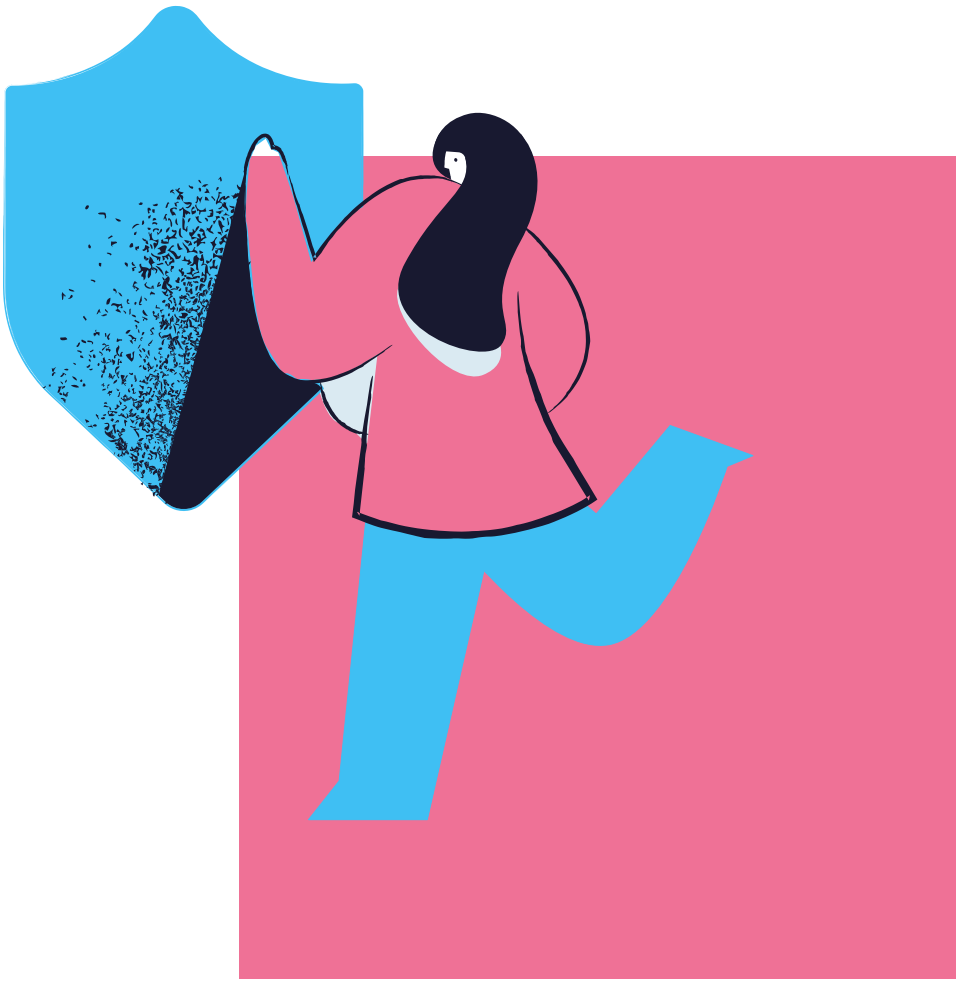
HEURISTIC EVALUATION
REPORT

Donation process in the site Salvation Army USA

salvationarmyusa.org



BOLD BOX

Ksquare University

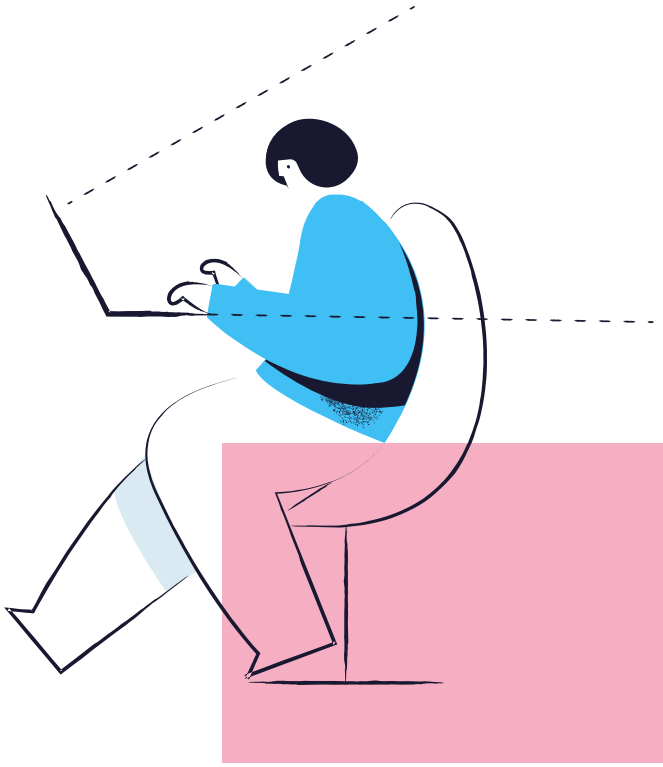
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the learning and teaching process of the Next Gen Program imparted by Ksquare University & the BoldBox team and in order to observe the possible usability challenges present in the salvationarmyusa.org site, a team of three evaluators carried out a heuristic evaluation on the mentioned site.

A heuristic evaluation is understood as a usability inspection method that allows finding potential problems in a digital product (eg a website), where the evaluators take the role of the user, with knowledge of usability criteria and try to predict possible errors that a user might have when performing typical and expected tasks with the product. For this, the Heuristic Principles of Jakob Nielsen, the 8 Golden Rules of Ben Shneiderman, the Usability principles of Bruce Tognazzini were considered.

In general, the results of the heuristic evaluation shows that there are processes within the The Salvation Army USA platform that can become tedious and confusing for users, that is, that they affect the donation process as the information is not clear shown.

