McMenamin's

Usability Testing

History & Business Objectives

- McMenamins is a hospitality and microbrewery chain of 50+ renovated historic properties located in Oregon and Washington.
- McMenamin’s offers a mix of pubs, historic hotels, movie theaters, restaurants, spas and other event for all friends and family to enjoy.
- McMenamins mission is to renovate historical places.

Objectives & Scope

The goals of this research project:

1. To better understand the usability issues of the McMenamins site.
2. To discover ways to improve the user experience of the McMenamins site.
3. **To better our understanding of User Experience.**

User Personas & Needs: The Users

Engaged Couples / Event Planner
Venue and services

Young Traveler
Unique/Fun experience

The Local
Nearby Entertainment

Hard Core Fan
Repeat Offender

Young Families
Happy kids and adults

Mature Traveler
Relaxing Experience

User Personas & Needs: The Users

Cocktail/ Beer/ Wine Enthusiast
Fancy booze!

The Indie Music Lover
Looking for a show

The Foodie
Nom, nom, nom!

Pet Guardian
Fun for them and fido

What do they all have in common?
Looking for a unique experience!

User Personas and Needs: The Participants

Who did we actually get?

- 8 super students from ITC 298

The Average Participant:

- 30 yrs old
  - 100% of participants above 21
- Familiar with McMenamin’s
- Have not used the site
- Are heavy internet users

User Personas and Needs: The Participants

Average Participant is which User(s)?

- **Foodie:** Frequents bars / restaurants
- **Local:** 3 locations nearby
- **Young(ish) traveler:** not frequent travelers, possible constraints

Possible other fit for user personas?

- **Beer enthusiast:** 2 users wrote beer related comments in posttest survey

Usability Research Methods

Methods used by our team to evaluate the current McMenamin's website:

1. Competitive Analysis
2. Card Sort
3. Heuristic Evaluation
4. Usability Testing

Competitive Analysis

A thorough review of websites deemed to be competitors to the subject site, aimed at improving our understanding of the sites role among its competitors. Due to the broad offerings of McMenamins, we've reviewed the following sites:

- Provenance Hotels - www.provenancehotels.com
- Kimpton Hotels - www.kimptonhotels.com
- Unique Inns - www.uniqueinns.com
- Appalacian Brewing Company - www.abcbrew.com
- Elysian Brewing Company - www.elysianbreing.com

Competitive Analysis (continued)

Analysis of the competitor sites revealed which elements are most important in hospitality, winery, and brewery sites such as:

- Clear navigation
- Short intuitive paths
- Clear, real world, location and contact information
- A clear, trustworthy, and functional purchasing system

McMenamins, in spite of having a lot of content, did not have any of the elements above.

Card Sorting

Research Method used to evaluate Information Architecture

Completing a Card Sorting Exercise improved our understanding of how information on the McMenamin's website should be grouped, organized and labeled.

Method:

- Optimal Sort Program focusing on 53 Hotel, Eat & Drink, and Event pages
- 13 participants from ITC 298 class

Card Sorting (continued)

After reviewing the data, our recommendations included:

- Add a “Search by Amenity” and “Search by Location” for hotels
- Give Craft Beer, Wine and Spirits their own pages under “What We Brew” Gateway page
- Include a Shop Online tab in the main navigation

Heuristic Evaluation

A cheap, simple review by a set of experts aimed at identifying Usability issues against a set of criteria called Heuristics:

- Is website simple to use
- Are users kept informed
- Are words and phrases familiar
- Is the site consistent
- Does the site make users remember things
- Does the website help to avoid mistakes and can they recover
- Is the help helpful
- Does the site grow with the user's expertise

McMenamin's site violated 7 out of the 10 Heuristics when booking a room and buying merchandise online.

Usability Testing

Research method used to evaluate a website design by testing it on representative users.

Completing a Usability Test improved our understanding of the pitfalls, frustrations, and difficulties users have accomplishing simple tasks.

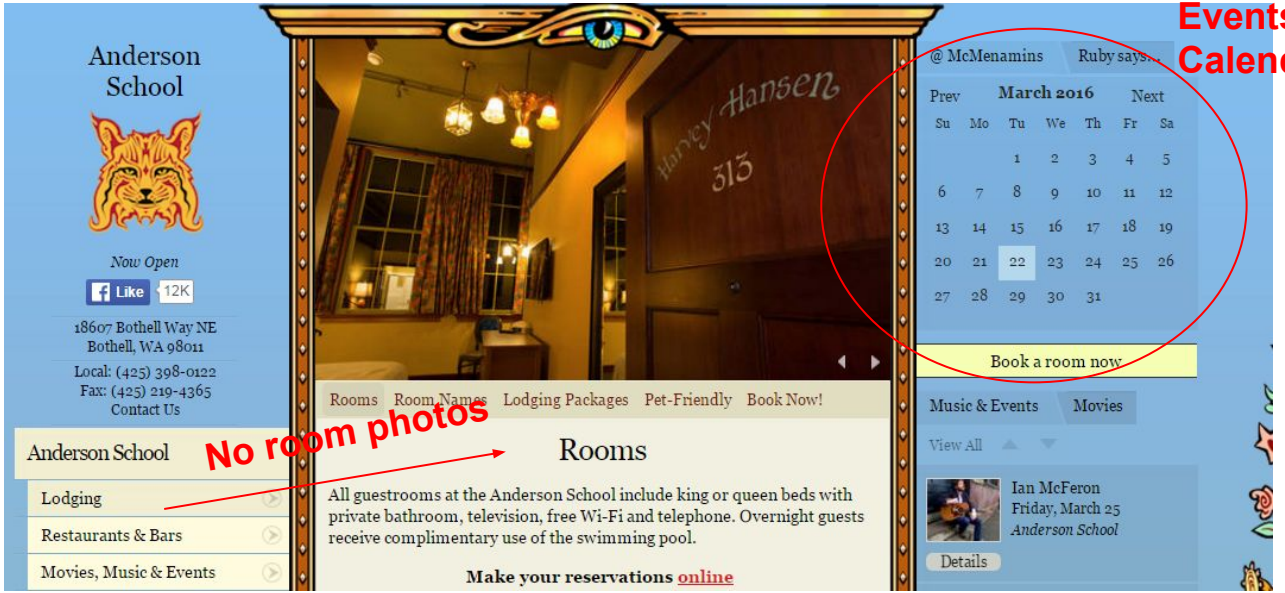
Tasks:

