

Usability Study

Sharon Huntley Land

Evaluation Objectives

Usability Studies for website design perform several functions. They help us determine if the website is functional. They help us know if our design elements, such as color and font choices, work together. But most importantly, they let us know if our site connects with our customers. ANew's motto of "Love is Love. Rings are Rings" is meant to communicate to our users that all are welcome, and that we strive to make their shopping experience uncluttered, simple, and straightforward.

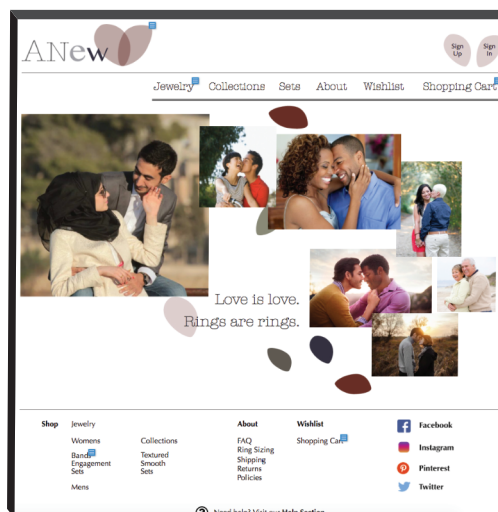
In this usability study, we have several aims. First and foremost is to make sure that ANew's website design is easy for consumers to use, and provides an excellent shopping experience. We also want to make sure that our target group of users find the site appealing. Folks in the 30+ age bracket are our target. In further usability studies we will be testing to see if those in that age range who have been previously married are attracted to the site. This is our ideal demographic.

In order for the site to provide an excellent shopping experience, it should also be easy to navigate, and to appeal to customers visually with the color scheme, imagery, and overall look. This will also be questioned. ANew strives to stand apart from other wedding jewelry sites, so study participants will also be asked about their most memorable aspects of the site, both positive and negative.

As Susan Farrel states...

"User research reduces the likelihood of building something that doesn't meet user needs, but only when everyone knows what those are."

We aim to find out what those user needs are.





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Test Approach

ANew realizes that shopping for wedding rings is a very personal endeavor. One wants to feel that they are in a safe space where they can make their opinions known, and the urge to hold back is not present. After all, users are making a purchase to last a lifetime. They should be extremely happy with their purchases. Therefore, having participants in the comfort of their own homes, without anyone watching, is an ideal test location.

Since we are looking at the participant's experience, the data we are gathering is qualitative, not quantitative. We are not looking at the speed at which a task is completed, rather having the study participants focus on their interaction with the website prototype.

Test Procedure

Participants were sent an email asking them to take part in our usability study. Attached to the email was a list of instructions to complete a mock-up jewelry purchase through ANew's website prototype, and a questionnaire to fill out and email back to the tester once they were done. Participants were informed of their choice to participate or not, and that their identifying information would not be collected. Demographic information of age and gender was collected to assess the market. Participants were asked to complete the test, and return the questionnaire in their free time, and no incentives were involved.

Participants were asked to complete a mock purchase of both an engagement ring, and a woman's wedding band. The procedure involved using a prototype of the ANew website made through Axure. Participants clicked through page links, accessed dropdown menus, and filled out forms in the the selection/add-to-cart/purchase path.

All participants were asked to use a desktop computer to complete the testing, therefore, we can infer that it was most likely performed in the home, or at the very least, the participant's free time.

Test Questions

Demographic data of the study participants was captured, as well as gathering their thoughts and feedback. This was important for ANew so as to make sure they are appealing to their demographic of choice, but also making sure others did not feel excluded. The following is a list of the questions that participants were asked on the questionnaire.

- 1 What is your age?
- 2 What is your gender?
- 3 Have you ever gone online to shop (if no, proceed to question 6)?
- 4 How often?
- 5 Have you ever shopped for jewelry online?
- 6 How would you describe your average experience shopping online?
- 7 Overall, how would you rate your experience of using this website to shop?
- 8 In comparison to your average online shopping experience, how does your experience of this website shopping experience rate?
- 9 Overall, are you satisfied with your experience of using this website?
- 10 Overall, did you find the layout pleasing?
- 11 Did you find the navigation easy to follow?
- 12 Did you find it easy to perform the tasks you were asked to do?
- 13 Did this website meet your expectations of an online shopping experience?

In addition to these multiple choice questions, two open ended questions were also asked participants could let us know about the positive and negative aspects of their experience.

- 14 Can you please share any negative aspects of this website you think need improvement?
- 15 Can you please share the most positive aspect of your experience of using this website?

