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## Usability Test Report

### *The Room* movie website

**Sean Hayden Anthony**

# 00

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# 01

## Introduction

This usability testing report presents the findings of a usability evaluation conducted on *The Room* website ([theroommovie.com](http://theroommovie.com)), the official site dedicated to the 2003 Tommy Wiseau film. The film has gradually become a cult classic, falling squarely into the so-bad-it's-good category, with some going so far as to call it the "Citizen Kane of bad movies" (Cohen, 2008). As the film's popularity endures, its website plays a crucial role in connecting with fans both new and old looking for information on screenings, related merchandise, or learning more about the film's unique legacy.

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess how well the site meets user expectations, supports common user goals, and adheres to established usability principles. Drawing on Jakob Nielsen's 10 Usability Heuristics (Nielsen, 1994) and Steve Krug's usability philosophy from *Don't Make Me Think* (Krug, 2014), the evaluation employed task-based usability testing to identify real-world friction points.

Three participants, aged 21 to 44 and representing a range of familiarity with cult cinema, completed three core tasks: locating a nearby screening, purchasing merchandise, and finding background information on the film and its creators. Their feedback, along with information gleaned from a previous heuristic analysis, revealed significant usability challenges related to organization, navigation, visual design, and language.

The insights and recommendations that follow aim to improve the site's usability while (hopefully) honoring its offbeat and unique charm.

# 02

## Website

The official website for *The Room* ([theroommovie.com](http://theroommovie.com)) serves as the primary online presence for Tommy Wiseau's 2003 cult classic film. The site aims to engage fans by promoting upcoming screenings, offering them themed merchandise, and sharing multimedia content (interviews, trailers, etc.) related to the movie.

Its design and usability reflects a profoundly outdated aesthetic, with inconsistent typography, poor color choices, and dense center-aligned text, all of which severely compromising readability. Navigation is inconsistent and unpredictable, with menu items opening in new windows or tabs without warning, and much content being hidden within long scrolls of undifferentiated text and no attention paid to visual hierarchy. Information is often outdated by several years, and links frequently redirect users in confusing ways.

It's unknown if the site design deliberately attempts to capture the eccentric personality of the film's creator, but this report contends that its lack of design coherence creates a frustrating and off-putting experience for users trying to accomplish basic tasks.

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# 03

## Methodology

### 3.1 Test Goals

The primary goal of this usability test was to evaluate whether users can successfully navigate, find desired information, and accomplish key tasks on *The Room* website.

The site's intended purpose appears to be to promote upcoming screenings, facilitate merchandise purchases, and inform fans about the film. Therefore, the end state for participants was to complete tasks such as locating current screening information, purchasing movie-related merchandise, and learning more about the film, its cast and (as a cult movie favorite) its established screening traditions.

Ideally, users of the site would all be able to achieve these goals without undue friction, frustration, or confusion.

The objective was thus to assess the clarity, efficiency, and overall satisfaction of the user experience while completing these goals.

### **3.2 Participant Recruitment**

- **Recruitment Source:** Friends and family
- **Number of Participants:** 3
- **Recruitment Rationale:** Participants were selected to reflect a range of familiarity with *The Room* and similar cult films, as well as varied comfort levels with technology and online browsing. This diversity supports the evaluation of the website's usability for both newcomers and more seasoned movie fans.

### **3.3 Usability Testing**

- **Test Format:** Moderated, face-to-face sessions
- **Location:** Participant homes (2) and my own home (1)
- **Equipment:** MacBook Pro for participant testing; iPhone 14 mounted on a tripod for capturing video and audio (e.g., user behavior, verbal feedback, navigation patterns)
- **Facilitator Role:** Screen participants, conduct sessions, record observations and user behavior, and analyze findings and generate the final report

### **3.4 Script**

A script was created to ensure the testing went as planned, consistent explanations were given to all participants, and prompts were present to keep the testing on track. A copy of the script is available in the *Appendix* section.

### **3.5 Pre-Test Questionnaire**

Before testing began, participants were asked to complete a brief questionnaire to collect some basic demographic information. The questionnaire was designed to focus on the information most relevant to understanding user expectations and

context in relation to cult films, online event discovery, and purchasing of merchandise.

Link to the pre-test questionnaire: [The Room Movie Pre-Testing Questionnaire](#)

### **3.6 Scenarios & Tasks**

To evaluate real-world use of the site, participants were asked to complete the following tasks associated with specific scenarios:

- **Scenario 1 / Task 1:** You saw a social media post about people going to see *The Room* in theaters and you want to experience a screening. Use the website to find when and where the next screening near you will be.
- **Scenario 2 / Task 2:** You and your partner are big fans of the film and want to buy some items from the store: a copy of the script and a t-shirt for you and your partner. Use the website to locate the store, and select “The Room SCRIPT By Tommy Wiseau,” and the combo “Two Black You’re Tearing Me Apart, Lisa! T-Shirts” for purchase.
- **Scenario 3 / Task 3:** You’ve heard the film is infamous for its bizarre production and want to learn more about its cast, its background, and potentially what to expect at a screening (fan rituals, expectations, etc.). Use the website to find any information you can about the making of the movie, its creator, and what to expect at a screening.

