

Amazon

Usability Testing

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Amazon Background



Background

Amazon began as an online bookstore in 1995 and has since evolved into the world's largest e-commerce platform. Known for its vast product selection, fast shipping, and features like personalized recommendations and one-click purchasing, Amazon has set a high standard for online retail.

Amazon offers platforms for both smartphones and computers. While this multi-platform accessibility increases convenience, the differences between the UI of each introduces usability challenges for users that are more familiar with one over the other.

Problem

Despite the Amazon website's success, even experienced users encounter challenges with the site's interface, such as:

- Confusing navigation paths
- UI elements that aren't where users expect
- Limited control over filtering and sorting
- Frequent changes to feature names or locations that disrupt familiarity



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Executive Summary of Results

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General Findings: Participants consistently finished tasks but had issues with:

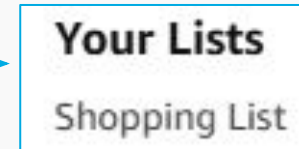
- Setting **exact price** ranges (in Task 1)



- Using **Today's Deals** (in Task 3)



- Managing quantities for **wishlist/cart** (in Task 5)



Executive Summary of Results Cont.

- **Frequent pain points**
 - a. Input interfaces lacked control
 - b. Elements in unexpected places (Actual UI vs. Expected)
 - c. Inconsistent labeling (“Add to List” vs. “Wishlist”)
- **Usability across levels of experience** (newer vs. power users) showed consistent problems in UI design—beyond unfamiliarity.



Summary of Tasks by Difficulty

Participant	Price Filter (Task 1)	Sort by Reviews (Task 2)	Today's Deals (Task 3)	Add to Wishlist (Task 4)	Add 3 from Wishlist (Task 5)
P1	🔴 Difficult	🟢 Easiest	🔴 Difficult	🟢 Smooth	🔴 Difficult
P2	🔴 Difficult	🟢 Easiest	🔴 Difficult	🟢 Smooth	🟢 Smooth
P3	🔴 Difficult	🔴 Difficult	🟢 Easiest	🔴 Unclear	🔴 Difficult
P4	🔴 Difficult	🔴 Difficult	🟢 Easiest	🔴 Confusing	🔴 Difficult
P5	🔴 Difficult	🔴 Difficult	🟢 Easiest	🔴 Struggled	🔴 Difficult
P6	🔴 Difficult	🟢 Easiest	🟢 Easiest	🟢 Smooth	🔴 Difficult

Key

Emoji	Label	Meaning
🔴	Difficult	Participant had notable friction / confusion during task period
🟢	Easiest / Smooth	Participant finished task with ease, with little or no hesitation
⚪	Neutral/Unclear	Task completed, but participant showed uncertainty

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Introduction

Introduction and Purpose

As frequent users of the Amazon website, we have found that despite the company's ubiquity and unprecedented success, there are elements of the user interface and customer journey that lead to frustration, under-utilization of certain features, and even abandonment of purchases.

Our goals in conducting this test were:

- Uncovering friction points in specific actions in taken on the Amazon website
- Determining whether these friction points were experienced across users of varying familiarity with the website
- Discovering what types of issues caused these friction points
- Using our findings to make recommendations for usability improvements in subsequent website iterations

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Methods

Testing Procedure

Selection Criteria

- The participants selected for this usability test were apart of a convenience sample, but all are familiar with and frequently use Amazon.

Administering the test:

- Testing was conducted in person by three separate moderators. Each participant was recorded and monitored during the usability test. Participants were asked to continuously speak aloud as they completed each task.
- The full testing process was structured as follows:
 - Pre-Test Survey
 - Task completion
 - Post-Test Survey

Demographics

By age, confidence with online shopping, and familiarity with Amazon

Participant 1

36-45, Confident, Familiar

Participant 2

26-35, Very Confident, Very Familiar

Participant 3

46-55, neutral, neutral

Participant 4

15-25, Very Confident, Very Familiar

Participant 5

46-55, Confident, Familiar

Participant 6

36-45, Very Confident, Very Familiar

Participant Profiles

Participant	Age Range	Amazon Usage Frequency	Tech Familiarity (1–5)	Amazon Familiarity (1–5)	Primary Device
P1	36–45	Weekly	5	4	Smartphone
P2	26–35	Daily	5	5	Smartphone
P3	46–55	Monthly	3	3	Smartphone
P4	15–25	Monthly	5	5	Smartphone
P5	46–55	Weekly	3	4	Smartphone
P6	36–45	Weekly	5	5	Smartphone

Tasks

1. Search for an inflatable raft and filter results by price range \$17-\$198.
2. Sort the search results by average customer review
3. Find an item that you would want to buy by browsing the “Today’s Deals” tab.
4. Add the item you found to your Amazon Wishlist.
5. From your wishlist, add three of that item to your shopping cart.

