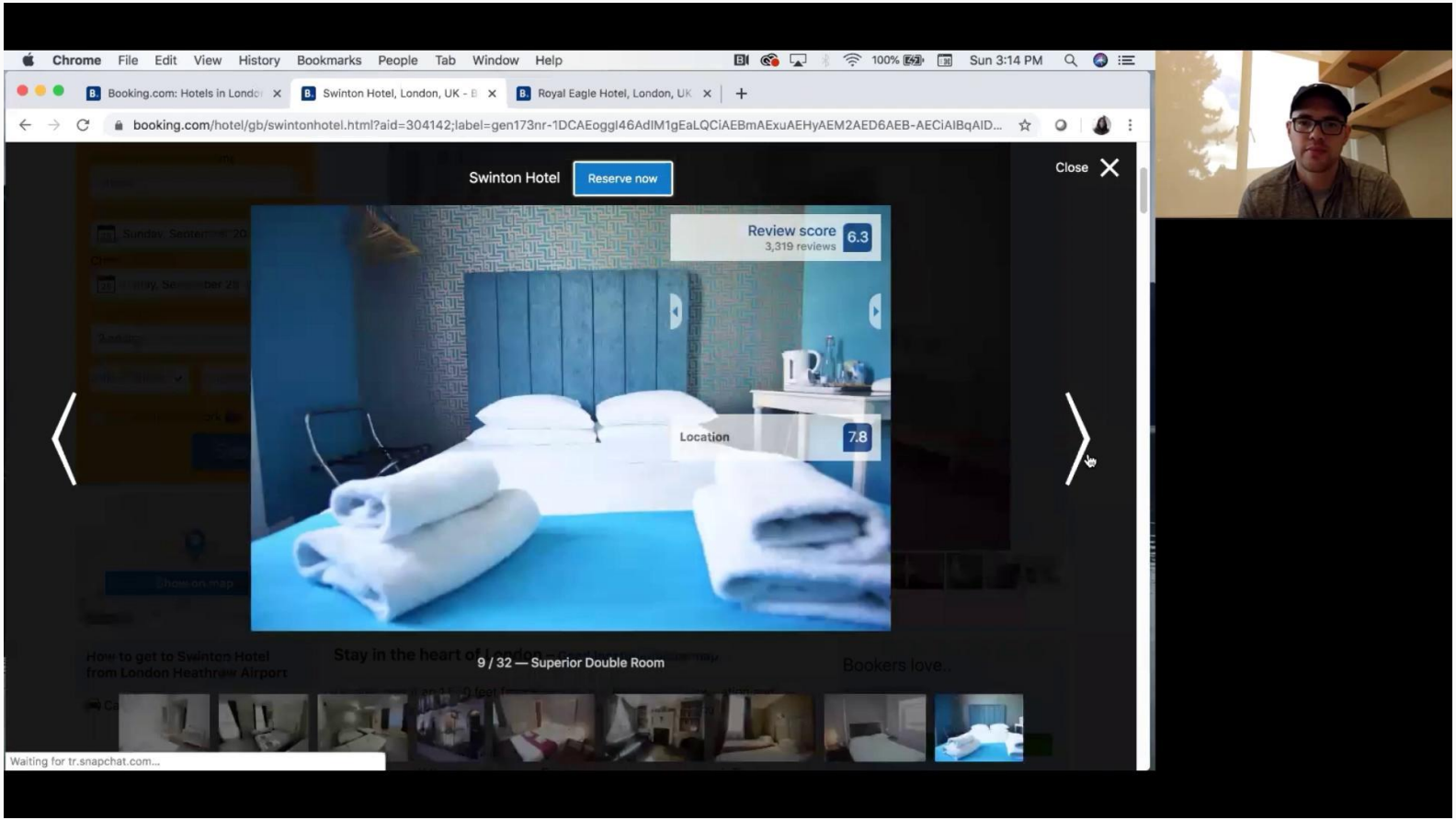
4 out of 6 participants expressed finding the pop-ups annoying.



3 out of 6 participants cleared out a pop-up at least once without acknowledging the content.

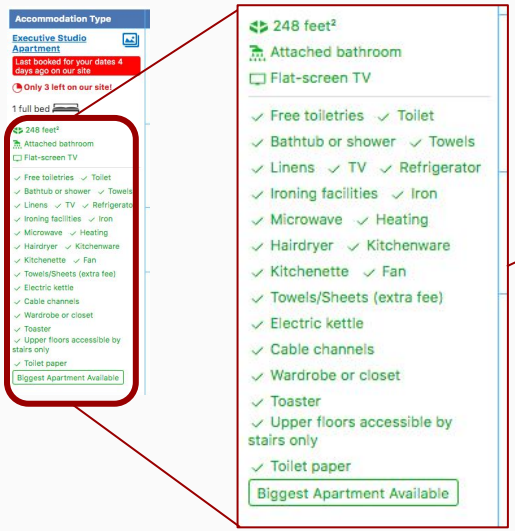
Recommendation: Consider reducing or eliminating the number of pop-ups and their frequency.

