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CSUMB

Heuristic Evaluation Report

The Catalyst

Summary

The Catalyst is a popular entertainment venue located in downtown Santa Cruz, California. The venue provides multiple stages to host performances on. It also puts on different types of acts such as, music, comedy and burlesque. Although the Catalyst does offer a bar for customers over the age of twenty-one, it also caters to a younger crowd with many shows being available to those over the age of sixteen.  
  
In order to promote future professional opportunities with The Catalyst, The California State University of Monterey Bay’s design club conducted a usability study of the process of finding events and ordering tickets online via mobile and laptop devices on the venue’s website. This study was done to show The Catalyst their strengths and weaknesses their site offers from the perspective of a new resident to the area who is a music and theater aficionado.

Methodology

This study focused on two simple tasks:

1. Find all the events on the site from now until December 15, 2017
2. Complete the task of ordering tickets online

This study focused on two types of devices

1. Mobile
2. Average size computer

The purpose of these tasks was to see how easy it was for a user to find and event they are interested in and purchase tickets to the event. With the information provided by the user the design club can make recommendation to The Catalyst on ways to improve their site and ultimately increase their ticket sales. The reason these two devices were chosen is that the venue primarily caters to a younger crowd which means having a good mobile experience is vital for business success. Although many users just interact on mobile devices, there are still plenty of computer users out there so it is important to evaluate both. Many businesses also offer more on their large screen sites than on their mobile platform so it is important to see what may be missing on the mobile that is offered on the regular platform. It is also important from a branding perspective to see if both sites portray the brand in a consistent fashion.

Evaluation

In order to evaluate the sites, ten heuristics of usability were used. These heuristics were devised by Nielson and Molich and have been used and tested for years. They have been proven to increase the user experience and increase profit margins for businesses.

The Ten Heuristics

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Heuristics | Explanation |
| 1 | Visibility of system status | Displays the step the user is on in a process, provides a visual cue when system is loading and lets the user know where they are in the system. |
| 2 | Match between system and real world | Does the system provide real world cues that translate to the digital world? A shopping cart icon in an eCommerce site represents the same thing as a shopper’s cart in a store |
| 3 | User control and freedom | Allows a user an easy exit from a function they didn’t want to do. |
| 4 | Consistency and standards | Are design elements consistent throughout the site, are buttons and menus in the same layout, do the mobile and web platform look like the same brand, does the site follow platform standards? |
| 5 | Error prevention | Prevents errors before they happen. |
| 6 | Recognition rather than recall | Instead of a user having to remember information or how to do something the system provides them ways to recognize what action they should do. |
| 7 | Flexibility and efficiency of use | Advanced users are able to tailor quick actions that are hidden from the novice. |
| 8 | Aesthetic and minimalistic design | Content should only contain pertinent information. |
| 9 | Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors | Plain language should be displayed to the user on an error instead of a code. The user should also be told how to fix this error. |
| 10 | Help and documentation | If needed help and documentation should be concise concrete steps that make it easy for the user to use the system. |

The Rating Scale

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| --- | --- |
| Rating | Problem |
| 0 | No problems |
| 1 | Cosmetic problems |
| 2 | Minor problems that don’t interfere with using the system |
| 3 | Minor problems that do interfere with using the system |
| 4 | Major problems |
| 5 | Catastrophic |

Findings and Recommendations

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| Rating | Heuristics |
| 3 | 4 Consistency and standards |

**Consistency Problems:**  
The Catalyst is basically three separate sites that have little to no cohesion. There is the mobile site, the large device site and then the ticketing (Tickefly). There is nothing that is shared across all three home pages. The home pages on the site basically just share the logo, search and a list of events. To keep cohesion the concert type feel should be added to the mobile. Their buy ticket icon should go across both platforms. The user in this study went through the mobile site first so when they reach the busy desktop home page the ticket icon looked more like a wrench. By having the same icons on all platforms this would add consistency letting the user know how to buy tickets.

|  |
| --- |
| Home Pages |
| Large device home page |
| C:\Users\Tee\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Word\home_d1.jpg |
| Mobile device home page |
| C:\Users\Tee\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Word\home_m1.jpg |
| Ticketing home pages |
| C:\Users\Tee\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Word\home_d2.jpgC:\Users\Tee\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Word\home_m2.jpg |

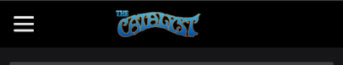
One of the problems small businesses have is processing credit cards. PCI compliance issues can make it hard for a small business to afford the tools they need to do purchasing through their site. This is why you are redirected to Ticketfly to actually purchase the ticket. It is completely obvious when you reach this page you are no longer on the Catalyst website.   
  
Another consistency issue has to do with buttons. These buttons basically do the same thing but in different areas of the site. The buttons on the left lack contrast. Although the buttons on the right are more legible they wouldn’t be for someone who is color blind.

C:\Users\Tee\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Word\button_1.jpg C:\Users\Tee\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Word\button_2.jpg

Many features on this site are not consistant looking. Take the search field for example. The search field on the right breaks with consistancy.

