



Competitive Analysis

Team Members

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In order to improve the strategy of PCC's site layout, we did a Competitive Analysis through which we identified the strengths and weaknesses of two competitors. By looking at the competitors' website designs and interactive applications we discovered opportunities for improvement and best practices to implement on behalf of PCC.

For this exercise, we reviewed two well established grocery stores:

[Safeway](#) and [Whole Foods](#)

Objectives

Our objective for the analysis was to determine what the competitors' websites are doing right and what are they doing wrong in the following areas:

- Labels & Taxonomy
- Visuals (Images & Graphics)
- Features & Functionality
- Usability Evaluation/User Interface
- Copy

- Calls to Action

Questions to be Answered

Assessing the visual and interactive designs of the vast websites of Safeway and Whole Foods at first seemed overwhelming. To help the team stay focused, we came up with key questions to answer through the analysis. The answers helped us come up with better ideas and see opportunities to improve PCC's site:

- Are the groupings of pages logical?
- Are the labels of pages understandable?
- Is the navigation usable to the user?
- Is the copy clear, concise, and relevant?
- Are the calls to action clear to achieve business goals?
- Does the page format lend itself to clear organization and streamlined design?
- Do the applications function?

Assessment Criteria

In order to answer our analysis questions we gave ourselves tasks to complete that we believed common users visiting the site would do. We wanted to see how easy it was to accomplish these tasks and try to identify anything that would create problems or annoyance to the user. These will be similar to the tasks we give our focus group for usability testing.

How easy is it to:

- Make a shopping list
- Create and sign into your account
- Find a recipe for a vegetarian Italian entree
- Learn more about grocery delivery
- See if frozen pizza is on sale



Findings & Results of the Analysis

Grouping of Pages:

- Inconsistent sub navigations. There doesn't seem to be a clear category/subcategory relationship to the pages (no set hierarchy)

Understanding Page Labels:

- Page labels are too general
- The labels are not intuitive. Often, they use company terms that don't have meaning to those who aren't affiliated with the company.
- Some labels don't represent the actual contents.

Navigation:

- There are no drop-down menus, requiring users to actually click on top level categories in order to see what sub-categories may be available.
- There is no breadcrumb navigation. The user needs to study the site before they "get the lay of the land." Lots of backtracking may be required to become familiar.
- When clicking a tab, some tabs change color, but not all tabs do thus making it confusing which page one was on at times.
- Duplicates of navigation links on a single page are frivolous and in some instances confusing.
- The shopping list function is not integrated well. There are two options: "My List" & "Shopping List". We think "My List" is for frequently bought items. It seems the "Shopping List" is for weekly ad specials. But there is no way to combine the two lists.

- There is lots of redundancy in navigation and a lack of consistency. At times, similar named links would lead to entirely different pages.

Is Copy Clear, Concise, Relevant?

- The copy seems superfluous and doesn't lend much explanation to the section it is meant to describe.
- The font size is too small and difficult to read.

Are the Calls to Action Clear to Achieve Business Goals?

- Heavily pushes the user to participate in coupon deals and promotions.
- Some text links are not very obvious. In some instances, they are simply black bold text with an arrow. In others cases they are red buttons, however, because red is their primary brand color it is used significantly throughout the site, thus the button CTA's get lost in the other red noise on the page.

Page Format and Functionality

- The site is not responsive
- Promotion material seems to be the focus of most pages. When navigating to category pages, copy is found further down the page than you would expect.
- There are multiple utility navigation locations.
- The site does not remember your location upon signing in, requiring you to re-enter it each time you want view store specific details about your account.
- How fast does the page load?

At 40mbps, the pages load fast enough to be seamless. Grocery Delivery re-routes and loads a little bit slower.

- Search Engine Optimization

Dependably on top of the list for searches in my area for keywords 'Grocery', 'Groceries', 'Grocery Store', and of course 'Safeway'.

Assessment

How easy is it to:

Make a shopping list

No shopping list available for a guest. The user must have an account to use “My List.” Many functions in “My List” seem dysfunctional with no action when clicking at times.

Create and Sign into your account

Too much personal information is required. To create an account, you need to submit a phone number, email, password, security question, zip code or city/state, then must actually select a home store, and agree to terms.

