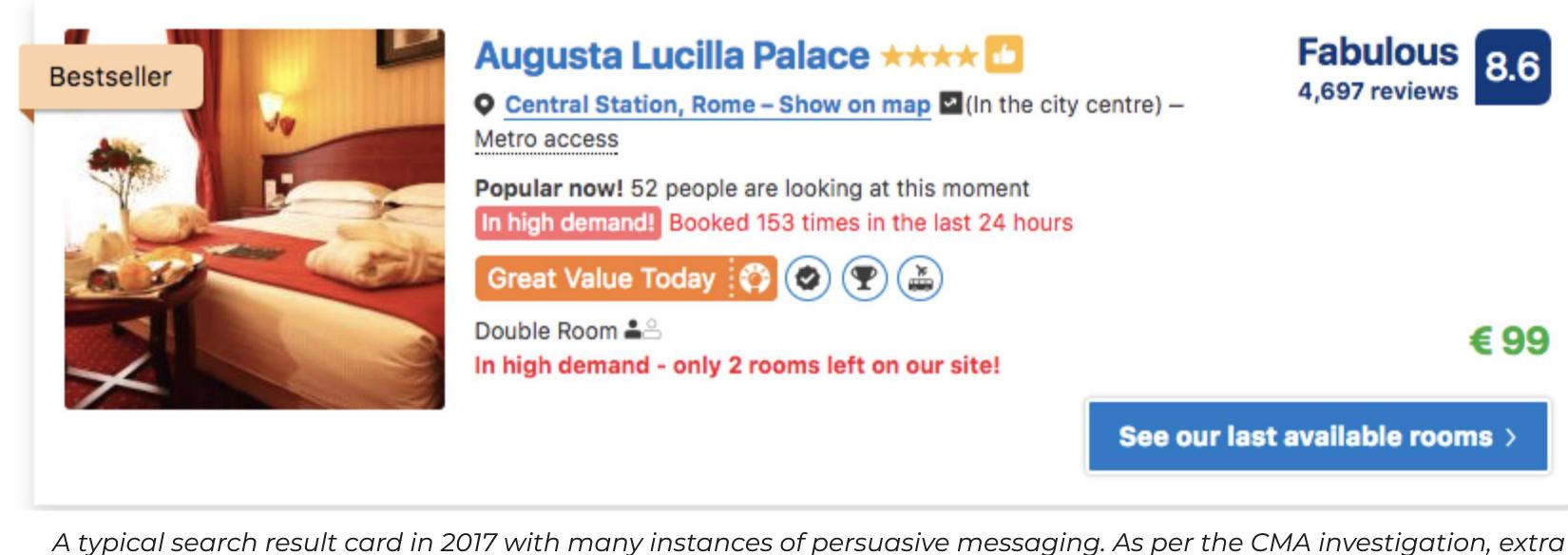
A persuasive legacy

I worked with Booking's only persuasion team between 2017 and 2020. An outdated culture of fast wins above coordinated strategy led to a mountain of design debt to scale, and I joined the team right at the beginning of this effort.

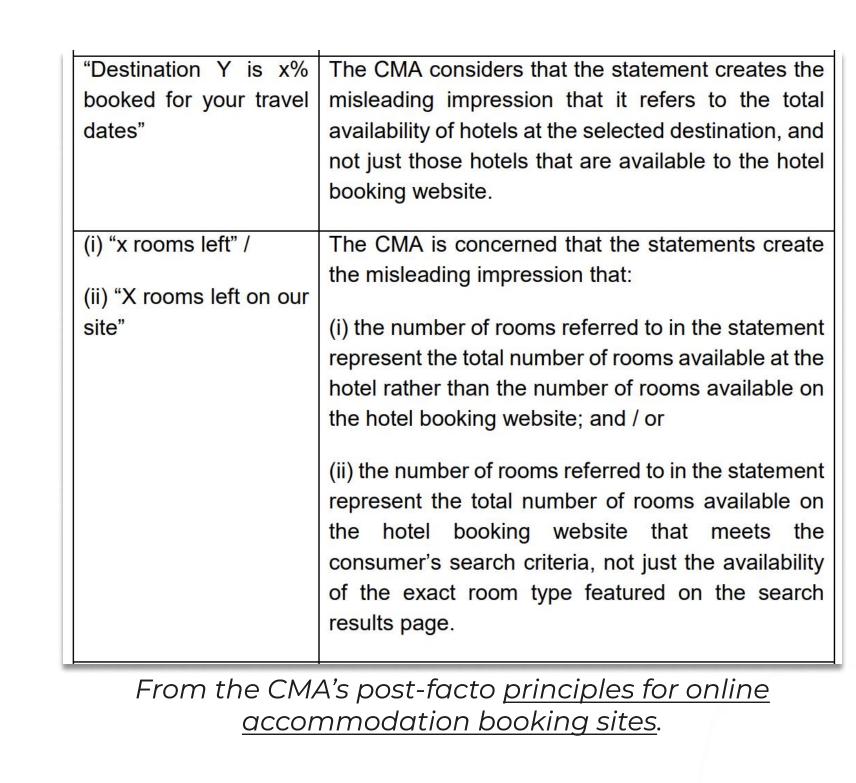
Millions users p/d Thousands exps {num} copy tags

