

Dating Website Interfaces

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Abstract

For this assignment, Terran Moore and I looked how Match.com, Eharmony.com, and ChristianMingle.com measured in the usability metrics of Learnability, Satisfaction, and Efficiency. For this assignment, we had 5 users create profiles and complete similar tasks in order to measure these metrics.

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1 Learnability

1.1 E-harmony.com

Users were able to fill out profiles almost instantly. Searching was hard to understand and users became frustrated with the searching of the system.

1.2 Match.com

Menus were easy to understand and users could fill out profiles almost instantly. The searching function was easy to pick up on for users, and users could navigate the site with ease.

1.3 ChristianMingle.com

The site was very simple and easy to understand. Menus were clearly marked, and everything was labeled very quickly.

2 Efficiency

2.1 E-harmony.com

E-harmony was efficient on every test except for search ability, which it tested very poorly in. Its search ability was foreign to users who were familiar with networking sites and caused users to be frustrated.

2.2 Match.com

Match.com was very intuitive to users for all aspects. Users felt that they could navigate the site quickly and efficiently with little errors and with a low learning curve.

2.3 ChristianMingle.com

Users liked how simple ChristianMingle.com was. They felt that the simplicity helped them navigate the site easily. The only thing that was not simple was updating profile information, which took users a few more clicks than necessary.

3 Satisfaction

3.1 E-harmony.com

Users felt this site was very good for something, but bad for dating itself. Users felt that it was next to impossible and very timely to connect with matches. Users had low satisfaction with the site.

3.2 Match.com

Users felt that this was the preferred choice in dating websites. It combined the comprehensiveness of E-harmony with the comprehensiveness of Match.com. Users were happy with how quick they picked up the site and how natural the interface was.

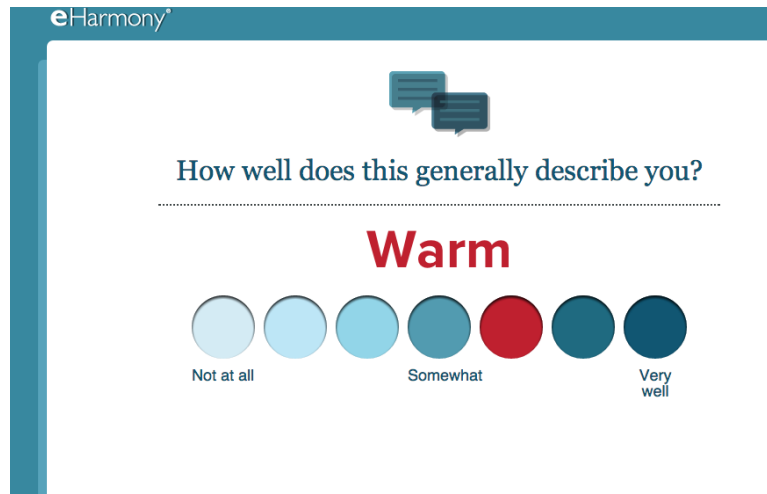


Figure 1: E-Harmony personality questions

3.3 ChristianMingle.com

Users felt Christian Mingle was easy to use, but too simple. Users did not feel that the creating a profile interface was comprehensive enough. Although the menus were simple, they felt that the actions they wanted to take were not always available in the menus.

4 Expectations of Dating Interfaces

For our report, we could not find any specific reference or guide specific to dating websites, so we used the government usability guidelines. The below sections will contain excerpts from usability.gov, and how they are seen on the dating websites.

4.1 "Designers should make every attempt to reduce the users workload by taking advantage of the computers capabilities."

Since dating websites often require a lot of input when making a profile, dating websites should have efficient ways to enter data and also vary in data entry style so that the user does not become bored.

4.1.1 E-harmony.com

When filling out a profile on E-harmony, the user is asked a series of personality questions. Almost all of the questions were in the format as seen in Figure 1. The users in our tests often felt that they were bombarded with questions. The E-harmony questionnaire was the longest, therefore took our users the longest to fill out. Our users were frustrated with the amount of questions, and since most of the questions were in the same format, our users were bored and began to answer questions quickly and less efficiently. E-harmony could change the style of how they ask questions after every few responses.