Pop-ups Clip (P5)

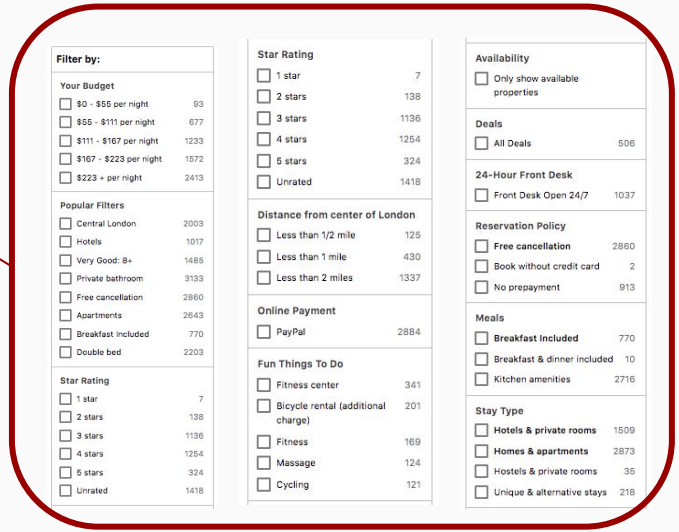


Improve the user interface by reducing information overload

Interface Challenge: User interface is dense with information. Information can be repetitive and unnecessary.



3 out of 6 participants said that the website had too much information.

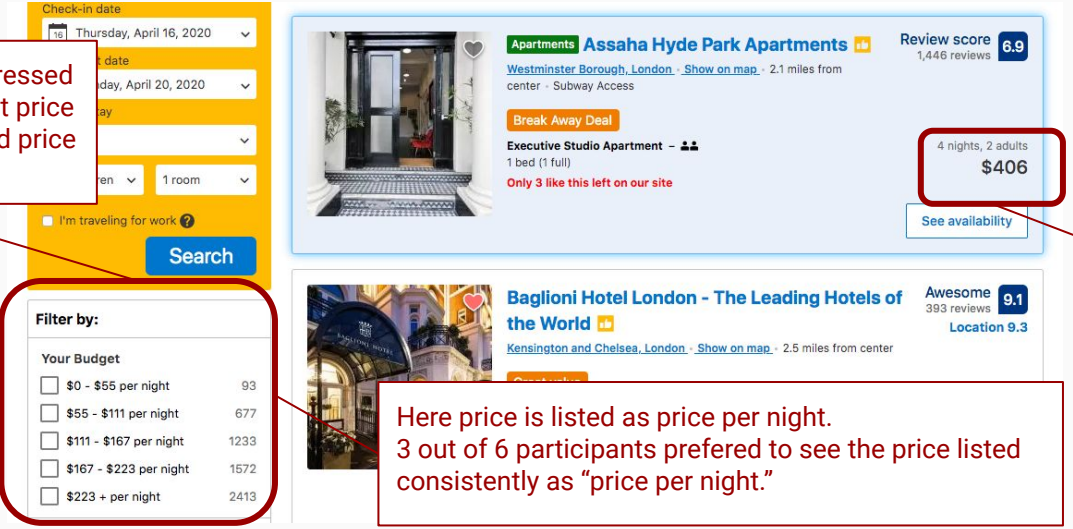


Recommendation: Consider reducing the amount of information shown on any given page, specifically consider reducing the number of amenities and filters in order to highlight the most important ones.

Improve the understandability of price

Interface Challenge: Accommodation costs are listed inconsistently. The price filters are fixed and not flexible to exact price.

4 out of 6 participants expressed wanting to filter by an exact price rather than the current fixed price ranges.