Each of the above scenarios was designed to simulate a user’s likely motivation for visiting the site, emphasizing real-life use cases and allowing me to observe if and where users encountered friction.

### **3.7 Evaluation Guidelines**

The evaluation focused on four main areas of usability:

#### **1) Organization**

- Is the structure of content logical and clearly segmented by topic or user goal?
- Are related pieces of information grouped together in an intuitive manner?
- Can users easily discern the purpose of each page or section (Including the site as a whole)?

## 2) Navigation

- Are menus consistent, persistent, and easy to find and use?
- Can users understand where they are within the site and how to return to a previous location?
- Do links behave predictably (e.g., open in the same tab, or clearly indicate when they are external)?

## 3) Visual Design

- Does the layout (including design features like spacing, alignment, and use of grid systems) support easy scanning and reading?
- Are design elements such as color, typography, and hierarchy used consistently to aid comprehension and user flow?
- Is there a clear visual distinction between different types of content or interactive elements?

## 4) Language & Content

- Is the text clear, concise, and written without grammatical issues and in a tone appropriate for the audience?
- Are labels and instructions easy to understand and free of jargon, typos, or awkward phrasing?
- Is important information up-to-date and easy to locate?

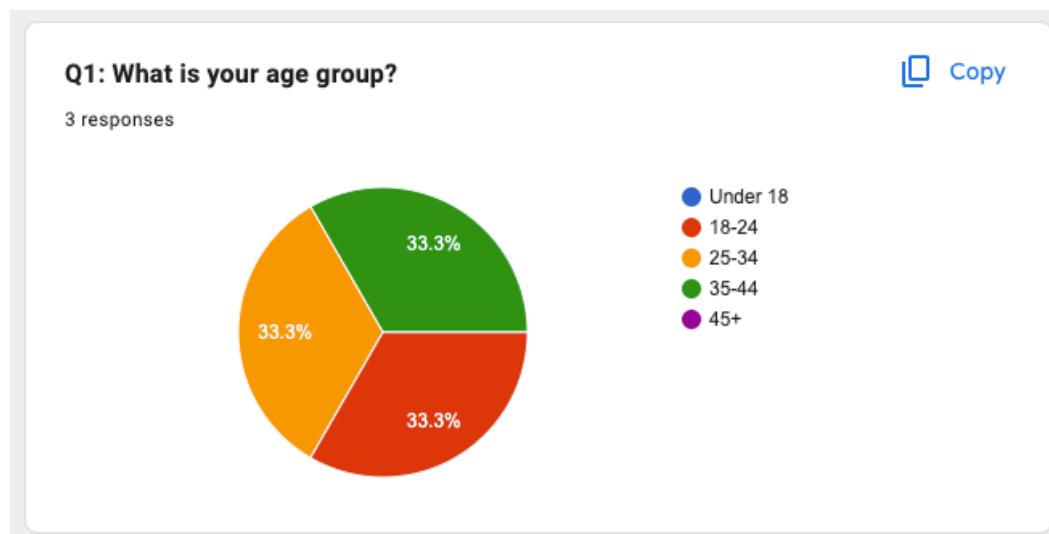
These criteria helped to support the identification of usability issues and gauge the overall effectiveness of the site in supporting user goals.

# 04

## Participants

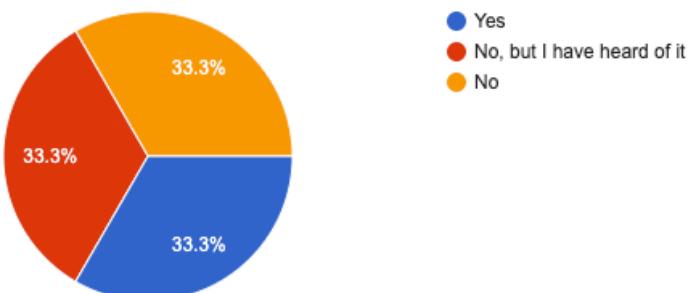
A pre-usability testing questionnaire was made available to participants in order to gather demographic information. Again, this questionnaire was designed to focus only on the information most relevant to understanding user expectations and context in relation to cult films, online event discovery, and purchasing of merchandise.

Results from this questionnaire were as follows:

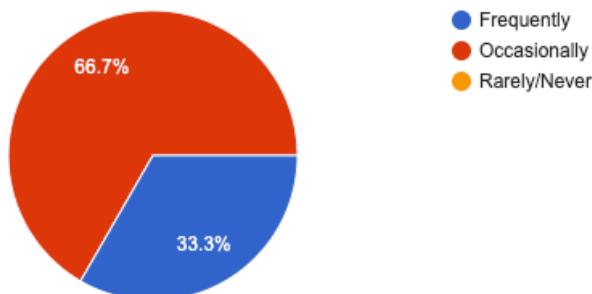


**Q3: Have you seen *The Room*?**[!\[\]\(2b9000c261447981d88674ebdb52dc1e\_img.jpg\) Copy](#)

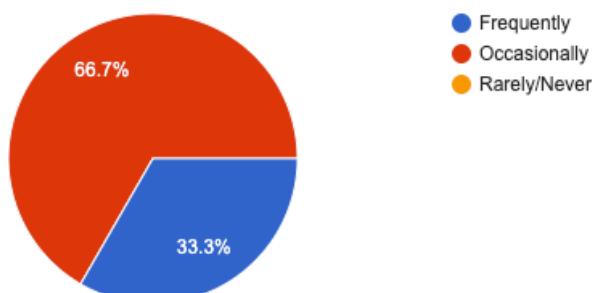
3 responses

● Yes● No, but I have heard of it● No**Q5: How often do you look up movie screening information online?**[!\[\]\(fc3a57079704ef1b99671c8cafae23be\_img.jpg\) Copy](#)

