
Exercise 3: Usability Test of www.VisitDenmark.com

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Executive Summary

This report documents the results of a usability test of www.VisitDenmark.com, carried out on a group of 5 test participants in January 2009. The most important findings are given below:

Positive aspects about www.VisitDenmark.com:

- **Reliable information.** The test participants considered the information presented on the website as being reliable, unbiased and not sponsored by any particular company.
- **Relevant country-specific information.** Some test participants tried their national version of the site and were positively surprised to see that they provide information and offers that is relevant when traveling to Denmark from their country.
- **Balanced amount of information.** Most test participants felt that the amount of information is good, that it is not overwhelming and that it is convenient to have all this different kind of information in one place.

Improvement areas for www.VisitDenmark.com:

- **Unintuitive main menu.** Most test participants had problems finding what they were looking for using the main menu. The menu item labels do not correspond with the words that the test participants expected to see.
- **Booking page difficult to reach.** Two of the five test participants failed to book a restaurant because there was no booking link on the details page for the restaurant. The other ones were severely delayed by the fact of having to go to another place on the site to search for the restaurant they have already found.
- **No help available if search fails.** One test participant failed to book a hotel because the query returned no results and no suggestions were given on what to do next. Another test participant failed to find music events in Copenhagen because the search either returned nothing or just a single result.

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1. Approach

A usability test of www.VisitDenmark.com was carried out in January 2009 as a part of the DTU course '02261 Usability Engineering'. The test was carried out on the public version of the website, using the United Kingdom specific version.

1.1. Purpose

The primary purpose of the test was to assess the usability of the current website for users that are not of Danish origin and that have a different level of awareness of Denmark.

1.2. Method

The test has been carried out with five participants who all belong to the target group for the website. The profiles of the test participants appear in section 1.5. Test participants were tested one by one.

The author of this report acted as the test facilitator, while Rafał Lipiński was observing the interviews and providing feedback. Three tests were conducted in Polish, while two were conducted in English. Each test took between 40 minutes and 1 hour.

The usability test consisted of three phases: Interview, Solving test tasks, and Debriefing. In this test the phases contained the following steps:

Interview: Test participants were informed about the purpose and procedure of the test and were then interviewed about their expectations to the website before they saw it.

Solving test tasks: Test participants were asked to carry out tasks using the website. All the tasks were defined by the author of the report, however some of them made it possible for the test participant to decide about the kind of information they will be looking for. The tasks are included in the usability test script in appendix A, while the participants' individual decisions for the open-ended tasks are included in appendix B. Test participants were asked to think aloud and to comment on the website while they were carrying out their tasks.

Debriefing: Test participants were asked to answer some post-test questions in order to summarize their experience with the website. The list of questions is given in appendix A.

1.3. Discussion of Method

The basis for this usability test is the recognized "think aloud" method. This method is described in several generally recognized books within the usability field, for example:

- *Brugervenligt webdesign* (User-friendly web design) by Rolf Molich (available in Danish only, published by Ingeniøren | Bøger 2000).

- *Usability Engineering* by Jakob Nielsen (Academic Press 1993, see also www.useit.com).

1.4. Equipment

The equipment used for this test was a laptop with a 1.73 GHz processor and a 15.4" wide screen set to a resolution of 1280 x 800 for all test participants. Microsoft Internet Explorer 7 (version 7.0.5730.13 English) was used for two test participants, while Mozilla Firefox 3.0.5 (Polish) was used for the remaining three.

The computer communicated with the Internet using a 10 Mbit xDSL connection through Telia.

1.5. Test Participant Profiles

The tests were carried out with test participants who fulfilled the following requirements:

- Are not of Danish nationality.
- Have not been in Denmark for more than 2 years.
- Have at least some experience with browsing the Internet.
- Have not studied computer science or worked within the IT field.

All of the test participants have a master's degree or are still studying.