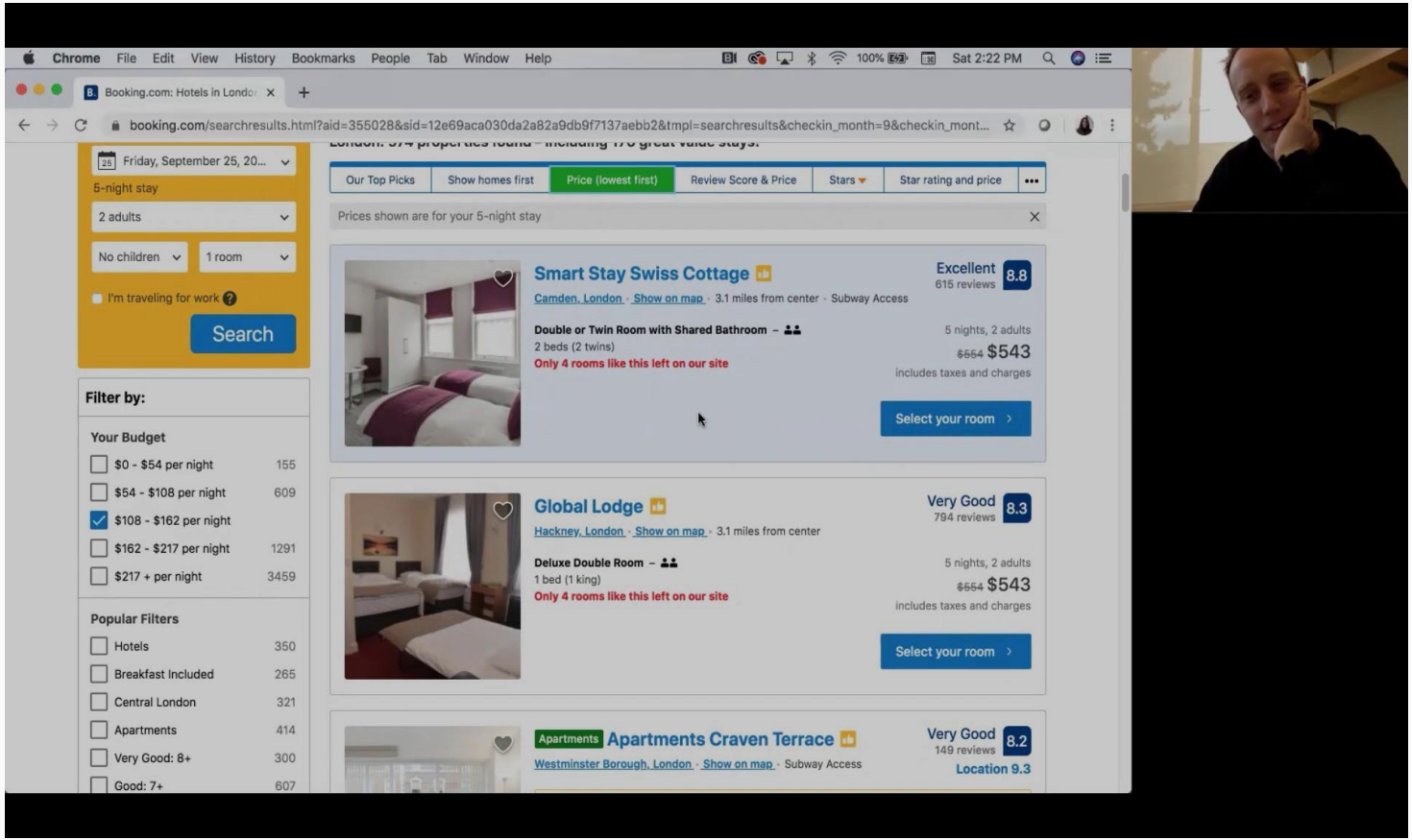
"Doesn't seem like it's applying the [price] filters over here [accommodation listing]" (P1).

Here price is listed as a total for all nights booked.

Here price is listed as price per night.
3 out of 6 participants prefered to see the price listed consistently as "price per night."

Recommendation: Consider allowing users to set their own price ranges. Consider listing accommodation prices consistently as "price per night."

Price Confusion Clip (P1)



Interesting Findings

- Average SUS of 6 participants: 72.9 - Above average
- Interestingly, 4/6 participants who found the site easy to use, would not opt to use it again.
    - 3 out of 6 participants prefer a competitor website
- Participants gave relatively high ease of use ratings but moderators observed more friction
- Though Booking.com is used primarily to compare accommodations, the “Compare” feature was only discovered by 1/6 participants

Reflection

What went well:

- Controlled testing environment
  - Second observation room
- Organized and effective note-taking system
- Dependable participants
- Scoped time for tasks
- Immediate one hour debriefs
  - Affinity diagramming
- Zoom screen share

What we'd do differently:

- Expand upon our scenario writing
  - Give more details to participants to better focus tasks
- Test in a natural context
  - Where would participants actually book accommodations (e.g. from their couch at home?)
- Test with other user groups
  - Varying age groups
  - Less tech-savvy individuals

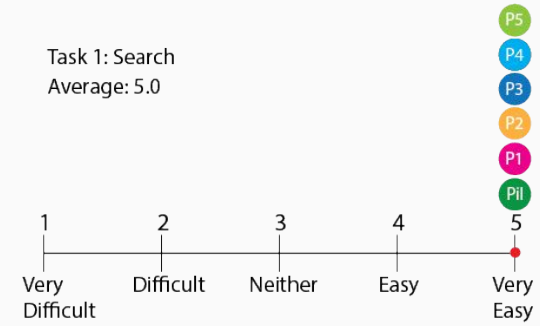
What we would test next

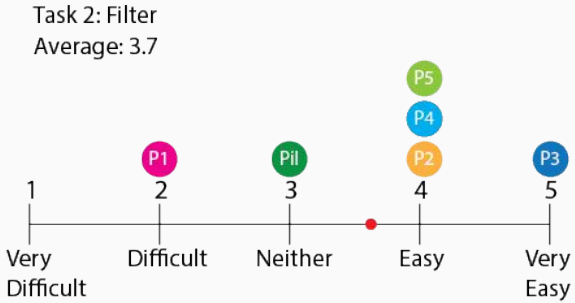
- Accessibility - specifically with the low vision population
- Usability across multiple devices (iPhone, iPad, etc)
- Comparison tool
  - Our last participant found the comparison tool
- Conduct a competitor analysis to benchmark booking.com website

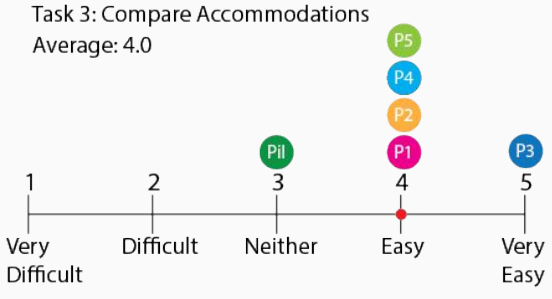
Questions?

