**Pluto TV UX Case Study**

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Introduction

Pluto TV is a free streaming service utilized by many people. While users appreciate the free aspect, there is criticism regarding the design layout of the platform. The overwhelming setup of Pluto TV impairs user enjoyment and undermines the overall user experience of the platform. The main concerns highlighted in this UX Testing paper are its lack of personalization features, poor visual layout, and accessibility issues. A reconfiguration of Pluto TV’s homepage and menu would help address these issues and improve user experience.

User Analysis

According to Similar Web, Pluto TV had 27.6 million visits in the last month. It is primarily used by older Gen Zs and middle-aged Millennials with the largest group of visitors falling in the 25-34 age range. However, people of all ages and regions use Pluto TV for entertainment purposes.

Hulu serves as a good streaming platform for comparison with Pluto TV, as it also offers a subscription that includes Live TV. Hulu employs several methods for personalizing its platform which could serve as inspiration for improving Pluto TV’s layout. Firstly, Hulu allows for multiple profiles that track viewing history and provide content recommendations. It also offers users personalized recommendations based on user preferences and viewing history. Hulu’s home screen is tailored, providing a distinct and personalized experience. Additionally, Hulu’s live TV personalization feature recommends channels based on user engagement, making it easier for users to find channels of interest quickly reducing frustration. Moreover, Hulu customizes ad content to align with users’ interests, enhancing the overall user experience by helping users find content to appeals to them.

Although Pluto TV is primarily used for entertainment, it has faced criticism regarding its functionality. For instance, a user reported difficulty adding a show to his favorites due to Pluto TV’s malfunctioning. Additionally, users have experienced issues with updating Pluto TV, “their ‘updates’ over the last couple of years have left this app virtually unusable unless you enjoy constant fiddling and tinkering with it” (J. Henderson, 2023). These flaws hinder accessibility and fail to meet users’ needs.

A green and white chart with white text

Description automatically generated

Figure 1

There are several different reasons why users may utilize Pluto TV. For example, as shown in Figure 1 (above), news viewers appreciate the user-friendly platform for easy navigation. Sports fans also enjoy using Pluto TV because it provides them access to live TV. They would benefit from easy access to their most-used channels. Those interested in news content would also benefit from this personalization. Additionally, families also may utilize Pluto TV to watch content suitable for all ages. Different profiles make it easier for parents to monitor the content their children are watching and engaging with. However, these are not the only types of users who interact with Pluto TV; there are several other ways and reasons users engage with the platform.

A screenshot of a computer screen

Description automatically generated

Figure 2

As understood through the user journey map above in Figure 2, personalization and a user-friendly interface can enhance the user experience with Pluto TV. If Pluto TV implemented personalized algorithms that provide tailored content recommendations engaging with users, it would make content discovery more enjoyable and accessible. Navigation and page layout are important to allow users to find content effortlessly. Interactivity within the Pluto TV is vital to Abby’s positive user experience (Figure 2). Improving Pluto TV’s design would allow her preferences to be met and create a more seamless experience.

Problem Statement

The UX problem that will be addressed below is the navigation and information architecture of Pluto TV’s on-demand page. These issues stem from the poor visual layout and lack of accessibility.

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated

Figure 3

Figure 3 shows that Pluto TV has inadequate personalization features and a layout that does not allow users to discover and enjoy content efficiently. The lack of specific personal features results in generic recommendations rather than tailored suggestions based on individual preferences. This makes it harder for users to find content they are interested in. Additionally, the layout makes navigation challenging and hinders users’ discovery experience.

Problem and Examples

**A screenshot of a video

Description automatically generated**

Figure 4

Figure 4 above displays the flaws in Pluto TV’s layout. Firstly, the pop-up obscures the movie description, preventing users from reading it and hindering their ability to decide if they would like to watch the movie. Additionally, the description is very vague and does not provide users with enough information to determine if they would like the content. Furthermore, this page lacks a tab that provides users with access to the trailer.

A screenshot of a video game

Description automatically generated

Figure 5

Again, Figure 5, shown above, the layout is not preferable since the pop-up is so large. To improve efficiency, the pop-up should start to disappear as the user scrolls down. Additionally, there are not enough categories targeted toward users’ interests, making it more challenging for them to find the content they would like to watch. The top menu could be more specific, making it easier for users to navigate Pluto TV. Moreover, there are too many movies shown at once, making it overwhelming. The sidebar listing the different categories takes up too much room, inconveniencing the user.

