**Critique – 3p94**

20Stage3

20ForMarker04

ForGroup04

Yellow Bricks (Group 9)

<https://digitalesca9e.github.io/DIY-Real-Estate/>

General:

* Cursor doesn’t change when hovering over buttons
* Can only get to buy page from home and listing, and must use search to get there
* Minimum price can be higher than maximum price
* Too many fonts throughout the website
* Striking color, great as it signifies happiness but may be a little striking and overwhelming

Homepage:

* + Clean homepage
* - Sliders could be combined
* - Sell button in odd place

Buy:

* - Search bar too large
* - Sliders could be combined
* - Could use more info on listing (e.g., Size, bedrooms, etc.)
* - Doesn’t list province
* - Too busy at top. Maybe hide the filters unless clicked on

Login:

* + Working login
* - Login box should be left justified
* - Different design from create an account

Create an account:

* - Different design than login
* - Doesn’t check email format
* - Show/ hide password is good but should also be available for confirm
* - Unused previous button

Account Information:

* + Able to change account info
* + Opens contact and saved listing on the same page
* - Unable to delete contacts
* - Saved listing could link to the listings
* - Might just be a mistake but there are houses on the contacts page?

Sell:

* - Form formatting!!!
* - Expanded form is cool but might be misleading on form length
* - No coded fields
* - Extra submit button is unnecessary. Should be able to make edits later if there is a mistake
* Submission leads to 404 error

Listings:

* - No clear way to go back to buy page, must search again
* - No way to add bookmark
* - Map would be nice to have
* + Add contact has feedback
* - More pictures
* Content could be better divided and organized

Book a showing / Make offer:

* - Again, form needs to be formatted
* - No confirmation

Information:

* - Lack of styling/CSS

Contact us:

* - Sections a bit too big, especially since its bright yellow
* - No time they are available for contact
* + Simple design

20Stage3

20ForMarker04

ForGroup04

The website MiCaRiYa is a mock interface by Group Four for a do-it-yourself real-estate website. As with any mock interface, it has many positive and negative features. In this critique, we will be looking at concepts of Human Computer Interactions to generate constructive feedback to help the group improve their product for future release.

MiCaRiYa features a simple and clean interface that is careful not to overload features which can in turn overwhelm the user. The simplicity and consistency of the real estate site are what draw in users. The website also features buy, sell and rent options where the home page is the buy page. There is also a chat bot located on every page should the user require help.

Pros

MiCiRiYa appeals to homo sapiens as it focuses on simplicity and allows the user to focus on their goal. Homo sapiens do not care about the internals of how the software works and given that most users fall into this category, this site clearly keeps the average user in mind. The interface is not heavy and is appealing to both novice and intermediary users. The use of a live chat feature that can be easily accessed by the user and is one of the best features that the site offers. The chat is located at the bottom left of the page on each webpage and is clearly visible at all times with no obstructions. This reminds the user that they are able to speak to a customer service representative should they experience any frustrations at any point of the process. One of the biggest pitfalls identified for the preexisting DIY real estate websites is the confusing layout and lack of access to a live agent. These deterred new users from using DIY real estate websites and frustrated existing users. The site clearly makes use of task action grammar by generating a consistent interaction language and maintains this across all pages.

The use of a third-party login feature that uses Google and Facebook accounts is an excellent idea that encourages the user to use the site. One of the drawbacks that are encountered by users of preexisting DIY real estate applications is the requirement of creating an account to view listings. Not only are users not required to have an account to browse the website, but the account creation is effortless when offering third-party login.

Interaction Problems

The profile picture located on the top right-hand side of the interface is not a clickable link that leads to the user's profile. There is no functionality as there is a button with text next to it that provides the same function. There is nothing indicating that the chat feature is a button until the user clicks it. The logo is also not clickable and does not direct you back to the home page, which in this case is the buy page. When the user is on the buy page or the sell page and they click the button of the page they are already on, the page reloads with different houses. There should not be any feedback from a menu item for the page you are already on. In addition, buyers may have difficulty in using the site due to a lack of information available for the listings. Users may try to look for more info, only for them to find that there is none. We also found that in wider screen resolutions, the text for listings may go outside of their containers, or even be covered by other listing’s sections. This can make it difficult to see what little information there is on the listings.

