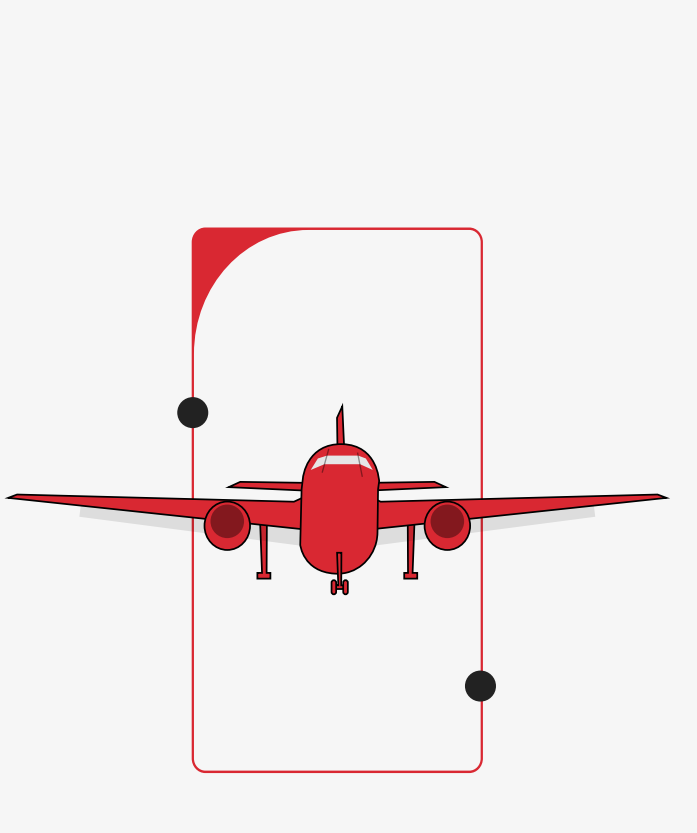
Emirates

UX
Case Study

PROJECT OVERVIEW



The Challenge:

Emirates Airlines homepage has a 10% bounce rate with users frequently leaving without completing flight searches, directly impacting conversion rates

The Problem:

- Users struggle to find trip type selection options
- Header navigation contains redundant and confusing elements
- Search widget uses technical jargon unfamiliar to first-time users
- Multiple entry points create decision paralysis

RESEARCH

1 Research Objectives

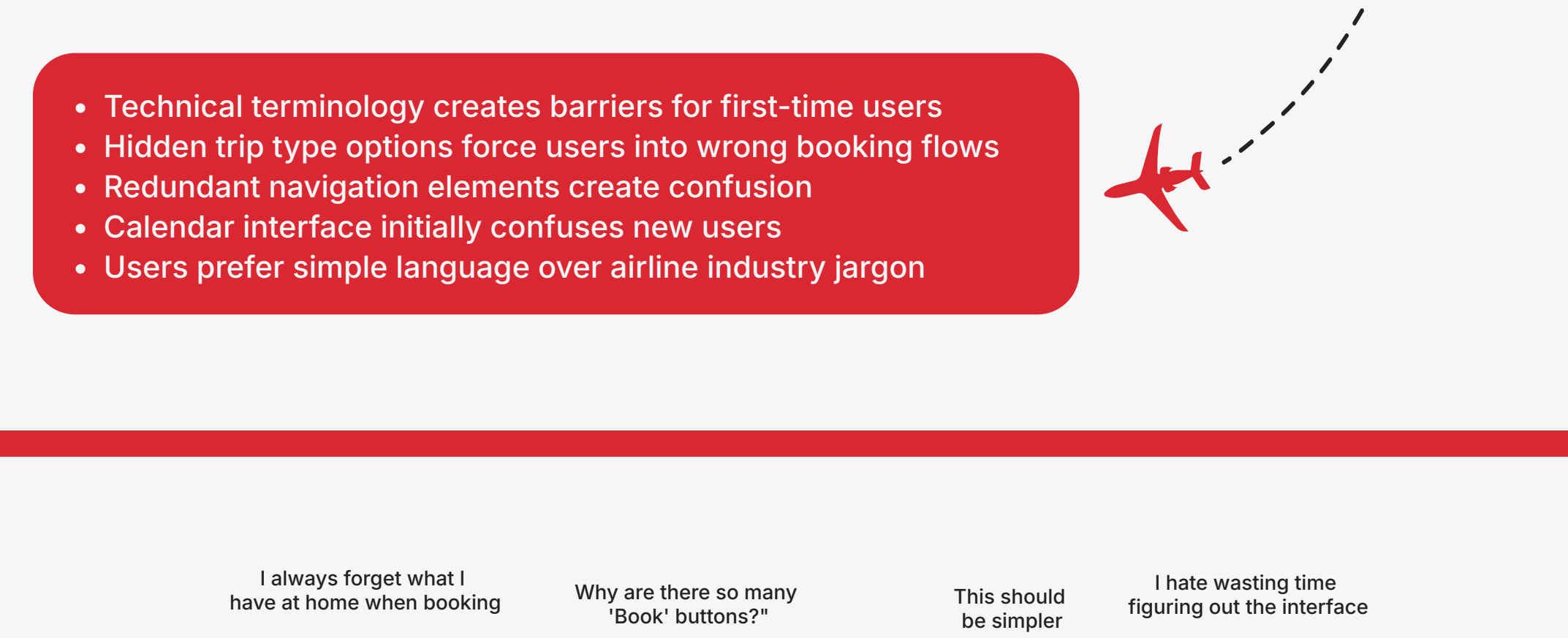
- Understand user behavior patterns during flight booking
- Identify pain points in current header and search experience
- Discover why users abandon the booking process
- Analyze competitive approaches to flight booking interfaces