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Results

Time on Task

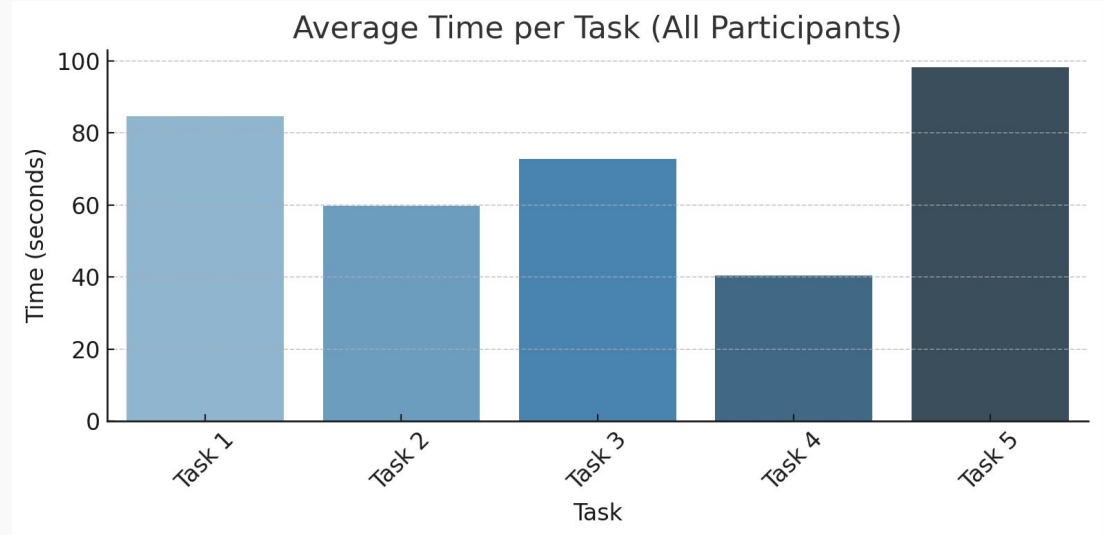
Task 1 (Price filter): **~84 seconds**

Task 2 (Sort by reviews): **~43 seconds**

Task 3 (Today's Deals): **~80 seconds**

Task 4 (Add to wishlist): **~50 seconds**

Task 5 (Add 3 to cart): **~80 seconds**



Difficulty on Task

Participant Rated vs. Practitioner Perception

Most Difficult Perceived by Subject (from post-test surveys):

- Participant 1: Task 3 – “Today’s Deals”
- Participant 2: Task 1 – Price Filter
- Participant 3: Task 5 – Wishlist Quantity
- Participant 4: Task 4 – Find Wishlist
- Participant 5: Task 2 – Sort by Review
- Participant 6: No difficulty reported

Observer Perceived Most Difficult:

- Participant 1: Task 3
- Participant 2: Task 1
- Participant 3: Task 2
- Participant 4: Task 5
- Participant 6: Task 5
- Participant 5: Task 2

Difficulty on Task

Verbalizations

Silence frequently lined up with task difficulty, thus supporting cognitive load theory.

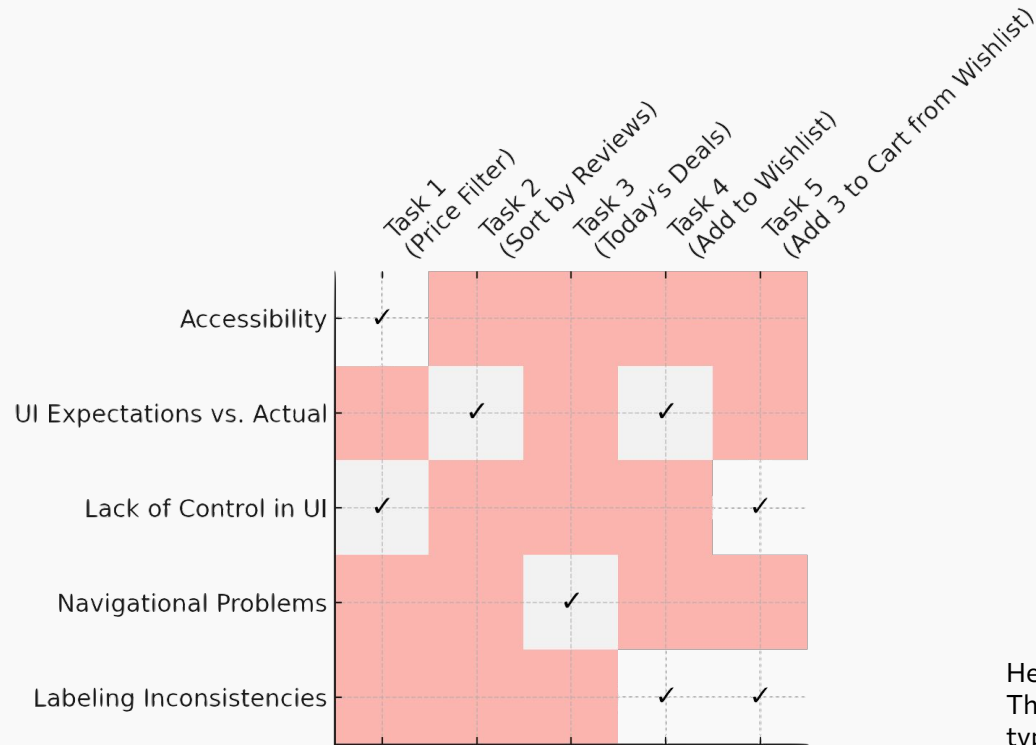
Participants were often silent while:

