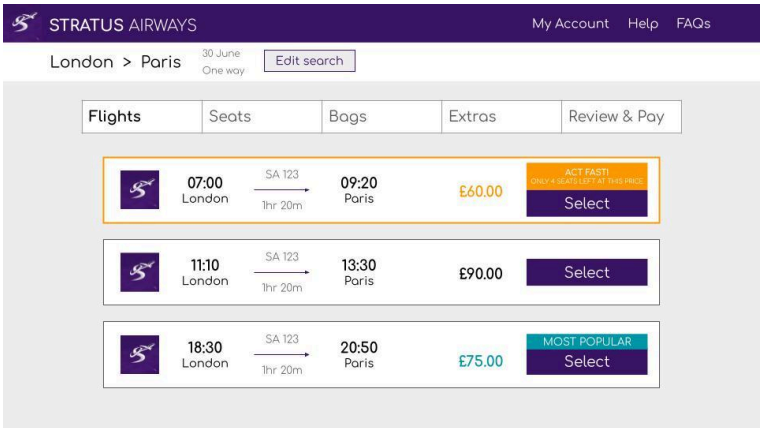
3.1 Scarcity and popularity claims

'The choice architect informs consumers about limited stock, limited time to buy, or high popularity of an item.'



Typical design

Two of the three flights include visually-striking labels to signal their scarcity or popularity.

The first includes a label encouraging the consumer to "act fast!" as "only 4 tickets are left at this price" whilst the third includes a "most popular" label.

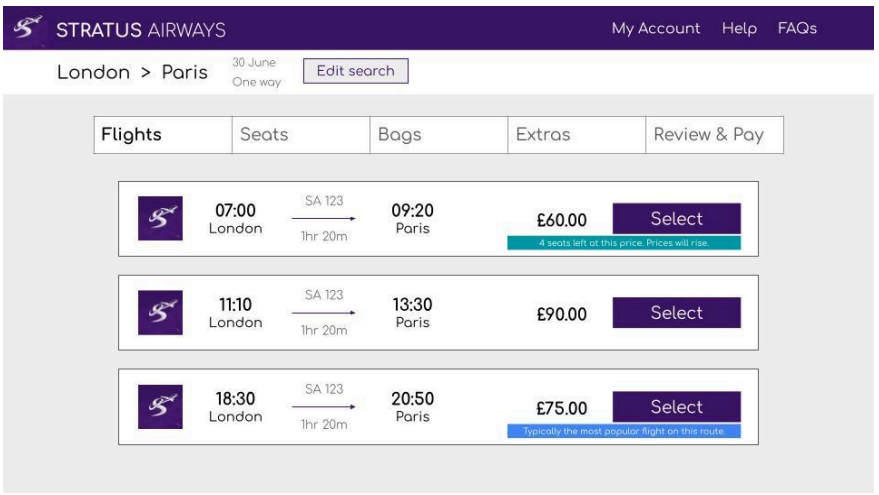
Consumer attitudes towards scarcity and popularity claims:		
Top responses	• Manipulative (26%) • Feared missing out (24%)	• Indifferent (25%) • Felt rushed (23%)
Overall sentiment	Positive: 27% Negative: 52%	

Scarcity and popularity claims are commonly used on digital platforms to encourage sales by placing pressure on consumers.[14] For plane tickets, where there are a finite number of seats, legitimate and responsibly-presented claims may be material information and help consumers make good choices.

However, for the claims to be helpful, rather than just exerting pressure, more information is typically needed than we typically found in the audit. Many of the examples were vague and did not explain what would happen to prices if consumers missed out on the one currently advertised. This can cause consumers to make rushed and suboptimal decisions.

Improved design

Airlines could include the necessary information to make the claims helpful, and present them less forcefully. Consumers could then make informed decisions based on availability and their circumstances.



[14] Teubner & Graul (2020) *Only one room left! How scarcity cues affect booking intentions on hospitality platforms*.