3 responses

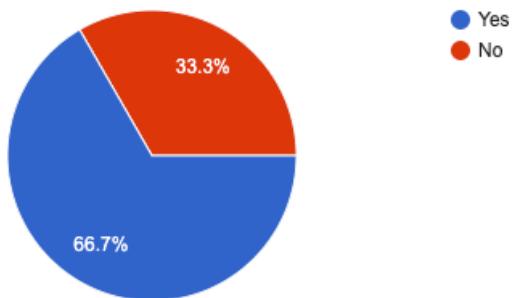
● Frequently● Occasionally● Rarely/Never**Q5: How often do you look up movie screening information online?**[!\[\]\(41959a55675a4cf6a0c75249945ddd26\_img.jpg\) Copy](#)

3 responses

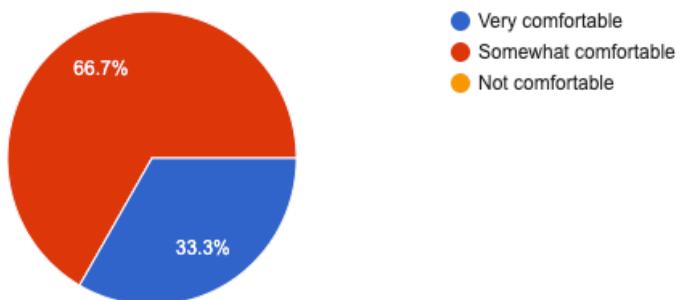
● Frequently● Occasionally● Rarely/Never

**Q6: Have you ever bought movie merchandise online?**[!\[\]\(be6c423ea45b0b2f0cf48f01786576dc\_img.jpg\) Copy](#)

3 responses

**Q7: How comfortable are you navigating websites to find events or make purchases?**[!\[\]\(4cafc60cd39da821525d7c6589540296\_img.jpg\) Copy](#)

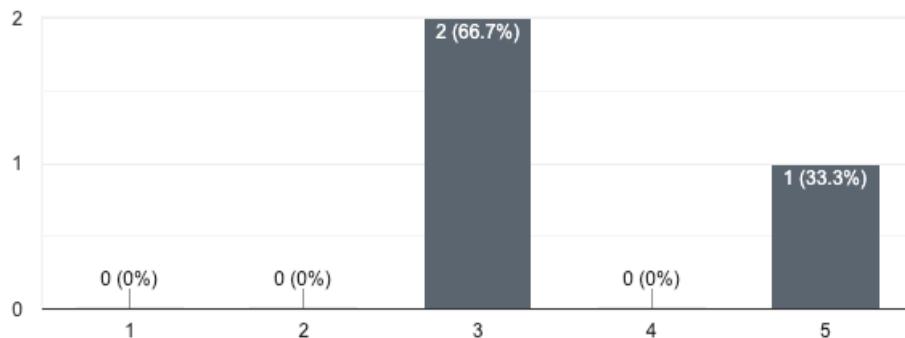
3 responses



**Q8: How would you rate your technological savviness (i.e. level of comfort and confidence with using digital devices and related tech)?**

 Copy

3 responses



## 05

## Findings

Participants were given three realistic task scenarios simulating typical user goals: finding a screening, making a merchandise purchase, and learning more about the film and its fan culture. Observations were recorded (see facilitator notes in the Appendix) and combined with post-task surveys to help identify trends and pain points.

### Usability Test Findings by Task

#### Task 1: Find a Nearby Screening

**Objective:** Locate the date and location of a screening of *The Room* using the official website.

### **Participant 1: Cari**

- Time on Task: 4:35
- Confused by links opening in new browser windows
- Screenings page featured outdated info (See Figure 1)
- Newer 2025 dates hidden beneath the fold on the homepage and not clearly linked
- Found the process frustrating and unproductive without the ability to filter by location

July 7& 8, 2023 -Reading Cinema - LaMesa -San Diego, CA

July 28, 2023 - Landmark Theater-Westwood-Los Angeles, CA

August 11, 12 & 13, 2023 -Village East / Angelika - New York, NY

\*\*\*\*\*

PAST EVENTS ! if you like to screen "The Room" please contact us:

