

I. Introduction

Objective

My candidate for website analysis and revision is [Craigslist](#), a web application for trading goods and services among the community in your area. With Craigslist garnering an annual +250M global traffic^[1], it brings attention to what makes the trading forum so successful. After conducting a navigation across Craigslist's and reviewing my personal user experience, my declaration and observation are as follows: I nominate Craigslist as my research subject for its cognitive overload, uncoordinated visual hierarchy, and low perceived affordance.

Intention

The intention to update the Craigslist website stems from its current shortcomings. By updating and modifying the website, my objectives are as follows.

- I. I aim to address the issue of cognitive overload, where users are overwhelmed with excessive information and struggle to find what they need. Streamlining the interface, simplifying the content, and organizing it in a more intuitive manner will help alleviate this problem.
- II. I want to establish a coordinated visual hierarchy throughout the website. Currently, the visual elements seem scattered and lack consistency, which can confuse users and hinder their ability to locate important information. By implementing a consistent visual structure, clear typography, and appropriate use of visual cues, users will be able to navigate the website more easily.
- III. I plan to enhance the perceived affordance of the platform. Users should be able to understand the functionality and available actions at a glance, without any confusion. By improving the clarity of buttons, icons, and interactive elements, users will have a better understanding of how to engage with the trading forum and make the most of its features.

My aim is to improve the overall usability and user experience, making it easier for community members to connect and engage in successful trades.

Persona Case One: Yam

Yam is a woman in her late 20s who has some experience with online selling. She is proficient in basic computer operations and feels comfortable navigating websites and using web browsers. Yam has used various online platforms to sell her personal items before. She has normal vision, hearing, and full mobility. Yam's goal in using the product is to sell her unused household items and make some extra money. She is looking for a user-friendly platform that allows her to easily create listings, communicate with potential buyers, and manage her sales. Yam also values a safe and secure environment for transactions and seeks a platform that fosters trust and reliability.

I. Scenario: Success

Yam successfully navigates the modified application's navigation bar to access site-wide features. She hovers over a link in the expanded menu, and the interactive prompts provide her with relevant options and suggestions. She uses the search bar to find a specific item, and the minimalist product card layout displays all the necessary information. Yam sorts the listings based on price, finds a suitable item, and proceeds to communicate with the seller.

II. Scenario: Error

Yam encounters an error while using the navigation bar, but the system provides clear feedback, such as an error message or visual indicator, guiding her to retry or try an alternative method. If there is an issue with the expanded menu, the system alerts her with an informative message or suggests relevant alternatives. In case of any search errors or invalid inputs, the application provides feedback to guide her towards correcting the search parameters or refining the keywords.

III. Goal

Yam's goal in using the modified application is to sell her unused household items and make some extra money. She wants a user-friendly platform that allows her to create listings easily, communicate with potential buyers, and manage her sales securely.

IV. Action: Feed Forward

Yam uses the navigation bar to access the site-wide features and hovers over links in the expanded menu to explore relevant options. She utilizes the search bar to find specific items and interacts with the minimalistic product cards to view item details, seller information, and prices. She sorts the listings based on her preferences and proceeds with actions like contacting sellers or making purchase decisions.

V. Action: Feedback

The modified application provides feedback to Yam at various stages. It confirms successful navigation actions through visual indicators or highlighted selections. The interactive prompts in the expanded menu provide immediate feedback upon hovering, showcasing available options. Feedback on search results includes displaying relevant product cards with clear information. Any actions Yam takes, such as contacting sellers or initiating transactions, trigger appropriate feedback, confirming the completion of the action or providing relevant instructions if further steps are required.

Persona Case Two: Alex

Alex is a man in his early 40s with advanced computer skills and experience managing an ecommerce business. He is comfortable with technology and online platforms. Alex regularly uses online marketplaces for buying and selling goods. He has normal vision and hearing, and his mobility is not limited. Alex's goal in using the product is to expand his customer base and reach a local audience for his products. He is looking for a platform that allows him to effectively showcase his products, manage inventory, and handle customer inquiries. Advanced search options, customizable listings, and promotional tools are features that Alex values to boost his sales.