On the other hand, there are elements within the interface that can cause doubts or questions about the process in which the user is, since some elements such as links or terminology are inconsistent throughout the site.



This evaluation was carried out during the Next Gen Program imparted by Ksquare University & the BoldBox team that was given during the months of February-April 2021. At the time of this evaluation BoldBox, Ksquare University or The Ksquare Group does not have a business relationship with The Salvation Army USA and is not in the process of negotiating a contract. This report cannot be construed as an endorsement of The Salvation Army USA or its services, nor does it represent criticism or judgment against the organization or its services.

Key findings

The sections that were analyzed within the platform and the user goals that were considered as typical tasks and that were taken as the basis for making the heuristic evaluation are shown below:

Objective / Main Task

1. Donate clothes through the Salvation Army page

1.1 SELECT DONATE GOODS OPTION THROUGH WAYS TO GIVE SCREEN

1.1.1 Observations:

There are too many options on the main page (Fig. 1.1.1), which can lead to the users not finding the desired option, which in this case is Donate goods option.

Fundament:

This is a problem because the larger the number of options, the longer it takes the user to decide, as stated in Hicks' Law. Users might feel overwhelmed and confused due to the complexity of the decision.

Suggestions:

It should be considered the possibility to reduce the number of options displayed on the main page. This could reduce the cognitive load on users to avoid unexpected actions. This could be verified by future usability tests.

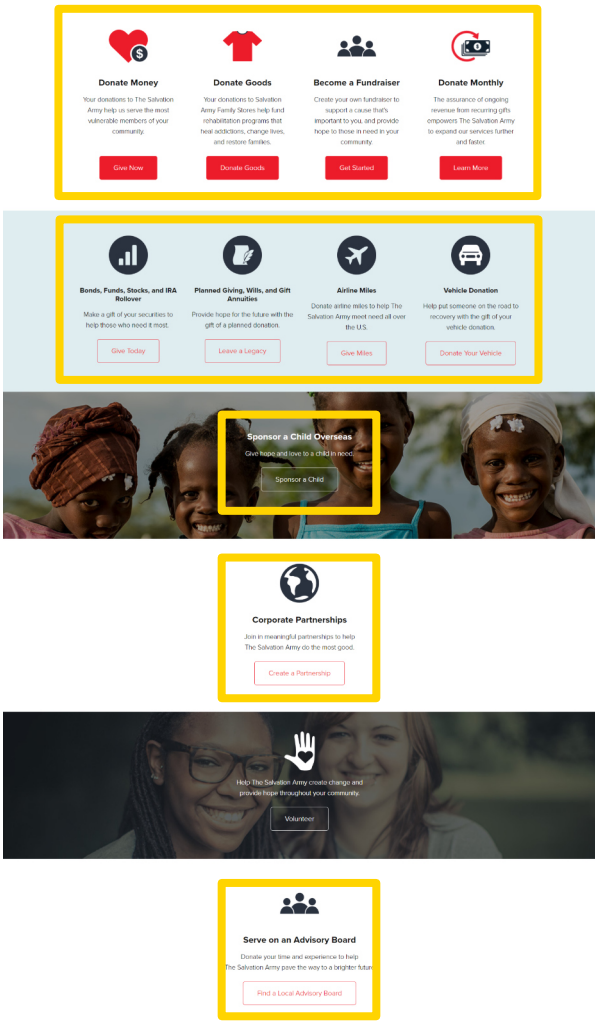


Fig. 1.1.1 There are 13 different ways that the user could use in order to help.

1.1.2 Observation:

At the top right of the website is a zip code bar that allows users to find the nearest Salvation Army locations; however, this field could be mistaken for a general search bar (Fig 1.1.2).

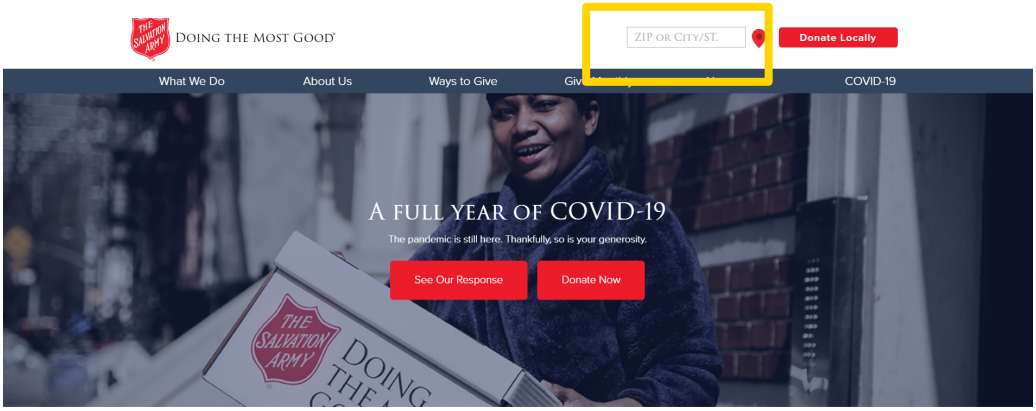


Fig. 1.2.1 Is that a search bar?

Fundaments:

The zip code finder is located where the search bar would normally be: at the top right of the screen. This breaks with users' conventions and mental mappings as indicated by Jakob Nielsen's Consistency and Standards heuristic.

Suggestions:

It is suggested to place the name of the field outside the zip code bar so that the function of this element is clear to users. Also, we considered as well could be evaluated the possibility of placing this element elsewhere to avoid possible confusion for users.