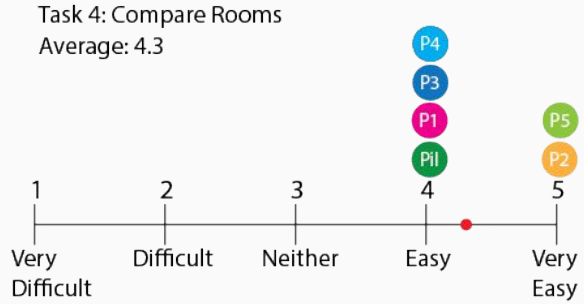
Appendix

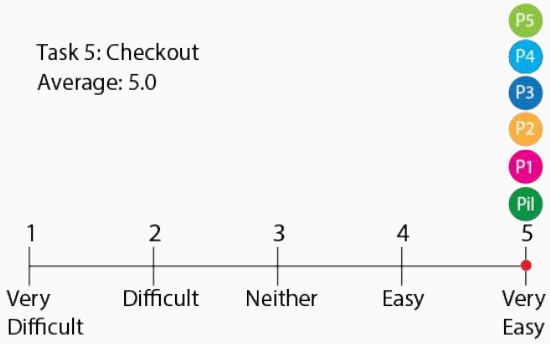
How would you rate the ease or difficulty of the task you just completed?

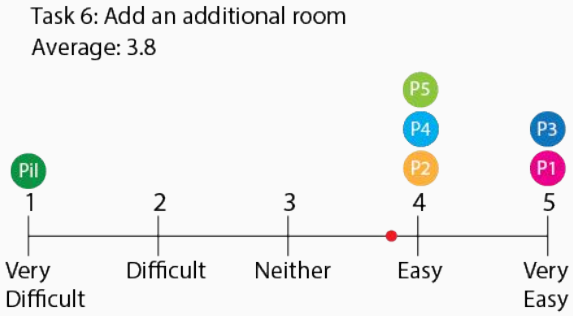












Participant Details

Participant	Age	Gender	Frequency of booking travel per year	Comfort with browsers (Likert)	Use of Booking.com in past year	Importance of location (Likert)	Importance of budget (Likert)	Importance of Amenities (Likert)
Pilot	25-35	Female	5+	5	3+*	5	3/4	2
P1	25-35	Male	5+	5	Never	4	5	4
P2	25-35	Female	3-4	4	Never	4	4	3
P3	25-35	Male	1-2	5	Never	5	5	2
P4	25-355	Male	1-2	5	Never	4	5	5
P5	25-40	Male	1-2	5	Never	4	4	2

*Although our Pilot participant did not meet our selection criteria of using Booking.com two or fewer times in the last year, we felt that the results from this session were compelling enough to include in our findings.

Note-taking tool

KEY	Difficult or task could not be completed	3
	Moderate, some issues	2
	Easy, no issues	1

Task	Notes	# out of #	Pilot	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	Severity
Search for accomodations									
Searches for London			1	2	1	2	1	1	
Enters check in date			1	1	1	1	1	1	
Enters check out date			1	1	1	1	1	1	
Selects 2 adult			1	1	1	1	1	1	
Completes search (clicks search)			1	1	1	1	1	1	
Filter options based on location, price and on amenities									
Selects location filter			1	2	1	3	1	Map	
Selects price filter			1	3	1	1	1	1	
Selects breakfast included filter			1	1	2	2	1	2	
Compare 2 or more accommodations & select 1									
Selects and reviews an option			1	1	1	1	1	1	
Navigates back to view other options			1	1	1	1	1	2	
Selects and reviews a second option			1	1	1	1	1	1	
Identifies best option			1	1	1	1	1	1	
Compare 2 or more rooms & select 1									
Reviews room details				2	1	2	1	1	
Selects room quantity				2	1	3	2	1	
Clicks I'll reserve				1	1	2	1	1	
Enter booking and personal information									
Enters name			1	1	1	1	1	1	
Enters email address			2	1	1	1	1	1	
Navigates to final details page			1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Add an additional room to your reservation									
Clicks on "change your selection"			3	N/A	1	3	2	1	
Modifies selection to include 2 rooms			2	1	2	3	1	2	
Clicks #			tons	3	3	tons	3	6	

Affinity map analysis document

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Category	**Usability Issue/Finding**	**Pilot**	**P1**	**P2**	**P3**	**P4**	**P5**	**Total**
Map	Prefers Map View to compare search results	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
Add Room	Confused between room options	X			X	X	X	4
Filter/Price	Wants to filter by an exact price (rather than ranges in filters)	X	X		X	X		4
Photos	Pictures are a top factor in decision making	X	X	X			X	4
Pop-up	Finds Pop up annoying	X			X	X	X	4
Ammenities	Too many amenities listed	X		X			X	3
Comparing	Hard to track room price on tabs	X			X	X		3
Comparing Rooms	Hard to compare	X	X		X			3
Comparison tool	Needs a more direct hotel comparison tool	X	X			X		3
Competitor	Prefer competitor or "better websites out there"		X		X		X	3
Filter	Skeptical of Central London filter	X	X			X		3
Photos/Rooms	Values room-specific pictures	X	X				X	3
Pop-up	Clears pop out without reading	X	X	X				3
Price	Prefers price per night		X		X		X	3
Reviews	Values reviews and ratings	X	X	X				3
UI	Too much information	X	X				X	3
Add Room	Tried to add a person on the # of guests drop down first			X	X			2
	Modified search using box on the left of the							