I. Scenario: Success

Alex effortlessly utilizes the navigation bar in the modified application to access various site-wide features. The expanded menu provides him with relevant options and suggestions when he hovers over a link. Using the search bar, Alex finds specific products and views the comprehensive product cards that showcase essential details, including product descriptions, seller names, and listing prices. He takes advantage of advanced search options, customizes his listings, and effectively manages inventory. Alex receives inquiries from potential customers and promptly handles them.

II. Scenario: Error

Alex encounters an error while using the navigation bar, but the modified application provides clear and informative feedback, guiding him to retry or explore alternative navigation methods. In case of any issues with the expanded menu or search bar, the system alerts him with error messages or prompts alternative actions. If there are errors in managing inventory or handling inquiries, the application provides appropriate feedback and suggestions for resolution.

III. Goal

Alex's goal in using the modified application is to expand his customer base and reach a local audience for his products. He seeks a platform that allows him to effectively showcase his products, manage inventory, and handle customer inquiries. Advanced search options, customizable listings, and promotional tools are features that Alex values to boost his sales.

IV. Action: Feed Forward

Alex uses the navigation bar to access site-wide features and interacts with the expanded menu to explore relevant options and suggestions. He leverages the search bar to find specific products and utilizes the comprehensive product cards to manage his inventory and respond to customer inquiries. Alex takes advantage of advanced search options and customization features to optimize his product listings and enhance his sales efforts.

V. Action: Feedback

The modified application provides feedback to Alex throughout his interactions. Visual indicators or highlighted selections confirm successful navigation actions via the navigation bar. The expanded menu offers immediate feedback upon hovering, providing relevant options and suggestions. The search results are presented through comprehensive product cards with clear information, enabling Alex to make informed decisions.

Feedback is provided when Alex customizes his listings, manages inventory, and handles customer inquiries, ensuring that he receives confirmation of successful actions and relevant instructions or suggestions when needed.

Persona Case Three: Evelyn

Evelyn is a 65-year-old woman with limited computer skills. She has a basic understanding of using email and browsing the internet. Evelyn has some experience with online transactions, mostly making purchases from trusted online retailers. She occasionally uses online platforms for buying and selling items within her community. Evelyn requires reading glasses and may have difficulty with small font sizes and low contrast. She has normal hearing and full mobility, preferring to use a desktop computer for ease of use. Evelyn's goal in using the product is to find affordable items within her local community and avoid the hassle of shipping or long-distance transactions. She is looking for a user-friendly platform with clear and accessible navigation options. Evelyn values larger font sizes, clear product descriptions, and the ability to communicate with sellers easily.

I. Scenario: Success

Evelyn easily navigates the modified application using the navigation bar, which allows her to access various site-wide features with ease. The expanded menu, triggered by hovering over links, provides clear and accessible navigation options that help Evelyn find affordable items within her local community. She uses the search bar to look for specific products, and the minimalistic and consistent list of product cards with larger font sizes and clear descriptions allows her to browse and select items comfortably. Evelyn appreciates the ability to communicate easily with sellers and find local items without the hassle of shipping or long-distance transactions.

II. Scenario: Error

Evelyn encounters an error while using the navigation bar or expanded menu, but the modified application provides her with clear and informative feedback, guiding her to retry or suggesting alternative navigation methods. In case of any issues with the search bar or browsing the product cards, the application presents error messages or prompts alternative actions that help Evelyn continue her search and browsing activities smoothly.

III. Goal

Evelyn's goal in using the modified application is to find affordable items within her local community and avoid the hassle of shipping or long-distance transactions. She seeks a user-friendly platform with clear and accessible navigation options, larger font sizes, and clear product descriptions. Evelyn values the ability to communicate easily with sellers to inquire about items or make arrangements for local pickup.

