Heuristic Usability Assesment

The following document is a heuristic evaluation of texasdebrazil.com, a website that allows users to make reservations, order delivery/pickup, browse menu options, and find locations. The analysis includes an evaluation of the Nielson 10 usability heuristics of interface design.

Usability principles that will be evaluated for the assesment:

1. Visibility of System Status
2. Match Between the System & the Real World
3. User Control & Freedom
4. Maintain Consistency & Adhere to Standards
5. Error Prevention
6. Recognition Rather than Recall
7. Flexibility & Efficiency of Use
8. Aesthetic & Minimalist Design
9. Help and documentation
10. Help Users Recognize, Diagnose, & Recover from Errors

Tasks

To help discover where the usability heuristics overlap with the user's journey, I performed some tasks that I thought users may wish to do on the website. While performing these tasks, I took notes and outlined usability heuristic successes and failures along with possible solutions.

#1   Make a reservation at the Denver location for 2, this Saturday @ 7:00 pm.

#2   Submit an online order of any menu item for delivery.

#3   Find one vegetarian menu item and another that is gluten-free.

#4   Find the location nearest to you and contact them for a question.

#5   Sign up to the mailing list to start getting exclusive deals and offers

#1 Visibility of System Status

Summary: The design should always keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate feedback within a reasonable amount of time.

Findings

Issue

Withholding information about the system. When selecting a date and time for a reservation, there is no indication of if the restaurant would be open for the selected time and date. Users may assume that any day or time that the interface allows them to submit is okay. However, this may not always be true for the restaurant in cases like Holidays, special events, or any reason the restaurant will be closed.

Suggestion

Some subtext communicating the restaurant hours and status in close proximity of the registration form could help users start the reservation process with times that align with the restaurants business hours.

Open Today 9am-11pm

Reservation Form

Find a Table

Success

Following the journey of making a reservation, the third-party tool OpenTable does a lot right for Texas de Brazil. If the selected reservation isn't available, the tool communicates unavailable times with disabled states and suggests other time slots.

When confirming the reservation, there's a banner at the top with a timer informing users that their reservation can only be held for so long.

#2 Match Between the System & the Real World

Summary: The design should speak the users' language. Use words, phrases, and concepts familiar to the user, rather than internal jargon. Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order.

Findings

Issue

While it seems most things are named and labeled correctly on the website for Texas de Brazil, there seems to be one small item that could be improved — Group Dining. This seems to be a bit confusing about what the service is. Users may wonder if this is for large groups trying to make a reservation when in reality it's catering and should be named more accurately.
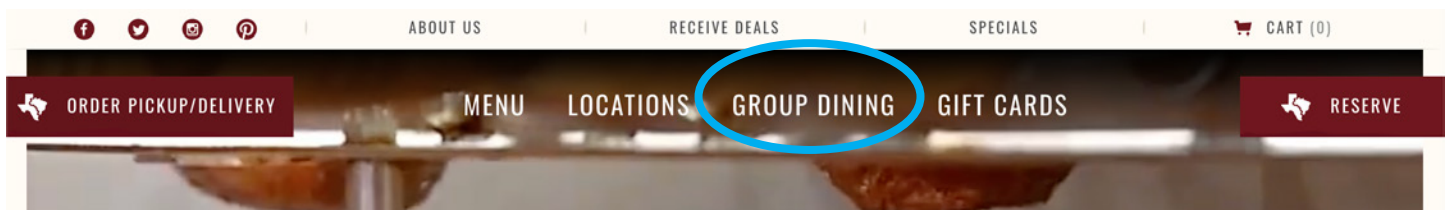
Suggestion

Change the name of the service from "Group Dining" to "Catering". This is an easy fix, but it also makes the service consistent. There is another area on the site that does refer to it as catering. This change would accurately communicate what it is and make it consistent across the website.

Issue

The form and function of the menu do not match how people use a menu in the real world. On the website, there are only pictures of the food items in a row that requires horizontal scrolling, without pricing information, descriptions, or even names (unless users request the name of the item by clicking a + icon in the UI).

