Website Accessibility Comparison Report: Walmart vs. UKY Homepage

Brian Clark

University of Kentucky

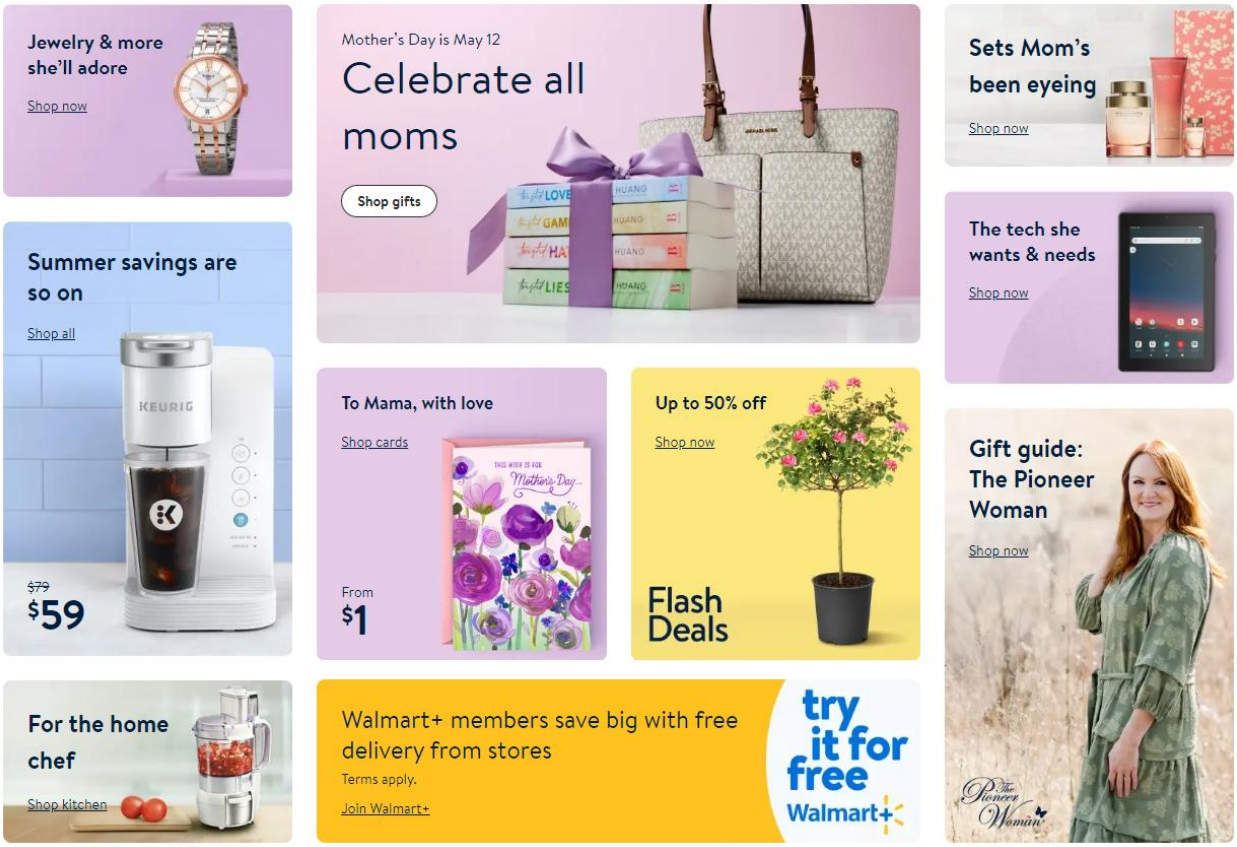
Website Accessibility Comparison Report

Website 1 Overview

The first website I decided to evaluate for accessibility is Walmart's website. Their website is primarily used for online shopping and looking through Walmart's offerings. I decided to use their website for my evaluation because my grandmother who suffers from a visual disability uses it regularly to order groceries. For this evaluation, I will be sticking to Walmart's homepage as there is already plenty to discuss with this section of their website.