August 16 & 17, 2019 - Minneapolis, MN at the Uptown Theatre

E-MAIL - CONTACT = THE ROOM" SCREENINGS REQUEST

June 14 & 15, 2019 - ST. LOUIS, MO at the TIVOLIE THEATRE

March 1 & 2, 2019 -River Oaks Theatre-2009 West Gray, Houston, TX 77019

Figure 1 – Outdated list of events on Screenings page

### **Participant 2: Karyn**

- Time on Task: 5:20
- Distracted by irrelevant visuals and poor grammar
- Unable to interact with map (i.e., no links on map that would appear to be its purpose) or access reliable screening info (See Figure 2)
- Suggested a location-based screening filter

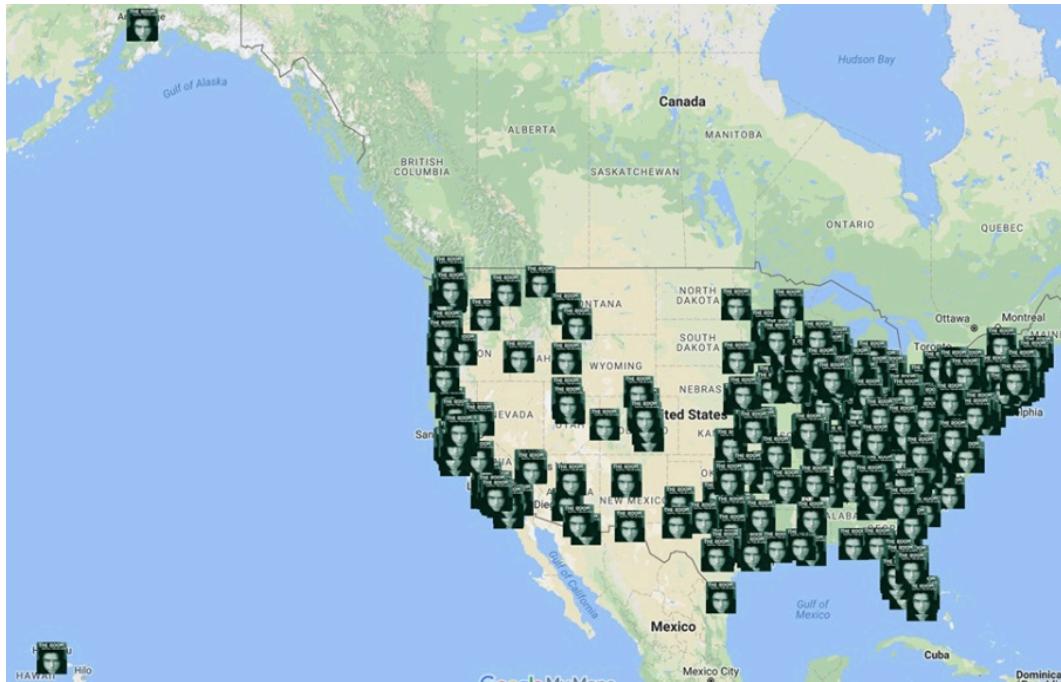


Figure 2 – Unclickable location indicators

### Participant 3: Jonah

- Time on Task: 6:45
- Criticized new-window behavior and small pop-ups necessitating the need for constant manual resizing
- Broken links and outdated content made task difficult
- Eventually found updated dates buried on homepage

### Trends:

- All users failed to complete the task efficiently
- Consistent frustration with multiple windows, outdated info, and lack of filters
- Centralized (i.e., one dedicated page), filterable, and up-to-date screenings page deemed by all participants to be highly desirable

**Survey Insight:** 66.67% occasionally look up screening info online and 66.67% rated themselves as only "somewhat comfortable" navigating such sites—amplifying the impact of poor usability.

### Task 2: Merchandise Purchase

**Objective:** Find and select the film script and a two-shirt combo package from the site's store.

**Participant 1: Cari**

- Time on Task: 6:20
- Encountered forced selection of irrelevant bundled items (underwear)
- Confused by missing navigation options and annoyed by having to resize pop-up window
- Unable to select individual shirt sizes in combo (See Figure 3)