The screenshot shows the 'Create Your Profile' page on Match.com. At the top, there are navigation tabs: 'About You' (selected), 'About Your Date', and 'In Your Own Words'. An 'Upload Photos' button is in the top right. The main content area has a left sidebar with the text 'Tell us your background' and an illustration of a graduation cap. The main section contains four questions:

- What's your education level?** with a dropdown menu currently set to 'No Answer'.
- Where did you grow up?** with a text input field for 'City, State' and an '(Optional)' label.
- What languages do you speak?** with radio buttons for 'No Answer', 'English' (selected), 'Spanish', 'Russian', 'Norwegian' (checked), and 'Portuguese'. A 'MORE >' link is also present.
- What is your ethnicity?** with radio buttons for 'No Answer' (checked), 'Asian', 'Black / African descent', 'East Indian', 'Latino / Hispanic', 'Middle Eastern', 'Native American', 'Pacific Islander', 'White / Caucasian', and 'Other'. A link 'Tell us more about your ethnicity >' (optional) is at the bottom.

At the bottom, there is a 'Go Back' button, a progress indicator with seven dots (the fourth is active), and a 'Keep Going' button.

Figure 2: Match.com personality questions

4.1.2 Match.com

Match.com does a good job of asking question multiple ways. Like Figure 2, there are 4-7 questions on a page, and there are multiple ways to submit input on this page. This kept users on their toes and stopped users from blindly answering questions. The only drawback to this interface is that the users spent more time per question than they did with E-Harmony. Users had to adjust answering in different ways, which made the questionnaire take more time.

4.1.3 ChristianMingle.com

Just like E-Harmony, Christian Mingle only used one type of input submission for its questions. However, Christian Mingle had a lot fewer questions than E-Harmony, so the user never had the opportunity to be bored by reading questions. The only concern with the question form was that there was no way to change answers if mistakes were made. Besides that, questions were easy to answer and process.

4.2 Results of user searches provide the precise information being sought, and in a format that matches users expectations.

On dating websites, searching for people or matches is extremely important. For this test, we asked users to find a 29 year-old Asian woman in St.Louis. We observed how users in this test could navigate the search function, and this is what we found.

4.2.1 E-Harmony

When testing all three websites, we did not pay for any premium service. It seemed that in order to have any functional use of searching for E-harmony, a deluxe account was required. However, the basic search we used was essentially useless. The user was given no real options of advanced search, and pictures and a lot of basic information was hidden. Also, users could not refine search using a basic account. The information was displayed in an unappealing way and none of the users in this test were able to complete the experiment.

Table 1: Sidebar searches for three dating websites

E-harmony	Match.com	Christian Mingle
<div> <div>Browse My Matches</div> <div>New</div> <div>My Turn</div> <div>Their Turn</div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> Archived <input type="checkbox"/> Closed </div> <div> Within this distance: <input type="text"/> </div> <div> Whose age is between: <input type="text"/> and <input type="text"/> </div> <div> Name and City search <input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Search"/> </div> <div> <input type="button" value="Find New Matches"/> </div> </div>	<div> <div>YOU SEARCHED FOR...</div> <div> Basics: <input type="button" value="[edit]"/> </div> <div> Women: 18 - 23 years old In US Photos only </div> <div>CUSTOMIZE RESULTS</div> <div> <div>Height</div> <div>Body type</div> <div>Marital status</div> <div>Faith</div> <div>Ethnicity</div> <div>Smoke</div> <div>Drink</div> <div>Education</div> </div> <div>Keep customizing »</div> </div>	<div> <div>Quick Search</div> <div> Gender: <input type="button" value="Woman"/> </div> <div> Age: <input type="text" value="18"/> to: <input type="text" value="22"/> </div> <div> Within: <input type="button" value="Any"/> miles of <input type="button" value="South San Francisco, CA"/> <input type="button" value="USA"/> <input type="button" value="change"/> </div> <div> Keyword: <input type="text"/> </div> <div> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photos only <input type="button" value="Clear Search"/> <input type="button" value="Search"/> </div> <div>Refine Search</div> <div> <div>Height</div> <div>Ethnicity</div> <div>Education</div> <div>Relationship Status</div> <div>Body Type</div> <div>Smoking</div> <div>Drinking</div> <div>Church Raised In</div> <div>Children</div> <div>Other Preferences</div> </div> <div> <input type="button" value="Clear Search"/> <input type="button" value="Search"/> </div> <div>Saved Searches</div> <div> Save this search as: <input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Save"/> </div> </div>