Solutions

The pop-ups on Pluto TV need to be resolved to improve user experience and satisfaction while using the platform. In Figure 3 and 4, the pop-up should be smaller and located in the upper right corner so that it does not obstruct anything. This allows users to be able to read the description of the show/ movie without issues. In Figure 5, the pop-up video takes up too much space limiting the categories users can view at once. To address this, the pop-up should disappear as the user scrolls down to view other categories. Providing a more detailed description would give users better insight into the content and reduce frustration when choosing a show/ movie.

There are some tabs that could be added in Figure 3 to enhance user experience. For example, including a trailer would provide users with a better understanding of the content. A rating tab would also allow Pluto TV to gather more information about the users’ interests. In Figure 3, modifications to the categories could be made. Making the menu more specific and accessible through a dropdown tab at the top would allow users to find different categories easily, reducing page clutter and making navigation less overwhelming. Additionally adding more personalized categories would benefit users by helping them find enjoyable content faster. Moreover, reducing the number of cover images for content would improve aesthetics and reduce overwhelming visual clutter.

Prototype and Solution Examples

By moving the pop-up users can read the movie/show description. Making the video pop-up disappear as users scroll down prevents it from taking up excessive space, allowing them to explore categories without any obstructions and creating a cleaner interface. The additional tabs, like the trailer and rating, provide users with more insights into the chosen content, enhancing the decision-making process.

The categories are limiting, and the menu structure could be more user-friendly. The dropdown bar makes the menu more specific and creates less clutter on the page. Personalized categories based on user preferences allow users to find content they find interesting faster, improving content discovery. Allowing for multiple users ensures a personalized experience for everyone.

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated

Figure 6

Figure 6 demonstrates a new home page designed to create a better user experience. The updated menu allows for easier navigation, with individual tabs for movies and TV shows that are on demand, making it easier for users to find what they would like to watch. The ‘My Stuff’ tab facilitates users to find content that is tailored to users’ interests. Additionally, the home page allows for more personalization, enhancing the user experience. It is a responsive page unique to each user. The pop-up that normally takes up half the screen can now disappear as the user scrolls down, making it easier to view more content at once and enabling faster navigation.

A screen shot of a computer

Description automatically generated

Figure 7

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated

Figure 8

The dropdown bar, shown in Figures 7 and 8, provides categories for TV shows and movies under the menu, giving users easy access to their personal information. This improves user experience by conserving screen space and reducing visual clutter, which can be especially useful for users using mobile devices. The dropdown bar also allows for a more focused navigation and increases users’ interaction with the streaming service.

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated

Figure 9

Figure 9 shows that hovering over the movies and shows will display a description of the content along with other features. The description is more in-depth, making it easier for users to decide if they would like to watch the content or not. Show descriptions also include rating, genre, and length/seasons, providing users with more insights into the content. Additionally, there are key cast members and user tags and keywords included. The ‘watch’ button and ‘add to watch later’ remained the same, but the trailer and personal rating have been added. The trailer is beneficial for users who prefer a visual experience, while the rating (the check and x) allows users to provide feedback and helps Pluto TV offer more personalized content. Another addition was the ‘similar movies/ TV shows’ feature, making it easier for users to discover other content that they may be interested in. Lastly, the pop-up ad has been made smaller and put in the lower right corner to avoid disrupting the description and user experience.

Conclusion

Pluto TV is a popular free streaming service that has received criticism for its design layout, which impacts the users’ experiences. The primary focus of this paper is to address the lack of personalization features, visual clutter of the pages, and accessibility challenges within Pluto TV. By refining the pop-up design, creating tabs for trailers and ratings, implementing a more user-friendly menu structure, and incorporating more personalized categories and tabs, we can significantly improve the users’ experience while watching and navigating Pluto TV. These issues can be solved through menu dropdowns, reducing the amount of information on one page, and enhancing descriptions, which will allow Pluto TV to be a more successful streaming platform.

Appendix with UX tests and results

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated

Figure 10

User Experience Test Instructions

A/B Test Comparing Pluto TV On-Demand Browsing Page to the Prototype (Figure 10)

* What do you like about the new page?
* What do you not like about the new page?
* Do you find the menu helpful?

Results

User A stated:

* There are several different ways users can find information, for example, they could find a show they were watching under the “continue watching” section or under the “my stuff” in the menu dropdown.
* The thumbnails of the movies/ TV shows could be more specific to display what they would look like.
* This user found that the menu provided users with a clean and precise interface.

User B stated:

* There is less clutter on the new page making it more visually pleasing.
* Unsure of how useful the “my stuff” tab is since a lot of personalization categories are displayed on the homepage.
* The menu is helpful since it aids users’ navigation and creates a clearer division between shows and movies.

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