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Website Critique

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Sleep Research Makes Me Sleepy

There are millions of websites out there. Each one has different organization of information, color schemes, navigation schemes, and ways of presenting that information. Some websites are developed very well and have a good balance of usability and proper information organization. Some are developed poorly, making it hard for users to find what they need. When critiquing any website, there are many factors to look at. Understanding the user and their needs is vital to understanding why the website was created the way that it was. Next, look at how the information is organized and how easy that information is to find for the user. Finally, look at the colors, alignment, and other visual factors when critiquing any website.

Users Use the Website:

When critiquing a website, regardless of content, the first thing to analyze is who the intended user is and what do they need from the information on the website. In this particular website, it is easier to define who the intended user is. However, the user base can be rather broad in this case because the average population tends to sleep in a bed, so the information may be relevant to many users. But with that said, for the most part, the main intended users of this website are those who are looking at replacing their old fashion spring mattress in favor of something new, in this case a Sleep Number bed.

The main goals of the user are to find as much information possible about the Sleep Number bed. The user's knowledge of the Sleep Number bed will vary from user-to-user and as such, the information has to be basic enough to assist the users who do not know much about the Sleep Number bed, but it still needs to be detailed enough so more knowledgeable users can still find the answers they need. Other users may be looking for only certain information about the Sleep Number bed. For example, they may just be interested in finding out what their sleep number is, rather than information about the bed itself. The user may also want to be able compare the differences between their old fashion spring mattress and the Sleep Number bed to see if is worth the investment of switching to this new bed, which should include the costs involved in purchasing a Sleep Number bed. Finally, the user may want to see reviews from those who have already purchased a bed to get a better idea of how well the product is liked.

Overall, the website does a fairly good job of giving the users the information it needs. However, the information itself can be slightly overwhelming for some users. Some of the information can be difficult to understand for those users not knowledgeable in beds in general, let alone the Sleep Number bed. For example, some users may not know what a high-density zoned foam topper pad is. But the site does manage to assist the user in better understanding the technical information. If the user scrolls over some of the highly technical words (only certain words that are labeled in a light blue color), the website gives the user a short description, definition, or even a picture explaining to the user what exactly they mean. For the finding the sleep number example, the user could quickly find the link at the bottom of the page where it says in big bold print "Find Your Sleep Number." Also, the website clearly displays the area where the user needs to go to read testimonials and reviews of the product, making it easy for the users to find that information. Finally, the site has a section where you can compare the current

models of the Sleep Number bed and it does include the costs involved, however it does not allow you to compare it to a spring mattresses. The link to the model comparison is easy to find, but could be placed differently. Most users will want to see the prices and the models at some point in their research, and therefore, it should be in the middle or perhaps even at the top to give it more emphasis.

The Flaws:

No website is without flaws, and this website is no exception. The layout and the look of the website are a good to place to start. The homepage, for the most part, is generally easy to look at. The colors and contrast seem to work well together, however the text color for the links need to be easier to read. At the bottom and top of the website there are grey links. At the top they are easily noticeable because they are against a white background, but at the bottom, the grey links are lost slightly in the background color and they are hard to read. They are also hard to read because they are rather small. At the bottom, they almost come off as boring, useless, fine print and as such, they tend to be ignored. These links cannot be ignored at the bottom because it is the only place on the homepage where the words home can be found. The home link needs to be relatively easy to find so the user can quickly go back to the start if needed. The image at the top left does take you back to home, but some users may not realize this and will never click the image, therefore, the home link should be placed at the top and in a bigger font to show the importance of the home link. The remaining links at the bottom of the page are fine where they are, but they need to be both bigger and in a different color to help them stand out from the fine print below it.

Another flaw found in the main homepage is that the alignment needs to be corrected. You have three main points, testimonials, sleep research, and product research and they are completely unaligned. These three headers either should be all left aligned or right aligned to make the flow of the site a little easier to follow. When you have elements that float left and right at the same time, it makes the site just seem disconnected. The flow of the homepage would look better if the testimonials part was left aligned in between sleep and product research, with product research being left aligned as well. You could also have all three of those elements aligned to the right as well, but either way, they need to be unified.

Now the homepage is not the only area with flaws. The testimonials section has some noticeable flaws as well. The testimonials page is a section most users will visit if they are interested in purchasing a bed, because the average person likes to know how others feel about the product. As such, this section should be heavily scrutinized as well. First, the dropdown box simply needs to be eliminated. Users may find this feature cumbersome as they have to click the box, scroll down to find the one they want, select it and then click go. It would be better if those were just regular links in that section and when you clicked the link, it opened a new testimonials page that relates to the link the user clicked on. If the user wanted to read testimonials from those owners who switched over from waterbeds, they would just click the waterbed replacement link instead of having to use the multiple step process involved in the dropdown menu.

The Good:

Even though it does have flaws, the website does several things right. As mentioned, the colors do seem to be inviting and the information on the site is relatively organized and easy to find. The best attribute this website has is that it has a lot of information in regards to sleep

research and product research and all of this information is very easy for the user to find. They use very good labels for each link to help the guide the user directly to where they need to be. For example, under the sleep research section, each link is clearly labeled and shows the user exactly what that section will talk about. If a user was interested in finding information about sleeping and allergies, the first link labeled under sleep issues is clearly labeled allowing the user know that by clicking that link they will find the information they were looking for. Also, the website shows the user where they are at all times on the site with the use breadcrumbs on the left side of page. This allows the user to backtrack quickly without having to go back to the homepage and start all over again.

Conclusion:

Overall, the website is done really well. It does have some flaws with the alignment issues, the small, grey links at the bottom of the homepage and the dropdown bar in the testimonials section, but these flaws really do not hinder the user from reaching the information they need. The site has good contrast and colors, they effectively use repetition, and the proximity is good, with little to no whitespace. From a users perspective, this site seems to be fairly informative, while still remaining easy to navigate and find any information that needs to be found regarding the Sleep Number bed.