Website 1 Accessibility Review

Walmart's homepage is a prime example of an inaccessible experience on the internet. The visual design, complex navigation mechanisms, and complicated layout can make it hard to navigate for users with cognitive or visual disabilities. Walmart's homepage uses a mix of horizontal lists and cards (show below) to advertise and show off their products. The lists are not consistently sized throughout the webpage and the cards showing off products seem to be randomly placed and sized. There are also no clear and distinct sections on the main page. Products are in random spots and there is no grouping of similar products. Walmart uses a white background for the website, but each individual card that shows off a product has its own color scheme. This can create a very muddled viewing experience for anyone who has any type of color blindness. The links to the products throughout the website are very unclear and are smaller than the rest of the text. Clicking the card that is associated with the product will take you to that product's page, however, there is no clear indication that this is how the system works. Actual links are presented on the cards, so it creates a confusing system of where to click and how to navigate the website. All of these visual design and layout elements create barriers for people with disabilities (WAI, 2024).



For my evaluation I decided to test some accessibility features and check their compatibility with the website. Unfortunately, none of them worked properly with the website. The first accessibility feature I tested was keyboard only compatibility. Two problems arose from this test. Firstly, the unclear and non-uniform layout made it difficult to get to where you wanted to go. You had to tab through a lot of the bloat on the website to reach something specific. Secondly, it was very difficult to know where my cursor was most of the time. The tab only cursor changed in size and design based on what I was currently selecting (shown below). The second accessibility feature I tested was zooming in and resizing text. The lists worked well with this feature, but the card system did not. Zooming in and resizing led to the text within the cards becoming jumbled, overlapped, and in some cases, missing. This made over half of the

website unreadable. The third accessibility feature I tested was text to speech. The program I used was able to read aloud what was on the website, but due to the poor design and layout, nothing in the text to speech made any sense. Portions of the webpage were skipped over and the order that the text to speech read text to me was not consistent with the layout of the website.

Website 1 Action Plan

Creating and following an action plan can help achieve and maintain a high level of accessibility standards. The five phases, listed zero through four, are an important aspect in assuring that a website is accessible (Dowden & Dowden, 2019). Below I will create an action plan that helps address accessibility issues with Walmart's website.

Phase 0: Walmart employs many disabled people throughout their company. Partnering these people with the website development team would give the development team better insight into accessibility. Extra training and third-party help would also increase the knowledge and know-how on accessibility issues. Ideally, this would lead to hiring or creating an accessibility expert or team.

Phase 1: One aspect of the accessibility problems that could easily be fixed and create positive moral for the team going forward is the tab cursor. The team could make the size and design consistent and improve visibility. This small change would go a long way in usability on the site and would provide the team with a "big win" (Dowden & Dowden, 2019).

Phase 2: This phase of the action plan would have the team working through each feature separately and completely. A good starting point for this phase would be working with the resizing text and zooming in functions. Using the implementation cycle, the team could develop a solution that makes these features work, test it through code, test it through actual users and tools, make sure no new issues arise, then collect public feedback and go back for adjustments (Dowden & Dowden, 2019). This process would continue until all current accessibility options and features are working properly.

Phase 3: Once the website was fully accessible, the accessibility team would split off from the general development team and continue to monitor and test accessibility throughout the website as new technologies and practices arise.

Phase 4: After completion of making the website accessible, the documentation would be sent out to all other departments within Walmart and other companies owned by them.

Website 2 Overview

The second website I decided to evaluate for accessibility is one that I am very familiar with, the University of Kentucky's website. For the evaluation I will be focusing on the main homepage as most of the links send you to different websites under the University of Kentucky's umbrella. This website serves as a main hub that can be used to access many different university websites and resources such as myuK, admissions, athletics, UK Healthcare, and much more.

