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A Navigation Nightmare:
An Analysis of Commercial Website Navigation

As Krug states in Don’t Make Me Think, “people won’t use your Web site if they can’t find their way around it,” and thus, website navigation is of vital importance, for it has the potential to abolish the success and prosperity of what could very well be an effective site otherwise. This holds especially true for commercial websites that tailor their site to a product or service. Should their web navigation be subpar or un navigable in its entirety, the consumer will assuredly gravitate towards a site with a more fundamentally sound website with more effective and thorough navigation. While it is apparent that this knowledge has become latent to commercial entities, for websites with poor navigation are harder to come by these days, websites of this nature are not extinct by any means. In particular, a car-rental website at the following URL (https://www.lingscars.com) violates the vast majority of principles outlined by Krug.

Ling’s Cars: Homepage

At first, I must admit that I thought the website was a fake, a joke or parody website meant to mock car-rental websites, yet through a bit of research, I discovered the site is legitimate, despite how unbelievable that notion may be.

The homepage, to be frank, provides the user with nothing but disorientation, as they are immediately swept into a whirlwind of blinding colors, distracting and irrelevant animation, and overly-complex aesthetic. With all the unnecessary facets and text-dense layout, it is made nearly impossible to find what you’re looking for, let alone just figuring how to work the site. Not to mention, staring at the site for long periods of time will evoke eye strain in the user, given that the site is extremely hard to look at. This would no doubt cause the user immense frustration, for the site is not only mind boggling in its complexity but also its sheer lack of usability.
Although the website does employ the use of vertical, sidebar navigation, it has “no sense of direction,” as Krug puts it. When the user clicks upon one of the categories, a menu of sorts extends out to the side rather than drop down like more typical sites. On page 61, Krug states that a hierarchy takes the user to “a more general or specific level,” and while the site does this, the sections are relatively vague and force the user to put more thinking into the action than necessary. In addition, the sections are tinted a variety of different colors that give off the feeling that they are not related topics.
Krug mentions the two different types of users: search-dominant and link-dominant users. While typical websites attempt to cater to both through a search box as well as link usage, this site completely disregards the former, as it lacks a search box all together. As such, the site does little to combat the confusion caused by its layout. For instance, if the site would have implemented a search bar, perhaps it could have been at least marginally navigable, but without, it forces users into a link-dominant role.

Pages
As far as the website’s other pages go, they are styled and processed in a similar fashion to the homepage, with the same dizzying array of colors and information overload. As the website’s sole purpose is car rental, one would think that the designer of the site would be more meticulous in the “Cars” page design and layout, as this is their users’ primary focus. However, this page is equally as disorienting and wrought with confusing elements.

When the user clicks the “Cars” section from the sidebar navigation, a menu slides out to the side, displaying a plethora of different subpages for the user to choose from. These range from “Order a Car,” “Full Price List,” “1-Year Deals,” and it is not made entirely clear to the user which selection they should make to receive the information they desire. Thus, this website requires a great deal of muddling, trial and error, and fruitlessly clicking links before the user stumbles upon what they’re looking for. After countless clicks on both the links and the back button, the user will find that by clicking “Full Price List,” the site will direct them to where the cars and their rental information are harbored. From there, the user can filter through the results to find the model of the car they seek, but once again, the page lacks a search bar. Thus, finding what the user is searching for requires some digging on their part.

Once the user inputs their specifications, he/she is presented with the results shown in the photo below. While the results are slightly less flashy compared to the homepage, they are still laden with animation that distracts the user. In addition, the text is tiny and hard to read, and the specifics on the car information is cramped, crowded. This demonstrates a poor use of the surface area on the site.
Furthermore, none of the pages have a page name. While the navigation implies a name, it is not displayed at the top of page, except if one looks at the “breadcrumbs.”

Although the site has countless drawbacks and taboos in usability, design, and especially navigation, there are a few elements that abide by the principles brought out by Krug. For instance, the website utilizes “breadcrumbs” when clicking from sections and subpages.

In addition, the website also incorporates “You are Here” markers, though rather subtly compared to the way Krug portrays them in *Don’t Make Me Think*. The site accomplishes this by highlighting the section in the navigation bar in a bright green color.

**Conclusion**

With its blatant disregard for the principles of web usability and its confusing and disjointed user experience, this website is a prime example not only of poor navigability but also
poor web usability in general. It employs none of the website conventions and requires too much thought by the user. Ultimately, it makes this website a nightmare to navigate.