IV. Action: Feed Forward

Evelyn uses the navigation bar to access site-wide features and interacts with the expanded menu to navigate through different sections of the application. She uses the search bar to find specific items and relies on the consistent and minimalistic product cards to review item details and make purchase decisions. Evelyn takes advantage of the clear communication options to contact sellers and arrange local transactions.

V. Feedback

Throughout Evelyn's interactions, the modified application provides feedback to confirm successful navigation actions. Visual cues or highlighted selections indicate successful navigation through the navigation bar and expanded menu. The application presents clear and accessible options and suggestions in the expanded menu to guide Evelyn's navigation. Feedback is provided when Evelyn searches for items using the search bar, and the consistent and minimalistic product cards present information clearly and legibly. The application offers confirmation and relevant instructions when Evelyn communicates with sellers, ensuring a smooth and reliable user experience.

II. Comparative Research & Study

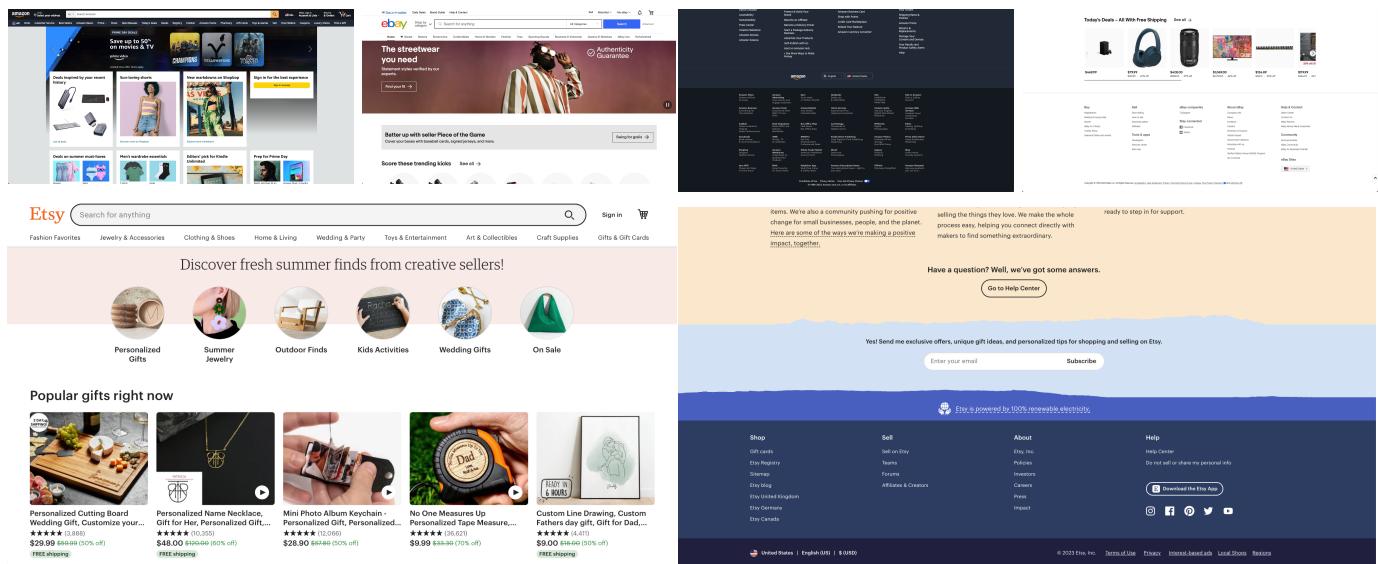
Adjacent-Category Webpages

For comparative research and study, I have chosen Amazon, eBay, and Etsy for their contending popularity amongst ecommerce platforms^[2]. The UI components that inspire solutions for Craigslist's shortcomings are: page structure standardization, typography hierarchy, and increased visual perceived affordance via product cards.