2 Methods Used

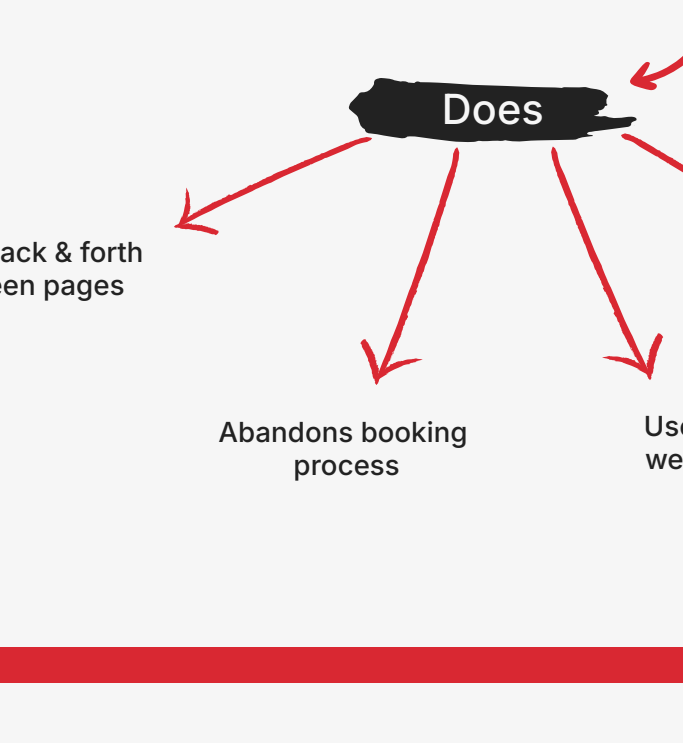
- User interviews with experienced and novice travelers
- Competitive analysis of MEA Airlines and Qatar Airways
- Usability evaluation of current Emirates interface

3 Key Research Insights

- Technical terminology creates barriers for first-time users
- Hidden trip type options force users into wrong booking flows
- Redundant navigation elements create confusion
- Calendar interface initially confuses new users
- Users prefer simple language over airline industry jargon


Empathy Map
SAYS
I always forget what I have at home when booking
Why are there so many 'Book' buttons?"
What does outbound & inbound flight even mean?
I don't know if this is round-trip or one-way
Thinks
This should be simpler
I hate wasting time figuring out the interface
Other sites are clearer than this
I'm worried I'll make a mistake
Does
Clicks back & forth between pages
Abandons booking process
Uses competitor websites instead
Seeks help from others
FEELS
Confused by technical terms
Anxious about making booking errors
Overwhelmed by multiple navigation paths
Frustrated by hidden options

USER PERSONA



Sarah Motte
Nutritionist

“ I just want to book a flight without going back and forth ”

21 | Female | Lebanon

Psychographics:

- Values efficiency & simplicity
- Prefers visual cues over text
- Risk-averse when making purchases

Goals:

- Book flights quickly without confusion
- Find the best price for round-trip tickets
- Avoid booking mistakes

Needs:

- Clear, simple interface language
- Obvious trip type selection
- Step-by-step guidance through booking

Frustrations:

- Technical airline terminology
- Hidden navigation options
- Complex booking flows

