Project 1

Competitive Benchmark Report

Airline Apps

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Introduction

I have conducted competitive benchmark analysis into market leading airline apps to gain insights regarding user experience design conventions, best practises and insights.

I will be reviewing the UK's leading airline apps; British Airways, RyanAir and EasyJet. I will also be analysing a flight aggregator app called SkyScanner. To understand user design best practises I will compare and analyse five key screens across the four apps.

4 key airline apps	**5 key app screens**
A. British Airways B. EasyJet C. RyanAir D. SkyScanner	1. Homepage 2. Navigation 3. Flight booking page 4. Flight comparison page 5. Flight summary page

Why do customers use airline apps?

Airline apps helps users search, book and manage flights in one place, anytime, anywhere.

The app is personalised to the user, providing instant access to the information they need, when they need it.

Users can manage travel plans, change flights, manage disruptions, select seats and add bags.

Users can check-in, download and store their boarding pass onto their mobile phone.

Key advantages

- Cost effective - users can compare flights to find the best deal
- Easy to use and personalised user-friendly interface
- Manage the whole process and store boarding pass

Introducing the airline apps

British Airways is the flag carrier airline of the United Kingdom. However, in 2019 it was only the sixth largest airline, carrying just 47.7 million passengers.

In 2019, Ryanair was the largest UK individual airline brand, flying 146 million passengers. In second place, easyJet carried 96.1 million passengers. Therefore, the difference between Ryanair and easyJet number of passengers is higher than the total number of passengers carried by British Airways.

Skyscanner is an airline aggregator app, comparing and rates flights by all major airlines to find the cheapest flight for the user. The app is customisable and flexible to users needs, offering search, sort and filter options.

Competitive Benchmarking Scope and Key

Main Goal
Gain insights for my decision process and decisions and discover UX Design Best Practises

5 key app screens
Homepage
Navigation
Flight booking page
Flight comparison page
Flight summary page

Key - Airline Apps

A British Airways
B EasyJet
C RyanAir
D SkyScanner

Key - Marking scheme

1 - UX Highlight

1

2 - UX Best Practises

2

3 - Avoid in UX Design

3

1 UX Highlights that give a Competitive Advantage

2 UX Design Common Best Practises, Conventions and User Mental Models

3 Poor UX Design decisions that I should avoid

Homepage

Key

1 - UX Highlight

2 - UX Best Practises

3 - Avoid in UX Design

A British Airways

B EasyJet

C RyanAir

D SkyScanner

1

Apps A and D utilise the proximity principle of visual design to create clear, structured and uncluttered homepages. The elements that are related by their context of use are grouped in close proximity. Separated from other content using large margins of negative space. This structure creates a clear visual hierarchy and guides the user to the key elements.

Apps A and C use the contrast principle of visual design to highlight the key button customers use 'Book a flight' using a bright, contrasting colour.

App D creates contrast by uses white negative space and colourful icons, creating a simple but easy to navigate homepage. The map showing covid safe travel locations is a useful and innovative additional feature.

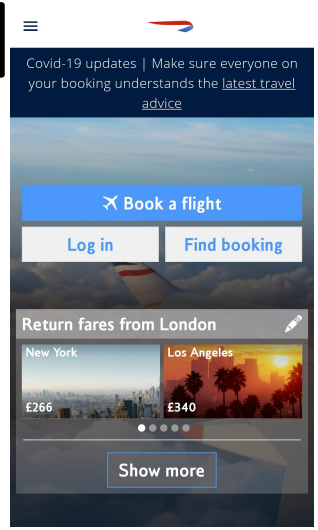
2

Apps A, C and D highlight the key user call to actions using colourful icons or buttons. Apps A and D locate the key buttons for users at the top of the screen for ease of access. Apps B, C and D use white space to separate and highlight the key elements users need by creating contrast.

3

Apps B and C homepages are cluttered and harder to navigate. To book a flight on app B users have to navigate through the menu at the bottom. App C has a large advertisement at the top of the screen which disrupts the users flow.