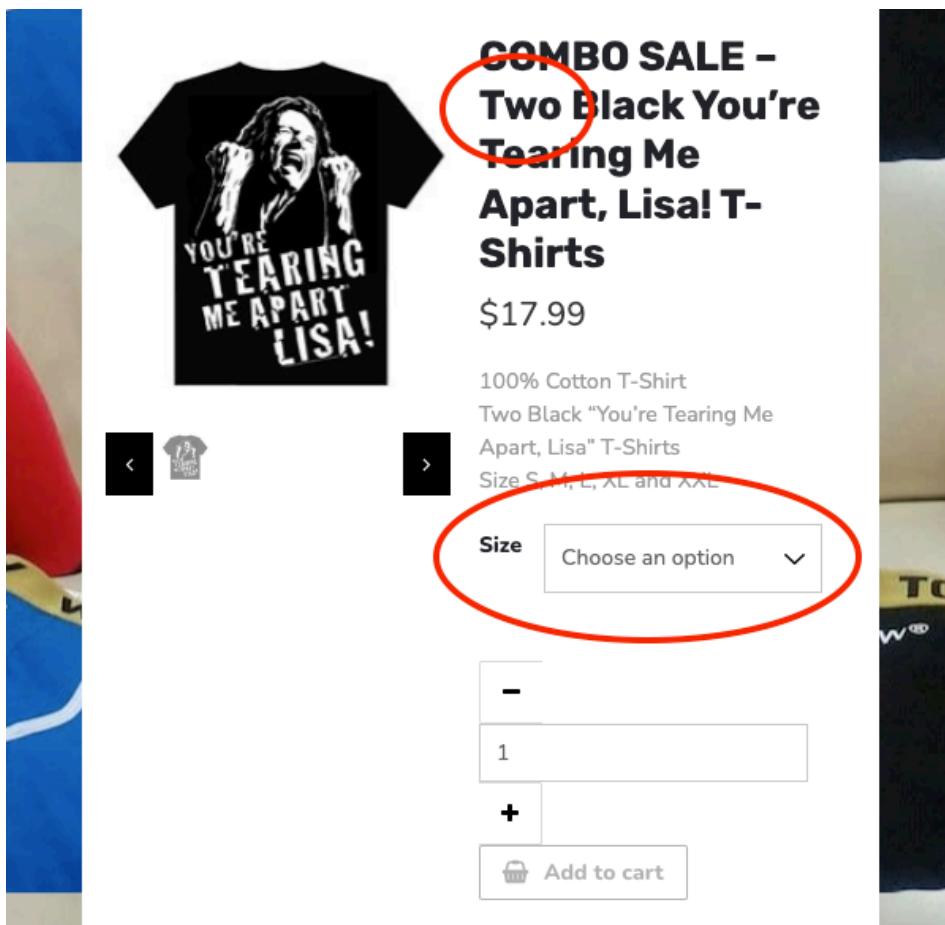


Figure 3 - Only one sizing option for two items in combo pack

**Participant 2: Karyn**

- Time on Task: 5:45

- Resented being required to choose unwanted items irrelevant to target purchase (See Figure 4)
- Failed to find the category filter at top of page (used the browser's "Find" feature instead) and struggled to continue shopping

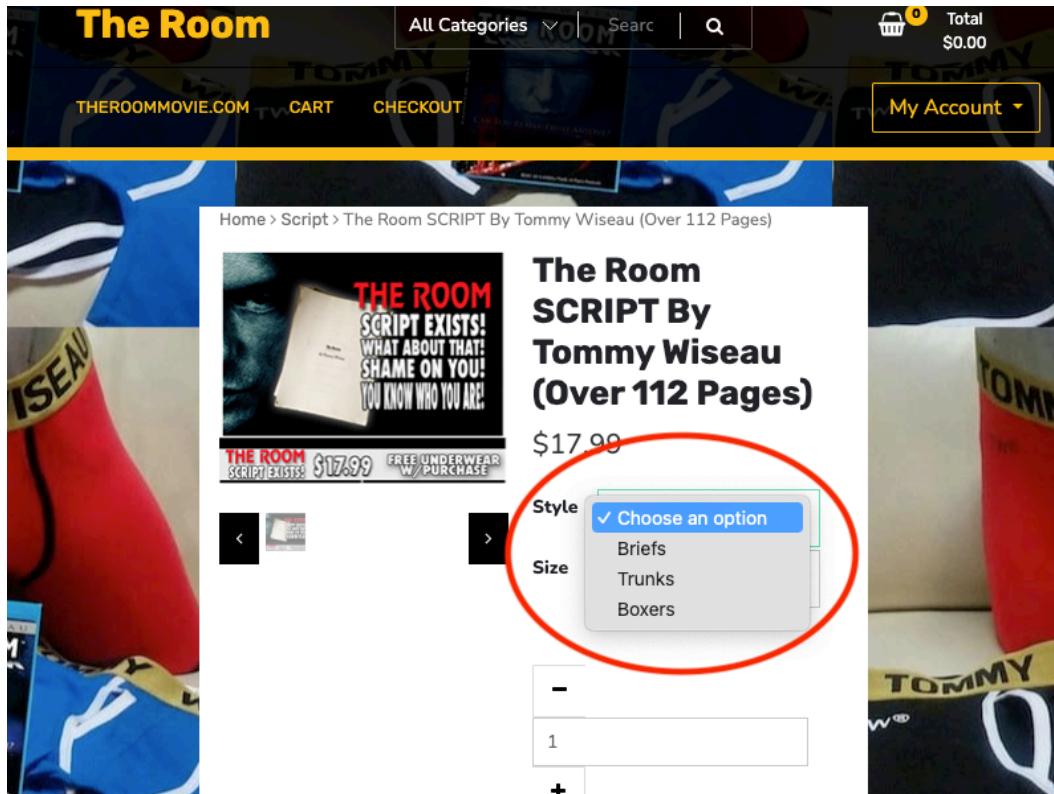


Figure 4 – Unwanted option to have to choose underwear when buying script

### Participant 3: Jonah

- Time on Task: 5:05
- Search was somewhat helpful, but found combo size limitation impractical and frustrating
- Noted redirection to inconsistent store views and the launching of an entirely different store under a different URL

### Trends:

- Mandatory bundled product options created confusion
- No easy return to storefront or persistent menu made navigation difficult

- All participants highlighted the need for clearer product pathways and a “Continue Shopping” feature

**Survey Insight:** 66.67% had previously purchased movie merchandise online and expected a smoother experience. Poor bundling (organizational) logic and navigation were major letdowns.