Participant	Gender	Age	Nationality	Internet experience*	Used VisitDenmark.com before?	Used other travel websites before?
1	Female	23	Canadian / British	Somewhat experienced	Yes	Yes
2	Female	27	Canadian	Somewhat experienced	No	No
3	Female	25	Polish	Experienced	Yes	Yes
4	Male	25	Polish	Experienced	No	Yes
5	Female	24	Polish	Somewhat experienced	No	Yes

* Internet experience was classified by the test participant according to these groupings:

1. None (e.g. has never heard of it or only read about it)
2. Bystander (e.g. has watched other persons use the internet)
3. Beginner (e.g. has used it once or twice)
4. Somewhat experienced (uses it regularly)
5. Experienced (uses search facilities without problems)

6. Very experienced (has developed websites, knows HTML)

1.6. About the Report

- Quotes: The report contains several quotes from test participants. In some cases, the quotes have been translated from Polish into English and are surrounded by “...”
- Test facilitator’s comment:
The test facilitator has added a comment to an issue or made a suggestion where applicable.
- Menus and headings: User entries and quotations from web pages such as menu items, headings and text are shown in *italics*. E.g. *Activities -> Restaurants*.

Appendix A contains the full usability test script including the tasks given to the test participants.

Appendix B contains a table that shows test tasks and the test participants’ success in solving them.

Appendix C contains a comparison of the test results with the initial assessment of the website done by the author and his team member.

Appendix D contains the author’s comments about the report.

2. Expectations

Before the test participants saw the website and started to carry out the tasks they were interviewed about their expectations to the website and what the core functionality was seen from their point of view.

Test participants expected the following of a tourist site about Denmark:

- Information about local events and celebrations (4 test participants).
- Find accommodation in different price ranges (2 test participants).
- Find top attractions (2 test participants).
- Information about country-specific laws and customs (1 test participant).

Two of the test participants have used www.VisitDenmark.com before and felt that it did not satisfy their needs back then. They have used it to look for information about Copenhagen and felt that www.VisitCopenhagen.com provided them with more information.

3. Findings - www.VisitDenmark.com

Findings are categorized by the facilitator using the following categories:



Good. This approach is recommendable.



Good idea. A suggestion from a test participant that could lead to a significant improvement of the user experience.



Minor problem. Caused test participants to hesitate for a few seconds.



Serious problem. Delayed test participants in their use of the website for 1 to 5 minutes, but eventually they were able to continue. Caused occasional “catastrophes”.



Critical problem. Caused frequent catastrophes. A catastrophe is a situation where the website “wins” over the test participant, i.e. a situation where the test participant cannot solve a reasonable task or which causes the test participant great irritation.

3.1. Information usefulness



All test participants were satisfied with the reliability of the provided information.

One test participant commented: "All information seem reliable, you don't get a feeling that it's sponsored by some particular hotel or restaurant chain". Another one said: "There are no ads, that's good." Even though the site contains ads and there are commercial links to partner's sites, their placement makes it unobtrusive and they are regarded as integral parts of the website.



Three of the test participants tried out their national versions of VisitDenmark.com and commented favorably on them. "It's nice that they have so many languages and that each of the language versions contains information relevant to that country"



Most test participants felt that the amount of information provided by the site is good.

"They have a little bit of everything", "All information is in one place" – there is information on different areas, suggestions about things to do in Denmark, and links to important pages one might need while in Denmark (such as rejseplanen.dk).



Three test participants found that it is difficult for them to get an overview and compare information.

This occurred mostly in association with the “Flight and transport to Denmark” section. One test participant commented, that she would have to visit all of the individual websites while all she wanted was an overview of the prices and the time it takes to reach Denmark using different means of transportation. Another one said, that he would expect a map (similar to the map of ferry connections to and from Denmark) with all the connections marked on it.

Sightseeing (53 results) [Show all results on map](#)

Most popular products








Name	Properties
 <p>Guided tours at the Viking Ship Museum 2009 Telephone: (+45) 4630 0200 Starts: Vikingskibsmuseet</p>	  Show on map
Name	Properties
 <p>Boat tour: Frederiksdal - Kollekolle - Furesøbad - Birkerød - Jægerhuset - Holte Telephone: (+45) 4587 0152 Starts: Baadfarten</p>	Show on map
 <p>Boat tour: Holte - Jægerhuset - Birkerød - Furesøbad - Kollekolle - Frederiksdal Telephone: (+45) 4587 0152 Starts: Baadfarten</p>	Show on map
 <p>Boat tour: Lyngby - Bagsværd Telephone: (+45) 4587 0152 Starts: Baadfarten</p>	Show on map
 <p>Boat trip: Lyngby - Frederiksdal Telephone: (+45) 4587 0152 Starts: Baadfarten</p>	Show on map

Figure 1: Activities search results. The test participants found it difficult to find the activities that are interesting to them.



The activity/attraction search facility was not helpful when the query returned a large number of results.