A



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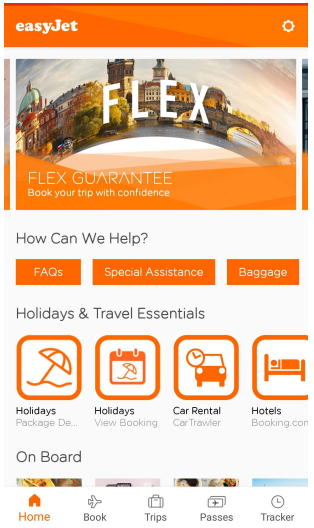

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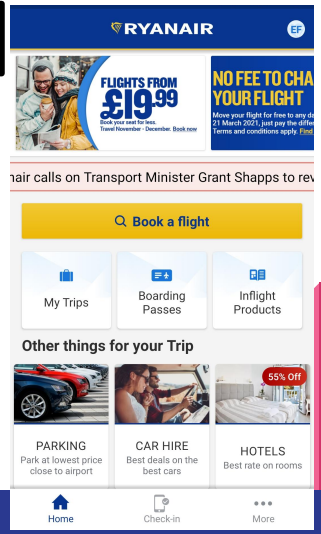

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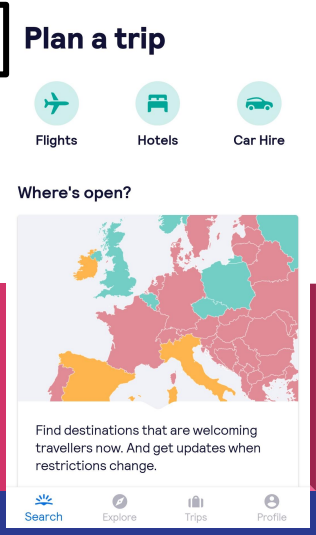

Navigation Menu

Key

1 - UX Highlight	2 - UX Best Practises	3 - Avoid in UX Design
1	2	3

A British Airways

B EasyJet

C RyanAir

D SkyScanner

1

British Airways (App A) uses the mobile navigation format. The global navigation menu is a drop down menu on the top left, users select by clicking on a button. This simplifies navigation and creates uniformity as it is available on every page.

2

Apps B, C and D use a horizontal navigation bar for the global navigation. This 'Primary Navigation' menu sits on the bottom of the page, and only shows links to the key, most relevant pages.
RyanAir (C) also has an option to expand the menu to view the 'Secondary Navigation' menu. The 'Secondary Navigation' menu is vertical and split into sections to make it easier to read and locate the page you want.

3

App D has a horizontal primary navigation bar. However, the secondary navigation menus are located on the homepage and profile page. This results in the navigation being confusing for users as they are split on different pages without clear direction and structure.

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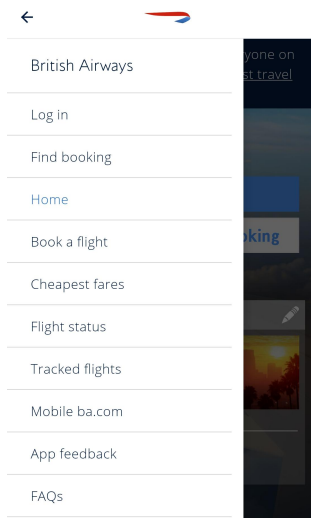

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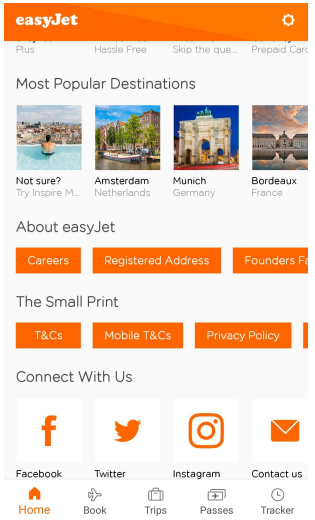

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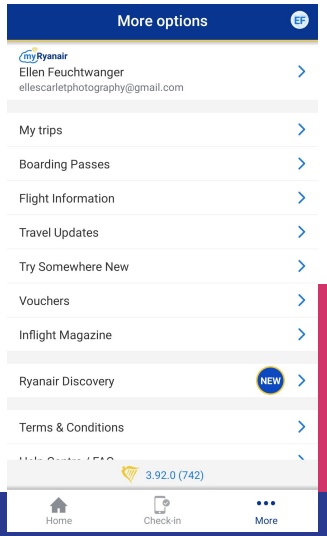

