Introduction

User research is an integral part of the product redesign process. The more a company understand their user's behaviors, needs, and motivations the better the product can be. User research provides context on how to improve products and can be done within any stage of the design process. Without user research a company risks making a product that does not fulfill the user's needs and could be a huge monetary risk for the company.

SUMMARY

User research can aid in improving Marriott's digital properties. Through nano usability testing, a few areas of improvement were discovered on Marriott's desktop and mobile website.

- How users are initially starting their search
- Search result sorting
- What users look for in their desired hotel
- How site interface affects user behavior

By utilizing user research on Marriott's website, we can improve areas of weakness and amplify areas of strength.

![Marriott logo]

Initial User Search

Initially, only one participant in the nano usability study used the homepage search. The wording of "find a hotel" comes across as confusing and the user has to guess at what they are supposed to input.

After clicking Menu > Find & Reserve, users are met with three options. Though finding hotels for groups could have potential value, browsing by location invited confusion as the user will most likely have a destination already in mind.

Users found the multiple log in functions as an impediment to their search as they believed initially they were not able to search for a hotel without creating an account.
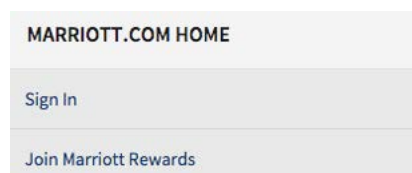
Search Result Sorting

Users did not realize they could switch between different views for searching for hotels. In the nano usability study, one user had significant difficulty using the gallery view which did not provide pertinent information like the list view.

There was no possible way to filter results that would also include sub-filters. For example, users wished they were able to search by price and filter that list further by how highly rated the hotels were.
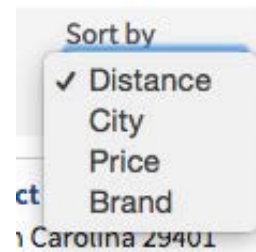
It was common for users to find a desirable hotel and be ready to book and not realize their hotel was quite far from their destination. If a user is primarily concerned about price, distance from destination does not become clear.

What Users Look For

Ratings were very important to hotel bookers. It became apparent that the rating could be seen but it was not obvious that the ratings were clickable and would bring the user to a new page.


Users needed important information to be readily available. When the title of the hotel was clicked it was expected a connected area would open up with more information or even a new window. Users did not even notice the sidebar of information appear as it was almost out of their field of vision and appeared quietly.
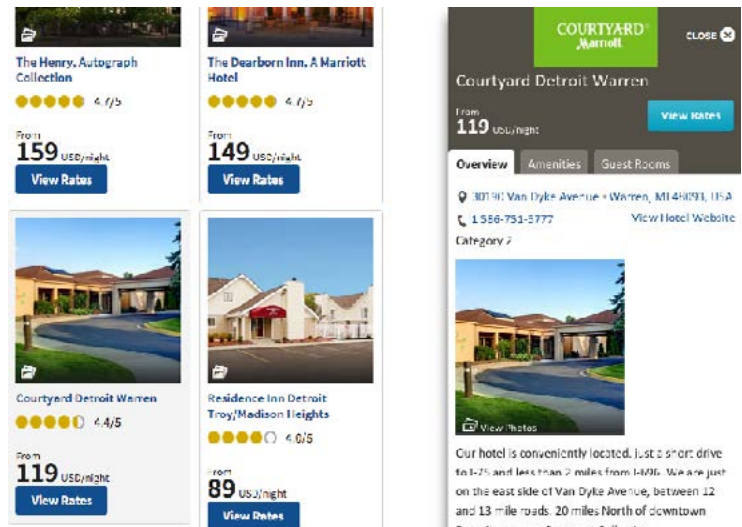
Site Interface

The gallery view of the site excluded information that the users wanted, which could be seen in the list view. Though this layout was clean and easy to view many hotels at once, the user became frustrated easily.
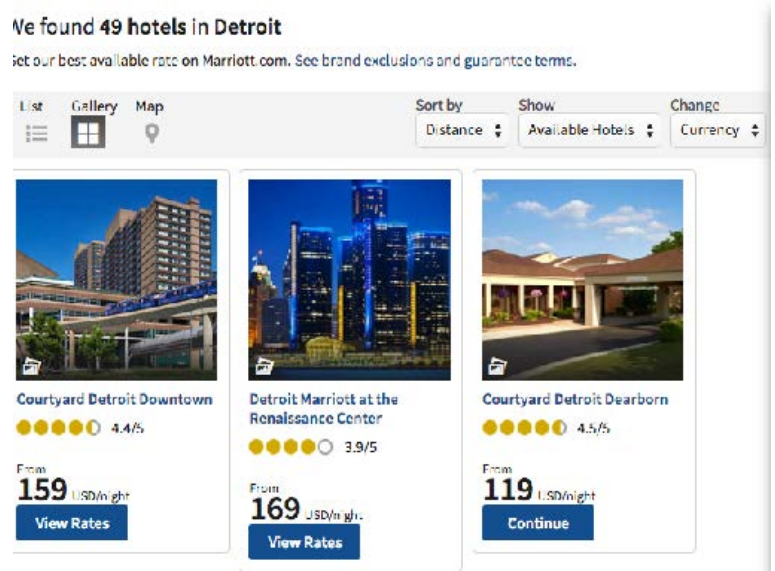
The "edit your search" side bar gave information users found as extraneous. Users found it frustrating that half of the form needed to be updated manually but at other points, once an option was checked the results would update automatically.
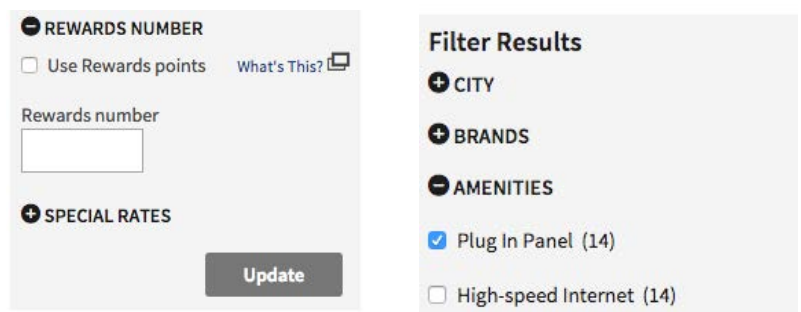
Recommendations

In order to improve the Marriott website a few suggestions should be considered.

- Surveying users with questions based on issues discovered through the nano usability study will provide insight on user attitudes and quantitative data. The survey should be simple and have a 1-5 rating scale.
- By using site analytics, user behaviors can be tracked. Site behavior such as booking abandonment can be taken into account and studied.
- Completing more usability-lab studies, such as the nano test, would provide more concrete patterns to issues with the hotel booking process.
- Utilizing competitive analysis to learn processes of other companies in the hotel booking industry should be completed. Successes and failures can be taken from this, rather than "reinventing the wheel."

By conducting these different facets of research, the Marriott site will be able to be re-designed with its business and users in mind.