My personal auditing experience

Introduction

The website I will be auditing is funcheaptravel. com. It is a travel website that provides information about travel destinations and all other travel needs such as booking hotels and flights. The website itself is pretty plain: a white background with black lettering. I believe the purpose of the website's creation is to help those who plan to travel with choosing a location and enjoying their overall experience. However, it's hard for users to enjoy this website because of all the items it is lacking. In this web audit I will be analyzing some aspects of the website that need major improvement and how the content can be more useful to its viewers. I will discuss the drawbacks of the poor visual aesthetic of the website and what makes it boring. Other issues I will cover are the lack of images and videos on the site, the overabundance of links on every page, the font size and style, the use of color throughout the website, the type of content and what it's supposed to convey to viewers, and possible difficulties with navigating the site. I will be also analyzing the overall user experience and how it can be improved with some minor changes in order to make the site more enjoyable to the audience. In regards to content, I plan to look at not only why the content is there but the process of creating it and what each piece of content adds to the site. By the end of this web audit I plan to have a better understanding of the website and how it affects the audience, and also provide some tips and suggestions for the improvement of the site.

Methodology

Data Collection

I collected data for my web audit by both visual inspection of the website, comparing examples of other travel websites, and analyzing both what the audience was looking for and what the purpose of the website is. The websites I used for comparison are www. kayak. com and www. expedia. com. I also used Halvorson's book and the page counting tool on www. xml-sitemaps. com to evaluate the content on the page. I will use these screenshots below to compare with my website, www. funcheaptravel. com :

Research
Audit Factors
Summary of Findings

User Experience (Usability)
Throughout the course of my audit I discovered a lot about funcheaptravel. com. Although the content is valuable, it is difficult for the audience to find what they are looking for. There is need for a content strategist when auditing this site. It is possible for a user to find the travel information that they need by visiting this site but it could be a lot easier for them to do so. There are various things such as the font size and extreme amount of links on each page that make this website very difficult to navigate. The overall user experience is okay but not great. The reason for this is that there is nothing on the webpage that will stimulate the user. Most web pages have lots of colors, images, or videos that keep the user entertained and want to explore more on the website. This site is just plain and has nothing but words and titles to guide the user. Because there are no images or videos, there's

nothing to guide the user in exploring more of the website. When analyzing the usability of a website the requirements are that the site is easy to use, safe to use, easy to remember how to use, etc. Based on my own experiences with using this website and what the audience can expect, I'd agree that the site is usable, but just not enjoyable to use. There is nothing much for the user to experience besides choosing a link that will take them to a more interesting website.

Content Issues

There are also issues with the content on the site. The audience consists of both new and experienced travelers looking for new places to travel and tips for how to get there and enjoy their time. The content on the main page is very misleading because I see topics like " The World's Most Superlative Trees" and " World's Largest Cost of Living Index." Although these things may be interesting to some users, they don't really relate to traveling which is supposed to be the main topic of the website. It would make more sense to users if the content were more organized and focused so that they could find exactly what they are looking for. I think this website has a great foundation but can just use more in order to increase traffic and retention. From the lack of visual stimuli to the overabundance of content this website simply falls short.

Analysis of Findings

Throughout the duration of this web audit I came across various issues with funcheaptravel. com that aren't very helpful to its audience.

Visual Aesthetics

Starting with the simple visual aesthetics of the site, it's overall just bland. To assist in understanding this issue, a visual of the main page is shown below:

As you can see, the website is a basic white background with black and grey lettering and some gold on the search icon. There are no additional colors, images, videos, or ads on the website. The font used throughout the site is consistent but varies in size from large and readable to very small. The bigger fonts help to distinguish travel topics from the sections of the site, but it becomes more difficult for viewers to see the tabs. The titles for different sections of the site such as " Start Here" and " Resources" are so small that they become overlooked in comparison to the blog titles. The " resources and inspiration for your next travel adventure" stated below the title of the website is so small and because they used the grey font, it's difficult to see. Most readers will simply overlook it although it seems like an important part of the page. The color scheme of the web page is simple and should make it easy to read but because of the differences in font size and their placement it becomes difficult.

Visual Content

Another issue I would like to address is the lack of visual content on the site. There is an abundance of links for viewers to find the travel information that they need, but no visuals to make the experience enjoyable. Because the website is visually very plain, there needs to be some images, ads, or videos placed on the page in order to amp it up. Without these visuals the site looks unfinished. There is nothing on the website that makes it visually appealing

to viewers. After reading so many lists of links and travel tips, the audience will get bored. It's important to have visuals to keep interest and increase the retention of users on the site. It gives viewers a break from reading so much content on the website, which can put a strain on the eyes. Without some kind of images or ads the website is boring. It becomes more difficult to fulfill the purpose of the website when the content is bland.

Web Content

Additionally, this website has way too much content for the audience to manage. There is an overabundance of links on the site. Each link takes the user to a brand new webpage and as a result their browser will become very crowded. Since the purpose of the content on the website is to provide travel information, it would make more sense for the site to provide most of that content and have the links for anything additional, such as booking flights and hotels. I think the content becomes confusing with so many links because there is no direction. If the user has to go to a new website to find each piece of information it becomes tedious instead of helpful. In order to better convey the purpose of this website with the content, some things have to be minimized. This makes the site gear towards blog readers as opposed to avid travelers.

The arrangement of content on the site makes it very confusing to the audience. The " Start Here" tab is not on the home page which isn't logical considering that's where the user should start. Also, on the " Start Here" page is a section on " How To Use This Site" which should also be listed on the home page for the reader to understand before they begin using it.

Recommendations.

Visual Improvements

Starting with the visuals on the webpage, I would change the accent colors from just black and gold to a red that will add a pop of color to the page and draw attention. I would also suggest adding some pictures on the main page of travel locations or world attractions such as the Eiffel Tower or Easter Island. This way users will want to explore the webpage further but also the images would be related to travel. I would increase the size of the font both underneath the page title and for each of the tabs on the homepage. I would add maybe a video or a slide show on the main page also to show images of different countries, hotels, and vacation spots, or simply a video showing what is offered on the website. I would also have the resources on the right page highlighted blue instead of gold when the cursor goes over them just for the contrast. I would change the links on the " Resources" and " Books" to another color, possibly blue, in order to clearly separate them from their descriptions on the page. Having everything on the website black and white is simple but just boring, and will put a strain on the user's eyes if they're on the website for a long period of time.

Content Suggestions

Overall, the existing content on the page is okay, but could definitely use some improvement. According to what the audience is looking for, there is valid and useful content on the page where they can find what they need. The audience of the website are travelers so they need travel locations, hotel and flight information, and travel tips. This website has a ton of pointers to other websites that will give them information, but nothing on the page itself

that will supply it. To avoid such a tedious process and cluttering the browser, I would recommend the website replace some of the links with actual information so the user won't have to go anywhere else. In the " Blog Posts" section, the names of the blogs should be listed instead of article titles. All of the links on the website should be arranged in order of relevance so the user will have some sense of direction instead of searching for hours through random links. This will improve the overall user experience and also make the website more attractive.

Organizational Changes

The webpage by itself is poorly organized in my opinion. There is too much clutter and way too many links on each page. For starters, I would make the " Start Here" tab the main page of the website, so users can automatically choose what to look for instead of just looking at links. This will improve the ease of navigation on the site and avoid confusion. I would also move the " How to Use This Site:" section to the top of the page since it should be the starting point for users. I would remove the " Useful Resources" section from the right tab of the page since there is already a " Resources" tab at the top in order to avoid redundancy. This will also clear up some space on the right side of the webpage.