In life, menus are much more informative and designed for reading to help people make a decision. They are scanned from top to bottom with names of items, the price, and if available descriptions and photos. This website menu is unlike anything you would see in life.
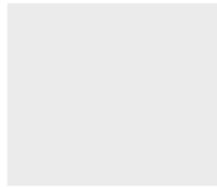
Suggestion

Implement a simple, more traditional food menu with vertical scrolling and include pricing information, photos, and descriptions
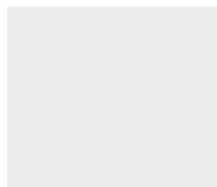
Dessert Menu
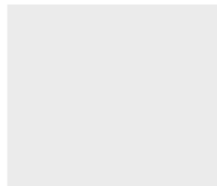
Carrot Cake $7.99

Pecan Pie $6.99

Créme Brülée $5.99

#3 User Control & Freedom

Summary: Users often perform actions by mistake. They need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted action without having to go through an extended process.

Findings

Issue

Since Texas de Brazil relies on third-party software for ordering pickup/delivery online the journey is kind of a serrated experience. As a result, if a user changes their mind about ordering online, and wants to go make a reservation in person instead, there's not an option for that. There is essentially no way to cancel out of making an order other than hitting the back button in the browser or hitting the logo in the main navigation.

Suggestions

If it's possible, replicating the main navigation of the website onto the reservations/online ordering pages could give users more flexibility. With this change, users could easily switch to do anything the website offers.
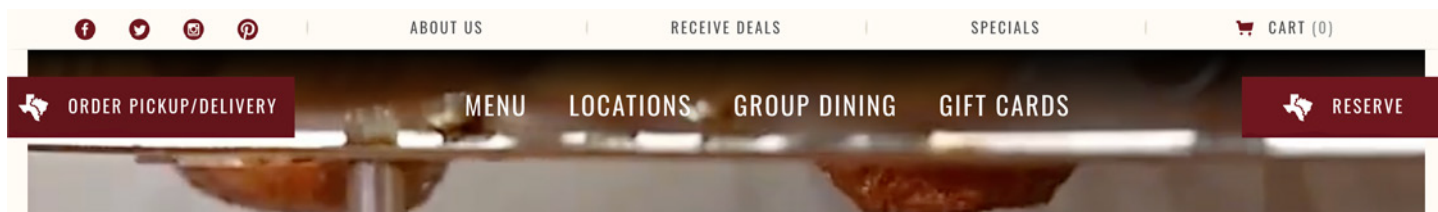
| Order Pickup/Delivery | Menu | Locations | Group Dining | Gift Cards | Reserve |

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│                             │
│                             │
│      Reservation Form       │
│                             │
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Success

Overall the website navigation and structure do seem to support user control and freedom when it comes to browsing the site. The consistent top-level navigation items make it easy to completely exit the page to go somewhere else or go back to the previous state.