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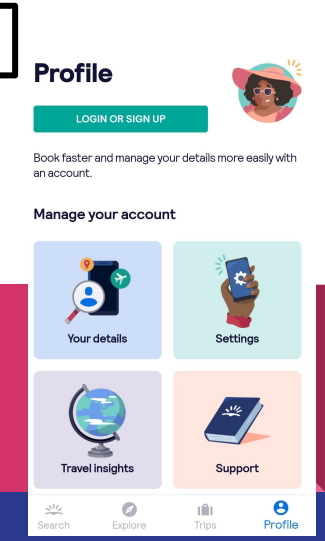


Flight Search Page

Key

1 - UX Highlight	2 - UX Best Practises	3 - Avoid in UX Design
1	2	3

A British Airways

B EasyJet

C RyanAir

D SkyScanner

1

RyanAir (App C) effectively applies the visual design principles of proximity and alignment to create a clear visual path for the user to follow. Related elements are grouped and separated from other elements using borders, margins and negative space. The buttons and key information are clearly highlighted using colour.

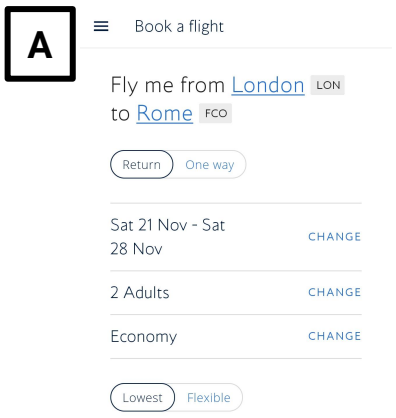
2

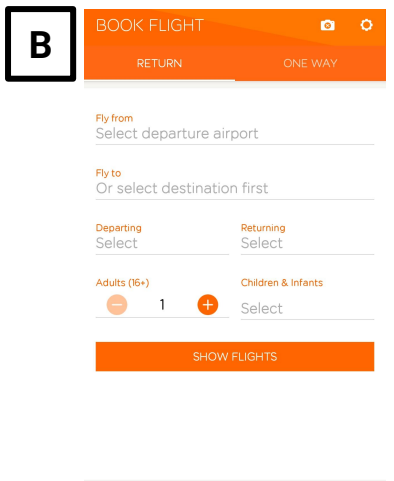
Apps A and B have a simple and easy to use flight booking page. The elements are clearly labelled and separated using margins of white space.
Apps A and B utilize contrasting colours to draw the users eye to the buttons.
App B creates a cohesive and consistent visual design style by employing the repetition visual design principle. They achieved this by using the same orange colour and font across the whole app.

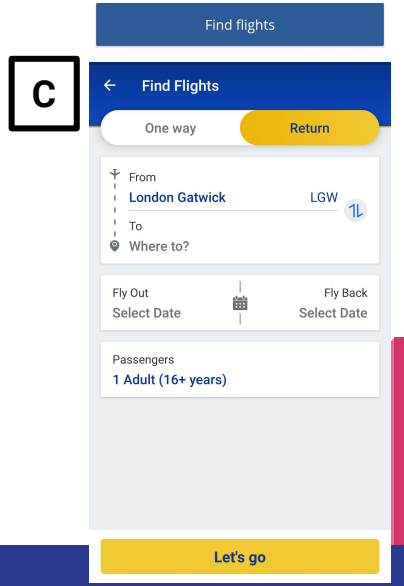
3

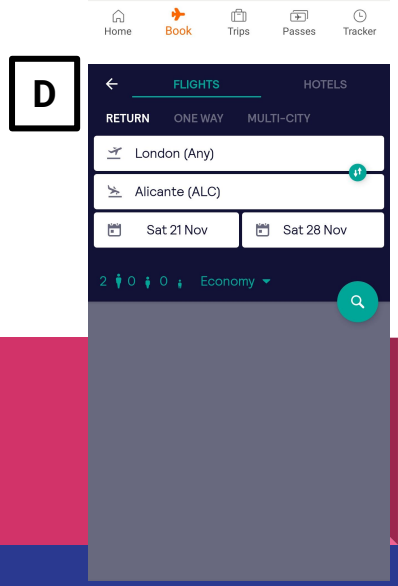
The flight booking system on App D appears in a pop-up page only using half the screen. This makes it harder for users to read and understand.