Page Structure Standardization

Upon visual observation, we apply the western reading flow of left-to-right and top-to-bottom. We begin with the header. The logo is first presented into a lengthy search bar that prompts immediate accessibility, and an account and shopping cart navigation. Now the body of the web application, which is presented by a row of suggested links for recommended products, a cross-screen billboard advertisement, and product cards laid out uniformly below. Lastly, at the footer of the webpage, miscellaneous information regarding the ecommerce platform.

Website Page Structure (Webpage screenshots of: Amazon, eBay, Etsy)



Typography Hierarchy

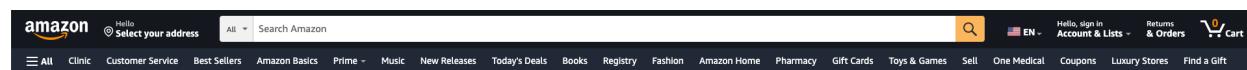
By using typography hierarchy, where the size of the suggested product links is smaller than the top section, the visual focus is maintained on the primary elements. The smaller size ensures that the suggested product links do not overpower or distract from the essential navigation and search features at the top. This helps users quickly locate and interact with the main elements without unnecessary visual clutter.

Visual Hierarchy

The aforementioned creates a natural reading flow for users. After engaging with the primary navigation elements, their attention is seamlessly directed to the suggested products. This smooth transition aids users in exploring additional product options without interrupting their browsing experience or requiring significant eye movement.

As users interact with the search bar or browse through products, the suggested links offer relevant options that align with their current interests or search history. This personalization and contextual connection enhance the user experience by providing tailored recommendations conveniently accessible from the main navigation area. The chances of users noticing and engaging with them are heightened.

Users are more likely to explore suggested products when they are strategically positioned within their primary focus area. This can lead to increased product discovery, extended browsing sessions, and potential sales conversions.

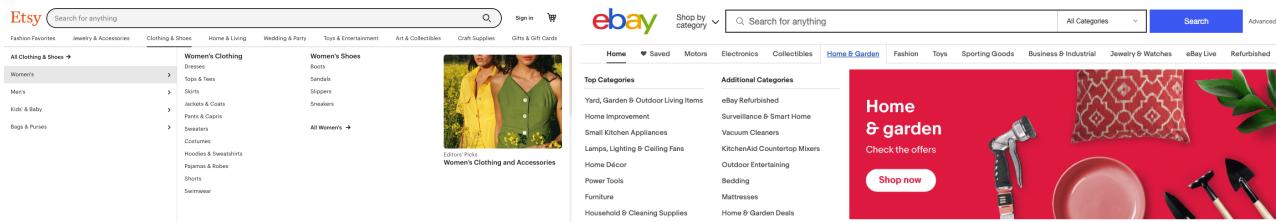


Webpage screenshot of eBay, Amazon, and Etsy

Increased Perceived Affordance

Seen amongst Etsy and eBay, we are met with interactive tabs that expand when the mouse hovers over a category. This design approach effectively communicates to users that these tabs are interactive and contain further content or options related to the specific category. By visually indicating the expandable nature of the tabs upon hover, users are more likely to engage with them and explore the additional information or functionality they offer.

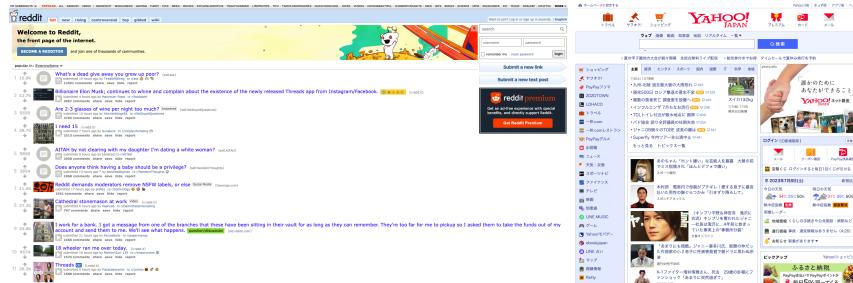
This visual feedback and immediate response to user actions, the increased perceived affordance contributes to a more intuitive and engaging user experience. Users are more likely to interact with the tabs, confidently expecting a relevant and expanded content experience when hovering over specific categories. This design choice aligns with user expectations and conventions, making it easier for users to navigate the website and find the information or products they are seeking. The increased perceived affordance of these interactive tabs can also contribute to a sense of delight and satisfaction among users, and the smooth animation and dynamic behavior create an engaging and enjoyable browsing experience, making the website more memorable and encouraging users to return.



