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TWC 421

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Fry's Usability Study

Introduction:

Fry's is a retail electronics store founded in Silicon Valley, which aims to provide a one-stop-shop for the tech savvy professional. Fry's electronics has stores throughout the United States, and each store retails over 50,000 electronic items. This study was done to identify potential usability issues in the web page and improve user experience. There were two participants in this study, one male and one female between the ages of 25-40, which is an adequate representation of users accessing the Fry's website for electronic purchases. Neither participant claims to have used the Fry's website in order to purchase electronics but mention they have utilized websites such as Amazon and BestBuy to make electronic purchases. Both participants were taken to a private testing area in my home and give the same laptop to ensure participants adequately met system requirements needed to navigate the website.

Once testing began, users were instructed to navigate to the Fry's website and complete a set of specific tasks. (see Appendix A)

Methodology

Both participants were chosen based on their age, gender, computer skills, and likelihood of making electronic purchases on-line. The following table details the demographics of each participant.

Name	Age	Gender	Computer skills	Online purchases in last 6 mos.	Electronics purchases online last 6 mos.
Mark	35	Male	High	3	1
Natalie	30	Female	Medium	6	1

Three potential candidates were contacted to partake in the user testing, but one candidate did not qualify. The qualifying factors for this study were participants between the age of 25-40, whether they have ever made a purchase online and whether they have ever been to the Fry's website. The third potential candidate was fairly familiar with the website and had made online purchases with Fry's in the past.

After it was determined who qualified for the study, the candidates were notified and given a time to arrive at my home. Each participant was given a different time to show up and were not in the same location at the same time. Upon arrival each participant was taken to a private office in my home and given a laptop. Then, the users were given an explanation of the purpose of the test and what would take place (see Appendix B, C). The participants were then prompted to listen to a specific task to complete.

The tasks were as follows:

- Locate the Fry's company history webpage from the navigation bar.
- Locate information regarding Fry's satisfaction guarantee from the navigation bar.
- Locate a phone number to reach customer service
- Locate Fry's price-match guarantee policy, without using the navigation bar.
- Without using the search bar locate an Apple iPhone 8 (no specifics)
Check to see if available for pickup today in San Diego, CA 92102
Check to see if available for delivery in San Diego, CA 92102

Results:

After completing the usability testing and reviewing the participant responses, it was apparent that the participants both agree there are some positives with the Fry's website, but that Fry's has the ability to drastically improve usability with minor adjustments to their layout, and what information is displayed in the homepage. Mark commented that "The 30-day guarantee and price-match information should be more visible on the homepage". He points out that those key

pieces of information may influence a buyer when making a purchase. Both participants found that navigating the website could be easier. In searching for the Apple iPhone 8, both participants failed to notice the filters on the left side of the web page and choose to scroll through every iPhone available until they reached the iPhone 8. Both participants had much difficulty in finding the company's history homepage because there was nothing to distinguish the link, in the "About us" paragraph. During the study both participants were able to locate the customer service phone number with ease as well as determine whether they could purchase the iPhone for in-store pick up. Natalie suggested "Using more tabs in the navigation bar to break up the information would help me navigate the website".

Recommendations

In completing the usability testing, I have to say I agree with the participants. The Fry's webpage, although functional has major layout issues. It should not be as difficult as it is to find what you are looking for. I would suggest breaking out the navigation bar into more sections with titles that give users a hint as to what might be located within that tab. As for locating the iPhone, most websites place the filter above the products, or above the products and to the right. I believe the reason both participants failed to notice the filters was because most websites position the filters elsewhere. Fry's should try to use similar layout to other large commerce websites, so that the webpage feels intuitive to the user. Overall, I found the Fry's website to be operative with potential to increase usability with a few adjustments to their layout.

Appendices

A. Tasks:

- ✓ Locate the Fry's company history webpage from the navigation bar.
- ✓ Locate information regarding Fry's satisfaction guarantee from the navigation bar.
- ✓ Locate a phone number to reach customer service
- ✓ Locate Fry's price match guarantee policy without using the navigation bar.
- ✓ Without using the search bar locate an Apple iPhone 8 (no specifics)
 - Check to see if available for pickup today in San Diego, CA 92102
 - Check to see if available for delivery in San Diego, CA 92102

B.

Web browser should be open to Google or some other "neutral" page

Hi, _____. My name is Lisa, and I'm going to be walking you through this session today.