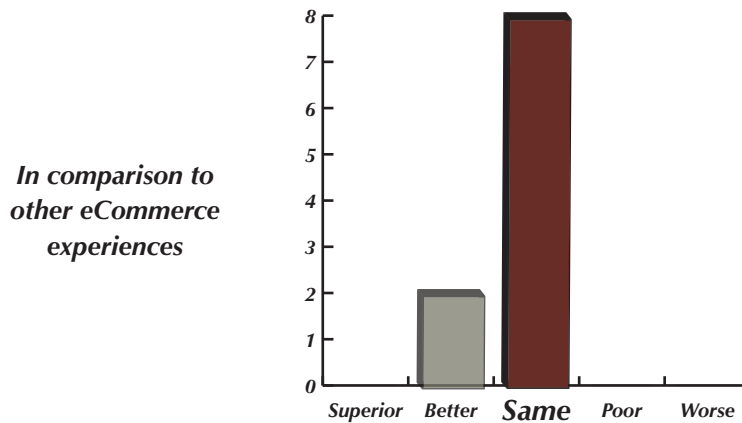
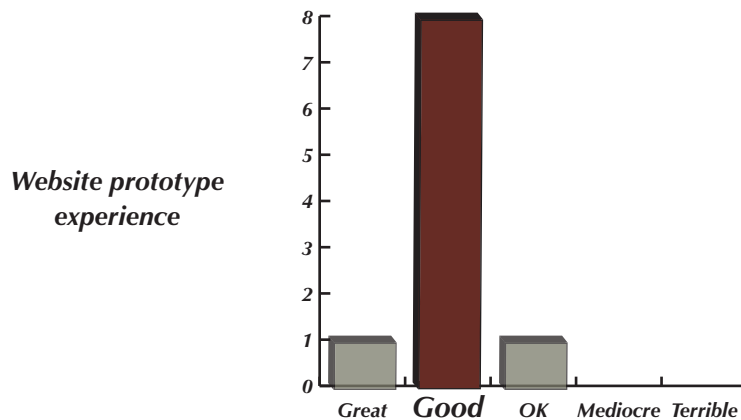
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Data

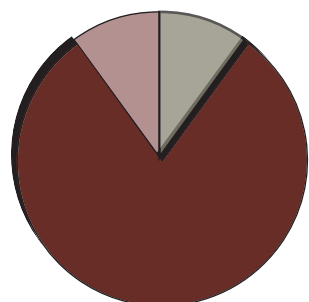
Data was collected from 10 respondents. Out of that group, there were 7 females, and 3 males. Ages were spread across groups, however most (6 out of 10) were in the target group of 35-49. 100% of participants had previously shopped online, with mixed results of how often. However, only one responded "Rarely." Most participants had not shopped for jewelry online before (7 out of 10), however, those that have, rated their shopping experience as only "Good."

Data about ANew's website prototype overall was favorable. Most rated their experience of using the prototype as "Good", and compared to other online shopping experiences, it was average:

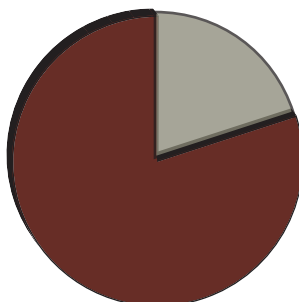


Data (cont.)

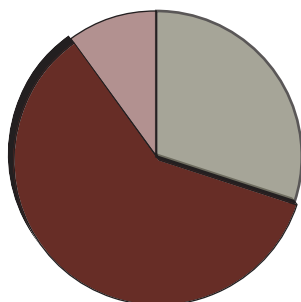
Data was also gathered using a Likert scale to gauge user satisfaction with the website prototype and the participants' experiences.



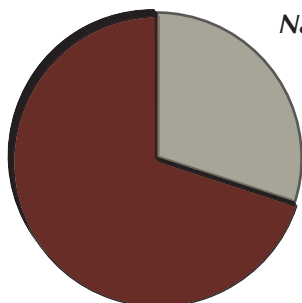
Satisfied with Experience
(Agree)



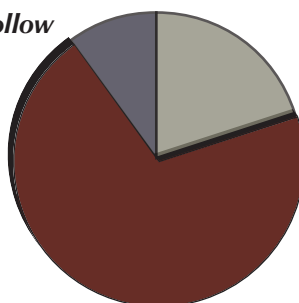
Layout Pleasing
(Agree)



Navigation Easy to Follow
(Agree)



Easy to Perform Tasks
(Agree)



Meet Expectations
(Agree)



Summary

Looking at the data gathered from participants, it is apparent that their experiences are on par with other eCommerce jewelry sites. However, only a few participants felt that the site was better than average. If ANew is to set itself apart from other wedding jewelry websites, it will need to improve upon the features that are different than other sites. In this way, it can truly stand apart and give users an emotionally stronger experience. In collecting participants' thoughts about the positive and negative aspects of their experience with the website prototype, we are able to get a better direction on where we can make improvements to help ANew stand apart.

Participants noted a few errors that needed fixing, and those that hadn't used a desktop for testing, noted that experiencing the website prototype on a mobile device was very laborious. In future iterations, a mobile-first, responsive design should be implemented to give customers a pleasant experience, no matter the platform.

Also noted what that the design was "simple" and, designers should "pep it up." Simple was used both as a positive and a negative in responses, which shows a difference of aesthetics with the participants. However, more participants noted the color scheme as standing out, and touted the site as "straightforward", "easy," and "intuitive."

Overall, ANew feels this was a productive pilot study of their website prototype's layout and features. More iterations of design and testing will be needed before launch. It is recommended that further iterations of the website prototype focus on turning up the dial a bit. Having what we do best stand out more.

After all...

"The battle for ecommerce market value is now centered around who can meet customers' growing expectations for shopping experiences that are simple, fast, reliable, and convenient."
And, "users' perception of their experience is directly dependent on their expectations, and on whether these expectations are met."

We need to focus on the expectations of our users, and aim to exceed them as much as we can. However, our direction is positive and can only continue to improve from here.