### Task 3: Learn About the Film's Background, Cast, and Fan Culture

**Objective:** Find general background info about The Room, its cast, or what to expect at a screening.

#### Participant 1: Cari

- Time on Task: 4:50
- Links such as “Press” and “News” yielded little or no relevant info, and often significantly outdated info (See Figure 5)
- No clear information on the film’s history, cast, or creator for people unfamiliar with the film



Figure 5 – Press page only has one press release – and from over 20 years ago

### **Participant 2: Karyn**

- Time on Task: 5:35
- Described site as chaotic and unhelpful
- Video link to what looked promising was unclear and lacked context ("Who are these people?")
- Gave up due to poor organization and overwhelming layout

### **Participant 3: Jonah**

- Time on Task: 5:20
- No "About" link (menu item) or background, cast, etc. information easily located
- Indicated task abandonment and transition to an external search engine or AI model for reliable background info

#### **Trends:**

- No participant successfully completed the task
- Potentially promising navigation paths ("Team," "Press") failed to meet expectations
- Site lacks basic onboarding for new users or educational context

**Survey Insight:** 66.67% of participants were at least somewhat familiar with cult film culture, yet the site failed to offer them a meaningful introduction or onboarding to engage them.

### **Overall Trends and Key Issues**

- **Navigation Confusion:** Non-standard design (e.g., menus mid-page, no persistent menu, no conspicuous breadcrumbs) made navigation difficult.
- **Poor Visual Design:** Lacked a clear sense of visual hierarchy, used low-res images, dated and crude animations, and poor color choices and center-aligned text made for poor readability. Additionally, the pop-up windows cause visual confusion as the black background of the pop-up

window blends into the black background of the original page, making it difficult to discern the two (see Figure 6).

- **Broken Links & Outdated Content:** Links that didn't work (either at all or as expected) and event information outdated by many years undermined trust, credibility and task success.
- **Inconsistent System Feedback:** No conspicuous "you are here" indicators made users confused about where they were on the site.
- **Misleading Labels & Bundling:** Forced purchases of unrelated products created friction.

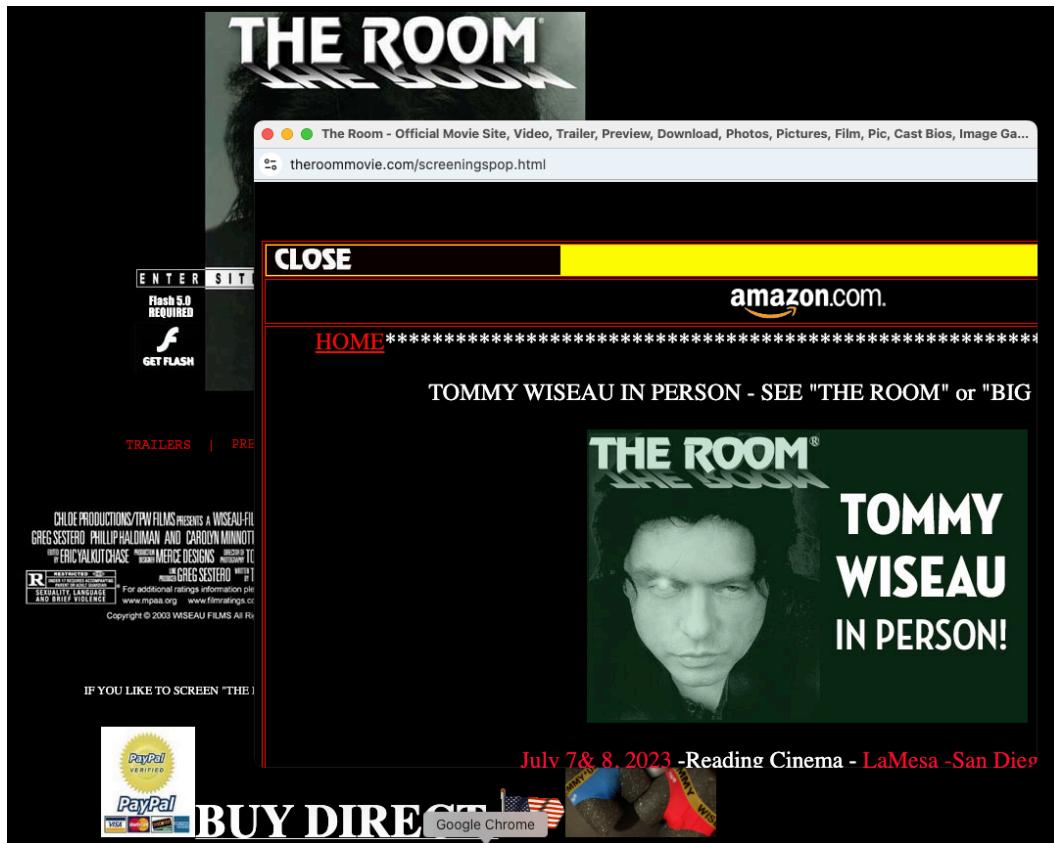


Figure 6 – Pop-up window backgrounds bleed into underlying page background

## 06

## Recommendations

## Organization

- Include an “About” section clearly labeled and accessible from the homepage
- Separate content into distinct, logically named pages (e.g., Screenings, Store, Cast & Crew) that take users to relevant content
- Reduce visual and content redundancy throughout the site
- Clearly differentiate sections by purpose and audience (e.g., fans, press, theater owners)
- Fix product bundling logic and support item-specific selections in combos to counter user frustration with the online store