1.2 ADD THE ITEMS USERS WOULD LIKE TO DONATE

1.2.1 Observation:

Users can add boxes or bags to donate goods (Fig. 1.2.1), but they have no way of knowing the amount of clothing that can be donated. When users perform this action (adding items), they might have some questions about it. They might wonder how many clothes they can put in the bags or boxes? Is there a recommended size for the box or bag? What is the allowable weight? Is there a recommended size for the box or bag? These questions may cause uncertainty for users as there is no information available to answer this question.

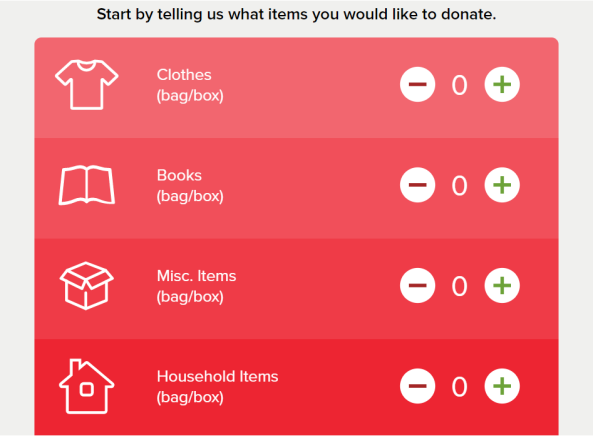


Fig. 1.2.1 Users know the number of boxes or bags that they donated, but they don´t have information about the amount of clothes that can be donated.

Fundaments:

To avoid uncertainty, users should have enough information about the actions they can perform on the site to complete a task, as stated in Nielsen's Help and Documentation principle: It is best if the system does not require additional explanations. However, it may be necessary to provide documentation to help users understand how to complete their tasks. The information can prevent uncertainty.

Suggestion:

It should be considered the possibility to add an information space, for example, as carrier services offer to users (fig 1.2.2). This could give adequate information about the box/bag dimensions and the kind of clothes a user can donate. The effectiveness of this solution could be evaluated in a future user test. We believe this option could reduce the possible uncertainty for the users.

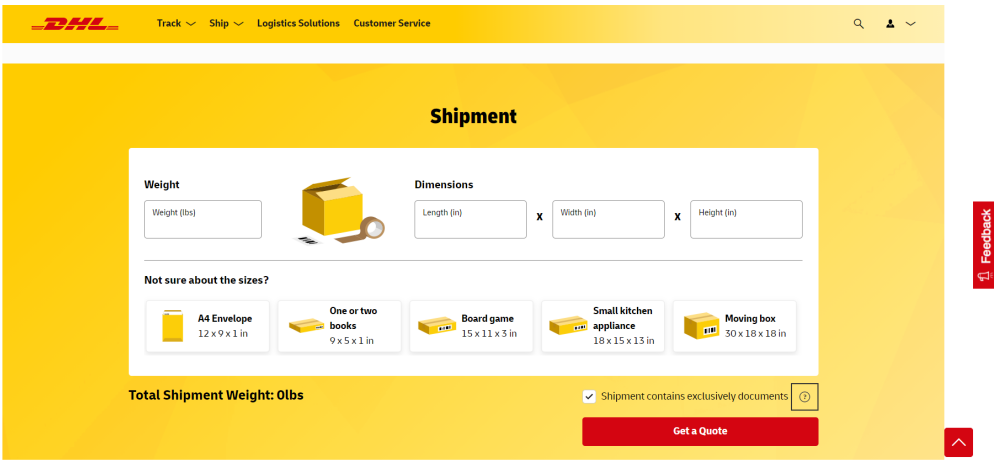


Fig. 1.2.2 Carrier services offer information. In this way, the users have an option to know the boxes dimensions, for example.

1.2.2 Observation:

Seven predetermined options are displayed with a gradient in the background. At first sight, it is believed that users considered the first option as the less important, and as they scroll down, they saw that the degree of importance began to increase, making the last option the most important. Besides, the color of the letter along with the background, makes it more difficult for users to see and read it. (Fig 1.2.3)

Fundament:

If users followed this mindset, they have assumed that clothes are not so relevant and as a result, they thought that couches and other items such as bicycles, cameras, and radios are more necessary for the foundation. According to the Goal Gradient Effect law, “Providing artificial progress towards a goal will help to ensure users are more likely to have the motivation to complete that task.” This law is observed to be fulfilled, however, how it is applied is not correct, since mentioned previously, the user could misinterpret that gradient.

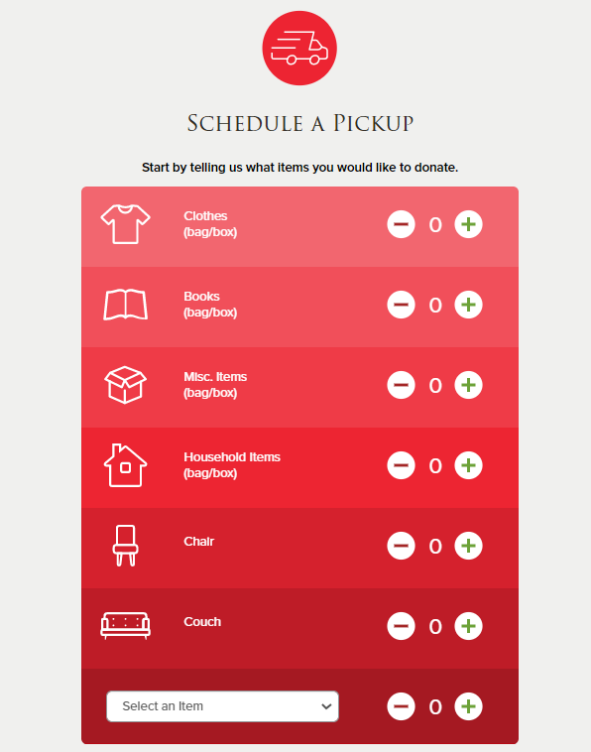


Fig. 1.2.3 Options to donate with a gradient in the background.