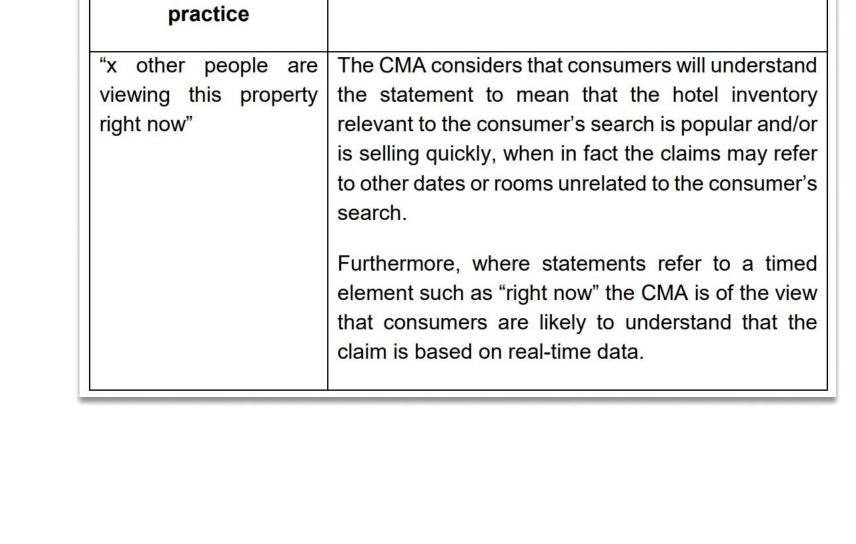
The UK's Competition and Markets Authority announced an investigation into our use of persuasion and pressure-selling in 2017. Failing to work with their guidance meant getting sued. It presented us an opportunity to make massive global change towards a more responsible, ethical design.