Expanded Navigation Bar (Webpage screenshots of: eBay, Etsy)

Non-Adjacent Category of Similar Design

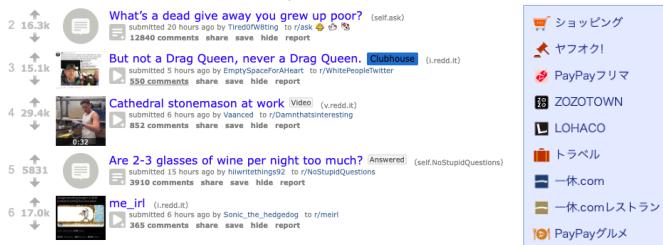
I have chosen Old Reddit and Japanese Yahoo as a comparative web page with similar design within a different category. Both web pages feature a thread-like user interface, but offer better visual cues via image attachments according to their respective topics/navigation.



Website User Interface (Webpage screenshots of: Old Reddit, Yahoo JP)

Visual Cues

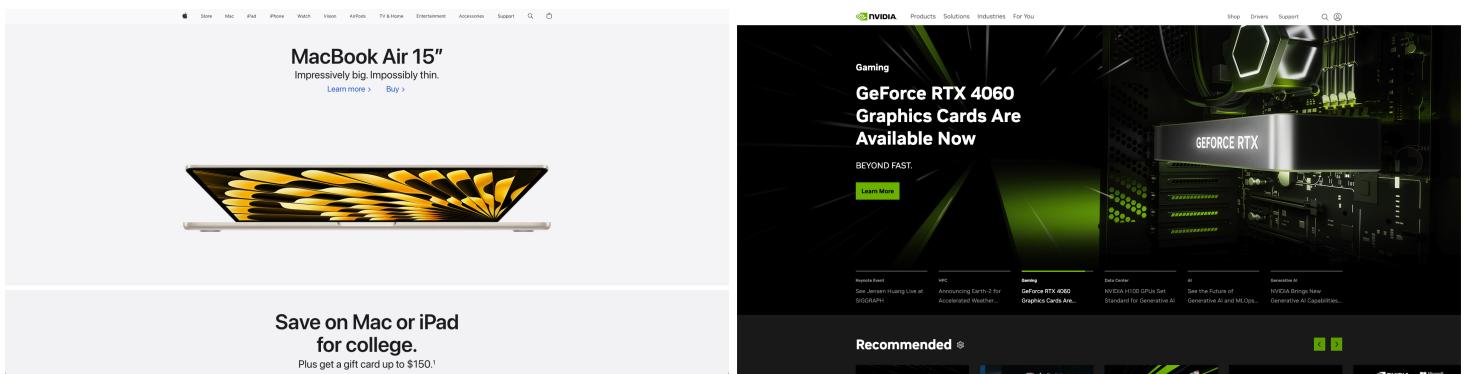
Images have the power to clarify brand purpose and reinforce product value proposition. When designers understand how to leverage imagery effectively, they can guide attention. Imagery also contributes to the aesthetics and usability of a product. Icons, when paired with descriptive text, reduce interaction costs and improve user understanding. Visual feedback, such as noise and touch, provides affordances and signals changes to users^[3].