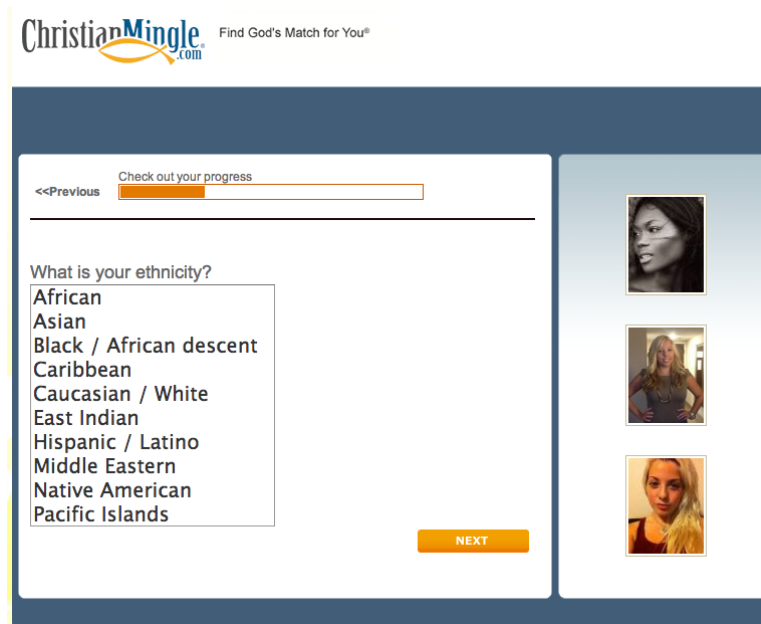


Figure 3: ChristianMingle.com personality question page

4.2.2 Match.com

The Match.com search was very easy to use. Users could easily do a basic search, and many advanced options were available in the sidebar. The advanced options made refining searches very easy and quick. Also, when the text was displayed, it was displayed in a manner that was very presentable. Each match had its own box with a picture and general information. The user even had the information to hide results he/she didn't like.

4.2.3 ChristianMingle.com

Christian Mingle and Match.com both had very similar side bars for searching. The many different search refinements made accomplishing the goal fairly easy. Users found the menus easy to use and understand, due to the drop down functionality of each menu. Also, users felt that since Christian Mingle used less factors to find personalities, the website has less to search through, allowing the user to find matches quicker. However, since there is less match criteria, users in the experiment felt that they could not refine searches as much as they want to. This could be because Christian Mingle users share similar interests and beliefs due to the Christian background of the site. However, there more options users felt helpful on Match.com than there were on Christian Mingle.



Figure 4: Eharmony.com toolbar

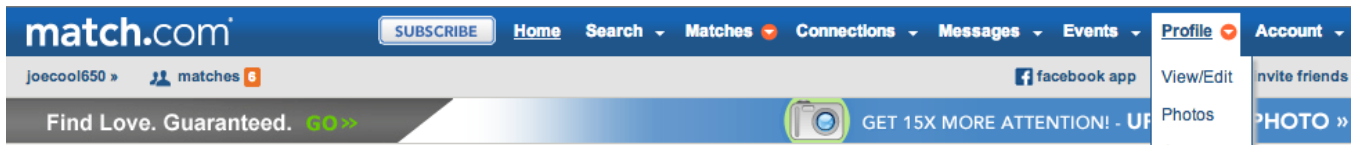


Figure 5: Match.com toolbar

4.3 "Designers should strive to use unique and descriptive headings, and to use as many headings as necessary to enable users to find what they are looking for it is usually better to use more rather than fewer headings."