Logic Problems

On the buy and rent pages, radius is measured in minutes which is slightly confusing as the time to reach a specific destination is not always consistent from a given location due to various factors. It is inconsistent with most applications that utilize the radius function as they typically use distance. This is not logical for real estate site as proximity can serve as an important consideration for home buyers and renters. The price range is also not logical as it is not reflective of the Canadian real estate market. The average home price in Canada is nearing the maximum range provided. Realistically, the price range should feature a wider range of prices that exceed the $1.5 million mark. The abbreviations “bd” and “ba” featured on the listings are not universally known. The use of abbreviations are generally discouraged as the user is required to use memory and learn a new term. The price of the house also does not follow standard formatting. Typically, when displaying the price and currency most companies tend to place the dollar sign first and the currency following the price. For example, $59.99 CAD. The website aims to facilitate transactions between buyers and sellers directly without the involvement of middlemen, but the site has an option to buy through a real estate agent which is confusing as it defeats the purpose of the site. Moreover, there is also a rent option which is a great feature, but it adds to the confusion as there is no option for landlords to rent their property. The rent section features an offer system that is similar to the buy page and is not consistent with standard rental practices as rent prices typically are not negotiable.

Design Principle Miscues

Despite the use of task action grammar, there are a number of practical considerations that override consistency. The interface is slightly underwhelming and lacks design. It does not use a comprehensive menu system that would allow a user to apply advanced filters or sort how the listings appear. The header looks awkward as it blends into the rest of the page owing to a lack of groupings. The search bar appears as though it is part of the header as there is no separation. There is a lot of noise when looking at the listing and this is due to the use of abbreviations and the lack of mapping principles. The lack of icons in the listing also makes a key difference when compared to counterparts as they aid the user with navigation and create a clean look for the design. For example, the use of icons for bedrooms and bathrooms for a given listing instead of abbreviations would lead to less confusion and a better design. The overlapping popup without a change in background creates noise on the page. It is nice to have a popup window to show the house but the other houses appear behind it is overwhelming for the user. This could be mitigated with a larger border or additional padding for the content. The formatting of the form should be left justified as there is extensive research to support that most users prefer left justified text. MiCiRiYa missed the mark when it comes to task analysis especially the ‘what people must know’ section as it is omitted altogether. The use of a knowledge-based technique approach to task analysis when creating a prototype would be beneficial to understand what the user knows about the task and how it is organized. In this case, the user may not have sufficient knowledge regarding how the task should be organized but the use of primary personas and extracting sufficient information through surveys will reveal that there is hesitation among most people in the real estate market to use a DIY real estate service that does not use real estate agents to facilitate purchasing and selling of homes.

Usability issues

There is no information offered to new users to explain the process of buying and selling without the use of traditional real estate services. The analysis during stage 1 revealed that most potential users that were in the real estate market were deterred from DIY sites due to a lack of information, given that they were not familiar with private home sales. The lack of a homepage is great for returning users or intermediary users but in most cases, it is not ideal to forgo the use of a homepage. The static interface overall requires more work as the look and behavior of the application interface are underwhelming. The interaction design is also not dynamic as domain knowledge of the user regarding the market is assumed. The interface does not successfully communicate its abilities to the user. When the user enters the site, no insight regarding the functionality is provided beyond the three navigation items and login.

Recommendations

The addition of a homepage is beneficial as it will provide users with information regarding the buying and selling process. It is also a great place to house additional resources for the user and can help make the site more consistent and convenient. Returning users will not be inconvenienced as they can always click on the options in the header to visit the other pages. This can be done by making the logo above the header a clickable link to the homepage which will not change the layout of the existing pages and will maintain consistency.