Icons & Imagery (Webpage screenshots of: Old Reddit, Yahoo JP)

Miscellaneous Webpages

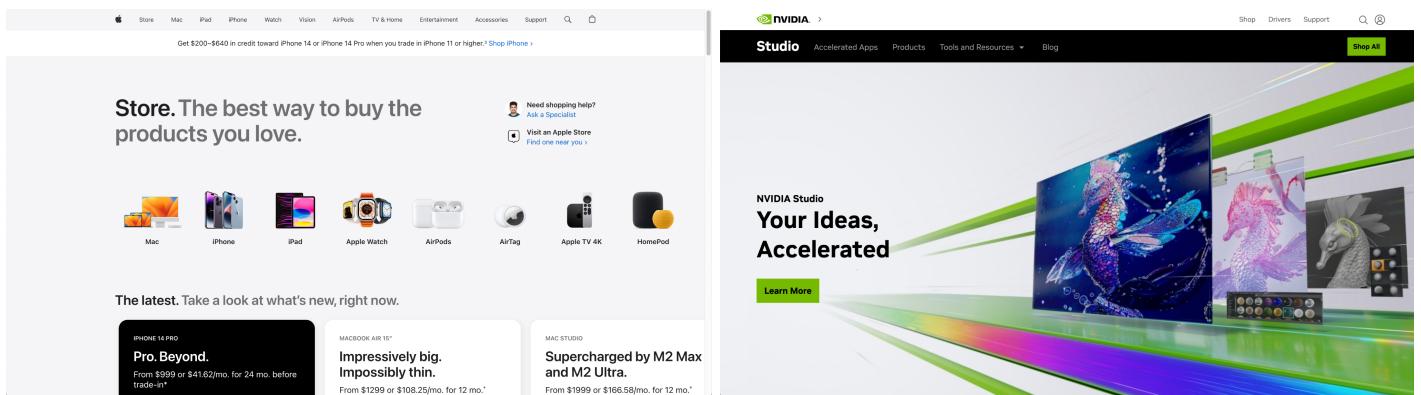
Apple and Nvidia being the few forefronting companies have inspired strong marketing techniques to display an effective user experience. Apple is known for its distinctive and consistent design approach, which focuses on simplicity, elegance, and user-centered design. The company strives to create intuitive and seamless user experiences by employing minimalist aesthetics, clear typography, clean layouts, and intuitive interactions^[4]. Nvidia on the other hand strives to prioritize the usability and functionality of their products, ensuring that users can easily access and navigate through the features and options.



Web Pages Interfaces (Webpage screenshots of: Apple, Nvidia)

Typography and Visual Hierarchy

The components that interest me are the visual hierarchy design choices. Take for example: the first and foremost apparent imagery of apple products are the series of products as the vibrancy of colors tend to contrast from their bright and minimalistic layout. Secondly, note the typography of headers featuring text sizes nearly twice as large as its corresponding subtext. Apple uses varying brightness within the greyscale to emphasize the contrast between header and subtext. While Nvidia focuses on a minimalistic buzzword approach to sell an idea.



Typography and Visual Hierarchy (Webpage screenshots of: Apple, Nvidia)

III. Problem Identification

Observations

Based on my initial user observation, I noticed that the website suffers from cognitive overload, as there is an overwhelming amount of information that makes it challenging for users to find what they need. Secondly, the visual hierarchy on the website appears uncoordinated, with scattered visual elements and a lack of consistency. This can confuse users and hinder their ability to locate important information. Lastly, I observed that the perceived affordance of the platform is low, as users often struggle to understand the functionality and available actions at a glance. These issues collectively impact the overall usability and user experience of Craigslist, and I believe they need to be addressed for the website's improvement.

Problem Analysis

Regarding the uncoordinated visual hierarchy, I understand the importance of establishing a consistent visual structure to guide users and make information more accessible. A scattered and inconsistent visual design can cause confusion and hinder users' ability to navigate the website efficiently.