When test participants were looking through all items in a category, the list contained many results listed alphabetically. Many of the results were quite similar to one another. It would require the test participant to go into each of them one by one and read the details to determine whether a particular item is of interest.

At least two test participants scrolled through such a list saying that they can't find anything interesting, even though they haven't seen all the pages of the list.



One test participant suggested, that it would be useful to be able to order the results by their popularity or some other criterion of recommendation.

! No test participant found the “Top 25 Attractions” page, even though this was the thing that most participants were looking for.

This is because often links to information that is otherwise available on the site is not shown in the relevant places.

Test facilitator’s comment: It would be useful to place a link to this kind of information on the search results page. It could be placed below the list of results, in the following form:

“Haven’t found what you were looking for? Try these links: ...”

3.2. Navigation

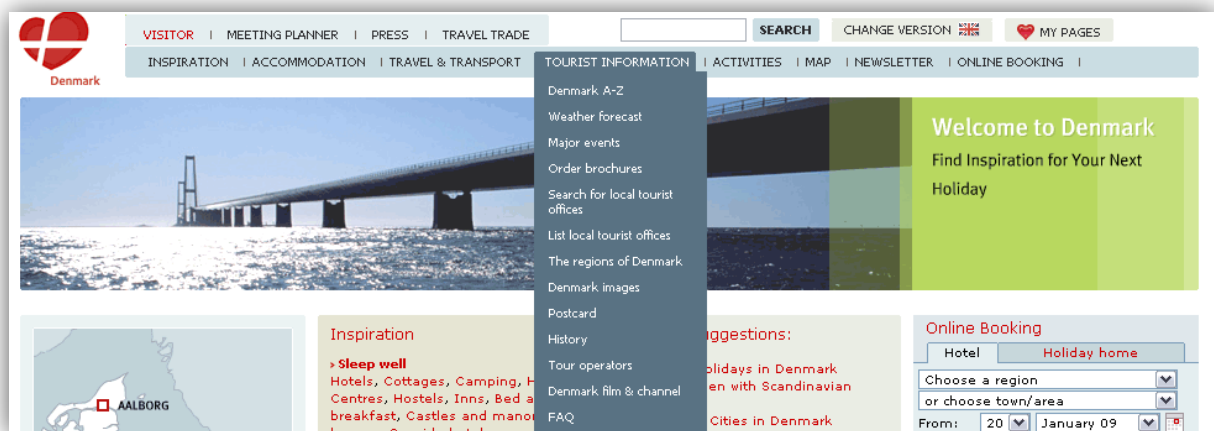


Figure 2: Main menu. The test participants found that it is difficult to find what they are looking for using the main menu.

! The main menu is unintuitive and does not speak the user’s language.

When test participants were trying to book a restaurant, most of them expected to find a list of restaurants first. One test participant said that she was looking for the words “food” or “restaurant”, but couldn’t find them neither in the menu or on the front page.

When participants were looking for general information about Denmark, they were certain it should be under *Tourist Information* but most of them didn’t decide to click on *FAQ* or *Denmark A-Z*. One test participant said that she would rather expect a menu item titled “tips for travelers” to contain such information.

One test participant commented: “Information seems to be there, but it’s hard to find it.”

Test facilitator’s comment: Some menu items could expand or display a sub-menu with a list of options available after clicking that item. For example, the *Activities* -> *On the Town* menu item could hold a sub-menu containing: *Restaurants, Music- & Dance Places*. This would help the user in deciding which menu item to click.

Restaurants

There are plenty of good eating places available to you while on holiday in Denmark, be it restaurants with Michelin stars, cosy family restaurants, and of course a rich variety of ethnic restaurants. You shouldn't miss the Danish speciality Smørrebrød - the famous open sandwiches - which are served with much pride around lunch time.

In addition to your search possibilities in visitdenmark.com, the site www.aok.dk offers a wide variety of restaurants in metropolitan Copenhagen.

Select area

 Choose city/area

 Enter search words:

Name

Print this page
E-mail this page
Add to my pages
Currency Converter

Facts

- > Price Indications when Eating out
- > Book a table at a restaurant
- > Control of Danish Eating Places
- > Smoking Policy in Restaurants
- > Restaurants with Michelin-Stars
- > Home Dinners - an Alternative
- > Complaints! Board for Restaurants

tripadvisor
 Candid Denmark travel advice

Restaurant Review:
 Restaurant Saison
 "Like their healthy dishes"

Figure 3: The "facts" box is ignored by most users. The test participants consider this box an advertisement.