5 months total 2017



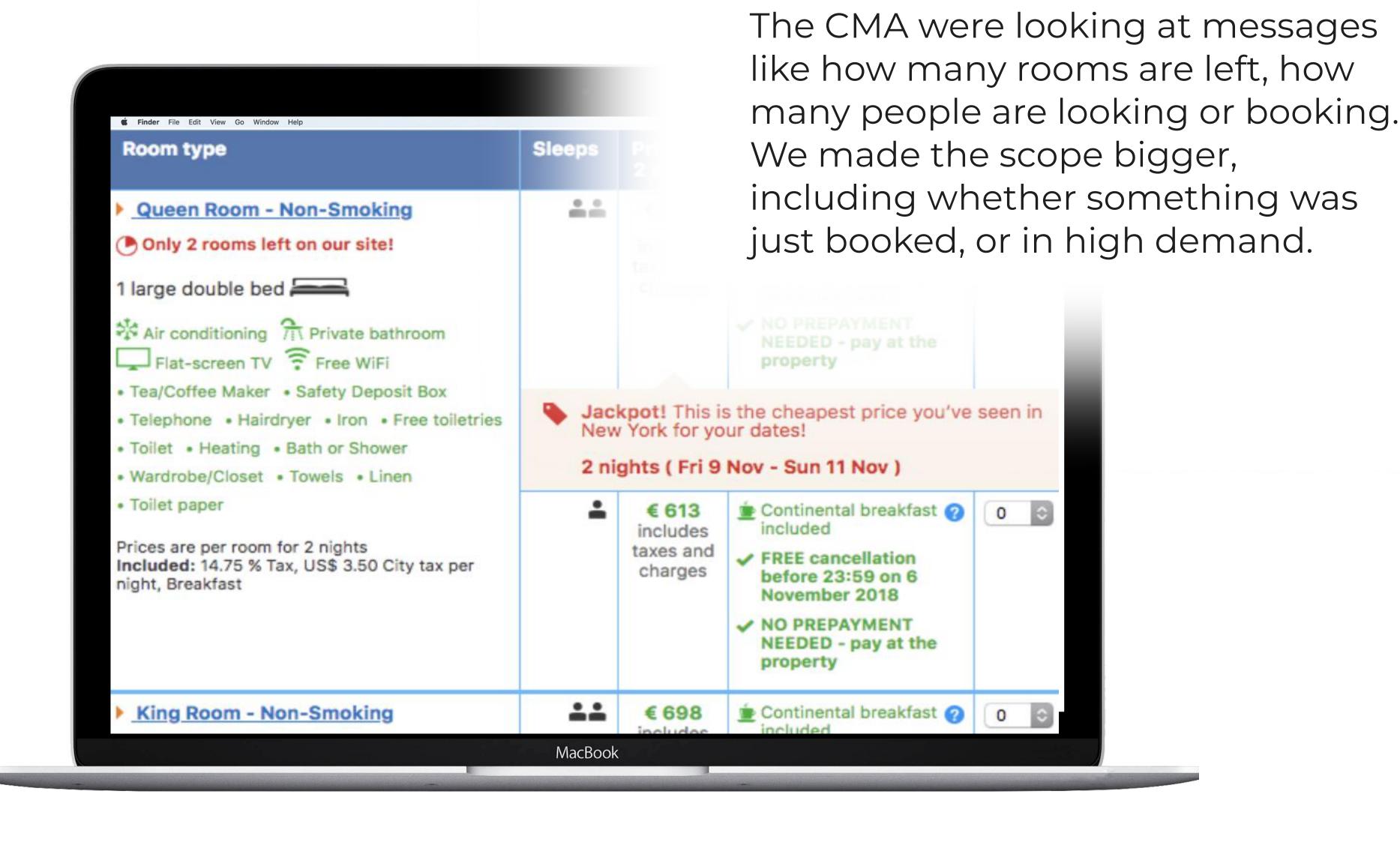
scrutiny now fell on any message with a misleading sense of urgency.





CMA's concerns

Example statement /



costs, go back and forth on CMA feedback and implement fixes brought up a *lot* of challenges. To begin with, a search of the codebase for affected tags wouldn't show whether those tags were live. (I created a taskforce to prioritise that functionality, using this work as a case study).