SUS

	Pilot	calc.	P1	calc.	P2	calc.	P3	calc.	P4	calc.	P5	calc.	AVG SUS
1. I think that I would like to use booking.com frequently.	5	4	1	0	3	2	2	1	4	3	3	2	
2. I found booking.com unnecessarily complex.	3	2	2	3	2	3	4	1	1	4	4	1	
3. I thought booking.com was easy to use.	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	2	5	4	4	3	
4. I think I would need the help of a technical person to use booking.com.	1	4	1	4	1	4	2	3	1	4	2	3	
5. I found the various functions in booking.com were well integrated.	4	3	4	3	5	4	2	1	4	3	2	1	
6. I thought there was too much inconsistency in booking.com.	3	2	1	4	2	3	4	1	1	4	2	3	
7. I would imagine that most people would learn to use booking.com very quickly.	4	3	5	4	5	4	4	3	5	4	4	3	
8. I found booking.com very cumbersome to use.	2	3	2	3	2	3	4	1	1	4	3	2	
9. I felt very confident using booking.com.	5	4	3	2	4	3	4	3	5	4	4	3	
10. I needed to learn a lot of things before I could get going with booking.com.	1	4	1	4	1	4	2	3	2	3	2	3	
SUM		32		30		33		19		37		24	
X 2.5		80		75		82.5		47.5		92.5		60	**AVG SUS**
SUS calculation	**80**	--	**75**	--	**82.5**	--	**47.5**	--	**92.5**	--	**60**	--	72.91666667

Images to be used in report

Level 1: Prevents task completion

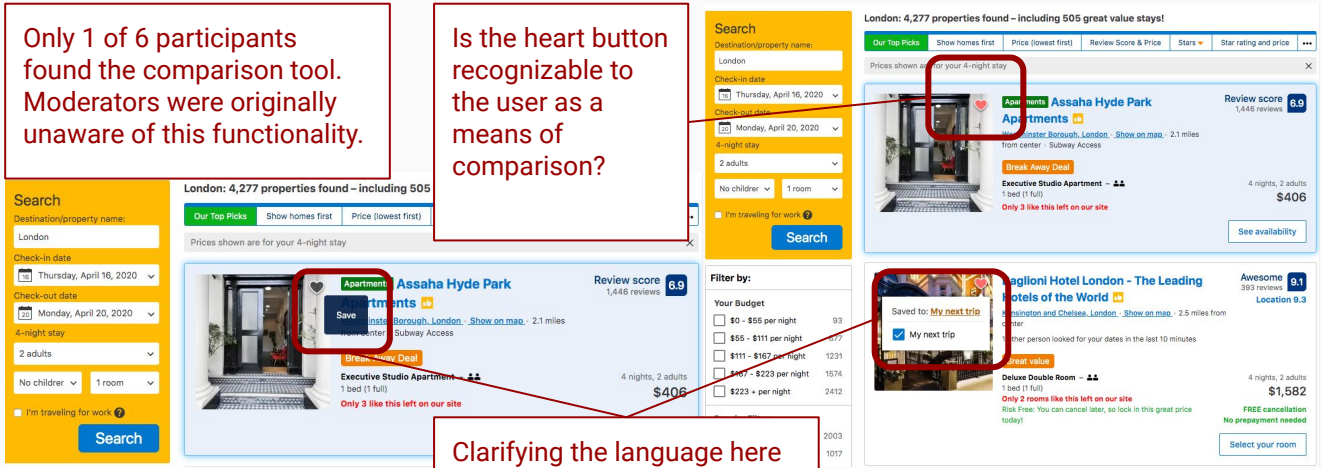
Level 2: Creates significant delay and frustration

Level 3: Problems have a minor effect on usability

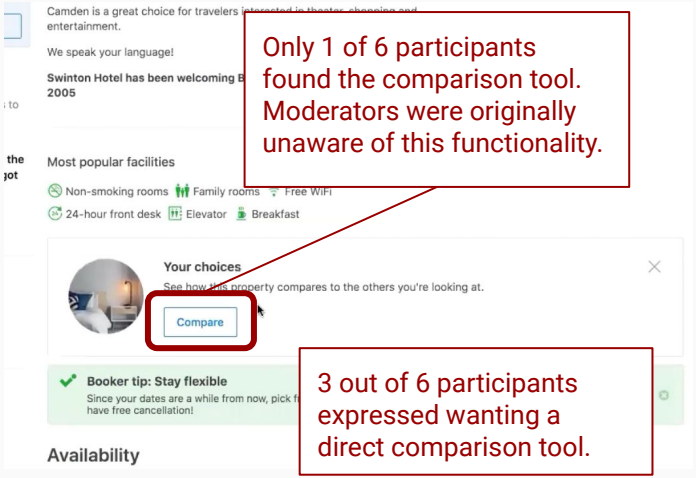
Level 4: Subtle and possible enhancements / suggestions

Only 1 of 6 participants found the comparison tool. Moderators were originally unaware of this functionality.