“ I know what I want, just let me book it quickly ”

26 | Male | UAE

Goals:

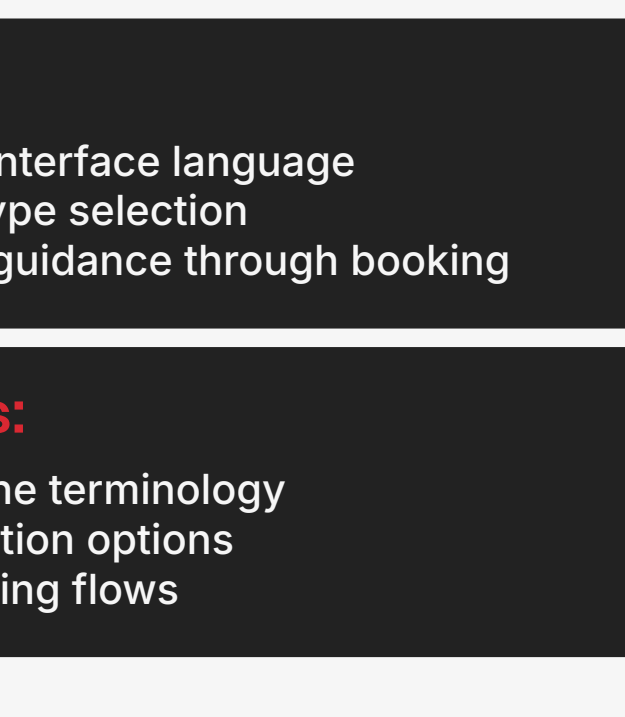
- Complete bookings efficiently
- Compare multiple options quickly
- Access booking management easily

Needs:

- Quick access to frequent destinations
- Clear pricing information
- Streamlined repeat booking process

Frustrations:

- Redundant navigation steps
- Time-consuming interfaces
- Poor information hierarchy



Daniel Smith
Marketer

Psychographics:

- Highly task-oriented
- Values speed over visual appeal
- Experienced with booking systems

USER STORIES & SCENARIOS

As a first-time user, I want to clearly see trip type options so I can select the right booking flow from the start.

Story 1

As a frequent traveler, I want quick access to popular destinations so I can book familiar routes faster.

Story 2

As any user, I want simple navigation language so I can understand my options without confusion.

Story 3

USER JOURNEY MAP

PHASE 1: ARRIVAL

- User lands on homepage
- Emotion: Neutral to slightly optimistic
- Pain Point: No visible trip type selection

Phase 2: Search Attempt

- User tries to use search widget
- Emotion: Confused
- Pain Point: Defaults to round-trip without user choice

Phase 3: Navigation Confusion

- User encounters multiple "Book" options
- Emotion: Frustrated
- Pain Point: Unclear which option to choose

Phase 4: Flight Selection

- User sees "Outbound/Inbound" terminology
- Emotion: Confused and anxious
- Pain Point: Doesn't understand airline terms

Phase 5: Abandonment

- User leaves site or seeks alternatives
- Emotion: Frustrated
- Result: Bounce rate increases

USER FLOW

1 User sees and select clear trip type selection(Round Trip/One Way/Multi-City)

2 User enters departure/arrival airports with auto-suggestions

3 User selects dates with improved calendar interface (one by one)

4 User proceeds to flight selection with clear "Going/Return" labels

5 User completes booking with progress tracking

SUCCESS

Booking completed with reduced confusion

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

MEA Airlines Strengths

- Clear trip type radio buttons on homepage
- Quick destination selection cards with pricing
- Real-time seat availability display
- Simplified calendar with separate departure/return selection

Qatar Airways Strengths

- "Return flight" terminology instead of "Inbound"
- Undo functionality for user corrections
- Creative loading states for better perceived performance
- Confirmation dialogs for important actions

Emirates Current Weaknesses

- Hidden trip type options
- Technical "Outbound/Inbound" terminology
- Redundant navigation elements
- No quick route selection
- Complex header structure

Opportunity Areas

- Implement visible trip type selection
- Adopt user-friendly language
- Streamline header navigation
- Add quick booking features

IDEATION & SOLUTION

Search Widget Solution

Solution 1: Visible Trip Type Selection

- Add prominent radio buttons for trip types
- Make selection contextually change form layout
- Position above search fields for immediate visibility

Solution 3: Quick Booking Feature

- Add popular destination cards below search widget
- Show starting prices and travel dates
- Enable one-click booking for frequent routes