It can be seen that the color of the letters presented in this section has very little contrast and as a result, it would be difficult for the user to see and read them. According to the Readability principle by Tognazzini (2014), "Text that must be read should have high contrast". This principle does not comply because as mentioned before, there is not a good level of contrast of the text in each background color in the options presented to donate clothes and it could cause fatigue for the user.

Suggestion:

It is recommended to invert the gradient so that users do not think that the first option is the least important when donating and the last option is the one most needed. Besides, it is suggested to change the contrast of the text that is presented in each section so that users when reading it do not have problems and it is easier to do this action.

1.3 SELECT A DATE TO SCHEDULE A FREE PICKUP

1.3.1 Observation:

While we were trying to schedule a pickup (Fig. 1.3.1), we realized that the calendar only allows us to select Wednesdays, Fridays, or Saturdays. We discover this when we try to schedule a pickup on Monday. After this we noted that the available days were inside a darker circle than the disabled ones, however, in the beginning, it was hard for us to note that different color due to the lack of contrast, and even though we notice it after, we didn't understand the meaning, due to there wasn't any message that gave us that information.

Fundaments:

As Donald Norman suggests in his visibility principle, usability is improved when the user is able to easily see which commands,

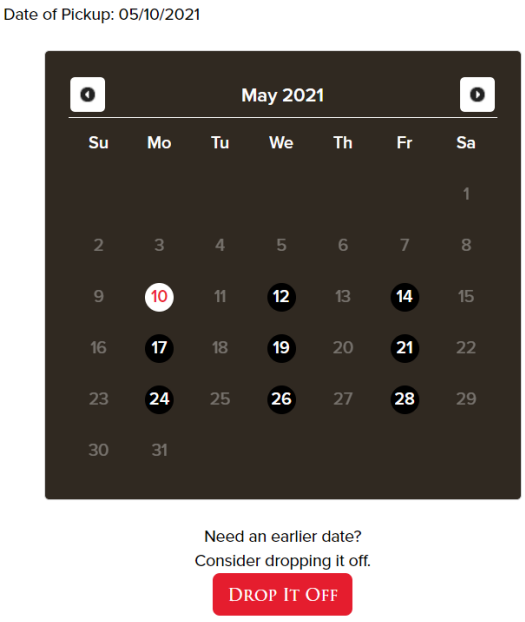


Fig. 1.3.1 Calendar where the users can select the date they want to schedule a pick up.

buttons and options are available. If we take what's mentioned above as a guideline, we will conclude that there is a lack of visibility, due to the absence of contrast, which doesn't help us to determine what we can do and what we cannot do in the calendar.

On the other hand, when we choose a date that is not available (Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, or Sundays) nothing happens, there is no feedback that helps us to understand why we can't choose that date. By doing this, Nielsen's Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors heuristic, is not applied.

Also, even though they are trying to use the Von Restorff Effect heuristic in order to make clear that the elements inside the darker circles are more important than the others, they don't clarify that those are actually the only ones that the user can pick.

Now, talking about the contrast, this is not high enough to notice the difference and there are no other cues to convey the information to those who cannot see the colors presented, breaking Tognazzini's Color blindness principle which states that "Any time you use color to convey information in the interface, you should also use clear, secondary cues to convey the information to those who cannot see the colors presented".

Suggestion:

In order to clarify since the beginning which are the days on which a pickup can be scheduled, it is suggested to have a greater contrast between the days, in addition, a message could be displayed telling the users the days that they can choose. What's more, in case the users still choose a day on which a pickup cannot be scheduled, a message will appear indicating that this is not a valid day, but that he can go back to the calendar and select a valid one, or give him the option to make a drop-off.

1.4 CONFIRM THE DONATION

1.4.1 Observation:

Based on the progress bar (fig 1.4.1), the user could interpret that at some point of this step they could edit and confirm their personal information, however, this is not the case.

Fig. 1.4.1The final step: Your info?

To complete the donation process, users will find a dialog box (Fig. 1.4.2) where they can see their personal information (name, street, telephone number), as well as two buttons (Continue editing and Save the ticket).

If users want to edit their personal information, probably, they could select the Continue editing button, but what is expected will not happen. Instead of editing their personal information, users back to the step where they can select a day for the free pickup.

Fundaments:

There is a discrepancy between the button and the action that users expect. This could cause frustration, as established by Tognazzini's Consistency with User Expectations principle, which explains that no matter how logical the argument is to make something work differently than what users wait, as this forces them to face unexpected situations.

Suggestions We recommend the possibility to change the functionality of the Continue Editing button to allow users to modify their personal information if required, thus avoiding unexpected actions that break user's expectations.

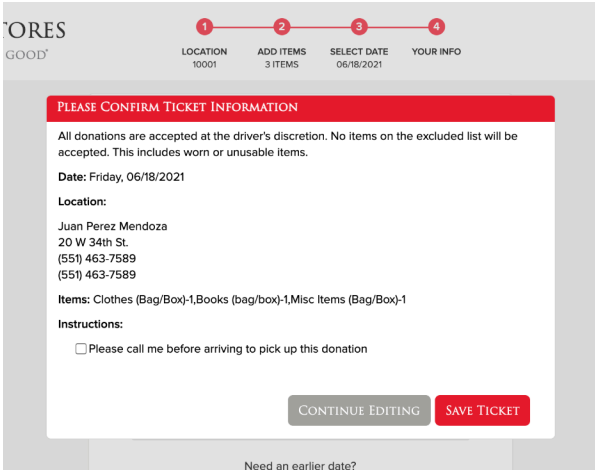


Fig. 1.4.2 What information the user could edit?