Is the heart button recognizable to the user as a means of comparison?

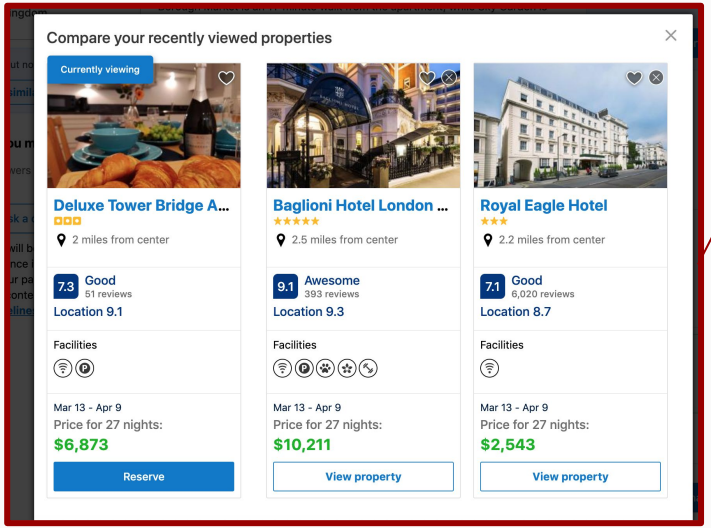


Clarifying the language here to be more representative of comparing options.



Only 1 of 6 participants found the comparison tool. Moderators were originally unaware of this functionality.

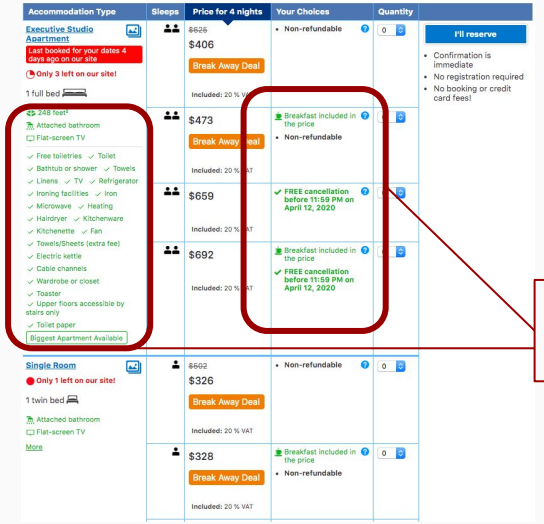
3 out of 6 participants expressed wanting a direct comparison tool.



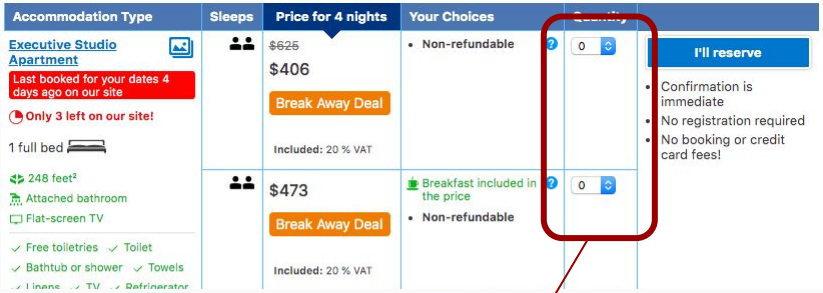
"For the purpose of comparing the two [accommodations] this doesn't tell me enough information." (P5)

Enhance the understandability of room option information

Usability Challenge: Participants experienced challenges comparing different room options.



Increase negative space to allow for easier skimming.

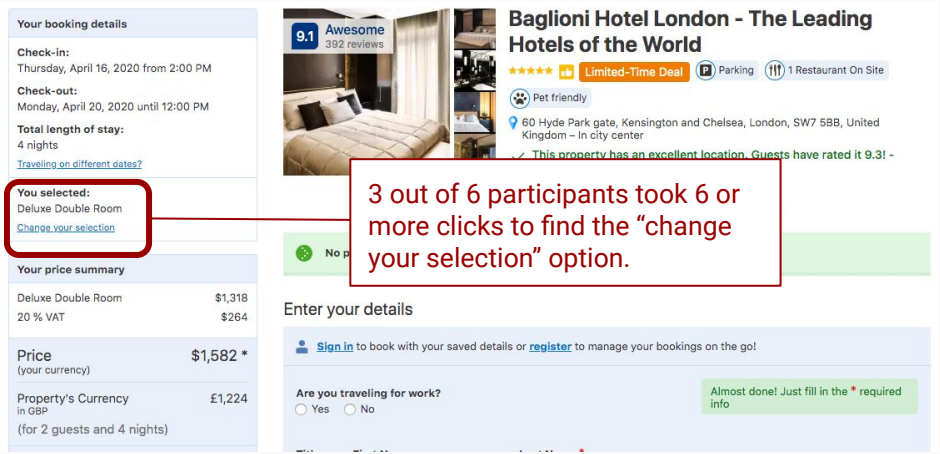


3 out of 6 participants had a moderate to difficult time selecting the room number from the dropdowns.