The final test of this experiment was to see if users could change their profession in their profile information. This task is fairly simple, but required users to look through the menus and bars to accomplish this task. In most cases, the test did not take very long and users could navigate menus quickly.

4.3.1 E-Harmony.com

E-Harmony has very few toolbar options. Users were able to change their profiles quickest on E-Harmony because there were so few menu options, and one of them was to access "my profile". If the task was to access something different on the website, the user may have had a harder time due to a lack of menu items. The user would have to scroll on the page and find links which is less efficient than an all-access toolbar.

4.3.2 Match.com

Match.com took advantage of a drop-down menu feature. Each toolbar option was filled with possible actions on each toolbar option. This allowed users to get what they wanted quickly. Also, if the users scrolled over the wrong toolbar, they could see that their desired option was not there, and try again without wasting clicks.

4.3.3 ChristianMingle.com

Like Match.com, Christian Mingle took advantage of drop-down menus. However, once the user found their profile page, the act of editing a profile was counterintuitive. There were multiple edit buttons on the page. For some users, it took a while to figure out which edit button was appropriate to change professions. In this case, the site provided users with too many options, making the user confused and cause some errors.

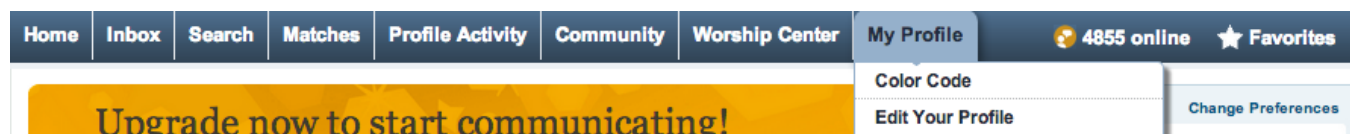


Figure 6: ChristianMingle.com toolbar

5 Conclusion

Each website has its positives and its downfalls. In this section, I will summarize the performance and results of each website.

5.1 Eharmony.com

E-harmony scored the worst out of all the websites tested. E-harmony does a good job of highlighting features that are most used such as putting the ability to edit your profile as a main toolbar option. However, there are a lot of things on E-harmony that are unnatural to the user. The search function is very limited and frustrating. The profile questionnaire was often repetitive and users found annoyed and bored. As a result, users were not satisfied with E-harmony and said that E-harmony would not be their first choice in dating websites.

5.2 Match.com

Match.com scored the highest out of all three websites. Users felt very comfortable with Match.com. Online dating is already a nervous experience, so having a website that is easy to use and understand would help calm daters. All of the menus and website functions were easily accessible, and the fairly lengthy questionnaire kept users engaged leading to more accurate profiles. this was the dating website of choice for all users involved in the experiment.

5.3 ChristianMingle.com

In general, users were very satisfied with their experience on the site. However, the biggest complaint was that the site was too simple to be an effective tool for online dating. When answering questions, users did not appreciate the fact that they were limited by options and that there were so few questions. This led to profiles being very vague. Also, users felt that the website was confusing when it offered many options. All these options were misleading and at times, in the case of changing profession, led users astray from the actual answer.

5.4 Priority of Metrics

After talking to the people in our experiment, we decided that satisfaction is the most important metric, followed by learnability, and then efficiency as the least important metric. Most people want dating to be enjoyable and fun. Unlike the terminal or a bicycle, there are a lot of intangible factors that play into the approval of a dating website such as ability to find people and compare them to yourself. Therefore the overall user experience is very important when considering which online dating site to use. A part of satisfaction comes from the users ability to learn all the features of the site. In order to a user to fully enjoy a site, the user must know all the features on the site and how to use them. Learnability is not a more important metric than satisfaction because although a site may be easy to learn, the experience on the site may

be negative if the intangible factors that come with satisfaction are not present. Efficiency is the least important because many people who use online dating websites are not concerned about time. Dating is a process that is not rushed, and many users are willing to sacrifice efficiency for accuracy. Therefore, efficiency was not a major factor in choosing my preferred dating website choice.