The following recommendation is made under the assumption that the chatbot does not utilize an AI that features a help system without contacting the customer service agent. The use of a goal-oriented help system would be beneficial to the user as logically, many users are not frequently buying and selling homes using the website. Much of the process will not be stored in the user's long-term memory and thus having a help system for questions that do not require a chat would be useful. Similarly, an FAQ page with hotlinks that lead the user to the information they are looking for is another way to avoid having the user speak to a customer service agent when it is not necessary.

Further analysis of the user goals through the use of a goal-oriented model as well as comparing the prototype to existing websites may help identify the user goals.

The use of small logo elements for the menu system as well as the listing can make it more appealing to the user as the design is lacking. The design also appears incomplete as it is missing a footer, groupings, and menus.

Project Comparison and Rating

Comparing MicaRiYa to our Realistate, we would rate it worse than our own. The things the group did do well were also things that were done better than on our site. They implemented a log in system that keeps track if the user is logged in locally for the mock interface which is something we did not do. Another aspect that MicaRiYa has over our site is the popup window that appear for listings. This was something we identified and considered implementing in our planning stage. It allows for seamless transition from browsing listings to viewing a specific listing. As the page doesn’t change, it doesn’t interrupt the user’s train of thought. If it redirected to another page, going back may lose the user’s spot. So by not changing the page, they can continue browsing from where they left off. However, a disadvantage would be in comparing listings, as you can’t simply open multiple listings in a new tab. Instead, you would have to have multiple instances of the site open. They also have better filters for searching, with the sliders and the drop-down menus being easier and more power tools for searching than our implementation. Finally, the live chat is a great feature to help users overcome the gulfs of execution.

While there are many positives, they are outweighed by the negatives. The site is barebones, lacking in many features the primary persona may want and need. Some requirements were not met as there is no functionality for a real estate agent and finding an agent is outsourced to another site. As potential users are already hesitant to using DIY sites, it is unlikely they would be happy with signing up for another website. Buyers would be hard-pressed to select a house from their website due to the lack of information for the listings. Opening the listing window doesn’t provide any more information than the search results and only lets you place an offer. Also, MicaRiYa is not the most aesthetically appealing site. The greys are fairly boring and the blue that borders the house pictures pop out too much. The login form is center aligned, including the text. While this would work well on a vertical phone, it doesn’t look as good on a wider screen. Speaking of mobile devices, the main page would not work on smaller displays. During our research, we discovered a large portion of people use mobile devices as their primary electronic device. Thus, we tried to make a responsive site that will work on a range of screens. The lack of a home/landing page may intimidate users as a lot of content shows up all at once. Our home page was limited on content and provided extra information regarding the site and its services. In addition, the my account section is either unfinished or very lack luster. Overall, it feels that MicaRiYa is incomplete as it lacks both key and optional features. We give MicaRiYa a score of five out of ten.

General:

* + Live chat is a great feature
* - Profile pic isn’t a link you your profile
* Very simple and intuitive
* Static header that is consistent throughout the website and indicates where the user is so that they can easily go back
* Not too feature heavy and does not confuse the user
* Excellent color choice as blue indicates trustworthiness and reliability
* No landing page which may hinder new users due to a lack of introduction while appealing intermediary users

Home/Buy/Rent:

* + Starts directly on listings
* + Sliders
* + Default is your current location
* - Listings are small, not enough info, more pictures
* + Listings are a popup, not a new page
* + Offer is auto filled with price

Sell:

* Find agent links to external site
* List property isn’t implemented

Login:

* + Third party login with FB and G
* - Account creation not implemente

This should be our subheadings

Things we need to cover:

* Interaction Problems
* Logic Problems (Logical use problems)
* Design Principle miscues.
* Usability issues.
* Suggestions for improvement
* good qualities, things which were done correctly, things which you found to be novel
* If you were to award a mark to the project on a scale of 1-10. How would you rate it? Why?
* Comparing the project to your own. Is it better, worse, or about the same in caliber?

20Stage3

20ForMarker09

ForGroup09

The website Yellow Bricks is a mock interface by Group Nine for a do-it-yourself real-estate website. As with any mock interface, it has many positive and negative features. In this critique, we will be looking at concepts of Human Computer Interactions to generate constructive feedback to help the group improve their product for future release.