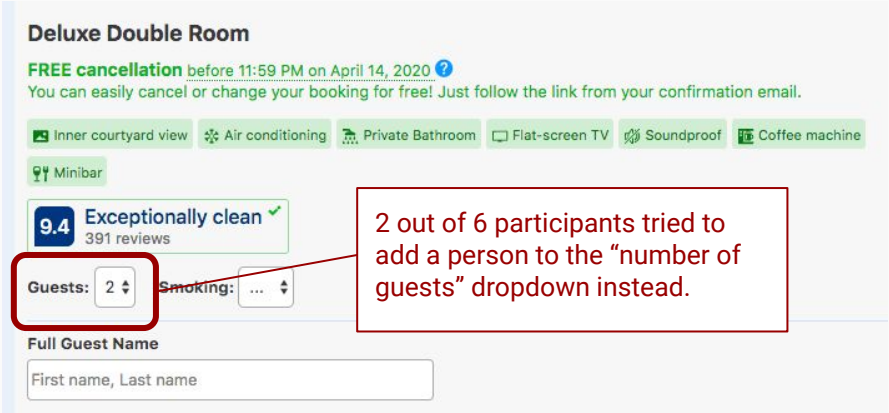
Recommendation: Consider simplifying room option detail in the table and making the room selection process more intuitive.

Enhance the visibility of the “change your selection” feature

Usability Challenge: Participants experienced confusion on how to modify a reservation from the checkout screen.



3 out of 6 participants took 6 or more clicks to find the “change your selection” option.



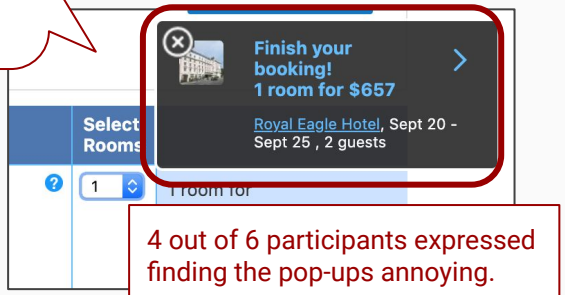
2 out of 6 participants tried to add a person to the “number of guests” dropdown instead.

Recommendation: Consider making the “change your selection” option more visible and giving it a more prominent position on the page.

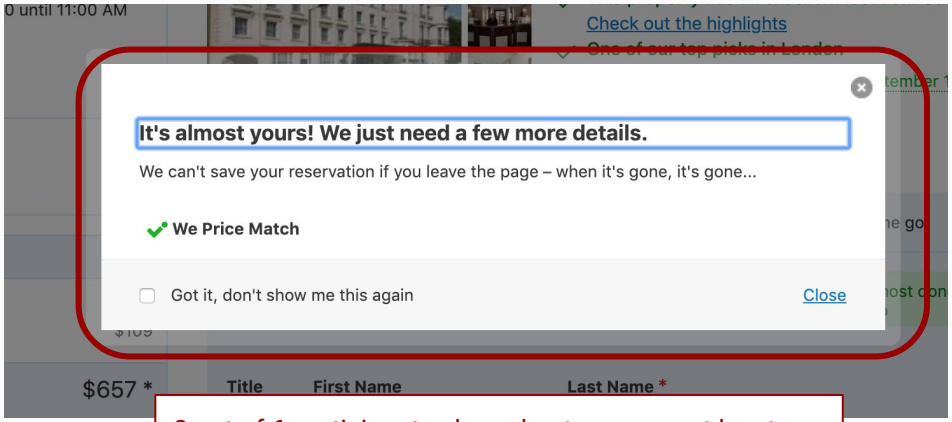
Reduce or eliminate the number of pop-ups and their frequency

Usability Challenge: Participants expressed annoyance with the number and frequency of pop-ups.

"I'm going to click this [pop-up] off… I never pay attention to those. They frustrate me. I hate pop-ups" (P5).



4 out of 6 participants expressed finding the pop-ups annoying.

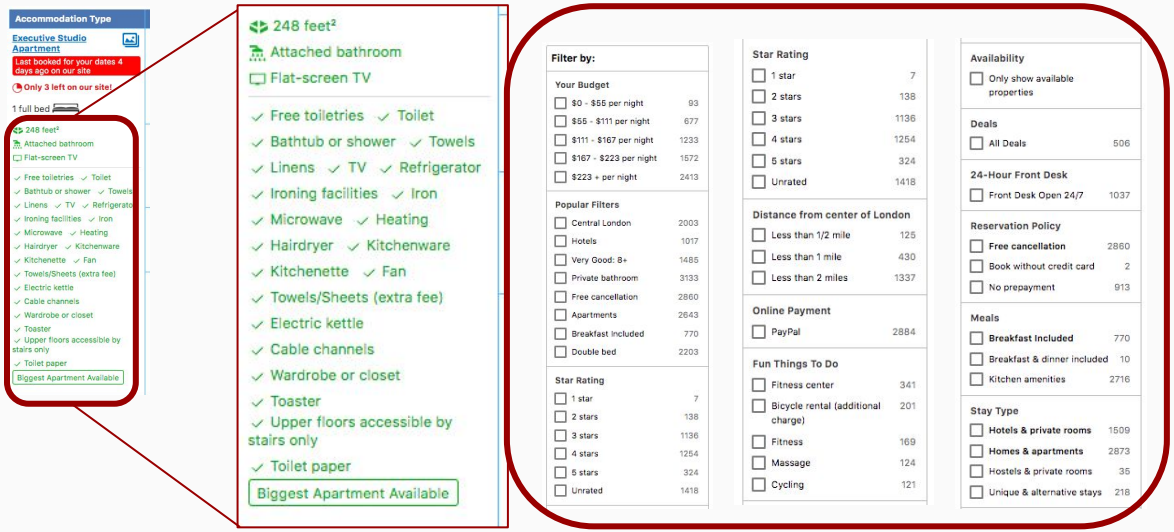


3 out of 6 participants cleared out a pop-up at least once without acknowledging the content.

