

UX Case Study

Redesigning Emirates Airline Header and Search Widget



Project Overview

Emirates Airlines is globally recognized for its premium service, but its homepage sees high drop-off rates before users begin a flight search. The flight search widget, intended to serve as the gateway to booking, appears to be falling short. This project aims to enhance the widget's usability and engagement, creating a more seamless and user-centered booking experience.

Problem

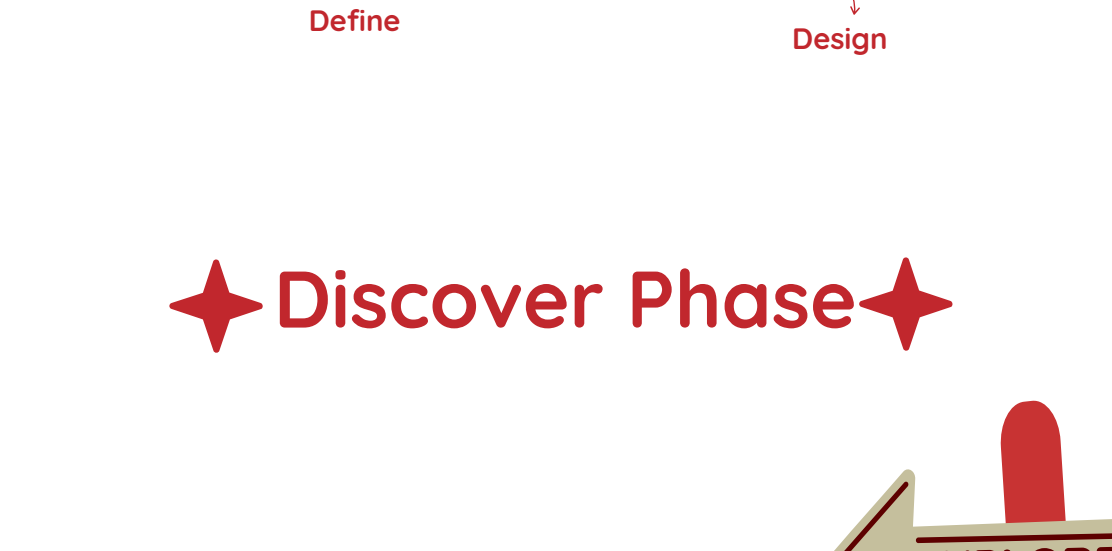
Many users arrive on the Emirates homepage ready to search for flights, but the search widget feels hidden or too complex. This small friction leads to high drop-off: only 60% start a search, 14% log in, and just 2% explore extras like insurance. The result? Missed engagement and lost conversions from the very first moment.

Solution

Redesign the search widget and header to be simpler, more visible, and engaging. This will guide users smoothly into the booking flow and encourage immediate interaction, improving both usability and conversion rates.

Design Process

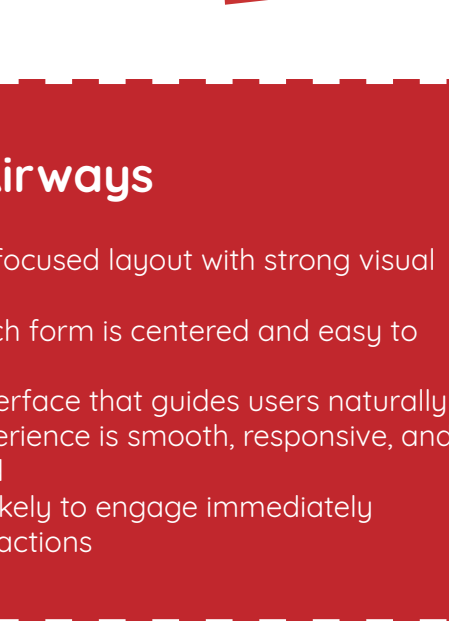
Following the Design Thinking methodology, I conducted user interviews and secondary research to understand the reason behind the users's actions with the goal of making the booking experience simpler and more engaging. This ensured a user-centered, empathetic design process from start to finish.



Discover Phase

Competitive Analysis

Before diving into the design process, I explored 2 other airlines websites to see the difference and understand what is missing. I focused on similar airlines like Qatar airways and Turkish airlines.



Turkish Airlines

- Compact and information-rich layout
- Flight search form is visible and relatively easy to use
- Visual hierarchy is moderate, not as strong as Qatar's
- Mobile version is responsive, though the page feels slightly busy
- Users can still start searching with minimal effort.

Qatar Airways

- Clean and focused layout with strong visual hierarchy
- Flight search form is centered and easy to spot
- Minimal interface that guides users naturally
- Mobile experience is smooth, responsive, and quick to load
- Users are likely to engage immediately without distractions

User Research

I interviewed 5 people over phone to better understand and uncover user frustrations and behaviors, this method helped me understand the why behind their actions, what they notice first, what confuses them, and what they expect from an airline website. Here are a few sample questions I asked:

- What's the first thing you look for on an airline homepage?
- How easy or hard is it for you to search for a flight online?
- Can you describe your last booking experience?
- What do you find confusing or annoying when booking flights?
- Do you ever notice extra options like travel insurance or upgrades?
- What makes you trust an airline's website enough to complete a booking?
- Have you ever abandoned a booking halfway through? If yes, why?

Key insights derived from the interviews

- 1- People want clarity fast = "Just show me the search box. Don't make me scroll around for it."
- 2- Mobile matters a lot = "I usually book flights from my phone, and some sites are hard to navigate."
- 3- Too much info --> overwhelm = "Sometimes I feel like I'm being sold ten things before I even search for my flight."
- 4- Login feels unnecessary early on = "I don't want to log in just to search. Let me explore first"
- 5 Trust is built through simplicity = "If the site looks clean and professional, I feel like my payment info is safer."
- 6- Drop-offs happen when things get complicated = "Once I couldn't figure out the baggage policy mid-search, so I just gave up and went to another site."