C:\Users\Tee\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Word\search_1.jpg C:\Users\Tee\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Word\search_2.jpg

**Consistency Solutions:**The Catalyst could leverage a responsive website framework like Bootstrap. This would allow the business to have one codebase that would cut the cost of hosting as well as give a consistent design to all platforms. To solve the ticketing page problem The Catalyst could use the savings from webhosting to integrate the Ticketfly API directly into their site. This would keep the user on their site. To solve the button issue using a more modern looking button style with two contrasting colors would fix the readability and update the feel of the site.  
  
**Standards Problems:**The following image is from an Android phone. Where it is a common standard on native Android applications to have the menu on the left most web applications have this menu on the right.



The following image shows how the purchase button on the far right, the cart is separated from this button. The user in this case missed the eleven-dollar service fee that Ticketfly charged. The user stated they are less likely to use the site after this experience.

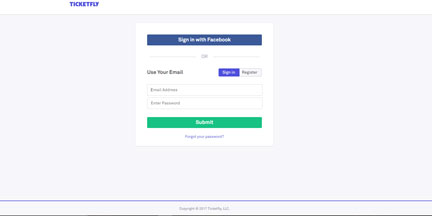


**Standards Solutions:**  
Tailor all menus, buttons and links to follow web guidelines. This will allow a user to interact with the site seamlessly.

A shopping cart should be easy to read and not have multiple boxes with different information strewn everywhere. The purchase button should be under the items.

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| Rating | Heuristics |
| 5 | 3 User control and freedom |

**User Control and Freedom Problem:**  
When The Catalyst sends the user to Ticketfly they are stuck that page. From this page there is no way for the user to go back to The Catalyst website without either hitting the browser back button or typing the URL back into the address bar.

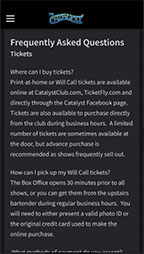


**User Control and Freedom Solution:**The solution to this problem has one of the same solutions as the consistency section. If The Catalyst implemented the Ticketfly API they could keep the user on their site. This would allow the user to have an easy exit route.

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| Rating | Heuristics |
| 1 | 10 Help and documentation |

**Help and Documentation Problem**

This is the is the FAQ page for the mobile. There is no easy way for the user to find an answer to a question they have. They have to scroll through all these paragraphs of text that have no visual cue as to where a new FAQ begins besides a space.

**:**

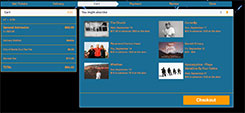
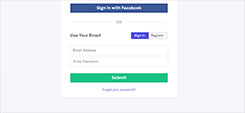
**Help and Documentation Solution:**

Having a search at the top would help a user find exactly the solution they are using for. The user would also benefit from the question being a different color than the answer.

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| Rating | Heuristics |
| 1 | 1 Visibility of the system |

**Visibility of the System Problem:**

Ticketfly does a good job of letting the user know the status of their purchase. There is a status bar at the top of where the user can see how many steps they completed and how many more they need to do. This lets the user know precisely how long the checkout process will take. There is a glitch in the system though. When a user clicks checkout they are redirected to a login page that is completely different from the look and feel.

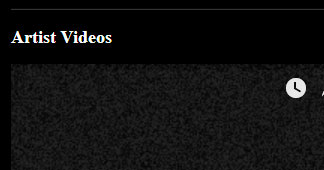
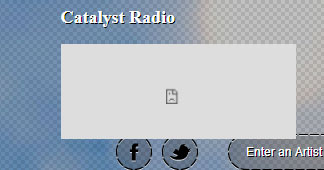
**Visibility of the System Solution:**

The Catalyst does not have any control over how Ticketfly works so the only solution for the business would be to implement the Ticketfly API. For Ticketfly to correct this issue across all the venues they serve, they should apply the same template to the login that they are using for the checkout process.

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| Rating | Heuristics |
| 3 | 5 Error prevention |

**Error Prevention Problem:**

The Catalyst’s webpage has many broken widgets. Two of these widgets are their radio player and their artists’ videos. The display of these broken widgets leaves the page looking very unprofessional. It is also a deterrent for users who might listen to a performance or watch a video and use that to decide they want to buy tickets to the show. This impacts directly The Catalyst’s sales.

**Error Prevention Solutions:**

There are a couple of solutions that The Catalyst could implement they could use JavaScript to detect if a widget doesn’t load in a specific browser and then hide it. Another solution would be for the business to update their widgets to ones that work across all major modern browser.

Conclusion

Most of the problems The Catalyst site face could be solved by implementing a responsive CSS framework that would allow them to leverage one codebase across all browsers. This would make their mobile and desktop sites have the same look and feel. It would also help with their search engine rankings since the same pages would be hit on all platforms.

The other big issue The Catalyst faces is the user leaving their site to go to Ticketfly for purchasing their tickets. The user is then stranded on Ticketfly. It is also very obvious for the user that they are no longer on The Catalyst website. Branding and consistency suffer greatly for the user in this experience. The solution lies in the business implementing the Ticketfly API instead of redirecting the user.