App B attempts to highlight the titles and buttons in a bold, eye-catching bright orange. However, the large elements with a bright orange background and small white text are hard to read and distract the users flow.









Flight Selection Page

Key

1 - UX Highlight

2 - UX Best Practises

3 - Avoid

A British Airways

B EasyJet

C RyanAir

D SkyScanner

1

RyanAir (App C) clearly displays the location, dates and best price in a header banner at the top of the page. The page is simple and only shows the relevant data. This follows the economise and organise principles of effective UI design.
App D offers users a ‘Sort & Filter’ tool to personalise the results to their requirements.
App D also highlights the share feature button in a bright colour on the bottom right of the page, this is a useful feature for users booking with multiple people.

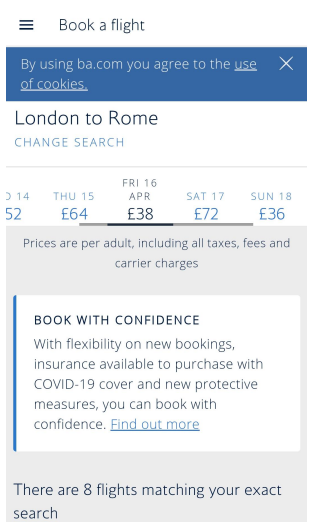
2

Apps B and C clearly group the related information about each flight option and separate the different flights using margins, borders and padding. The flight data is well structured and easy for users to understand, all the outbound flight data is grouped on the left, with the return flight data on the right, in a chronological timeline format.

3

Apps A and D do not follow the economise and organise principles of effective UI design.
App A is not economical with its use of space, it does not emphasise the critical elements to the users task. Half the page is taken up with a Covid-19 information message, which disrupts the users flow. To find information about alternative flight options users have to go to another page. The key data about prices and dates are small and hard to locate.
App D has no clear and consistent conceptual structure or visual hierarchy. The page is cluttered and the very large range of options may be confusing for users. Users have to scroll through a long list of flight options.

A



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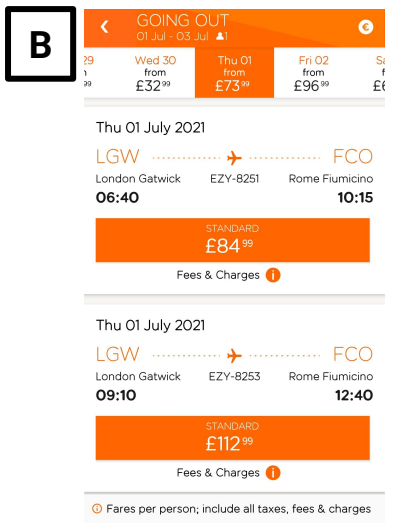

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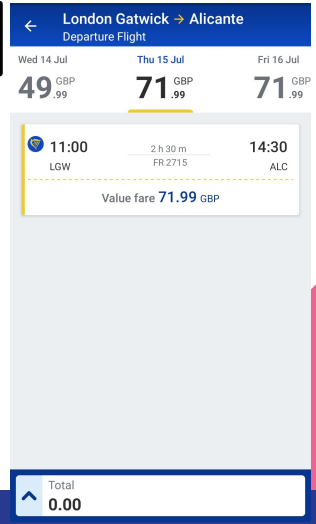

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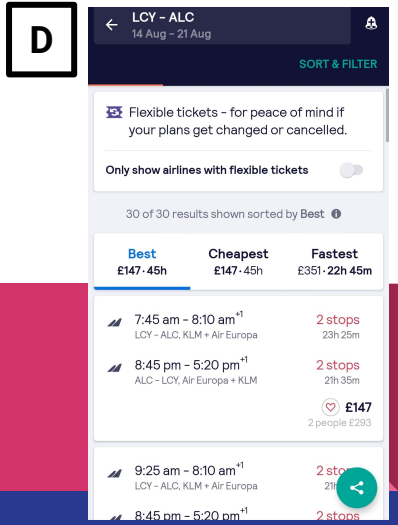