1.4.2 Observation:

Once the users corroborate that the information shown in the "Please confirm ticket information" window corresponds to their contact information and address, the next step that they could carry out is to press the "Save Ticket" button (fig. 1.4.3), however not it is clear what will happen if they press it. For example, they might think that when they press it, they will save the information that they were filling in and that later there will be another button to confirm the pickup of the package, however, this does not happen, since by pressing that button, the user has concluded with the process.

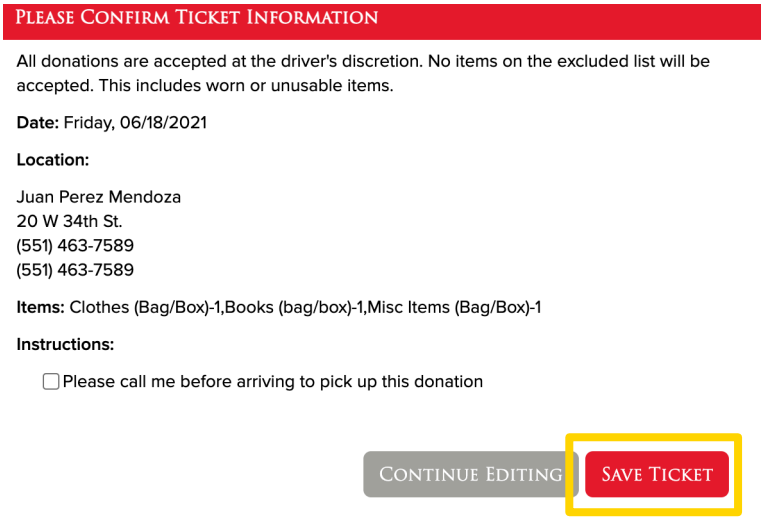


Fig. 1.4.3 Save Ticket button

Fundaments:

At the moment in which the users do not obtain the result they expected when pressing that button, Tognazzini's Consistency with User Expectation principle is broken, which indicates the following: It doesn't matter how fine a logical argument you can put together for how something should work. If users expect it to work a different way, you will be facing an uphill and often unwinnable battle to change those expectations.

Another heuristic that could help us understand why this button can be confusing is Nielsen's Match between system and the real world, which recommends using words, phrases, and concepts familiar to the user, rather than internal jargon. By using the term Save the ticket, it is clear that only for this site means that the process to collect the package will be concluded.

Suggestions:

To avoid this situation, it is recommended to use a more appropriate word to indicate that the process will be terminated once that button is pressed, for example, the label could say the following: Schedule pickup. To confirm that this could be a solution, it is recommended to turn to users to evaluate it.

Objective / Main Task

2 Donate money through the Salvation Army page

2.1 FINDING OPTIONS TO DONATE MONEY THROUGH MAIN PAGE OF SALVATION ARMY

2.1.1 Observation:

It can be seen that a quick option is presented to do the process of donating locally. The user would assume that they would have to enter their zip code and press the donate locally button so that it will take them to another tab and start the process, however it is not like this. When you press that button, a small screen is displayed where there is a section in which you have to enter your code again and another where you have to select the amount to donate and press the donate button so that now if you start the process.

Fig 2.1.1 Zip code box, location button and donate

Fundament:

The user would think from the color that the location icon and the locally donate button are one group and the text box is another. As a result, the user would first enter their zip code and then press the donate locally button. According to the law of similarity, “the human eye tries to create a relationship between similar elements, through shapes, colors, and sizes, in addition to the fact that the user would think that they share the same functionality”.
When users see that the text box is very close to the location button and the button to donate locally, they would think that everything is a group due to the closeness that exists between them. According to the law of proximity, “objects that are close or close can be interpreted as a single group”.

Suggestion:

It is recommended to change the color of the locate button so that users do not think it is related to the donate now button. Besides, it is convenient that it be included as an icon within the text box of the zip code so that it has a greater relationship with it.
As for proximity, it is recommended that there be blank spaces to separate the elements and that there is a better interpretation of each group and put a separating line between the two so that the user assumes that they are two different options.

2.1.2 Observation:

When users click on the Donate Locally button, a menu (Fig. 2.1.2) is displayed with many items that, taken together, can lead to incorrect interpretation, causing errors and delays for users.

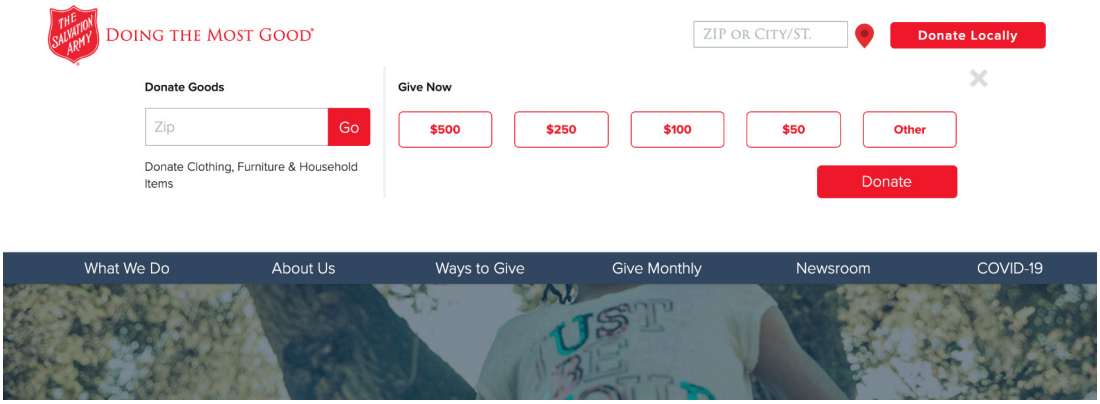


Fig. 2.1.2 How might the users figure out the two different sections on this menu if components are so close each other?