The severity of the charges and the limited

time to research, map, ideate, assess the



asion_hp_high_demand_compliant	only {num_room} rooms left on our site!	CONTRACTOR MANAGEMENT OF A STATE OF THE STATE OF T	so Tdot	gyon keresett	No	 nagyon kapôs 	Yes	- felkapott	Yes	* nagyon keresett	No	- nagyon keresett	is not a mistranslation, but that term does sound
asion_hp_high_demand	{start_style}In high demand{end_style} - only {num_room} rooms left!	https://paste.booking.com/61mw		sj efterspørgsel	No	Særligt efterspurgt	Yes	- Haj efterspangsel	No	+ Haj efterspargsel	No	 Hej efterspargsel 	more technical, so we would much rather keep other translation for this.
op_x_looking_at_this_moment	{number_of_users} people are looking at this moment	https://paste.booking.com/89166	à										No lease laterales la CI translatione also it fo
asion_hp_high_demand_label	In high demand!	https://paste.booking.com/862v6	also HP	oma traženo	No	 Veoma traženo 	No	 Visoka potražnja 	Yes	 Veoma traženo 	No	 Veoma traženo 	No inconsistencies in SL translations, plus it foll
ooked_x_like_this_header	Just booked {city_name_in}	https://paste.booking.com/4l1nc											the EN original very closely Our "base" translation is a mistranslation (the lowest was not clearly explained to us in the first requesent). We're currently saying that the property/whas a lot of searches, so it is not accurate. Also have issues with gender in our current translation. We'd like to change it to "Té molta demanda" (a more literal translation of In high demand).
ooked_x_like_this_properties_cta	{num_properties} properties like {property_name} were just booked	https://paste.booking.com/1q4f8	į.	tiko povpraševanje	No	Veliko povpraševanje Es busca molt!	No	Veliko povpraševanje Van molt buscats	No Yes	Veliko povpraševanje Va molt buscada	No Yes	Veliko povpraševanje! Va molt buscada!	
ooked_x_like_this_properties_legal_cta	{num_properties} properties like {property_name} were just booked on our site	https://paste.booking.com/6cht5	S										
op_x_looking_at_this_moment	{number_of_users} people are looking at this moment	https://paste.booking.com/6w3do	0		Yes		Yes						
cial_proof_popular_now	Popular now!	https://paste.booking.com/9xgt6		εγάλη ζήτηση	No	 Μεγάλη ζήτηση 	No	 Μεγάλη ζήτηση 	No	 Μεγάλη ζήτηση 	No	 Μεγάλη ζήτηση 	
oked_x_times_today	Booked {num_bookings_today} times today	https://paste.booking.com/5qh2v	i	alta procura	No	 Multa procura 	No	 Multa procura 	No	" Multa procura	No	" Multa procural	No inconsistencies in PT-BR translations.
ooked	Just booked!	https://paste.booking.com/642xe	i										
lesktop latest booking time ago	Latest booking: {elapsedTime} ago	https://paste.booking.com/617hz											

Working at scale meant centralising all

variants, with different styles, emphasis or logic. A message like In high demand had hundreds of different instances with different translations - and not all of them would be live in the code.