While my initial observation points to these problems, I acknowledge the importance of further research and testing to validate their significance. User feedback and usability testing would provide valuable insights to confirm these issues and identify any additional problems that might have been overlooked. By conducting user interviews, user testing sessions, and analyzing quantitative data, I can gain a comprehensive understanding of users' pain points and verify if these identified problems align with their experiences.

IV. Solution Suggestion

Solution Description

To address the identified problems in the Craigslist website, I have developed a comprehensive plan to update and modify the current webpage. The solutions I propose are based on best practices in UX/UI design and aim to enhance the overall user experience and usability of the platform.

Regarding the issue of cognitive overload, I intend to streamline the interface and simplify the content presentation. By carefully curating the information displayed and eliminating unnecessary clutter, users will be able to focus on the essential details and find what they need more efficiently. I will also restructure the navigation and search functionalities, making them more intuitive and user-friendly. This will help users quickly locate the relevant categories, listings, and features without feeling overwhelmed.

In terms of the uncoordinated visual hierarchy, my plan involves establishing a consistent and visually appealing design across the website. I will ensure that typography is clear, legible, and appropriately sized to guide users through the content. Implementing a grid system and visual cues, such as color coding and prominent call-to-action buttons, will provide visual cues that guide users' attention and help them navigate the website with ease. By unifying the visual elements and creating a cohesive visual language, users will experience a more visually harmonious and organized interface.

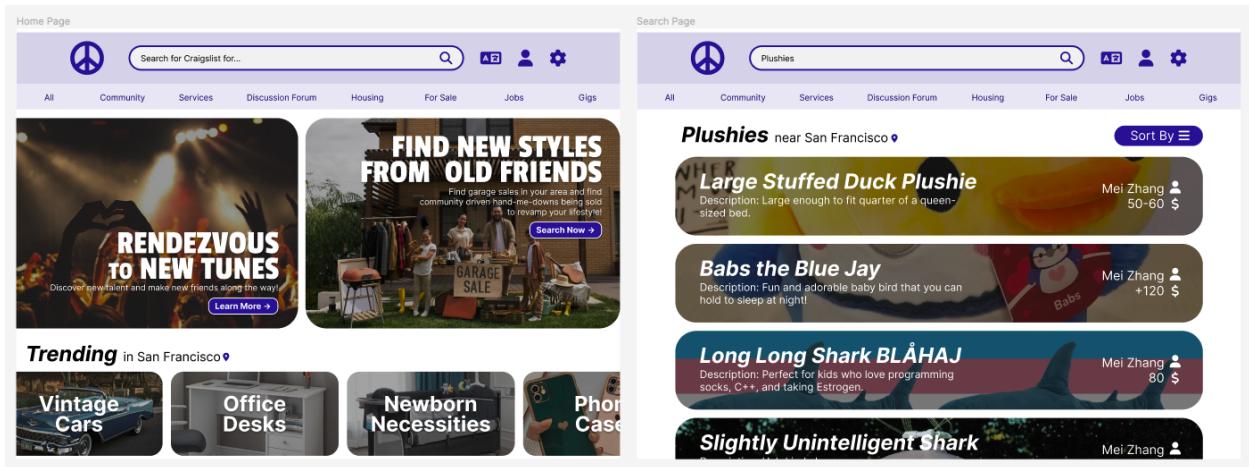
To improve the perceived affordance of the platform, I will focus on enhancing the clarity and intuitiveness of interactive elements. Buttons, icons, and links will be designed with clear visual indicators and concise labels, enabling users to understand their purpose and functionality at a glance. I will also provide informative tooltips and contextual help to guide users through complex processes or unfamiliar features.

Throughout the updating and modifying process, I will conduct usability testing and gather feedback from users to validate the effectiveness of the proposed solutions. This iterative approach ensures that the changes made align with users' needs and preferences, ultimately resulting in an enhanced user experience on the Craigslist website.