**Positives:**

Yellow Bricks starts with a very clean looking home page. If it weren’t for the image used for the background, it would be considered minimalistic. This simplicity is not intimidating and appeals to homo sapiens. There are multiple filters that make it easy for buyers to search for their next home. The sliders for the price are very helpful for users to visualize a price range. The site wide header is aesthetically pleasing with the contrast between the black text and the yellow background.

Going into the listings, the same multiple filters are consistent to the home page’s filters. The large images make it easy for buyers to see how the listings look, which is an important aspect in accomplishing their goal. The image is further expanded on the individual listing’s page which also has lots of space for information on the homes. The “Add Contact” button provides feedback for the users with an alert, so they know for sure that their action has gone through. Both the “Book A Showing” and “Submit An Offer” buttons lead to short and simple forms that let buyers get their tasks done easily. The same can be said for the page for creating a listing. The forms make use of their space well, making it less daunting and clear on what users need. The Sell page’s house type selection also changes the additional details for the listing. This is great as it hides form fields that are not applicable to the type of house the user is selling.

The group has also gone out of their way and implemented a rudimentary login system for this mock interface. The fields for the Create an Account form are checked for input and highlights any missing information which is helpful for users. The form also makes the user retype the password and checks to see if the two match, preventing the possibility of a slip with a data driven error. The ability to hide and unhide the password is also very user friendly and also reduces the chance of a data driven error. The Account Information page has a simple but effective menu at the side that changes the contents, rather than linking to another page. The page has the ability to change each aspect of your account details which it is important to have as it allows users to make any corrections or changes needed.

**Interaction Problems:**

Its difficult to tell whether the “call”, “email”, and “live chat” panels on the contact us page are links or not. This is indicative of a larger problem which can be seen throughout the website, namely that it is hard to distinguish what is and is not a button. Its easy to imagine a user struggling to navigate this aspect of the website and frequently themself “will this do something if I click on it?”. To solve this problem, some feedback could be added to the buttons so that when a cursor hovers over them, the shape of the cursor changes, like with the site logo. In addition, the saved listings should also link to the actual listing page. Without this, users will have to manually search up listings that they have already saved, adding additional steps to accomplish their goal.

The price values filters change by very large increments for small movements of the slider along the scale. If you’re not sure why this is a problem, then try to set one of the sliders to exactly $250,000 and see how difficult it is. This is a difficult problem to accommodate for because user interests will be varied. Users who want a house in a lower price range will struggle to use the slider in its current form because the range will jump in value too quickly. But if they are accommodated for users who want a more expensive house, they will find the price changes too slowly. The sliders currently seem to be suffering from the former problem and are somewhat geared toward people looking for more expensive houses. A good solution is to use a logarithmic scale so that when the slider is on the left side of the scale (lower price end) the price changes slowly but when its on the right side of the scale (higher price end) the price changes more quickly. There should also be a text field where the users can manually enter their desired price range to allow for more precision.

**Usability:**

The maximum and minimum price values filter default to the same amount – 200, 000 – when the page is landed on. This means that if a user opens the page and doesn’t change the maximum and minimum filters, the only houses that will show up are houses worth 200, 000 dollars exactly. The user shouldn’t to *have* to change any of the filters on default as the default selections should work for a general user. A good solution would be de default the minimum and the maximum price values far apart to be able to search a larger number of houses.

The sell button is at the bottom of the page which makes it somewhat hard to find, and it only exists on the homepage. People selling their homes on your website constitute a large portion of the user base, so the button they need to click should be easier to find. In its current form, this website seems highly geared towards buyers, which isn’t a bad thing, but a bit more consideration needs to be made toward sellers. A good fix for this problem would be to include the sell button on the top of every page in the navigation bar. That way, if a person who is looking at other listings wants to sell their home, they don’t have to navigate back to the homepage. The same could be said for adding a buy button in the navigation bar.