Trustworthiness

rooms left on our site

Don't worry, there's still three

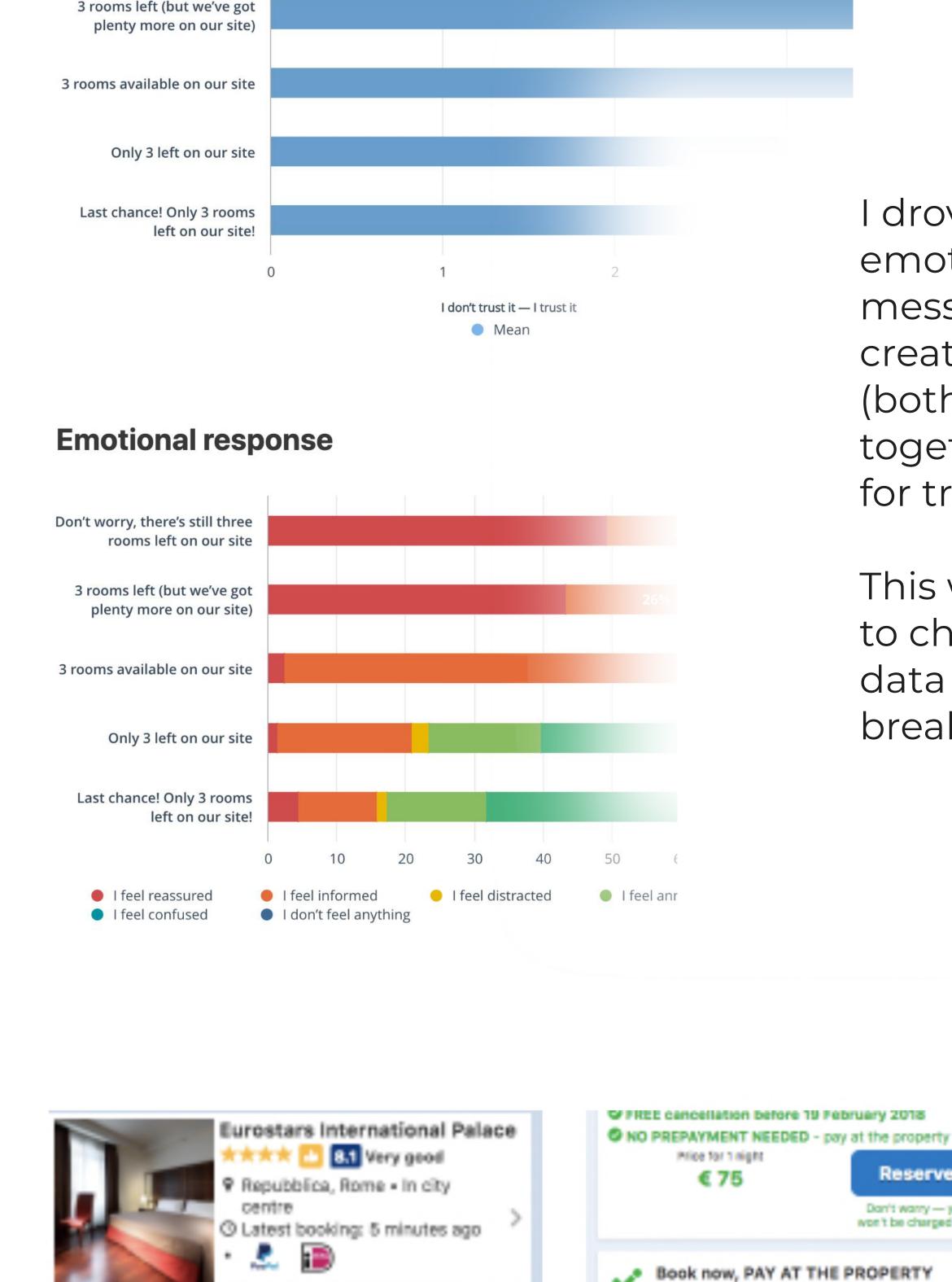
Lanuary Pick

solutions, monitoring and being able to turn

messages on and off in the future. But one

copy tag could have countless existing





€ 67

together with the persuasion team for trickier implementation). This would give us more solutions to choose from, each with in depth data and UX insight to build or break the case for any message.

You have 1 room selected

Price for 1 night

€ 69

Bestselleri Only 5 rooms left on our site!