Find a recipe for a vegetarian Italian entree

The recipe drop-down menu does not show an Italian tag, but does show vegetarian. Typing ‘vegetarian Italian’ in the search bar gave a category list and showed truly relevant recipes.

Learn more about delivery

There is limited copy or explanation for Delivery Service. Clickable links only send you to a sign-in page, requiring a membership to view delivery options.

See if frozen pizza is on sale

We needed to use the search bar for such a specific request. We searched for “Frozen Pizza on Sale.” Only a small percentage of results are relevant.



Findings & Results of the Analysis

Grouping of pages:

- The Main Category links on the home page make sense for users who are looking at the site for the first time.
- The Sub-Category pages are relevant to the Main Category pages. They continue the theme of the Main Categories had broadly introduced.
- The hierarchy of the pages seems concise and well constructed

Understanding Page Labels:

- The Page Labels are logical and consistent with the content they represent.

Navigation:

- The Main Navigation is not immediately visible since they are using a collapsed sidebar. The Utility Navigation can be mistaken as the Main Navigation.
- There seem to be duplicate links in the Main Navigation and the Utility Navigation.

Is copy clear, concise, relevant?

- The copy is very clear and relevant to each section.
- The copy is readable.
- The content is engaging to the reader and is relevant to the page or section.
- Body content on the main page showcases the Whole Foods social media interaction and blog posts. We expected more content about the store itself and thus initially found the home page confusing.

Are the calls to action clear to achieve business goals?

- The CTAs are very clear because they use a highly contrasting color and they are intuitive (eg text on buttons makes sense). The eye is easily attracted to significant links and focuses on main content.

Page format and functionality

- On various screen sizes, the main navigation will stick and cover body content.

- Resizing the window creates formatting problems. It seems that the page will not adaptively change its responsive qualities upon resizing the window, only when refreshing or loading a new page.

Assessment

How easy is it to:

Make a shopping list

You must be signed in to make a list. And even then, you can only add the ingredients from a Whole Foods recipe to your shopping list. There isn't a stand alone shopping list application for a user to populate with all of the items they might want to buy during a shopping excursion.

Create and Sign into your account

Signing in is easy and obvious. There is a link at the top of the page where I intuitively looked to first. The sign in process asks for a minimum of information which is nice. There's a "back" button to allow you to go back to the previous screen if you realize you've already created an account and simply need to sign in.

Find a recipe for a vegetarian Italian entree

Typing "vegetarian Italian entree" into the recipe search bar resulted in "no matches." But there is an "advanced" search form that allows the user to check boxes to narrow the search. In this instance, it is possible to check a "vegetarian" box, a "main dishes" box and a "European" box. So it's not possible to specifically call up Italian dishes but it's possible to get reasonably close.

Learn more about delivery

The page that describes online shopping and delivery has very sparse information. At first it is not clear if one can buy all their groceries in this manner or if one can only order the deli items in advance, to be picked up at the store. But at closer inspection it appears that all groceries can potentially be ordered

and delivered to one's home. However, it is still vague and when the user clicks on the grocery delivery button they are taken to a sign-in page first.

See if frozen pizza is on sale

There is a nice top level "On Sale" tab in the top navigation. Very easy to find. However, after clicking on that tab the user must then scroll through a list of items on sale, or that have a coupon associated with it.

For users more comfortable with paper, there is a pdf version of the sales flyer they can print out (it does not open in a new tab, though).

Design Recommendations

Safeway and Whole Foods are large grocery franchises that convey a large amount of information via their websites. Because of the sheer size of the content we found that if website components weren't designed well, they could cause a lot of frustration for the user.

With that in mind our biggest revelation was that reducing and simplifying content is the highest priority. Vetting the content and making sure it isn't just filler and unnecessary is vital. We question whether their users want all of this content from them. But if they do, then streamlining it would help keep it under control.

Features that would aid this cause are:

- Labels that are specific and intuitive
- Giving users a road map when navigating the site—drop down menus and breadcrumb trails, for example.
- Instead of having a sitemap/index at the bottom of the homepage, or every page, make sure the primary menus are clear enough to guide users.
- Providing a search bar with filters.

We would improve common grocery store applications by:

- Providing a shopping list that can be populated with actual products in stock
- Allow sale items and coupons to be added to the shopping list.

- Searching for recipes through a filtering form as well as organizing them by “Featured”, “Top Rated”, “Newest”