Solution 3: Enhanced Calendar Experience

- Separate departure and return date selectors
- Provide clear labeling for each selection
- Show pricing hints in calendar view

Header Solutions:

Solution 1: Consolidate Navigation

- Remove redundant "Book flights" from dropdown
- Maintain only essential primary actions
- Improve visual hierarchy with typography and spacing

Solution 2: Fix Link Affordance

- Style clickable items as buttons with clear hover states
- Use consistent interaction patterns
- Apply proper contrast for accessibility

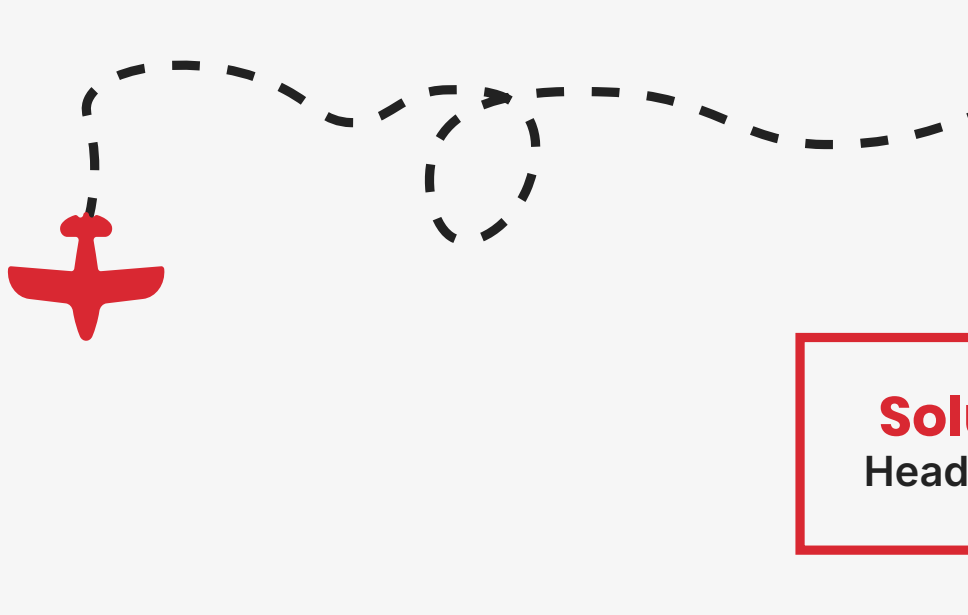
Solution 3: Streamline Manage Booking

- Keep header dropdown for full options
- Remove redundant bottom navigation
- Maintain quick access form with clear labeling

WIREFRAMES

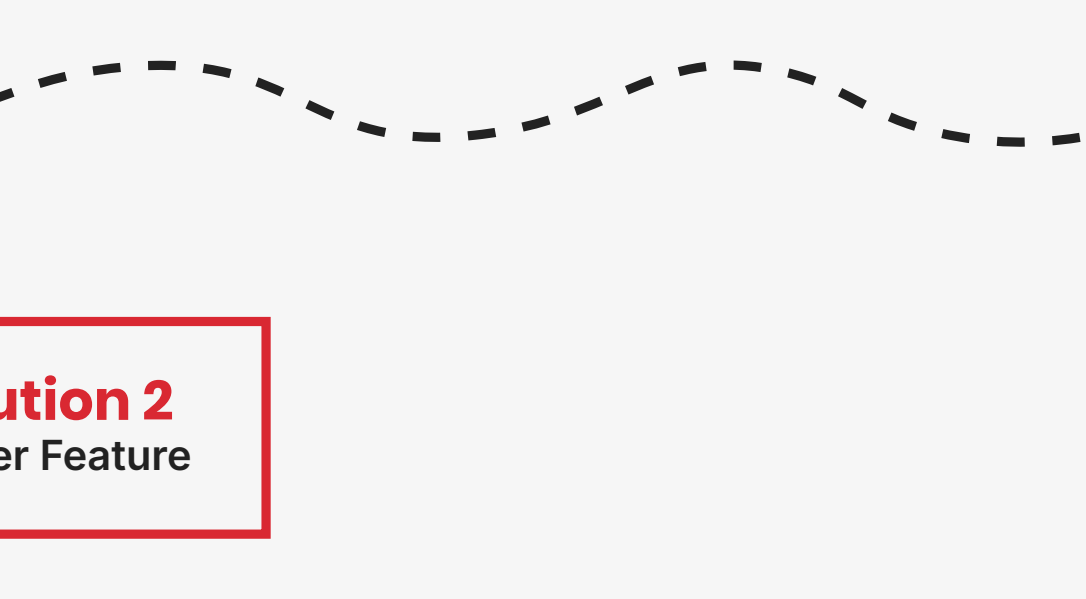
Solution 1
Search Widget

☒ Current Problems


Search flights
Manage booking / Check in
What's on your flight
Flight status
Flight
Flight + hotel
Advanced search: multi-city, promo codes, partner airlines
Departure airport
Beirut (BEY)
Arrival airport
Dubai (DXB)
Departing
Returning
Passengers
1 Passenger
Class
Economy Class
Search flights