1 room

Reserve

Dan't warry - you won't be charged yet? € 89

Remove

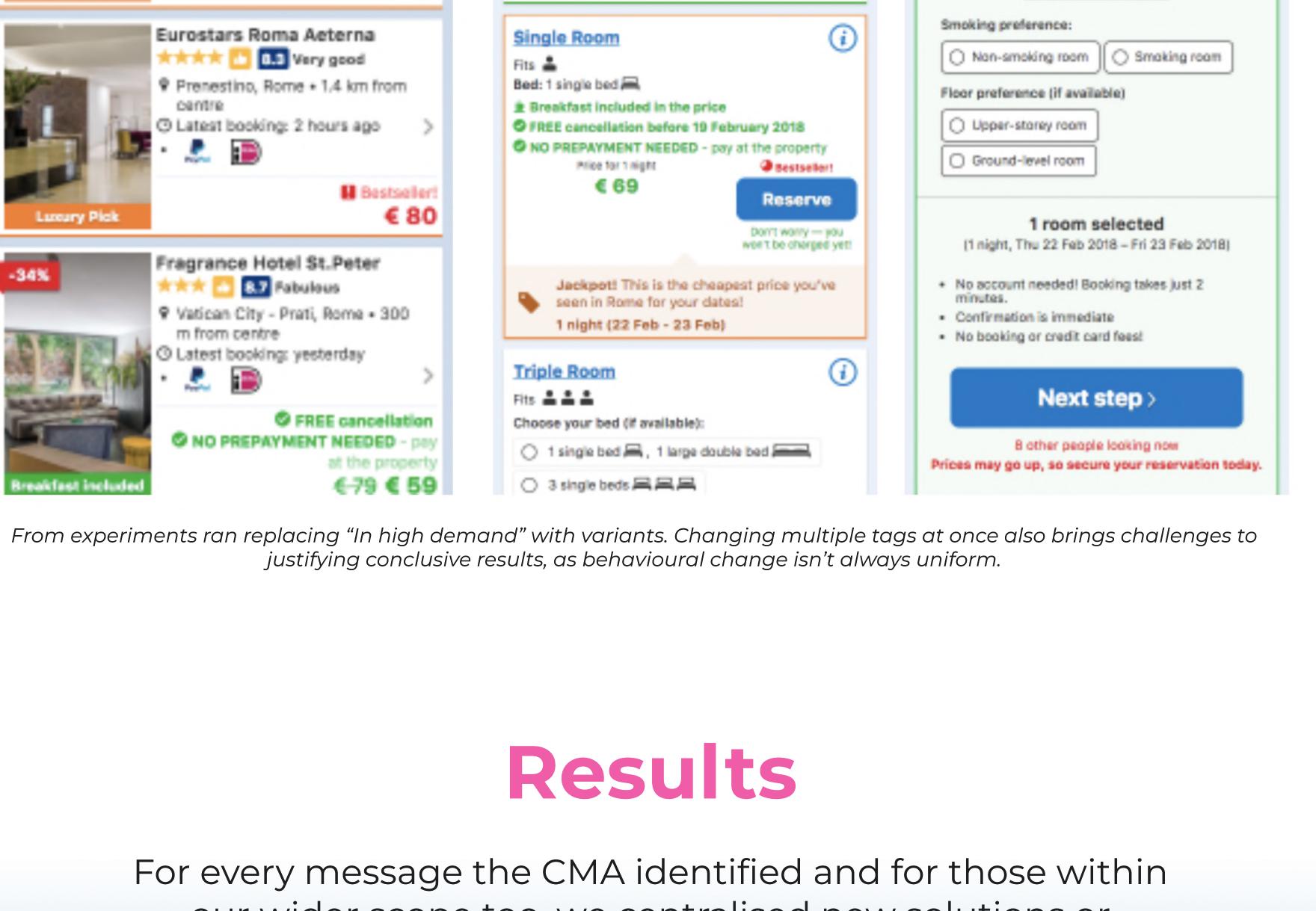
drove research into trust and

emotional response of affected

creative solutions where possible

(both in pure copy experiments and

messages, testing alternative



With FREE cancellation on most rooms

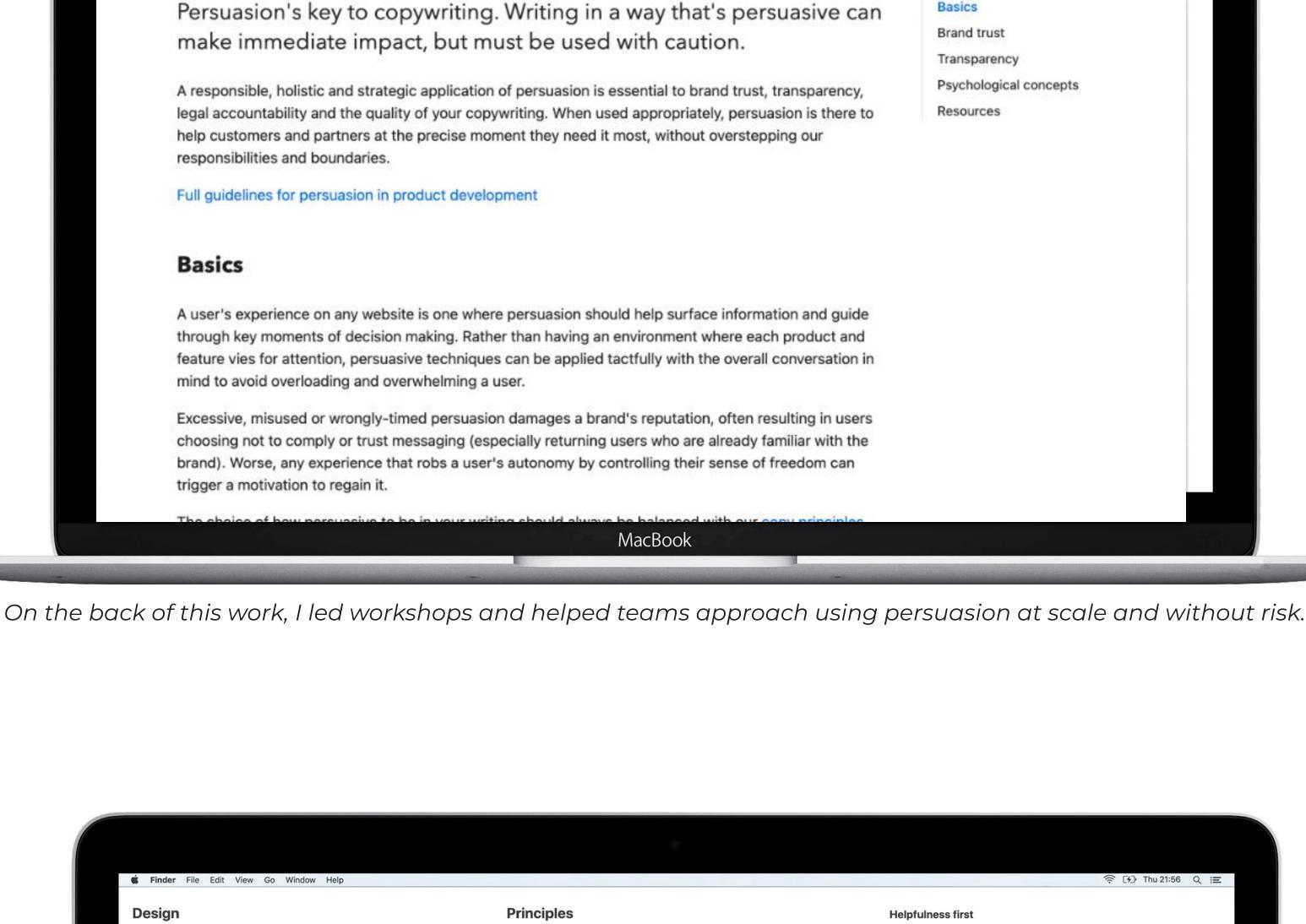
our wider scope too, we centralised new solutions or straight removed over 50% of all persuasion messages without business impact. Each had been thoroughly