Before we begin, I have some information for you, and I'm going to read it to make sure that I cover everything.

You probably already have a good idea of why I asked you here but let me go over it again briefly. We're asking people to try using a Web site that we're working on so we can see whether it works as intended.

The first thing I want to make clear right away is that we're testing the *site*, not you. You can't do anything wrong here. In fact, this is probably the one place today where you don't have to worry about making mistakes.

As you use the site, I'm going to ask you as much as possible to try to think out loud: to say what you're looking at, what you're trying to do, and what you're thinking. This will be a big help to us.

Also, please don't worry that you're going to hurt our feelings. We're doing this to improve the site, so we need to hear your honest reactions.

If you have any questions as we go along, just ask them. I may not be able to answer them right away, since we're interested in how people do when they don't have someone sitting next to them to help. But if you still have any questions when we're done I'll try to answer them then. And if you need to take a break at any point, just let me know.

Do you have any questions so far?

THE QUESTIONS

OK. Before we look at the site, I'd like to ask you just a few quick questions.

First, how many hours a week altogether—just a rough estimate— would you say you spend using the Internet, including Web browsing and email, at work and at home?

Have you made on-line purchases while on the Web?

THE HOME PAGE TOUR

OK, great. We're done with the questions, and we can start looking at things.

Click on the bookmark for the site's Home page.

First, I'm going to ask you to look at this page and tell me what you make of it: what strikes you about it, whose site you think it is, what you can do here, and what it's for. Just look around and do a little narrative.

You can scroll if you want to, but don't click on anything yet.

Allow this to continue for three or four minutes, at most.

THE TASKS

Thanks. Now I'm going to ask you to try doing some specific tasks. I'm going to read each one out loud and give you a printed copy.

It will help us if you can try to think out loud as you go along.

Hand the participant the first scenario, and read it aloud.

Allow the user to proceed until you don't feel like it's producing any value or the user becomes very frustrated.

Repeat for each task or until time runs out.

WRAPPING UP

Do you have any questions for me, now that we're done?

Give them their incentive, or remind them it will be sent to them.

Thank them and escort them out.

C.

“Things a therapist would say”

While the participant is doing the tasks, to maintain your neutrality you're going to be saying the same few things over and over, which turn out to be the same kind of non-directive things a therapist typically says to a patient. Here's a handy chart of “permissible” phrases.

When this happens:	Say this:
You're not absolutely sure you know what the participant is thinking.	“What are you thinking?” “What are you looking at?” “What are you doing now?”
Something happens that seems to surprise them. For instance, they click on a link and say “Oh” or “Hmmm” when the new page appears.	“Is that what you expected to happen?”
The participant is trying to get you to give him a clue. (“Should I use the _____?”)	“What would you do if you were at home?” (Wait for answer.) “Then why don't you go ahead and try that?” “What would you do if I wasn't here?” “I'd like you to do whatever you'd normally do.”
The participant makes a comment, and you're not sure what triggered it.	“Was there something in particular that made you think that?”
The participant suggests concern that he's not giving you what you need.	“No, this is very helpful.” “This is exactly what we need.”
The participant asks you to explain how something works or is supposed to work (e.g., “Do these support requests get answered overnight?”).	“What do you think?” “How do you think it would work?” “I can't answer that right now, because we need to know what you would do when you don't have somebody around to answer questions for you. But if you still want to know when we're done, I'll be glad to answer it then.”
The participant seems to have wandered away from the task.	“What are you trying to do now?”

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There are also three other kinds of things you can say:

- **Acknowledgment tokens.** You can say things like “uh huh,” “OK,” and “mm hmm” as often as you think necessary. These signal that you're taking in what the participant is saying and you'd like them to continue along the same lines. Note that they're meant to indicate that you understand what the participant is saying, not that you necessarily agree with it. It's “OK.” Not “OK!!!”
- **Paraphrasing.** Sometimes it helps to give a little summary of what the participant just said (“So you're saying that the boxes on the bottom are hard to read?”) to make sure that you've heard and understood correctly.
- **Clarifying for observers.** If the user makes a vague reference to something on the screen, you may want to do a little bit of narration to make it easier for the observers to follow the action. For instance, when the user says “I love this,” you can say, “The list over here on the right?” (Since you're sitting next to the participant, you sometimes have a better sense of what they're looking at.)

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