- Confusing "Advanced Search" text
- No visible trip type selection
- Combined departure/return calendar
- No quick access to popular routes

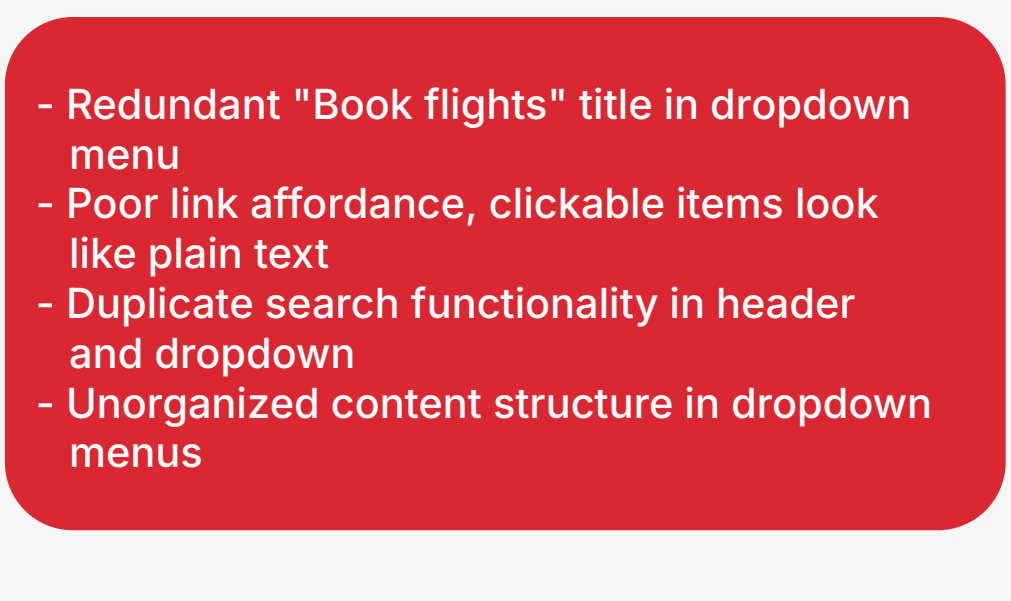
☑ Proposed Solution


Search Flights
○ Round Trip
○ One Way
○ Multi City
From
To
Departure Airport
Arrival Airport
Departing
Returning
Passengers
Class
Search Flights
Quick Booking

- Prominent trip type radio buttons
- Individual calendar selectors
- Clean, intuitive interface
- Quick Booking feature added