researched, challenged from a craft and business level, and

we'd gained legislative approval.

Finder File Edit View Go Window Help Guidelines > Global Persuasion Edit article

Basics



Knowing the key principles is key to using persuasion appropriately. Being persuasive always Information shown to our users should be helpful, informative and matching our specific user's At the core of every nudge we design, the user's best interest should be key. starts with knowing who you're talking to, why you're in contact with them and how to intents. Nudging a business booker towards a resort, for example, is neither. empathetically guide a conversation. If nudges are justified purely by urgency or acting out our own self-interest, ask if it should be there When creating experiences that truly serve customers, partners and everyone in between, in the first place. There should either be information that serves the user's needs or a beneficial persuasive techniques and digital psychology should always be governed by key commandments nudge in the right direction at the right moment. While there's always some subjectivity in these to ensure we're helping our users, playing fair and always acting in their best interests. decisions, we should be able to clearly stand by the nudge with objective reasoning. Consider the following when using persuasion in your work: How is it helping? Remember our brand Is what we're doing something the user would find useful and helpful? Any method of nudging our users reflects back on us. We should always make sure we can be Always be relevant · Are we helping the user or ourselves? accountable for all our messages or techniques. · Do we have any qualitative data that validates it? A perfectly crafted nudge can be useless or harmful if presented at the wrong time, or to the wrong Do we have good reasoning or data behind why it's helpful? audience. Determining what the user needs at a specific moment is essential in order to provide the • Is it transparent so the user can understand what's behind it? right information at the right time. Is it timely and for the right person? · Does it detract from the purpose of the page or area? · What else is happening in the context? . Is the message relevant based on the user's booking journey? Trust is always earned · Who is the user and is it relevant to them? As an authority in the travel industry, we have a responsibility to our users as a brand. They place a certain level of trust in us when they choose to use us. Any claims behind our messages should be Watch your tone firmly backed up by data, and nothing we do should ever be perceived as manipulative trickery. Where did the user come from and where are they going? The emotions we evoke in our users requires careful consideration. Misleading information that can · What has the user already been exposed to? trigger rushed bookings swings towards manipulation. A positive or neutral emotion leaves a better · What will the user be exposed to afterwards? taste in our user's mouths than a negative one. · Are they being bombarded by the same message across the funnel? Is there a precise moment in the funnel where it can have the most impact? Are we implementing and validating it the right way? · Can it be targeted to the most relevant users if possible? Be transparent and clear Have we validated first without flourishes such as colour, emoils, etc? We should always make sure the information we display is clear and objective. The facts should be Safeguard their interests properly presented to our users, allowing them to draw the same conclusions. Does it fulfil our principles and can you stand by it? The end goal of anything we put out there should be in the user's best interests and not out of selfinterest, and should always help them in their journey. For example, letting a user know that a MacBook We also made ninjas.