! Important links placed in a box that is ignored by users.

Only one test participant noticed the "facts" box when he was looking for food prices the first time he visited the restaurants search page. Two test participants found it after returning to this page for a subsequent time, while others managed to find this information through some other means.

Test facilitator's comment: This information box is placed in the right column and, to make it worse, it is adjacent to an actual banner advertisement. This is enough for the users to simply ignore this box, treating it as another banner. That is why this information should rather be placed in the center column where the user's attention is focused.

Search result

Search query: All categories

Sort: Show marked words

Your Search: **restaurants**
Pages: **11718**
Categories: **9**

[Previous 3 categories](#) [Next 3 categories](#)

Turistbureauer

- Hadsten Turistinformation** 07-01-2009
Tourist bureaus
The tourist information of the city Hadsten welcomes you and will be happy to advise you in any way about the area e.g. regarding accomodation, sights and restaurants.

Figure 4: Text search. Test participants have used this to look for categories, such as "restaurants", but found it difficult to get a list of restaurants this way.



It is difficult to find categories through the site's main search facility.

A few test participants tried to search for "restaurants" when they failed to find such a menu item in the main menu. However, this search produces results from such categories as "Aktiviteter", "Attraktioner", "Overnatning", etc. which are hardly relevant, even though "restaurants" is the name of the category that is otherwise available on the site.

Test facilitator's comment: The search facility should also include category names themselves in the search, which is probably not the case right now. The category names should be links to places where the user can browse or search the items belonging to that category.



The category names in the main search are not translated into English (see Figure 4) and some of them are completely incomprehensible (such as "MICE"). Some test participants felt that it is something they are displeased about.

3.3. Search forms and results



The screenshot shows a search form with a map of Denmark on the left. To the right of the map are two dropdown menus: 'Select area' (set to 'All regions') and 'Choose city/area'. Below these is a text input field labeled 'Enter search words:'. The main form area contains several sections: 'Name' with a text input; 'Opening periods' with 'From' and 'To' date inputs (both set to '01/01/0001'); 'Facts' with a list of options: 'Recurring event', 'Major event', 'Date not yet fixed', and 'Part of other arrangement'; and 'Type' with a list of options: 'Music', 'Festival', 'Market', and 'Town Fête'. At the bottom are 'Search' and 'Reset' buttons.

Figure 5: Regional search form. The test participants found it difficult and annoying to use.






-  All test participants were annoyed that the search criteria got lost whenever they clicked the back button or a “back to search” (see Figure 7) link.
-  Most of the test participants were annoyed that they have to fill in the same region and city when searching in different categories (Attractions, Activities, Major events, etc.)
-  One test participant suggested, that it would be useful for the website to remember the last selected region and city and use it as a default value on all search forms.
-  When selecting a region, four test participants had doubts in which region is their city of interest located. However, they either managed to select the correct region, or they used the second select box with a list of all cities.
-  Two task participants had doubts as to the date format that should be used in the date fields, and one of them felt that a valid date must be entered before the form can be submitted. Another one suggested that the current date should be prefilled in these fields.

Figure 6: Book a hotel search form. Test participants found it difficult to find some Danish cities.



Four test participants appreciated the fact that the maps in Figure 5 and Figure 6 are clickable, making it easy to select a region.



Three of the test participants had problems with finding Aarhus in the *Town/Area* select box in Figure 6, even though they selected the correct region. Some test participants were not aware of the alternate spelling (“Århus”) and were confused when the city was not listed under the letter “A”. They pointed out that there is “Aarhus” on the map, but it is not in the list. Those participants that knew of the alternate spelling were still confused, cause they expected to find items starting with “Å” right after “A” on the list, and not at the end as is in accordance with the Danish alphabet.

Test facilitator’s comment: The list should contain all spelling variants for names with Danish letters. The official spelling could be indicated in brackets, e.g. “Arhus (Århus)”. Danish letters should be placed after the corresponding English letter in the collation sequence.