Fundaments:

Several items in this menu cause problematic reading.

1. Because of the similarity and proximity of the items, it could be interpreted that they are related and part of the same process: Enter ZIP CODE Select Amount Click Donate.
   The menu items are similar in shape, and according to the Law of Similarity, the human eye tends to perceive common elements in a design to form groups. Moreover, these elements are so close to each other that users could assign similar values to them by grouping them, as per the Law of Proximity.

2. If we consider that this menu is displayed after the user clicks on the Donate locally button, users might expect the next step to be related to the action performed, especially if we take into account that all items share a well-defined common area, so the items might be perceived as part of the same group, as explained in the Law of Common Region.

3. The above is reinforced when one considers that users on average read horizontally, as Nielsen explains in his article F-Shaped Pattern For Reading Web Content, so in addition to the above, users might interpret the order of elements sequentially.

As described before, the menu items do not belong to a sequence, since the left part of the menu is the area for donating goods, while the right part is for monetary donations.

These categories (donate goods and monetary donations) are not very clear to users for the reasons already mentioned, which could make it difficult to understand the purpose of this menu: Giving shortcuts.

Suggestion:

Should be evaluated the possibility of removing this menu, allowing the Donate button locally to perform the action that the button label mentions and be consistent with the expectations of the users, as stated by the principle of Tognazzini Consistency with User expectation.

In addition to mentioned before, by taking fewer unnecessary steps, the users will avoid potential errors.

It should be remembered, that the longer the users try to carry out the task they want, the more difficult it will be to achieve it, as indicated in Hicks' Law: Not always offering too many options is the best way to do things, sometimes, that makes it difficult the navigation.

2.1.3 Observation:

On the main page of the Salvation Army website, you will find a banner with a background image (Fig. 2.1.3) in which the following message says: "A full year of COVID-19", and under this heading: "The pandemic is still here. Thankfully, so is your generosity". Next, the user will find two buttons: one that invites them to learn more about the Salvation Army's work in this situation (See our response), and another that invites them to donate (Donate now). If the user clicks on See our response, they will know the activities carried out by the Salvation Army to face this problem. However, if you select the Donate now button, you will be directed to the same page (Fig 2.1.4) as the Donate Locally button, which could generate the question of whether the money donated through that form will go to the COVID- 19's cause or not.

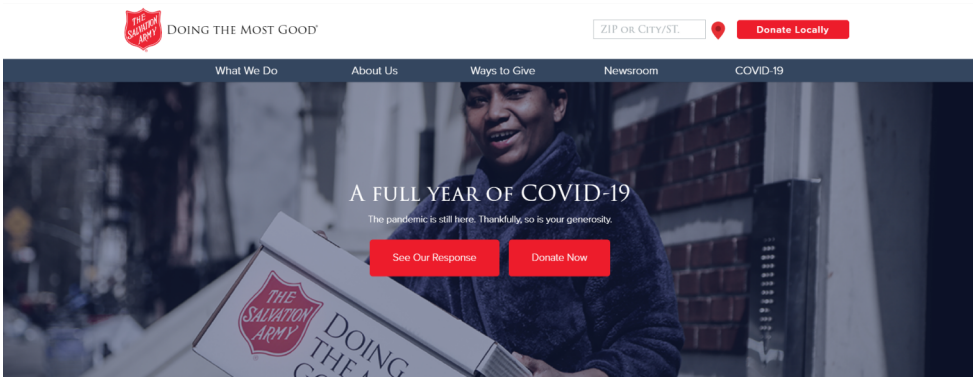


Fig. 2.1.3 COVID-19 Banner

Fundament:

The confusion in this situation is mainly provoked due to two things:

- The law of Common Region. As all these elements are in the same area with well-defined boundaries (the background image), the user could interpret them as a single group and a defined topic, so they could assume that the Donate now button is directly related to the topic of the COVID-19.

- Tognazzini's Consistency with user expectations principle. The above brings us to this point. When the user clicks on the Donate now button, they will realize that the result is not what they expected, as the button will direct them to a donation page that is not related to COVID-19, but to donation in general.