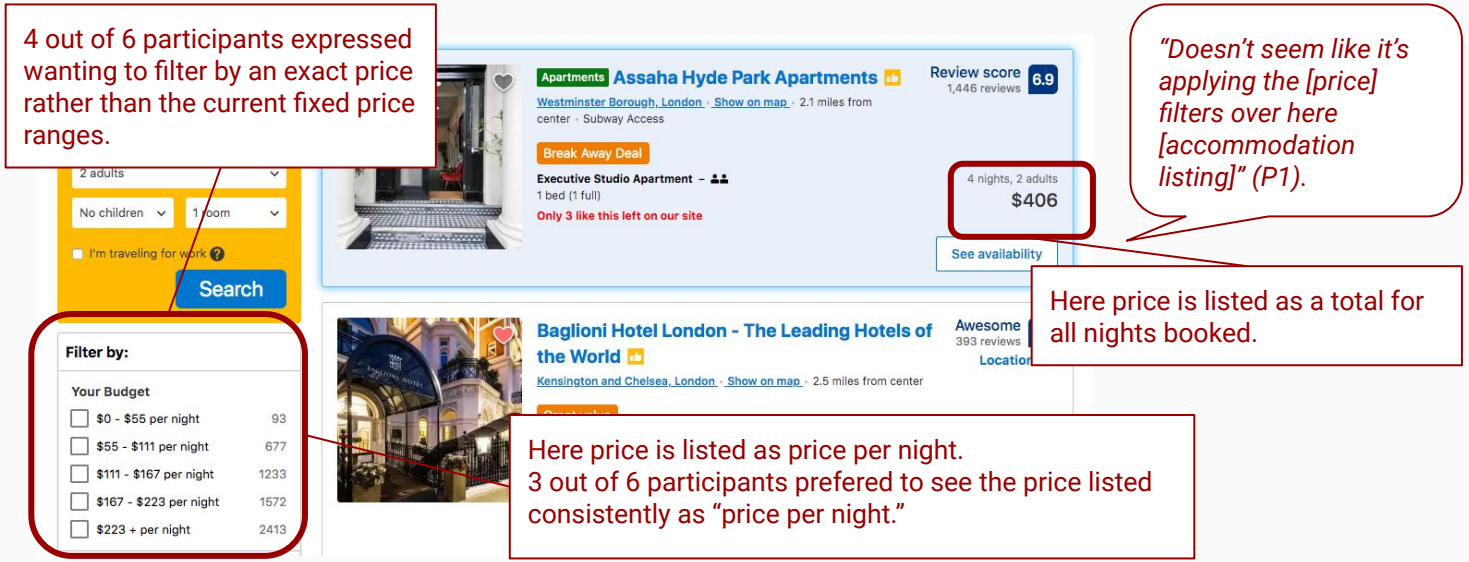
Recommendation: Consider reducing or eliminating the number of pop-ups and their frequency.

Improve the user interface by reducing information overload

3 out of 6 participants said that the website had too much information.



Improve the understandability of price



Entering details for Checkout

You selected:
Double Room
Change your selection

Your price summary

Double Room	$492
20 % VAT	$99
Price (your currency)	$591 *
Property's Currency in GBP	£457.20
(for 2 guests and 5 nights)	

* This price is converted to show you the approximate cost in $. You'll pay in £. The exchange rate might change before you pay.
Keep in mind that your card issuer may charge you a foreign transaction fee.

How much will it cost to cancel?

If you cancel, you'll pay $591

Your booking includes

Free WiFi
15% off all car rentals in London

Limited supply in London for your dates:
13 three-star hotels like this are already unavailable on our site

The fine print

Non-UK Visa/Mastercard holders only:
Where available, the GBP amount will be converted to your card's 'home' currency and processed through the property's credit card machine.

The credit card used to make the booking must

Enter your details

Sign in to book with your saved details or register to manage your bookings on the go!

Are you traveling for work?
Yes No

Almost done! Just fill in the * required info

Title **First Name** **Last Name ***

Email Address *
Double-check for typos

Confirmation email sent to this address

Confirm Email Address *

Who are you booking for?
I'm the main guest
I'm booking for someone else

Double Room

Non-refundable

Private Bathroom

Guests: 2

Full Guest Name
First name, Last name

Breakfast **$ 13**
Enjoy a convenient Breakfast at the property for $13 per person, per night.
2 guests, 5 night
Chang

Want to book a taxi or shuttle ride in advance?
Avoid surprises – get from the airport to your accommodations without any hassle.
We'll add taxi options to your booking confirmation.

15% off **I'm interested in renting a car**