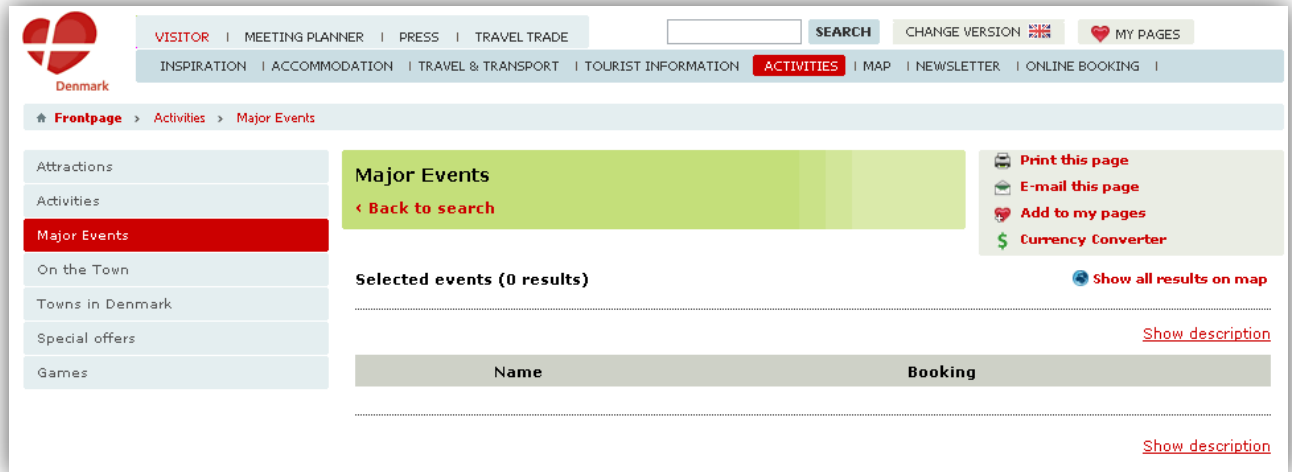


Figure 7: Search yields no results. The screen provides no information on how to proceed.

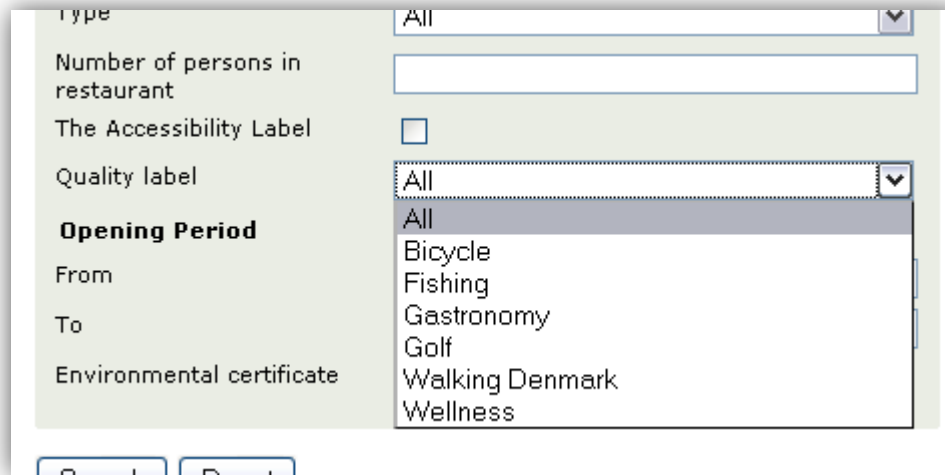


No information on how to proceed when search yields no results.

One test participant was searching for a hotel (Figure 6) to book in Aarhus and the search returned no results for the selected period of time and number of people. The test participant tried changing the search criteria, but still couldn't find anything. The test participant reached the conclusion that "something must be wrong" and gave up.

Another test participant tried to find music events in Copenhagen this winter (Figure 7). She tried several times, selecting different types of *Facts* about the event, but in the end found just one result. "It's impossible. There must be more going on."

Test facilitator's comment: If the search produces no results, the user should be presented with a list of steps that they can perform to find what they are looking for. This could include information on how to modify the search query or a link to browse all events in a given category. The user could also be presented with a short list of alternate results from a less restrictive query.



The screenshot shows a search form with several fields. At the top, there is a dropdown menu labeled 'Type' with 'All' selected. Below it is a text input field for 'Number of persons in restaurant'. The next field is 'The Accessibility Label' with an unchecked checkbox. Below that is 'Quality label' with a dropdown menu showing 'All' selected and a list of options: 'All', 'Bicycle', 'Fishing', 'Gastronomy', 'Golf', 'Walking Denmark', and 'Wellness'. Under the heading 'Opening Period', there are 'From' and 'To' text input fields. At the bottom is 'Environmental certificate' with a dropdown menu.