Flight Summary Page

Key

1 - UX Highlight	2 - UX Best Practises	3 - Avoid in UX Design
1	2	3

A British Airways

B EasyJet

C RyanAir

D SkyScanner

1

EasyJet (B) clearly displays, groups and highlights the key information. Separating grouped elements using a margin in a contrasting colour. The key data about dates, times and prices are highlighted using a bright colour and large text. The names of the airports are written in full next to the anacronym to avoid confusion.

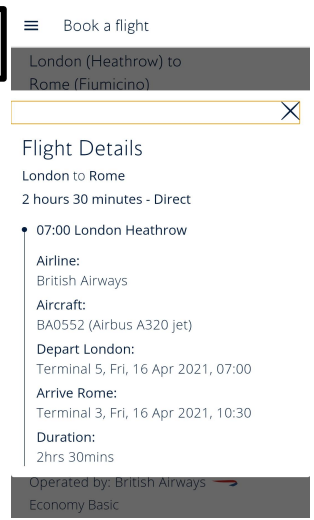
2

Apps B, C and D have a simple and easy to use flight booking page. The elements are clearly labelled and separated using margins of white space.
Apps C and D clearly highlight the call to action button to take the user to the next page. The button is in a bright, contrasting colour on the bottom right of the screen, located on the footer banner next to the price.

3

App A flight details are simply listed, this is less visually appealing and easy to digest. It is harder for users to quickly locate the information they are looking for, instead users have to read down the list to find the information they need.
App D is cluttered and the key information blends into the other elements as the text is the same size. The airport names are anacronyms that the users may not recognise. It is important to not assume the users have prior knowledge.

A



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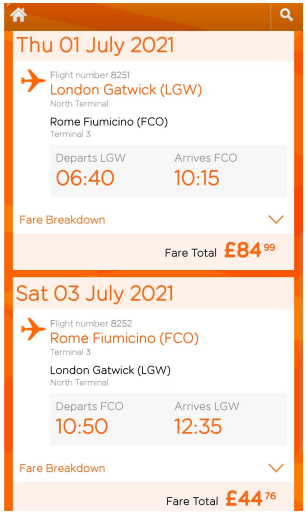

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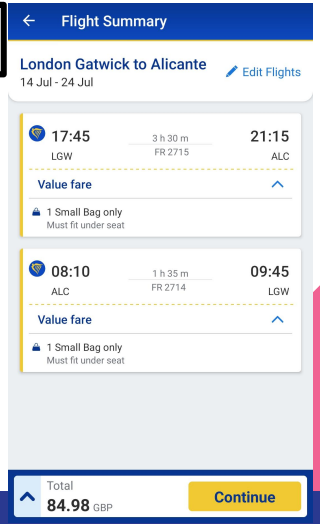

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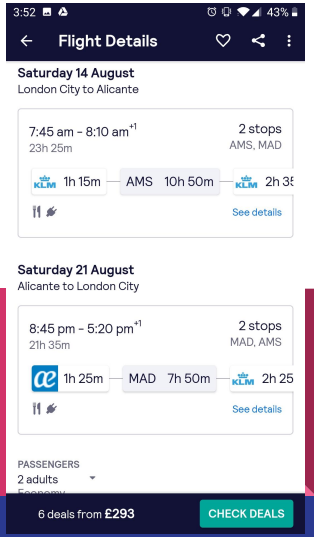

