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Analysis on: www.craigslist.org

Say “Peace” to Craigslist

Website design is a fundamental part of trying to keep users on a platform. Without useful design, the user will just get frustrated or fatigued trying to use the site and leave. To keep a website looking nice, it needs to be updated, or it is going to get left in the dust and taken over by newer websites. Unfortunately, Craigslist has done just that. Craigslist’s website is an outdated mess that is slowly fading into obscurity because of its lack of innovation and inability to improve its website.

Craigslist is one of the hardest trading sites to use today, compared to its competitors: Facebook Marketplace and eBay. The first thing that makes the application hard to use is the clutter when a user opens the homepage for “your Craigslist.” When users open the application, they are presented with one hundred or more links to a bunch of different predefined search terms for users to click on. While the actual search bar is hidden in the top left, making it easy to miss, it allows inexperienced users to miss the feature entirely if they do not know the purpose of the website. Nothing on the Craigslist homepage hints at the actual functionality of the website and for what it is used. Because of its horrific front page, the website is not effective at keeping unaccustomed users or effectively letting veteran users make the most out of the website.

After getting past the horrific home page, using the website is still frustrating and difficult. Clicking one of the links so the user can start shopping just makes users want to leave the sight even faster. After selecting a section to start shopping, users are in a list view where the photos for the ads are all small, and all the categories are broad, there are hundreds of distinct types of ads popping up. It is rare users will find what they are looking for unless they play hide and seek with the search bar. On the left side of the screen, there are filtering options to help the user find what they are looking for more efficiently. This is a useful tool for the user however, there are similar options on the top of the screen to change the search criteria. Instead of keeping the search criteria in one place formatted well for the user, it is scattered across the web page. This makes it easier just to restart a search instead of using the available tools because options are not confined to one area.

Once the user finally finds a list of items they are looking for, the price for the item shows up twice for every ad when in the gallery view, which is not the default view. It looks messy and it is redundant for the user. Instead, the text should be bolded to draw the user’s eye to the price when they are looking for it. The arrows to switch between multiple pictures are also hidden, I believe they should put dots or lines at the top or bottom of the pictures like some popular social media apps do to represent if an item listed has multiple pictures, instead of needing to hover over every single picture. This can become tedious and annoy the user.

From the items on the website, I can tell that they are trying to appeal to a broad audience and be an affordable website to trade items and services on. However, there are many other websites like this with better UI and a better environment to do so. For example, Facebook marketplace can leave users' reviews so people cannot get scammed, as well as see their profile to try and make a connection with the user before buying an item from a stranger. The only redeeming quality about craigslist is its ability to help narrow down the search criteria to people in the users’ city or area.

From a complicated user interface, and boring colors that let the users’ eyes get lost trying to navigate the website. With an outdated search system, and a cluttered user interface: Craigslist is a messy and frustrating user experience that needs to be updated immediately. For such a popular website in the early days of online shopping, it’s easy to see why eBay or Facebook Market Place has taken them over as the go-to place to trade, sell, and buy items from other people. Craigslist already has great name recognition and I believe a new layer of paint it could put itself back into the ring and truly compete with these other popular websites.