Figure 8: Restaurant search. Quality label, accessibility label and environmental certificate fields are not clear to the user.



Test participants liked the possibility of refining the restaurant search (Figure 8) with such criteria as the accessibility label, quality label and environmental certificate, but did not understand fully what was the exact meaning of these fields. This especially holds for the quality label. “Can I play golf in the restaurant?” One of the test participants tried finding more information about this, but failed to do so.

3.4. Booking



It is impossible to book a restaurant from the restaurant details page.

When the test participants were asked to book a restaurant, all of them started looking for a list of restaurants first. They usually ended up in the *Activities -> On the Town -> Restaurants* list. However, when they opened the details of a particular restaurant, it was not possible to book it directly from there. Two test participants failed to book a restaurant because of this. Another test participant said that at that point she would visit the restaurant’s homepage or call it directly, but after a while managed to find the *Online Booking* option in the menu.

The remaining test participants were confused, but managed to reach the *Online Booking* section. Here, however, they had to search for the restaurant again from the start. A few of them have not found the same restaurant they selected a while ago.

Test facilitator’s comment: The list of restaurants and restaurant booking should be integrated. It is confusing for the users that there are two separate places that provide the same function. A similar comment holds for booking hotels.

Figure 9: Personal details form for restaurant booking. It does not indicate what is the format of the telephone number and the error message does not contrast enough to be seen by the users.

! The contact details form for booking a restaurant (Figure 9) does not specify what is the format for the telephone number. This information appears only after you have submitted the form with an incorrectly formatted phone number. Only one test participant used the correct format the first time.

! The message informing the user that some information is missing or is not formatted correctly is not clearly visible.

Most test participants had to resubmit the form 2 or 3 times before they were able to fill in all the information correctly. As there are two scrollbars on the page, the test participants usually quickly scrolled to have the complete contact details form visible and thus moving the error message out of their view.

Test facilitator's comment: The error message should not be placed at the very top of the form. An error message concerning a field should be placed along with the field itself. Furthermore, an example of how to correctly fill in the field should be provided even before the user submits the form for the first time.

! Fields that are required should be marked as such.

The form in Figure 9 specifies which fields are required in the description above the form. However, none of the test participants have read this description. They have all filled in all the fields in this form.

A similar problem exists on the contact details form for hotel booking (after you have selected a hotel in Figure 6). Here there is no information as to what fields are required. You need to submit the form and read the error message to find this out.

Appendix A. Usability Test Script

Before test

- Clear computer cache and cookie list.
- Start browser – go to www.VisitDenmark.com – minimize browser.

Test facilitator:

Test facilitator is neutral – I have not participated in the development of this website. Please provide as many comments as you possibly can.

This is not an examination – you are not being tested. You can do nothing wrong during this test. If you have any problems with the website, it is the website's fault and not yours.

I will ask you to think aloud during the test. This will enable me to follow your thoughts. I am interested in any and all comments. Positive as well as negative.

Pre test interview

1. Have you ever used VisitDenmark.com before? If so, what was your experience?
2. Have you used other travel information websites? If so, which websites were these and what were your experiences?
3. What is your level of familiarity with using the Internet?
4. What are your expectations as to VisitDenmark.com?
5. Have you been in Denmark before? Do you think you might go there in the future? (for participants outside DK)
Note: Unfortunately, none of the test participants were outside Denmark.
6. Do you have any questions?

Test tasks

1. What comes first to your mind when you think of Denmark? Is there some information about this on VisitDenmark.com?
2. A friend who lives in Copenhagen invited you to visit him. What places would you like to see during your stay there?
3. Find the exchange rate of the Danish currency to your country's currency.
4. Find information about public transportation in Denmark.
5. Can you find out roughly how much money would you need to spend on food if you would like to go to Denmark with your friend or partner?
(Note: It is possible to find information about the typical food prices in restaurants in the Tourist Information/FAQ section. A list of typical food items with prices is also given there. This list can also be found through the Denmark A-Z list.)
6. What is your favorite way of spending your free time? Choose a time of the year and find some activities that you would like to do in Denmark at that time.
7. You would like to take a friend out to dinner tomorrow evening. Find a restaurant in Copenhagen that suits your taste and have them reserve a table for you. Stop at the "Confirm booking" step.
8. You would like to take your family or a couple of friends to see Aarhus. Can you find and book a hotel that would suit your needs? Stop the booking at "Payment" step.
9. You've heard that Copenhagen is a place where a lot of interesting things happen. What events would you like to attend in the city?
10. You are planning to go to Denmark. Compare the different available means of transportation.