*Highlighted Quote: “There doesn’t appear to be any organization whatsoever here.” – Participant 1 (Cari)*

*Rationale: Reflects the overall lack of structured content and clear categorization across the site, especially when users attempted to locate background information or understand the site’s layout.*

## Navigation

- Implement a persistent, top-aligned navigation bar on all pages
- Avoid launching internal content in new browser windows or small pop-ups, and standardize use of in-tab navigation
- Add more noticeable breadcrumbs to improve user control and backtracking, and reduce disorientation
- Add an appropriate “emergency exit” with *The Room* logo or home icon so users always have a reliable way to navigate back to the homepage
- Add internal linking to guide users logically between content

*Highlighted Quote: “Why are things not clickable that should be and why are things that are clickable not take you anywhere useful?” – Participant 3 (Jonah)*

*Rationale: Illustrates the unpredictable behavior of site links, which severely hindered task completion and created confusion during basic navigation.*

## **Visual Design**

- Adopt a consistent color palette, a more contemporary palette, and more disciplined font hierarchy
- Replace center-aligned text with left-aligned body content for easier reading
- Use a grid-based layout to organize page content into digestible sections
- Improve visual grouping with proximity and whitespace

*Highlighted Quote: "Aesthetically traumatic. Just unpleasant. I might think back about it throughout the day and not in a good way." – Participant 2 (Karyn)*

*Rationale: communicates the strong negative emotional response triggered by the visual design, and exemplifies just how alienating the site's aesthetics are.*

## **Language & Content**

- Correct grammatical errors and awkward phrasing
- Use recognizable naming conventions (e.g., "About the Film") and ensure linked content is relevant to the name
- Avoid jargon or unclear labels and links ("Fun" is ambiguous) and rename to something more descriptive
- Clearly mark external links and broken content, and inform users appropriately of site errors
- Clarify product descriptions and option labels to eliminate confusing or misleading language (e.g., requiring users to select an underwear size when purchasing a script)

*Highlighted Quote: “All the stuff that’s not grammatically correct and formatted improperly makes me crazy.” – Participant 2 (Karyn)*

*Rationale: Directly points to the distracting and unprofessional language issues present throughout the site that detracted from and compromised users’ trust and comprehension.*

# 07

## Conclusion

The usability evaluation of *The Room* movie website reveals an online experience that falls well short of supporting even the most basic user goals. Across multiple test scenarios and users, the site consistently failed to deliver clear navigation, intuitive organization, functional design, and effective language. Outdated content, broken links, inconsistent navigation patterns, and confusing product flows contributed to a sense of frustration and mistrust. This is particularly damaging in an environment where users are asked to make purchases or plan to attend events.

As Steve Krug advises, good design should “take advantage of conventions, create visual hierarchies, break pages up into clearly defined areas; make it obvious what’s clickable; eliminate distractions; and format content to support scanning” (Krug, 2014, p. 29). *The Room* website violates every single one of these principles:

- **Take advantage of conventions:** The menu is placed mid-page instead of at the top, navigation links open in new windows without warning, and there is no emergency exit leading home, all departures from standard web practices.

- **Create visual hierarchies:** The homepage lacks any strong visual cues to prioritize content, center-aligned text, inconsistent font sizes, and poor layout obscure what's most important.
- **Break pages up into clearly defined areas:** Dense blocks of undifferentiated content make it difficult to distinguish between sections that address very different topics.
- **Make it obvious what's clickable:** Several participants clicked on text or images they assumed were links, only to find they weren't. Other actual links led to dead pages or unexpected destinations.
- **Eliminate distractions:** Users repeatedly complained about the excessive use of animated national flags, outdated videos, and eccentric formatting that distracted them from task goals.
- **Format content to support scanning:** The website fails to support easy scanning. Participants were forced to scroll endlessly and deal with text blocks of low readability just to find basic information.

This usability testing reveals a website that, while perhaps unintentionally capturing the eccentric tone of the film, ultimately fails to deliver a usable, informative, or trustworthy experience. The site currently serves only to alienate casual browsers and frustrate devoted fans. With the more thoughtful design updates identified in this evaluation (e.g., implementing a persistent and intuitive navigation structure, improving content clarity and layout, and logically structuring the shopping experience), the site could maintain its offbeat charm while becoming far more accessible, credible, and enjoyable to use.

# 08

## References

Cohen, E. (2008, December 12). *The crazy cult of 'The Room'*. Entertainment Weekly.  
<https://ew.com/article/2008/12/12/crazy-cult-room/>

Krug, S. (2014). *Don't make me think: A common sense approach to web usability* (2nd ed.). New Riders.