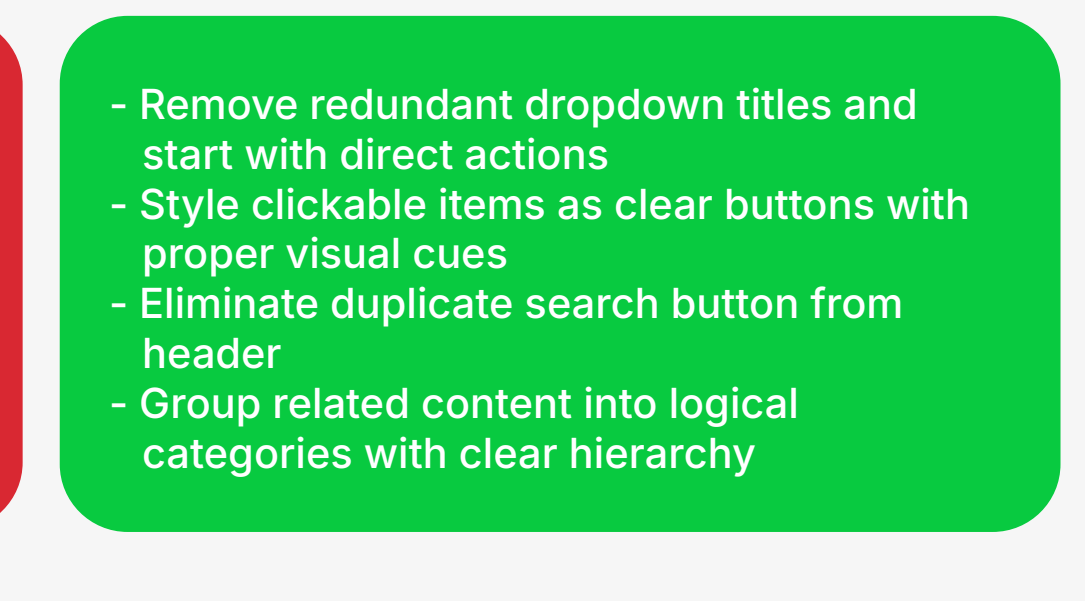
Solution 2
Header Feature

☒ Current Problems


Emirates
Book
About booking online
Search flights
Book flights
Search for a flight
Flight schedules
Featured fares
Special offers
Best Fare Finder
Planning your trip
Book your trip to Dubai
Book a hotel
Tours and activities
Book a holiday
Travel services
Meet & Greet
Dubai Connect
Transportation
Airport transfer
Book a car
Airline partners

- Redundant "Book flights" title in dropdown menu
- Poor link affordance, clickable items look like plain text
- Duplicate search functionality in header and dropdown
- Unorganized content structure in dropdown menus

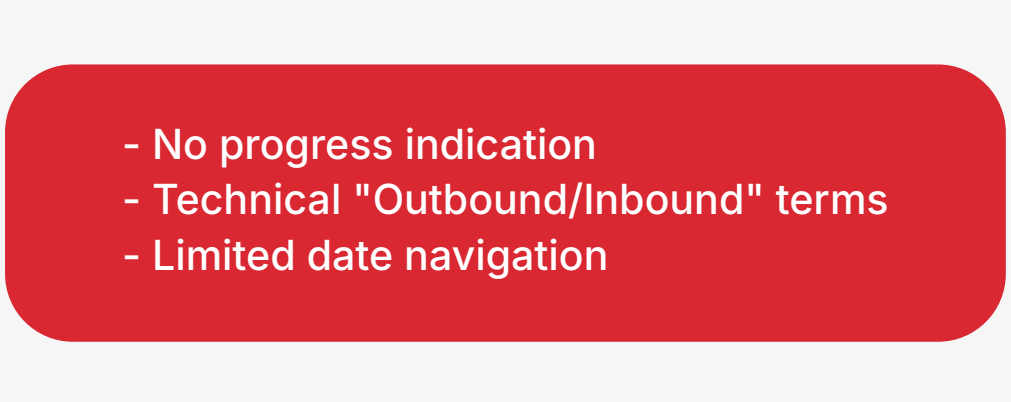
☑ Proposed Solution


Emirates
Book
Manage
Experience
Where We Fly
Loyalty
Help
LOGIN
Search for a Flight
Best Fare Finder
Special Offers
Flight Options
Flight schedules
Featured fares
Trip Planning
Book trip to Dubai
Book a hotel
Tours and Activities
Book a holiday
Services and Tranport
Meet and Greet
Dubai Conncet
Book a car
Airlines partners

- Remove redundant dropdown titles and start with direct actions
- Style clickable items as clear buttons with proper visual cues
- Eliminate duplicate search button from header
- Group related content into logical categories with clear hierarchy