- Book a hotel room at The Anderson School
- Purchase a $50 gift card at the Online Store
- Find the pub closest to Seattle Central College

Usability Testing - Booking a Hotel Room

Major Usability Issues:

1. Events Calendar unrelated to hotel room booking
2. Can't see rooms prior to starting reservation process



Usability Testing - Purchasing Gear Online

Major Usability Issue:

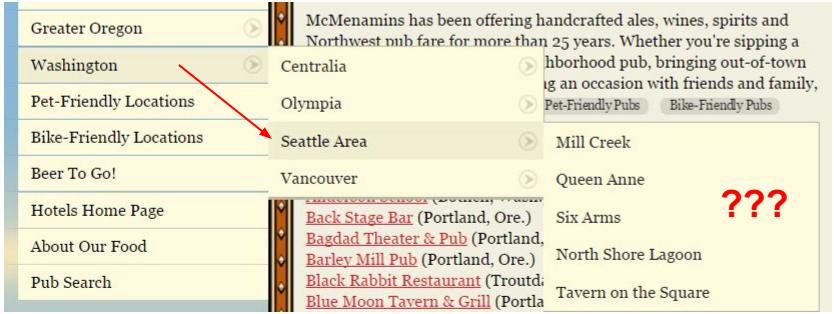
1. Difficult to find the Online Store

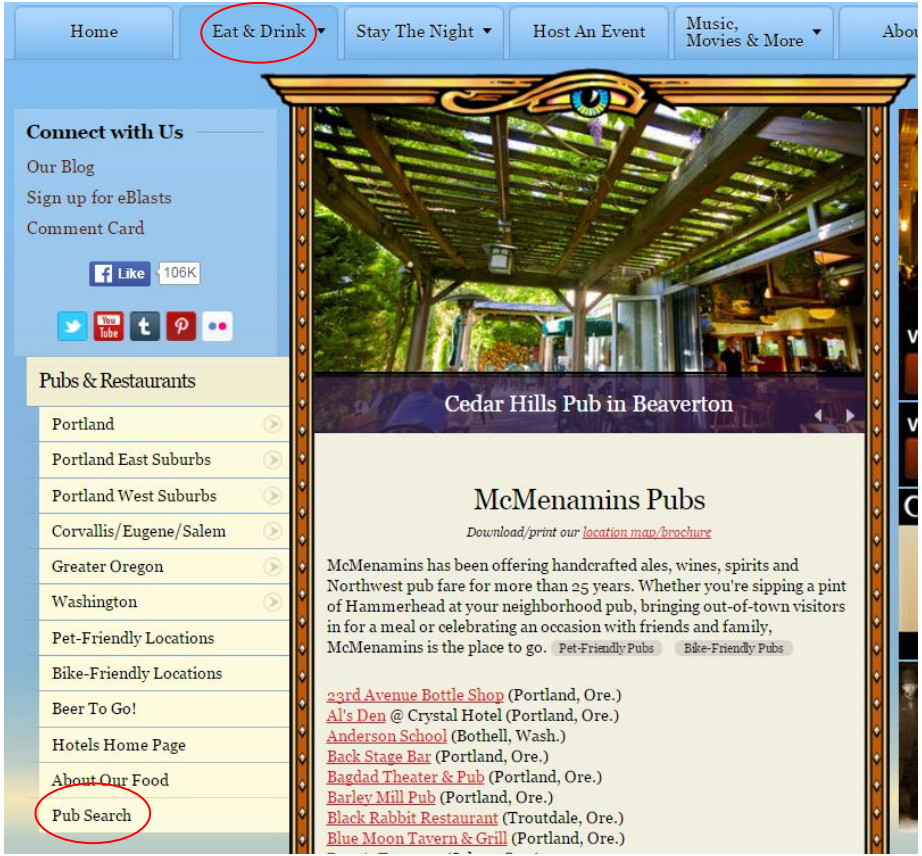
Usability Testing - Find a Pub near SCC

Major Usability Issues:

1. Pub Search feature at the bottom of the sidebar

2. No mapped locations if you select Washington





Conclusions

Through testing we have seen that mcmenamins.com is a site with a number of user experience problems. Most of those problems were immediately self-evident. Others weren't realized until basic tasks were analyzed.

We discovered that while analyzing a site, it is important to:

- Maintain empirical objectivity
- Express situations using reference-based comparison
- Rely on results from testing, not your own opinions.
- Understand how users want to use a site, not how you want them to use it.

Conclusions

A website's user experience can be improved by:

- Researching competitors to discover standards that should be met in the industry and opportunities to make improvements over the competition.
- Accommodating user needs by making the features and content they want available.
- Preventing users from being confused by using proper labeling based on typical expectations and heuristic standards.
- Testing the sites common tasks using impartial users.