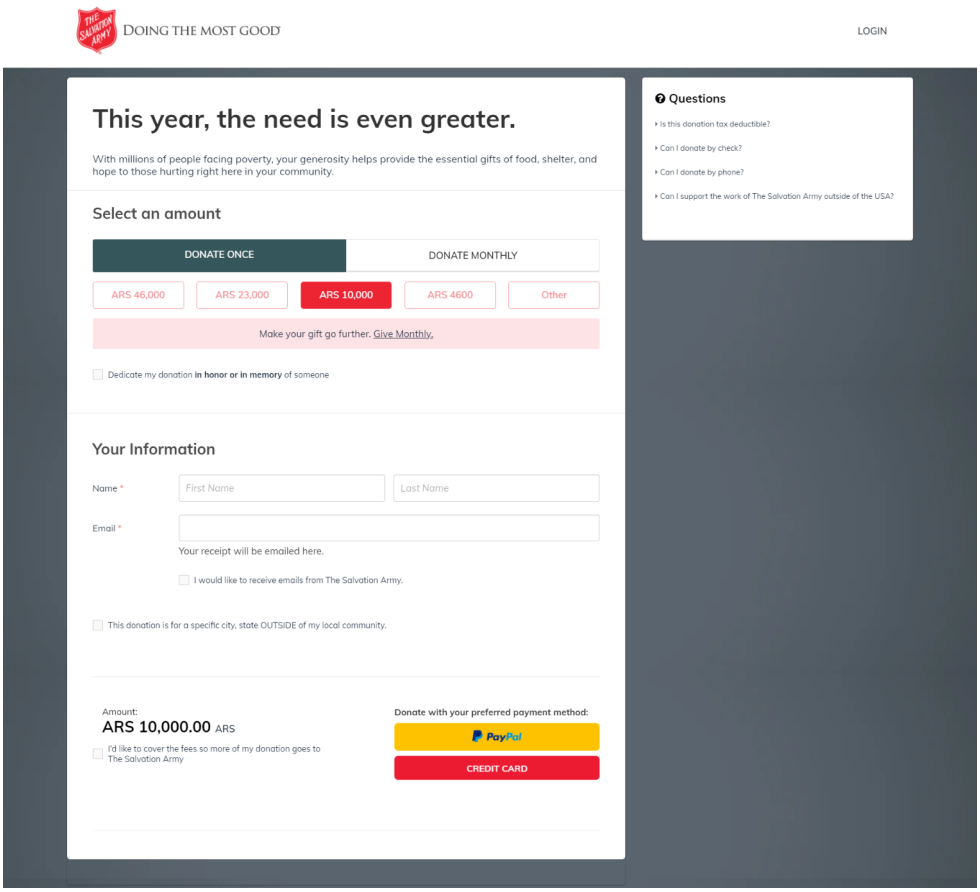


Fig. 2.1.4 Donation Form

Suggestion:

In order to solve this problem, the following is suggested:

The "Donate Now" button should direct the user to a form that effectively meets their expectations, in which they can donate directly to the COVID-19 cause. Therefore, it is suggested that if you want to keep this specific section for this situation, you should configure a delimited space for this purpose.

Or, if the current mechanism is to be maintained, it is recommended that the general donation form explains how the amount donated will help the different causes of the Salvation Army, emphasizing that the money raised not only addresses the problems caused by COVID-19.

It should be noted that either of the two options would require further research to determine which one is appropriate for this situation.

2.2 START THE DONATION PROCESS

2.2.1 Observation:

If the users click on the "Donate Now" button, they are directed to the screen where the donation process can be carried out figure 2.2.1. Then, they must decide between Donate once or Donate monthly. However, there is a problem in either of the two options, the currency of the amount to donate does not correspond to the country from which the donation is being made, not even with the website's local currency (USD).

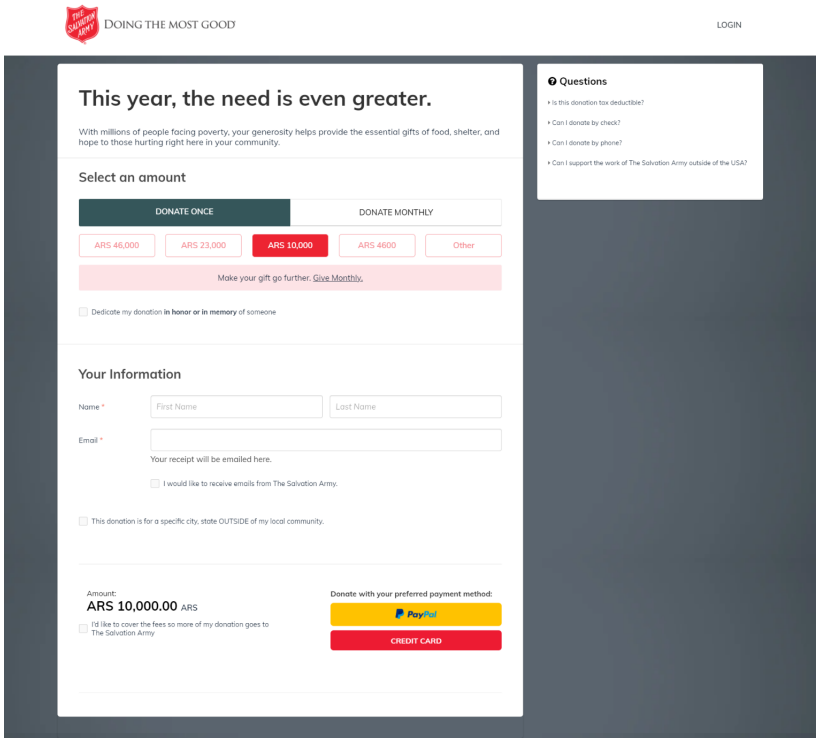


Fig. 2.2.1 Donation Form

The evaluation was carried out from Mexico, so it would be expected that the currency would be the local currency of this country (MXN), however, the currency displayed on the screen corresponds to Argentina (ARS). We searched for a button that would allow changing the currency, but this one could not be located at the beginning.

In order to change the currency, the users must click on the Other button (Fig. 2.2.2). However, this should not be the function of this button, because, as its name indicates (Other), this option should only allow users to modify the amount to donate, not to change the currency.

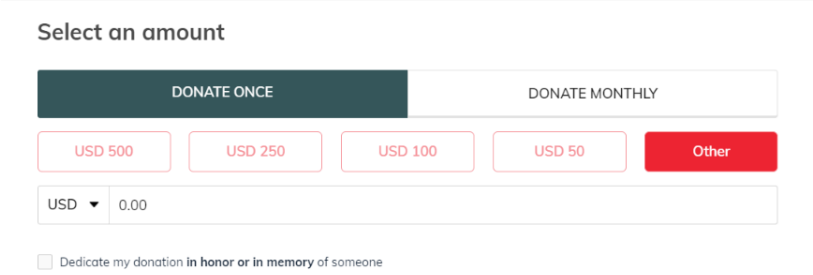


Fig. 2.2.2 Currency change button

Fundament:

If we take the previously described and compare it with what Donald Norman raises in his Visibility principle: "that controls should be made clearly visible, rather than hidden, and should be placed where users would expect them to be", we will realize that It can be difficult for the users to discover how to change the currency, since when inspecting the interface, they will not be able to find the button necessary to achieve it, and, if we take into account that the function to change the currency is in a section where it is assumed that the user can only enter an amount other than the default, this task looks very complex.