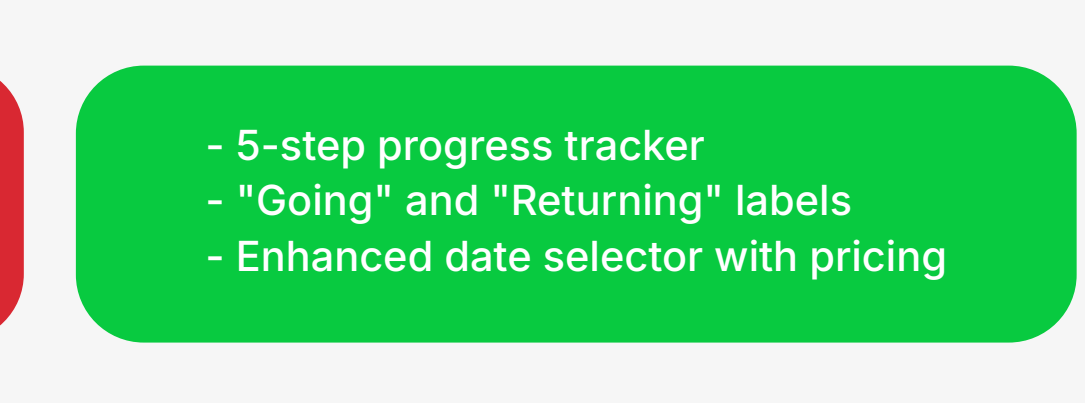
Solution 3
Flight Selection

☒ Current Problems


Choose your outbound flight
Beirut to Dubai
Lowest total price for 1 passenger USD 450.44
Change currency
Friday, 27 June 2025
Previous day
Next day
Show prices for:
Economy
Business
First
Sort: Lowest price
09:35
BEY
Beirut
Non-stop
14:25
DXB
Dubai
Economy Class
from USD 229.17
Lowest price
B777 EK956

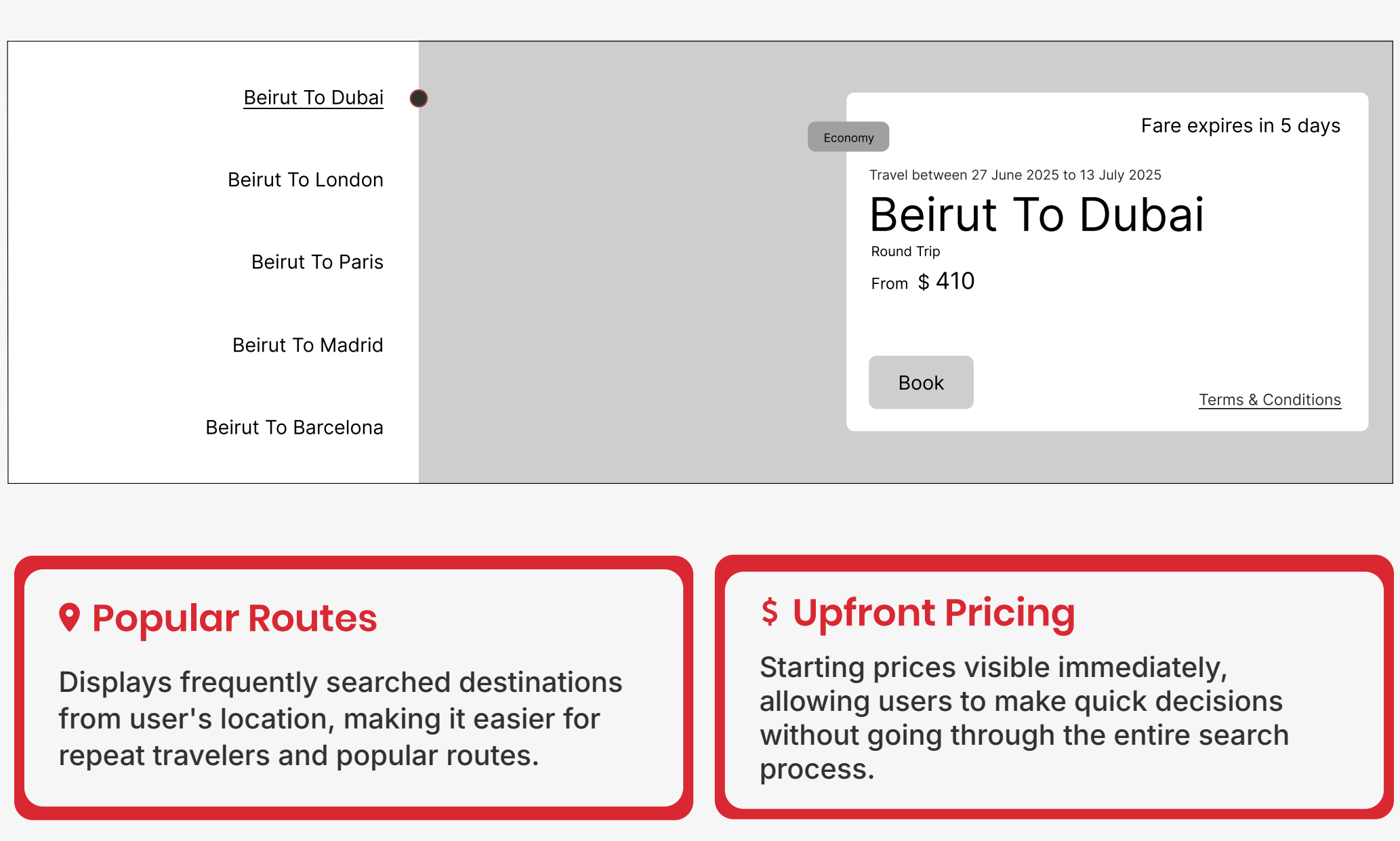
- No progress indication
- Technical "Outbound/Inbound" terms
- Limited date navigation