The home page itself has several different sections that include University of Kentucky news, quick links to applying and scheduling a tour, and a section of statistics about the university.

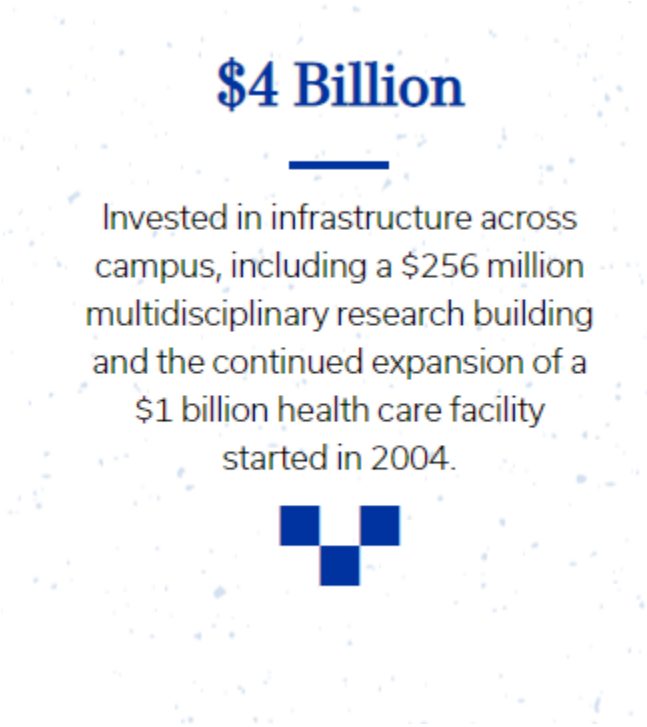
Website 2 Accessibility Review

The University of Kentucky's homepage does a good job in implementing a variety of accessibility standards into its design and functionality. The visual design of the webpage lends itself well to accessibility. The contrast of blue and white throughout the webpage provides a clear visual experience and the buttons/linked text are consistently larger than the rest of text making them easy to find and interact with. The overall layout of the webpage is also easy to understand through the use of clear and distinct sections that alternate color schemes. Also, there are no automatic moving parts or pop-ups throughout the webpage. The only part that moves must be manually interacted with.

The first accessibility option I tested for myself was keyboard only compatibility. The webpage allows proper use of the tab and enter keys to fully navigate the site and I was able to reach every destination available with only my keyboard. The second accessibility option I tested was the resizing of text and zooming in on the webpage. The webpage interacted with the zoom properly and the text, images, and links shifted around to where it was all still visible and readable with no overlap. The third accessibility option I tested was compatibility with text to speech using Google Chrome's built in extension. All the text was able to be read out loud and the organization of the text on the webpage translated well to text to speech. Overall, the accessibility features and options align with most of WebAIM's key principles of accessible design. The University of Kentucky's home page has a logical document structure that works well with keyboard only use, has links that make sense out of context for users who use screen

readers, does not use color to convey meaning, and the content is written clearly and easy to read (*Introduction to Web Accessibility,* 2020).

Although the University of Kentucky's homepage does a good job of being accessible, it is not without a couple of issues. Firstly, there are no text descriptions for the images on the webpage. Also, the text to speech did not pick up on any alternative text embedded within the image, though that could be attributed to user error or limitations of Google Chrome's text to speech software Secondly, in the statistics section of webpage, there are shapes used only for design that could potentially muddle the viewing experience in that particular section (shown below).



According to the World Wide Web Consortium, "Web accessibility is about designing web sites, applications, technologies, tools, products, and services in an inclusive manner, and thus lifting barriers to communication and interaction that many people face in the real world" (*Accessibility,* n.d.). This quote perfectly summarizes why all the accessibility standards that the

University of Kentucky's website implements are important. The easy to navigate website with clear visual design and the ability to use accessibility tools ensures that the website lowers as many barriers as possible. This not only provides disabled users with a good user experience, but it also provides a better experience for everyone.

References

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