Another of the principles that can help us understand why this simple action can be complex for the user is Discoverability, by Tognazzini: “If the user cannot find it, it does not exist”, in which it is stated that only the most persistent will stay on the web looking for the functions that are hidden, the rest will simply look for the competitors, believing that the website does not have what they require. In this particular case, users might believe that they can only donate in the default currency and, in the worst case, discourage them from donating.

Suggestion:

To avoid this problem, it is suggested to place the button presented in figure 2.2.2 in the section where the default quantities and the Other button are found. This with the purpose of improving the user experience under Donald Norman's Visibility principle, which suggests that usability and learnability are improved when the user can easily see what commands and options are available, however, it is necessary to verify through different tests with users that this solution is the right one.

2.2.2 Observation:

When arriving to select the desired amount to donate, users would observe that at the bottom there is a box with a red background and they would assume that they have performed an incorrect action. You can also see that there is a text that tells users to make their donation go further and they would assume they have to donate more and the options presented are wrong (Fig 2.2.3). Furthermore, if users press the other button, they will observe that this will not appear and they could think that is the correct option (Fig 2.2.4)

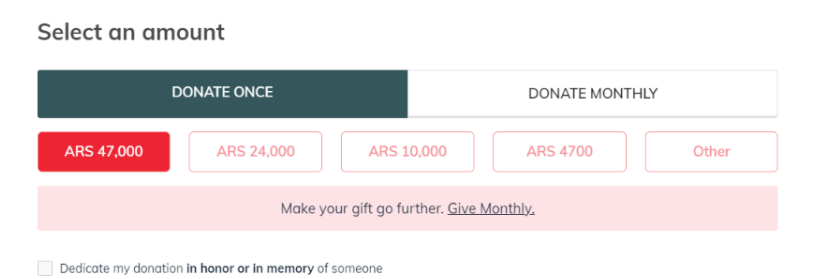


Fig. 2.2.3 Text with a red background color.

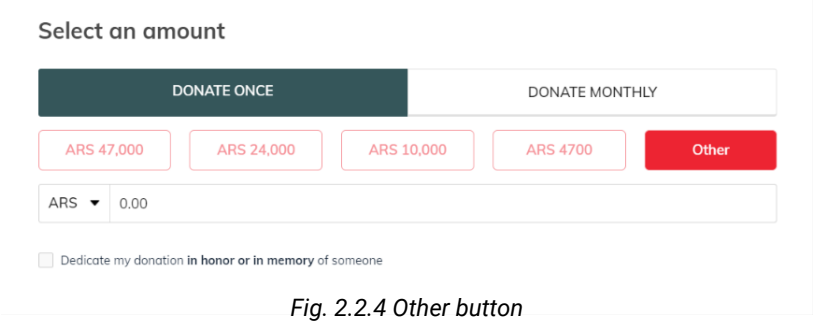


Fig. 2.2.4 Other button

Fundament:

This red background would be interpreted as an incorrect action that the user has taken. According to Kendra Cherry in her publication on the psychology of the color red (2020), she mentions that this color provokes the most intense emotions in people. This is because it is a very visible color and attracts their attention. It can have several interpretations and one of them is danger or warning.

On the other hand, Jed Lehmann mentions in his publication 9 tips for how to use color in UI design (2018), that color is a fundamental part of any interface. In addition, it is mentioned that there are action colors that are those who notify the user of an action that has taken place or that can be carried out. Each action within the interfaces has a color set such as error - red, success - green, warning - orange, etc.

In this case, it can be seen that there is a box with a text and a primary action that is give monthly.

This breaks with the aforementioned because the red background color could be interpreted in another way since it is generally used in interfaces to demonstrate an error, danger, or something that can be eliminated.

Suggestion:

It would be recommended to change the background color so that users do not think that they have done wrong actions and thus be able to avoid misunderstandings with users. In addition, it is suggested to check the code of the page so that when users are in the donate once step, they do not have confusions about the red background and thus the page can be more consistent between all its sections.

Conclusions

The observations described in this evaluation, while not critical, may cause confusion and delays in the tasks the user wishes to perform due to the structure of the money donation process is not clear. Although this process is the most important one, as it is the main objective of non-profit organizations such as Salvation Army.

Another of the processes analyzed was the donation of clothing. This process and the previous one has similar problems. Both have obstacles that can be confusing to users. For example, no button allows to perform this task directly, moreover, the process is long and it seems to have the same hierarchy as other processes with which it shares space and flow.

Besides, we notice that as part of the graphical identity of Salvation Army, the color red is used in most flows. This could cause users to take unexpected actions, as Kendra Cherry states in her work on the psychology of the color red (2020), it can have multiple interpretations and one of them is danger or warning.

Considerations like these help us understand the importance of designing simple and clear processes for users to achieve their stated goal.

The principles, laws, and rules we rely on for this evaluation are guides that define good and ideal design practices, but they are not absolute.

On the other hand, the suggestions made in this document are subject to subsequent and possible testing with users, as well as the application of other tools to deepen and validate the suggestions made.

This evaluation was carried out during the Next Gen Program imparted by Ksquare University & the BoldBox team that was given during the months of February-April 2021. At the time of this evaluation BoldBox, Ksquare University or The Ksquare Group does not have a business relationship with The Salvation Army USA and is not in the process of negotiating a contract. This report cannot be construed as an endorsement of The Salvation Army USA or its services, nor does it represent criticism or judgment against the organization or its services.

Evaluation Team

This report was created by a team of three (3) evaluators participating in the Next Gen Program imparted by Ksquare University from February to March, 2021.

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http://www.boldbox.io

And to know more about **Ksquare University**, visit the website:

https://ksquare.university/

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