☑ Proposed Solution


1- Search
2- Select Going Flight
3- Select Returning Flight
4- Passenger Details
5- Payment
Choose Your Going Flight: Beirut → Dubai
Show prices for:
Economy
Business
First
Sort: Lowest price
09:35
BEY
Beirut
Non-stop
14:25
DXB
Dubai
Economy Class
from USD 229.17
Lowest price
B777 EK956

- 5-step progress tracker
- "Going" and "Returning" labels
- Enhanced date selector with pricing

INNOVATIVE SOLUTION
QUICK BOOKING



Beirut To Dubai
Beirut To London
Beirut To Paris
Beirut To Madrid
Beirut To Barcelona

Economy
Fare expires in 5 days
Travel between 27 June 2025 to 13 July 2025
Beirut To Dubai
Round Trip
From $ 410
Book
Terms & Conditions

Popular Routes

Displays frequently searched destinations from user's location, making it easier for repeat travelers and popular routes.

$ Upfront Pricing

Starting prices visible immediately, allowing users to make quick decisions without going through the entire search process.

One-Click Booking

Streamlined booking process for frequent destinations, reducing steps and time to complete purchase.

Time-Sensitive Offers

Fare expiration warnings create urgency while providing transparency about pricing validity.

USABILITY TESTING

Tasks They Performed:

- Book a round-trip flight from Beirut to Dubai
- Navigate through the new header to find manage booking options
- Use the search widget to select one-way vs round-trip options
- Complete a multi-city booking flow
- Try the quick booking feature for popular destinations

What Didn't Work ?

- Honestly, everything worked as expected, both users successfully completed all tasks
- No major usability issues were discovered during testing
- Users found the new design intuitive and straightforward

Who I Tested With ?

- Sarah (novice traveler) same person from original interviews
- Ahmed (experienced business traveler) same person from original interviews

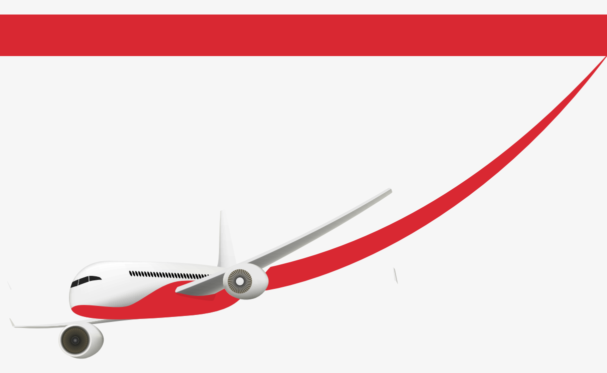
What Worked ?

- Both users immediately understood the trip type selection radio buttons
- Sarah said "Finally, I can see what I'm choosing!" when seeing Round Trip/One Way options
- Ahmed appreciated the cleaner header navigation: "Much less cluttered now"
- The "Going/Return" terminology was instantly clear to both users
- Quick booking feature excited Ahmed: "This would save me so much time"
- Both users completed tasks faster than with the original design

Changes Made Based on Feedback:

- No significant changes were needed since the solutions effectively addressed the original pain points
- Both users validated that the improvements solved their previous frustrations
- The wireframes proved that the research-driven approach was successful

REFLECTION



What went well

- Comprehensive user research revealed specific pain points
- Multi-method approach provided diverse perspectives
- Competitive analysis identified proven solutions
- Wireframe solutions directly address identified problems

Key Learnings:

- First-time & experienced users have different but overlapping needs
- Simple language changes can dramatically improve user experience
- Visual hierarchy is crucial for guiding user attention
- Reducing options can actually improve user satisfaction

Different Approach

- Conduct mobile usability testing
- Include accessibility testing in research phase
- Test with users from different cultural backgrounds
- Gather quantitative data on current user behavior

FINAL THOUGHTS

This project reinforced that great UX starts with understanding real user needs. By listening to both novice and experienced travelers, I created solutions that work for everyone, proving that simple, user-friendly design drives better business outcomes.

> " *Good design is actually a lot harder to notice than poor design, in part because good designs fit our needs so well that the design is invisible.* "
>
> ***- Don Norman***