Individual tasks can also be interrupted if the test participant cannot advance with the task or if the test facilitator finds that no new information would come of continuing with the task.

Interview after test

1. What are the two best things about the website?
2. What are the two things that most need improvement?

3. Did the website meet your expectations?
4. Do you have any advice for the development team of the website?
5. Would you recommend this website to a friend?
6. Were the tasks realistic? Would you do similar tasks yourself?
7. What tasks were missing?

Appendix B. Test Task Results

The chart below lists all test tasks and all test participants. Each entry indicates how successful the test participant was in solving that particular task.



Solved without problems.



Solved with minor problems.



Solved, but serious problems arose which delayed the test participant significantly.



The test participant could not solve the task or reached a result which was significantly different from the desired result.

No time The task was skipped for lack of time.

Duplicate The task was skipped because it had already been solved as part of a previous task.

Task No.	Task title	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5
1	Associations with Denmark					
2	Interesting places					
3	Exchange rate					
4	Public transportation					
5	Cost estimation					
6	Seasonal activities					
7	Book restaurant					
8	Book hotel					
9	Events in the city					
10	Transport to Denmark					

The full task descriptions appears in appendix A.

Open scenarios

For the open-ended scenarios, a list of information that the test participants decided to look for is given below:

	Task 1: Associations with Denmark	Task 2: Interesting places
Participant 1	Farms, food, cultural events.	Looks through a list of activities and found something that interests her.
Participant 2	Windmills, cycling	Looks for night clubs and cafes.
Participant 3	Hans Christian Andersen	Looks for “top attractions”, but cannot find it. Then decides to browse through a list of activities in Copenhagen.
Participant 4	Carlsberg beer	Browses through a list of attractions and is happy to see some recommendations.
Participant 5	Vikings	Looks through <i>Inspiration</i> -> <i>Culture</i>

	Task 6: Seasonal activities	Task 9: Events in the city
Participant 1	Sport activities in winter	Looks through <i>Tourist Information</i> -> <i>Major Events</i> and found some semi-interesting information about Copenhagen Carnival.
Participant 2	Music events in winter, but wasn't able to find anything.	Looks for information on music events, but was not satisfied with the results.
Participant 3	Summer, outdoor activities, cycling	Looks through <i>Activities</i> -> <i>Major Events</i> but feels this list is missing some recommendations.
Participant 4	Summer, sightseeing	Looks for some rock music concert, but didn't find anything in the Copenhagen area.
Participant 5	Summer, relaxing on the beach	Finds some more or less interesting information in <i>City Break in Copenhagen</i>

Appendix C. Comparison with expert review

Our initial assessment of www.VisitDenmark.com turned out rather poorly. It was hard for us to spot the usability problems with that site, while the test participants encountered many interesting problems. This proves that the use of think-aloud tests with real users is a worthwhile task.

In our initial review, we have identified only four problems:

1. Problem with returning to VisitDenmark front page from the hotel booking process. None of the users encountered this problem. Once they have completed the steps they were asked to do, it was natural for them to click *Delete* which cancelled the aborted the reservation and returned the user to a page where it was easy to go to VisitDenmark's front page.
2. Date format problems (01/01/0001).
Two test participants noticed this problem, but it was a minor issue.
3. Entering an invalid date raises a technical error message.
Even though two test participants had doubts as to the correct date format, none of them managed to enter it incorrectly as to receive an error message of this sort.
4. "Back to search" link clears entered search criteria.
This is the only issue that the test participants have confirmed that is annoying and would like to see it corrected.

Appendix D. Your Comments

Hours spent:

- Piotr: 24 hours
- Rafal: 8 hours

I find that this was a very interesting exercise. I realized before that real users view a website in a different way than the designers do, however I did not expect that these views would differ so much. As I used to design websites before, and might also do so in the future, I will probably conduct such tests for the projects I will work on to understand what problems they might have.

As far as conducting the test sessions is concerned, I've noticed it is very important to make sure one closely follows all the steps. For example, I have once forgotten to minimize the browser with VisitDenmark open and asked about the test participant's expectations, and as a result I got a list of things that were on the front page as the "expectations."