Nielsen, J. (1994). *10 usability heuristics for user interface design*. Nielsen Norman Group. <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ten-usability-heuristics/>

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# 09

## Appendix

### 10.1 Pre-test Questionnaire

Google Form for [The Room Pre-Test Questionnaire](#)

### 10.2 Orientation Script

I'm Sean and I'll be walking you through this session. Before we get started, I'd like to run through some information that's important for the session. Ok? And you'll note I'm going to be reading it off to ensure I share the exact same information with all participants.

This usability test is part of a class project I'm doing through Arizona State University's graduate program in user experience. It's important you understand that what I'm testing is the SITE, not YOU – so there are no wrong answers, dumb questions, etc. The project is basically to assess the usability of a website for a cult movie and see what it's like for you to interact with the site and perform certain tasks that would be typical of users visiting the site.

Keep in mind that I want to hear exactly what you think – I'm trying to find ways to improve the site and users' experience with the site so I need to know honestly what you think, both good and bad.

As you go through the tasks, what's going to help me the most is if you think out loud so that I know exactly what's going through your mind. So try to provide a running narrative of what you're doing as you attempt to complete the tasks. Ok?

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask but keep in mind I may not be able to answer them right away as what's of most interest is seeing how people do when they don't have someone sitting with them while they go through the tasks.

Finally, I want to be sure I have your permission to record this session and I'd like to reiterate that the recording will ONLY be used by me to help identify issues users encounter and to improve the site. It also helps me on a more fundamental level because I don't have to be scrambling to try to capture everything that happens during the session in my notes.

All right - first I am going to bring up a short pre-test questionnaire to get a little information about you and your experience with sites like the one we're going to be looking at.

*[Bring up pre-test questionnaire and participant fills it out]*

So, do you have any questions before we begin?

First off, let's go to the homepage for *The Room* movie. Just get there, look around a bit but don't click on anything. Talk out loud about your impressions, things like:

- What strikes you about it?
- Whose site do you think it is?
- What can you do here?
- What's the site for?

Ok great, now there will be three scenarios and tasks we will run through together. So put on your acting hat as you try to inhabit each of these scenarios.

*[Hand participant hard copy of scenarios and tasks]*

**Scenario 1 / Task 1** (read out loud):

You saw a social media post about people going to see *The Room* in theaters and you want to experience a screening. Use the website to find when and where the next screening near you will be.

Is that scenario and task clear?

*[Potential Prompts as they run through the task:*

- ***Don't forget to talk out loud as you make your way from this page to another.***
- ***Feel free to use any available means you think is appropriate to locate what you're looking for, including a search, a relevant menu, etc.***
- ***Where do you think this information is located?***
- ***Where do you think you'd click?***
- ***What are you thinking right now?***

Ok great – any follow-up questions before we move on to the next task?

Now let's move on to the next task.

**Scenario 2 / Task 2** (read out loud):

You and your partner are big fans of the film and want to buy some items from the store: a copy of the script and a t-shirt for you and your partner. Use the website to locate the store, and select “The Room SCRIPT By Tommy Wiseau,” and the combo “Two Black You’re Tearing Me Apart, Lisa! T-Shirts” for purchase.

Is that scenario and task clear?

**[Potential Prompts as they run through the task:**

- **Don’t forget to talk out loud as you make your way from this page to another.**
- **Feel free to use any available means you think is appropriate to locate what you’re looking for, including a search, a relevant menu, etc.**
- **Where do you think this information is located?**
- **Where do you think you’d click?**
- **What are you thinking right now?]**

Ok great – any follow-up questions before we move on to the next task?

Now let’s move on to the next task.

**Scenario 3 / Task 3 (read out loud):**

You’ve heard the film is infamous for its bizarre production and want to learn more about its cast, its background, and potentially what to expect at a screening (fan rituals, expectations, etc.). Use the website to find any information you can about the making of the movie, its creator, and what to expect at a screening.

Is that scenario and task clear?

**[Potential Prompts as they run through the task:**

- **Don’t forget to talk out loud as you make your way from this page to another.**
- **Feel free to use any available means you think is appropriate to locate what you’re looking for, including a search, a relevant menu, etc.**
- **Where do you think this information is located?**

- **Where do you think you'd click?**
- **What are you thinking right now?]**

Thank you for completing the tasks! Before we wrap up, I'd like to ask you a few follow-up questions to get your thoughts on your experience using *The Room* movie website.

### **1. Task Completion**

How was your experience completing the assigned tasks (e.g., finding specific information or purchasing merchandise)? Were there any points where you felt confused or unsure of what to do? How easy or difficult was it to locate what you needed, and what did you do when you ran into challenges?

### **2. Navigation Experience**

How did you find moving around the website? Were there specific sections that were especially easy or frustrating to locate? Can you recall a moment when the site's navigation either helped you or got in the way?

### **3. Overall Satisfaction**

How would you rate your overall experience with the site? What stood out the most (either positively or negatively) as you interacted with it?

If you were to rank the site on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being terrible and 5 being amazing, what would your ranking be?

### **4. Suggestions for Improvement**

If you could recommend one or two changes to improve the website, what would they be? How do you think those improvements would help future users like yourself?