Furthermore, hiding part of the listing submission form may both mislead or confuse the user. At firsts glance, the form looks incomplete as the submission button is hidden. It also makes the form longer than it originally seemed, which may frustrate users. The confirmation window is unnecessary, as the listing’s data should not be set in stone. As with the user account information, there should be an option to change the details on the listings afterwards. There is also no way to import pictures of the house which is an important part in creating a good listing. Lastly, submitting a listing redirects users to a non-existent webpage. This may confuse users as they might not be sure if the submission has gone through.

**Design Miscues**

There are inconsistencies throughout the pages as some pages are missing the company logo at the top left-hand side of the page, instead displaying “Site Here.” Yellow Bricks also assumes that the user has previous knowledge regarding independent real estate. The home page jumps right into buying, and there is no help or information regarding what services are available. On the listings page, the user notices numerous different font sizes that exceed the 3-4 font sizes rule, creating visual noise. There are also hidden slider menus that can be found with horizontal scrolling, and they are formatted differently compared to the other filters. There are search features and filters on a given listing which is redundant and makes the user lose progress by directing them to restart their search process and filter through the results again. The contact page is poorly designed and is inconsistent with the other pages on the site. Large icons that do not fit the screen size overwhelm the user and create unnecessary horizontal scrolling. Another design miscue is the hidden login feature that requires horizontal scrolling on some screen sizes. The login button is not formatted as part of the header and instead is floating next to it. It also is not formatted as a button which is inconsistent from the other buttons in the header. The Information page doesn’t have any styling and is just blocks of text. This is inconsistent with your otherwise well formatted site and is not aesthetically appealing.

**Logical Problems:**

Most people looking for a home don’t need 10 bathrooms, bedrooms, or garages. To make the search filters cleaner, it should cater to what the majority of people want and include filters up to a certain max number of these amenities, say 5. For those people who want more than that, you can include the option to filter for “5+” of each of them. But including the option to filter from 1 to 10 seems excessive.

There is no way to consult an expert on the “Consult an expert” page. Presumably the user would have to read about the experts on this page and then contact them somehow using the “contact us” page. If this is the case the page should be renamed from “Consult an expert” to “About our experts”. Currently, there is just a section of text for each expert’s biography. If contact information is to be included in this section, then it may get lost within the text as it may be difficult to distinguish from the rest of the content. Alternatively, you could include buttons which link to the contact information for each of the experts next to their bio.

The price filter allows a user to have a maximum price lower than their minimum price. In practice, this could lead to a lot of confusion for a user who unintentionally mixes up the two sliders, adjusting the maximum price to the minimum intended minimum value and vice-versa. An easy solution for this problem would be to have one scale with two sliders and to not allow these two sliders to cross.

While the submissions require verification by Yellow Bricks, it is not stated what the verification entails. Currently, there is no way for the seller to prove that they are the owner of the property they are trying to sell. This can lead to a security issue and a problem for users in the form of fraudulent listings. An easy solution to this problem would be to have the seller upload a digital copy of proof of ownership of the house (a deed for example).

**Project Comparison and Rating:**

Comparing our site Realistate to Yellow Bricks, we would rate it as slightly worse than our own. Both have the features that would suite the primary persona and are easy to navigate. We praised the site on its simplicity. However, it seems to be less detailed than our own. For an example, buyers may find themselves having to contact the seller for more details on a listing. While they have a better search filtering than ours, the options they provided were not all sensible. Their website has better spacing as it is more compact, whereas we have too much white space between sections. Their site is only supported for one window size, which is not flexible. In our information gathering, there was a large variety in primary electronic devices, with a significant portion using phones. We designed our site to theoretically work on any size screen including mobile. Something both websites did not include was the forms for account creation. They did however, implement a log in system that keeps track if the user is logged in locally for this mock interface, which we did not do. Various small mistakes, such as “Site Name” appearing where “Yellow Bricks” should be, a button redirecting to a non-existent page, and forms that are not aligned, bring the down quality of the site and suggests the mock interface was rushed. With some additional polish, Yellow Bricks would be a strong competitor to our own site Realistate. We give Yellow Bricks a rating of eight out of ten.