

## **Group 6**

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### **Proposal For Improvement**

#### **❖ Introduction**

Craigslist has been a widely used platform for over two decades, offering free classified advertisements for a broad range of goods and services. Despite its enduring popularity, particularly among students who frequently use the site to find housing near universities, buy or sell used furniture, and search for part-time employment, the platform's usability often leaves much to be desired. While Craigslist's simplicity has contributed to its longevity, its outdated design and lack of intuitive navigation can make it difficult for users to efficiently locate specific items, particularly when the site hosts an overwhelming number of listings.

This research aims to explore the user experience of navigating the Chicago Craigslist site (<https://chicago.craigslist.org/>), with a focus on students as the primary user group. These individuals typically possess the necessary digital literacy and experience with similar online platforms, making them ideal respondents for gaining insights into the site's usability challenges. Through this investigation, we aim to identify key pain points in the site's design, such as the cluttered front page, the absence of advanced filtering options in the search tool, and the underutilized horizontal navigation bar, which collectively hinder users from effectively navigating the site.

Despite these issues, Craigslist has maintained its appeal due to its commitment to simplicity, absence of ads, and the free nature of the service. Our goal is to assess how these characteristics contribute to the platform's persistence and user satisfaction, while also providing recommendations for improving the user experience, particularly for students who rely on it for their day-to-day needs. By examining how users interact with Craigslist, we hope to uncover both the strengths and weaknesses of its design, ultimately offering actionable insights to enhance the site's usability for a more streamlined and efficient experience.

#### **❖ Method**

For this research, we conducted a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to constructive feedback about the user experience of the Chicago Craigslist website, with a particular focus on design, navigation, and usability. We chose FGD to open the possibilities for any input from the participant and allowing the room for discussion among the participants. Participants were encouraged to speak freely, sharing their opinions about what works well and what could be improved. We emphasized that there were no right or wrong answers and that all feedback was valuable. Throughout the discussion, we encouraged active listening and respectful dialogue, allowing participants to build on each other's ideas or offer contrasting opinions. We also

assured confidentiality (data only use for the purpose of class assignment) of this research by give an verbal inform consent before the interview start. The session lasted approximately 30-45 minutes, and we were available to provide clarification if needed at any point during the discussion.

The topic of questions that we asked during interview include:

- Familiarity of the site. Understanding how often participants use Craigslist and for what purposes, providing context for their experience with the site.
- Navigation and usability. Investigating how easy it is to navigate the website, whether any parts of the site are confusing, and identifying potential ways to make finding items or information faster.
- Search functionality. Exploring the accuracy and usability of the search feature, including whether it is easy to locate and use the search bar.
- UI Design and Layout. Gathering feedback on the overall design, layout, and visual clarity of the site, as well as any difficulties users may encounter with interactive elements.
- Mobile vs. Desktop Experience. Comparing the ease of use on mobile devices versus desktop, and identifying any differences in the user experience across platforms.
- Improvements and Features. Seeking suggestions for new features or design improvements that could enhance the site's usability, and asking about UI features from other platforms that users would like to see on Craigslist.

## ❖ Result

The focus group discussions (FGDs), conducted with three participants representing varying levels of familiarity with the site, provided valuable insights into user experiences and perceptions, the session lasting approximately 20 minutes and facilitated by one interviewer and one notetaker.

From the FGD we found several things:

### **Ease of Use and Functionality**

- Participants praised the site's ease of navigation but noted that its text-heavy approach and dated look dampened their experience.
- The filtering system got high praises for fast and accurate searches.
- Despite the functional features, the overall user experience was hindered by the lack of visual appeal.

## **Visual Design**

- Several participants were critical of the site's dated look and shabby nature.
- The minimalist presentation was functional but unappealing, lacking up-to-date features such as animations or advanced CSS styling.
- The site's design appeared overly simplistic and lacked modern visual elements that enhance engagement.

## **Report on Search Accuracy**

- Generally, successful searches returned accurate results, although participants brought up issues with exact keyword matching leading to occasional wrong matches.
- Some improvement suggestions included predictive search and recognition of synonyms.
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- Participants expressed the need for better handling of partial matches and misspellings to improve accuracy.

## **Device Preference**

- In general, participants prefer running the site on a desktop because there is a better layout with less stress in navigation as opposed to the odds and ends of the mobile version.
- The mobile version's navigation was often described as clunky and less intuitive.
- Participants suggested that a more streamlined mobile experience would enhance usability.

## **Proposed Improvements**

- Some suggestions included a redesign of the interface, improvement of filtering options, and increased mobile responsiveness.
- Improving filtering options to refine and sort search results more effectively was recommended.
- Increased mobile responsiveness and mobile-specific improvements were suggested to make the site easier to navigate on smaller screens.

## ❖ Discussion

### 1. Modern UI and Visual Design

Issues: The outdated look and feel of the website drew criticisms. "It looks too text-heavy and boring," said participants, rendering the screen less captivating.

Proposed Changes:

- Clean, modern interface easy to navigate.
- Visual items should be included as icons, pictures, while making categories differentiate with colors-this will lessen heavy text representation.
- Animation and transition are to be provided to increase interactivity so that the user experience actually comes alive.

Benefits: It will make the site considerably more visually attractive and more usable and thus will help retain users.

### 2. Improved Searching Functionality

Issues: The search feature relies that the enquiring requires the exact keywords for searching, which gives off irrelevant results when any word is missing or not entirely accurate.

Proposed Changes:

- Use predictive search with an autocomplete suggestion for queries.
- Incorporate after identification for synonyms, and which would widen search results without sacrifices in contextual relevance.

- Some advanced filtering options, such as toggles for special features like pet-friendly housing.

Benefits: Better search functionality goes a long way in saving time and reducing user frustration, thus prompting more frequent visitation by the users.

### **3. A Responsive Design for Mobile Use**

Issues: The mobile version is cramped and difficult to use-small text and limited responsiveness.

Proposed Changes:

- The redesign of the mobile interface to include larger touch targets and simplified navigation features.
- The layout must be optimized wherever possible to promote general usability across varying sizes of screens.

Benefits: Responsive mobile design will improve accessibility and convenience, catering to users whose preference is browsing with mobile devices.

### **4. Improved Layouts of Text and Content**

Issues: Appeared as a thick wall of text was pointed out by the participants that bar quick navigation.

Proposed Changes:

- Whitespace and collapse segments of content.
- Use a larger, more readable font and match text elements for alignment consistency.

Benefits: It will contribute to good readability while helping users complete the search for solutions pretty quickly.

## **5. User Feedback Mechanisms**

Issues: Collecting and addressing feedback properly would require a streamlined system for categorizing, analyzing, and prioritizing suggestions, which could complicate development and lead to strains on resources.

Proposed Changes:

- An interface will be built to allow users to give suggestions for constant improvements.
- Provide a "Help" or "FAQs" section for common navigation issues.

Benefits: These additions will foster a sense of community engagement and provide actionable insights for further enhancements.

By addressing some of these issues, the Craigslist website can significantly improve its usability, ensuring it remains relevant and competitive in the online marketplace space. While the site has incorporated its own stable design for decades, It would have to eventually level up it's User Interface so that it could keep the new users - who are not familiar with it, engaged and interested.