- Searching for hidden UI elements (Task 3)
- Attempting to input price (Task 1)
- Tinkering with wishlist/cart controls (Task 5)

Categories of Issues

Accessibility	Interaction methods cannot be accommodated to different abilities
UI Expectations vs. Actual	Website elements deviate from expected layout conventions
Lack of Control in UI	Single option for method of interaction with website elements
Navigational Problems	Intended navigational path is unclear or complex
Labeling Inconsistencies	Names of features and buttons vary between platforms or have been changed

Task Difficulty, Categorized



Key

Symbol



Meaning

One or more participants had an issue in the particular task



No major issues were observed in the given category for that task

Here, we map observed usability issues by task, categorizing by type. The chart helps highlight patterns across tasks, highlighting which types of difficulties (i.e., navigation, accessibility, etc) were most pertinent within the participant's journey

Notable Participant Quotes

“It doesn't go any higher.”

— Participant 6, Task 1 (Price Filter)

“I don't really understand this. It just won't work.”

— Participant 5, Task 2 (Sort by Review)

“I guess I don't actually have to like it [the item].”

— Participant 4, Task 3 (Today's Deals)

“It looks weird when you add to the wishlist. It doesn't show you that you did it.”

— Participant 3, Task 4 (Add to Wishlist)

“There used to be more filters.”

— Participant 2, Post-Test Reflection

Key Pain Points Summarized

- **Imprecise price filters**
 - Hard to toggle, don't permit manual entry.
- **Unexpected placement of Sort by Review**
 - Changes by category, buried in tab or hidden by ads.
- **Wishlist quantity must be edited in cart**
 - Expectation is to edit quantity directly from list.
- **Terminology confusion: "Add to List" vs. "Wishlist"**
 - experienced users expected older term

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Discussion and Recommendations

Overall Recommendations

Filter by price

- Amazon uses a slider bar, which can limit user control
- We recommend a manual input option for users, so they can better control price range



A screenshot of the Amazon price filter interface. It features a horizontal slider bar with two circular handles. The left handle is positioned at the minimum price, and the right handle is at the maximum price. Below the slider, the text "\$1 - \$66+" indicates the current price range. To the right of the slider is a "Go" button.

List to cart

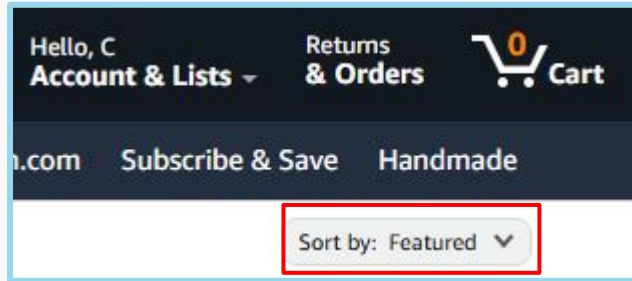
- Amazon lets you add items to your cart from your list, but you cannot control the quantity
- We recommend adding a popup that would let people control the quantity of items they add to cart



Overall Recommendations

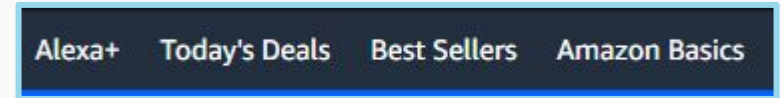
Sort by Price

- Instead of being with the rest of the sorting features, the “sort by” feature is in a corner next to the shopping cart.
- We recommend making this feature larger and move it to be with the other sorting features



Navigation

- The “Today’s Deals”, despite being a core feature, was hard for users to locate.
- We recommend making the “Today’s Deal” tab stand out more for users, making navigation easier.



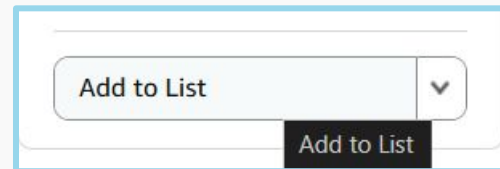
Overall Recommendations

List vs. Wishlist

- The name of the “Wishlist” feature changed to “List” on Amazon, which caused confusion among moderators and participants
- Our recommendation is to add some sort of clarification on the site that “wishlist” has integrated with “list” for users



List feature 2023



List Feature 2025

Limitations

For the sake of transparency, here are some potential errors and biases that could have contributed to this studies limitations:

Mislabeling

- We had an issue where we mislabeled a feature in our tasks. Instead of calling the feature a “Shopping List” we called it a “Wishlist” as it is shown in the phone app.

Price Range Issues

- For our “filter results by price range” task, we unintentionally provided participants with a value they could not input.

Convenience Sampling

- While we believe our data to accurately represent the average Amazon consumer, our participants were recruited via convenience sampling

Moderator Relationships

- Since our participants were recruited via convenience sampling, many users have personal relationships. This has the potential to influence user behavior.

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