Review of each Airline App

	BRITISH AIRWAYS	easyJet	RYANAIR	Skyscanner
1	Modern, visually appealing and uncluttered homepage. Mobile navigation menu.	The flight summary page clearly displays, groups and highlights the key information. Separating grouped elements using a margin in a contrasting colour. The key data about dates, times and prices are highlighted using a bright colour and large text.	RyanAir applies the contrast principle by utilising bright colours and negative space. Easy to use horizontal navigation menu with additional links in a secondary menu.	SkyScanner has a simple but easy to use homepage. They create contrast by uses white negative space and colourful icons, creating a simple but easy to navigate homepage. SkyScanner offers useful features such as ‘Sort & Filter’ and ‘Share’.
3	The flight comparison page is not well structured. The key data about prices and dates are small and hard to locate. The bottom half of the page displays a warning message rather than data about alternative flight options that users are looking for.	Their company colour is overused and the bright orange can create a negative emotional response. The white text on the orange background was often hard to read.	The homepage is cluttered and hard to navigate. A large advertisement at the top of the screen disrupts the users flow.	Confusing navigation menus. The flight comparison page is cluttered and the very large range of options may be confusing for users. Users have to scroll through a long list of flight options.

UX Design Best Practises

2

UX Design Common Best Practises, Conventions and User Mental Models

Principles of Visual Design

Utilise the proximity principle to create clear visual hierarchy, structure and uncluttered pages. Group related elements by their context of use in close proximity, and separate other content using large margins of negative space.

Designer can employ the contrast principle to highlight the key information and call to actions customers use in a bright, contrasting colour. Contrast can also be created by using white negative space to separate content elements.

EasyJet employs the repetition visual design principle to create a cohesive and consistent visual design style, by using the same colour and font across the whole app. However, the bright orange can create a negative emotional response, and the white text on the orange background was often hard to read.

RyanAir effectively applies the visual design principles of proximity and alignment to create a clear visual path for the user to follow.

Principles of effective UI Design

It is best practise to follow the economise, organise and communicate principles of effective UI design.

1. Apps should be economical with its use of space, by only including or emphasising the critical elements to the users task.
2. Apps structure should be organised to provide users with a clear and consistent conceptual structure or visual hierarchy.
3. Lastly, it is important to clearly communicate with users and follow their mental models. Designers can employ pattern recognise and balance to improve the users understanding.

UX Design Best Practises

2

UX Design Common Best Practises, Conventions and User Mental Models

Page layout, structure and visual design

When designing mobile app pages, utilise the proximity principle of visual design to create clear, structured and uncluttered homepages. Group elements that are related by their context in close proximity, and separate them from other content using large margins of negative space. This structure creates a clear visual hierarchy and guides the user to the key elements.

Page layout should be well organised, economical with its use of space and communicate effectively with users. Create uncluttered and easy to navigate pages by only including critical elements to the users current task. The contrast principle can be applied to empathise key elements and calls to action by increasing font size and weight or using a bright, contrasting colour.

Navigation menu format

Three apps use a horizontal navigation bar format. This global or ‘Primary Navigation’ menu sits on the bottom of the page, only showing links to the key, most relevant pages. RyanAir also has an option to expand the navigation menu to view the ‘Secondary Navigation’ menu in a vertical format. The ‘Secondary Navigation’ menu is split into sections to make it easier to read and locate the page you want.

An alternative but viable navigation menu structure is the ‘Mobile navigation’ format, used by British Airways (App A). The global navigation menu is a drop down menu on the top left, users select by clicking on a button. This simplifies navigation and creates uniformity as it is available on every page.

Conclusion - Insights & Recommendations

To improve the users experience it is vital to create pages that are easy to understand, use and navigate. UX Designers can apply the principles of Proximity, Contrast, Alignment and Repetition by utilising padding, borders and margins of negative space to separate unrelated content elements. Group related elements in close proximity and highlight key elements using colour and size. Use a consistent colour scheme, font style and alignment.

Designers should also employ the principles of effective UI design to clearly organise and communicate information economically. By only including relevant content with a clear and consistent visual hierarchy and conceptual structure. Designers can use pattern recognise to achieve balance and meet users expectations and match their capabilities.

I would recommend using a horizontal navigation bar for the global or ‘Primary Navigation’ menu, only showing links to the key, most relevant pages. Also include an option to expand the navigation menu to view the ‘Secondary Navigation’ menu with further links. Split the ‘Secondary Navigation’ menu into sections to make it easier for users to read and locate the page they need. This will create a clear and easy to use navigation menu to decrease frustration and improve user flow so they can complete their task.