Proposed Interface Design Prototype

This proposed design solution solves the aforementioned issues with the original UI design. The implementation of a navigation bar allows the user to immediately be prompted site-wide access. Just beneath the navigation bar is a modified version of the original website's scattered links, in which hovering over each link will prompt an interactive expanded menu regarding the topic. Furthermore, the billboard headers and subheaders help the user suggest item recommendations within their area as well as discovering new activities to explore.

Navigation via the search bar will prompt a minimalistic and consistent list of product cards that display the following: item name, item description, seller name, listing price. All listings will allow various sorts by: price, item name, seller name, and various keywords. All modifications from the original product were designed with user accessibility in mind.



Screenshots from Figma of Craigslist Modification Mockup^[5]

Successful Test Case

In a successful use case, users will be able to navigate the updated Craigslist website effortlessly and accomplish their goals with ease. They will find the information they need quickly, thanks to the streamlined interface and improved visual hierarchy. The simplified content and intuitive organization will reduce cognitive overload, allowing users to focus on their trading activities. Clear typography and appropriate use of visual cues will guide users throughout the site, ensuring they understand the available actions and functionalities. The enhanced perceived affordance will make it evident how users can engage with the platform, leading to a seamless and satisfying user experience.

Unsuccessful Test Case

In a use case where errors occur, users may struggle to achieve their goals on the Craigslist website. This could be due to remaining cognitive overload issues, uncoordinated visual hierarchy, or low perceived affordance. For example, users might have difficulty finding relevant listings due to cluttered content or inadequate search functionality. The lack of consistent visual elements and unclear typography might cause confusion and hinder users' ability to navigate the site effectively. Additionally, if interactive elements like buttons or icons are not clearly labeled or do not provide appropriate feedback, users may encounter errors or struggle to perform desired actions. These errors can result in frustration, wasted time, and potentially discourage users from fully utilizing the platform.

V. User Testing Plan

Participants Recruitment Plan

For the user testing phase, I will recruit participants who are regular users of online trading platforms or have previous experience with Craigslist. They will be good fits for the project testing because their familiarity with similar products and their background knowledge will provide valuable insights into the usability and effectiveness of the updated website. Additionally, I will aim to recruit participants from different age groups and demographics to ensure a diverse range of perspectives and feedback.

Conducting Research

I plan to conduct both quantitative and qualitative research to gather comprehensive data and insights. The chosen tasks for both qualitative and quantitative research are designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed solutions in addressing the identified problems. By testing these tasks, we can assess if the updated website enhances the user experience, improves task completion, reduces errors, and increases user satisfaction.

Qualitative Research Proposal Plan

For qualitative research, I will conduct interviews and surveys with participants. The interview questions will focus on their experiences with the current Craigslist website, their pain points, and their expectations for a better user experience. The survey questions will cover aspects such as the clarity of information, ease of navigation, and overall satisfaction with the platform. The tasks for qualitative research will involve scenarios where participants will be asked to perform common actions on the updated website prototype, such as searching for specific items, posting listings, and communicating with other users. These tasks will help assess the usability, efficiency, and intuitiveness of the interface.

Quantitative Research Proposal Plan

For quantitative research, I will gather data on specific metrics such as task completion time, error rates, and user satisfaction ratings using a standardized usability testing methodology. Participants will be given a set of predefined tasks to perform on the prototype, and their interactions and responses will be recorded.

Analyzing Research Data

From the testing results, I expect to gather valuable feedback and insights that will inform further refinements of the website design and functionality. The data will help identify any remaining usability issues, validate the effectiveness of the proposed solutions, and guide iterative improvements to ensure an optimal user experience on the updated Craigslist website.

Analyzing Qualitative Research Data

For qualitative research, I will conduct a thematic analysis of the interview and survey responses to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights. This analysis will help uncover qualitative feedback on the usability and user experience aspects of the website.

Analyzing Quantitative Research Data

For quantitative research, I will analyze the collected data using statistical analysis techniques to derive meaningful insights. This analysis will provide quantitative measurements on task performance, error rates, and user satisfaction ratings.