

Helping a travel portal generate more enquires and revenue

Responsible Travel is the world's leading travel portal that helps people find appealing holidays that also give something back to the places they visit. Its revenue model is based on receiving commission back from operators for every enquiry that is made through its site. Responsible Travel's site analytics indicated that a significant number of site visitors were finding holidays and clicking to make an enquiry but then not going through with the enquiry. Each one represented a lost revenue opportunity so Responsible Travel asked us to conduct research and usability testing to understand how they could overcome this problem.

Research and usability testing sessions



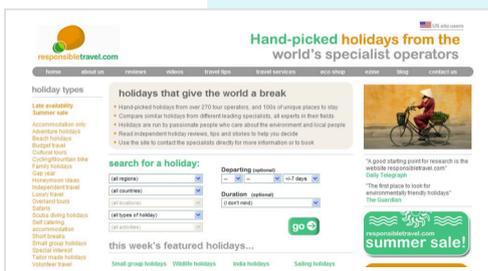
We recruited people who were currently considering booking adventure holidays and who had at least some concern about the environmental impact of their trip. We asked them to use the site to find a holiday of interest and then we shadowed them through the user journey as far as and beyond making an enquiry to the operator of that holiday. We had participants think aloud and voice their feelings about whether they would or would not go forward through each stage of the journey in a real-life situation.

Rethinking the site-journey experience

From our analysis of the data it was clear that users frequently did not understand the portal model of the site until very late in the journey when they came to make an enquiry. This misconception affected their perceptions of the experience at every stage of the journey. They perceived the wide choice of holidays on offer as indicating a lack of specialism, they saw the need to make an enquiry to the operator as an extra and unnecessary step. When they finally recognised the model they felt misled and had lost trust in the Responsible Travel brand.

Select search engine result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They seem to offer what I want • Can't be that good, they do everything • Hope I'm not paying more to be green
Find a holiday of interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can't find the activity I'm after • It's not coming up with my dates • These reviews are 3 years old
Act to find out more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'll call RT, here it is in Contact Us • I'll use the itineraries, what do I do now? • I want more information, not to book
Make an enquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's a lot of work, it's for their benefit • I'm confused, who's the property owner? • I'll ask again, I want answers not spam
Satisfy self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That's sneaky, not them, I'll pay more • I'll go elsewhere, get answers and look at it to charity, that's mean given the cost
Book	
Notify	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where's the guide they promised? • Surely they know I booked now • I'm still confused how RT helped me

Follow-up testing and redesign



Our research suggested that by being more upfront about the way they work Responsible Travel could turn its model into a virtue. Responsible Travel redesigned the site to make clear from all entry points that it was a portal through which users could make contact with specialist operators. The copy stressed the fact that they did all the legwork for users while filtering for eco-friendly holidays. Our follow-up testing confirmed this hypothesis and helped Responsible Travel select the best form of

wording to describe the way it works and so maximise the proportion of visitors finding a holiday of interest who then go on to make an enquiry.

What our client had to say about the research process

"new experience's research and testing helped us rethink aspects of the way we explain our offering to our customers. It highlighted important barriers to the customer journey. Implementing new experience's recommendations has led to measurable improvements in conversion rates."
Paul Snudden, Marketing Director