Empathy Map

The Empathy Map helps us gain a deeper understanding of the user's thoughts, behaviors, and emotional triggers, guiding the design process to craft a more meaningful and supportive experience.

Says :

- Where do I even start?
- I just want to find a flight quickly.
- Why is this so complicated?
- I'm scared I'll miss something important.

Thinks :

- Am I filling this out correctly?
- I don't want to make a mistake.
- This isn't as easy as other airline sites.
- I wish it were clearer and faster.

Does :

- Scrolls up and down the homepage
- Tries filling parts of the form, then hesitates
- Switches to another airline site
- Looks for help or chat option

Feels :

- Confused and overwhelmed
- Rushed or pressured
- Anxious about booking wrong
- Relieved when things are simplified

Persona

After conducting in-depth research, I crafted a user persona to represent key audience types, helping me stay focused on real user needs, goals, and frustrations throughout the design process.

Beirut, Lebanon

Graphic Designer

Biography:

Leila is a 26-year-old graphic designer from Beirut, Lebanon. She's planning her first solo trip to Europe, a dream she's been saving up for. While she's comfortable using apps like Instagram and Spotify, she's less confident navigating complex booking platforms. She gets easily overwhelmed when faced with too many options or technical travel terms. Leila values clarity, visual guidance, and feeling in control throughout the process



Pain points:

- Homepage feels busy
- Too many dropdowns
- Unsure what's required
- No clear help or guidance

Motivation & Needs:

- Simple, step-by-step flow
- Wants to feel confident
- Needs visual guidance
- Mobile-first experience

Goals:

- Book with ease
- Understand travel extras
- Compare flexible dates
- Feel seen as a first-timer

Dubai, UAE

Regional Sales Manager

Biography:

Omar is a 37-year-old Regional Sales Manager based in Dubai. With frequent business trips across the Middle East and Europe, he's no stranger to booking flights multiple times a month. His schedule is packed and time-sensitive, which means every minute he spends navigating a website is a minute away from his work. Omar is tech-savvy, organized, and values efficiency in every tool he uses, especially when it comes to travel.

Pain points:

- Confused by search steps
- Can't find deals easily
- Gets lost on crowded pages

Motivation & Needs:

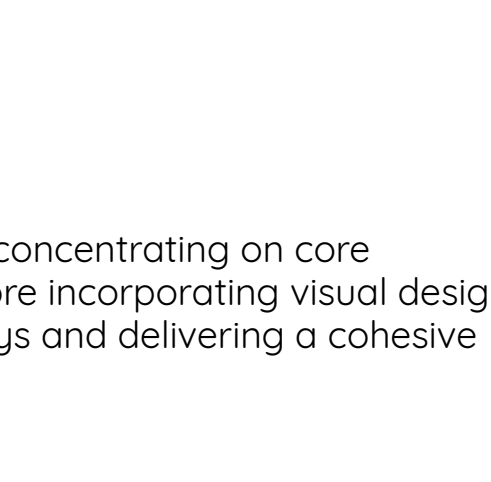
- Wants quick booking
- Prefers clean, direct UI
- Trusts organized platforms

Goals:

- Book flights with no stress
- Compare prices easily
- Avoid unnecessary steps

Ideate Phase

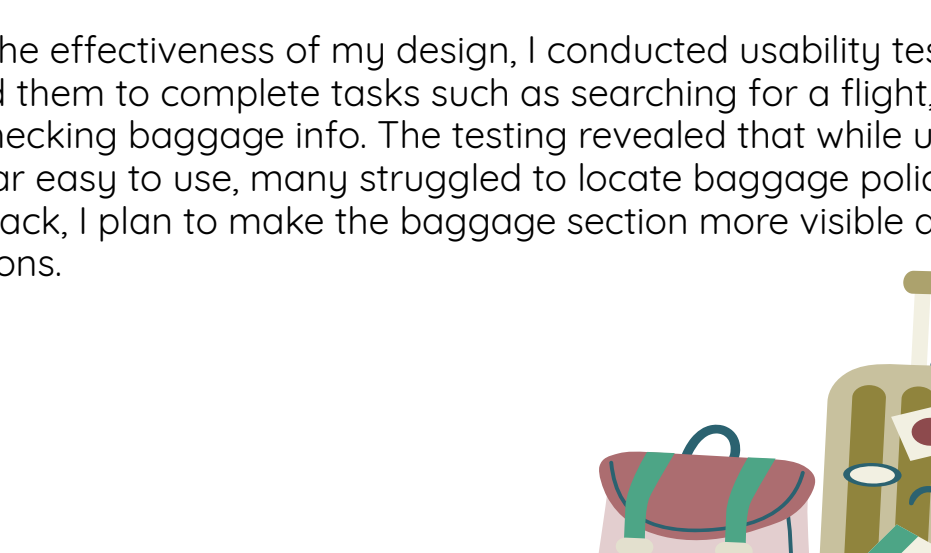
User Flow



Design Phase

Wireframe

Wireframes establish the foundation of the app, concentrating on core functionality and seamless user interactions before incorporating visual design. This phase is essential for optimizing user journeys and delivering a cohesive experience.



Testing Phase

Usability testing

To evaluate the effectiveness of my design, I conducted usability testing with 2 users. I asked them to complete tasks such as searching for a flight, applying filters, and checking baggage info. The testing revealed that while users found the search bar easy to use, many struggled to locate baggage policies. Based on this feedback, I plan to make the baggage section more visible and simplify the filter options.