Even on the nested pages, there is a supporting UI component that takes users back to the previous page.
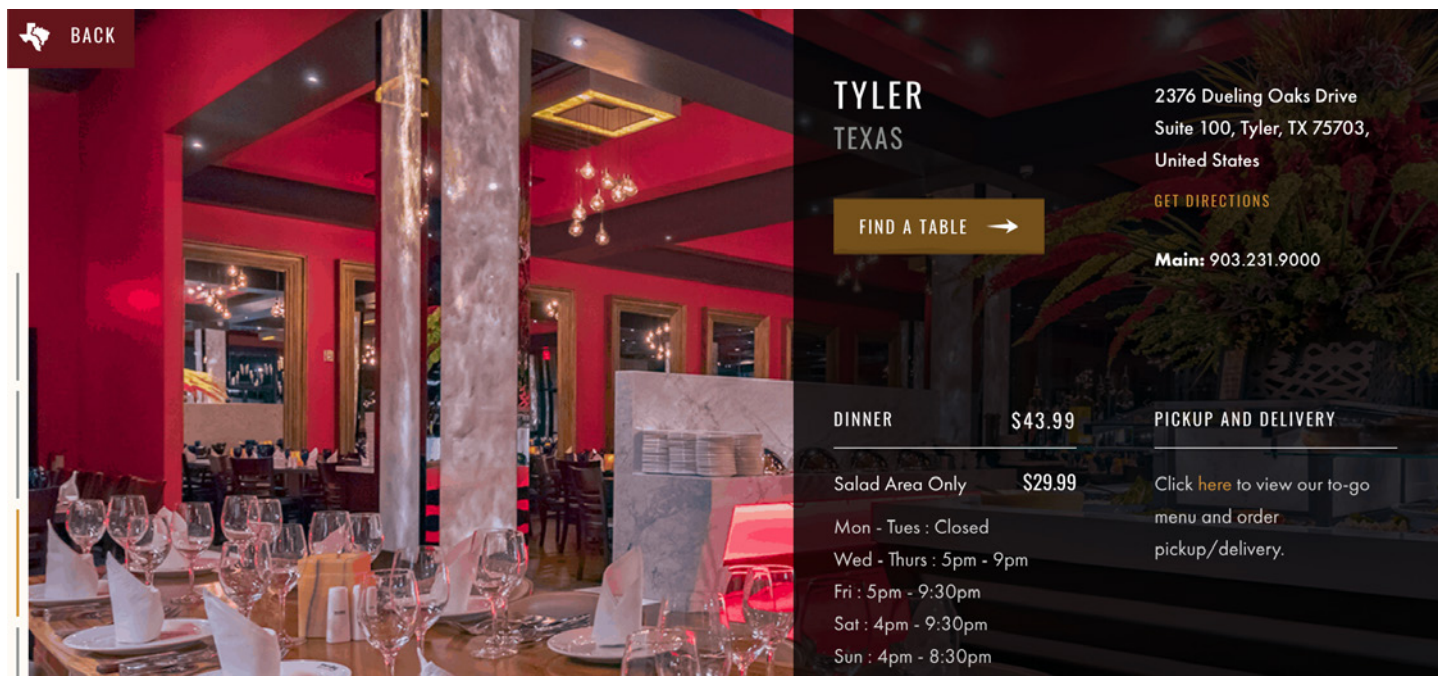
#4 Maintain Consistency & Adhere to Standards

Summary: Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing. Follow platform and industry conventions.

Findings

Issue

Internal Consistency. This is a direct result of relying on third-party software to build the online systems for Texas de Brazil. The UI from the website design doesn't match the UI of components you see for making a reservation and ordering online.
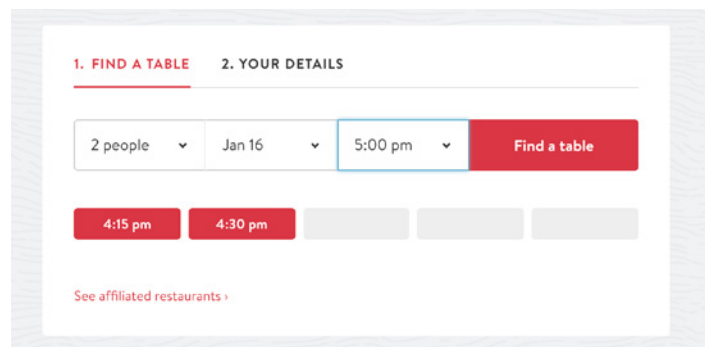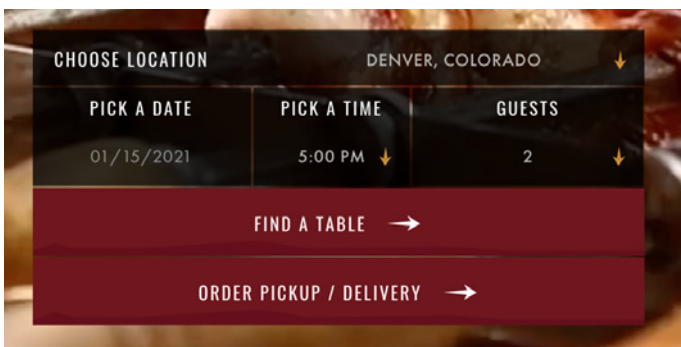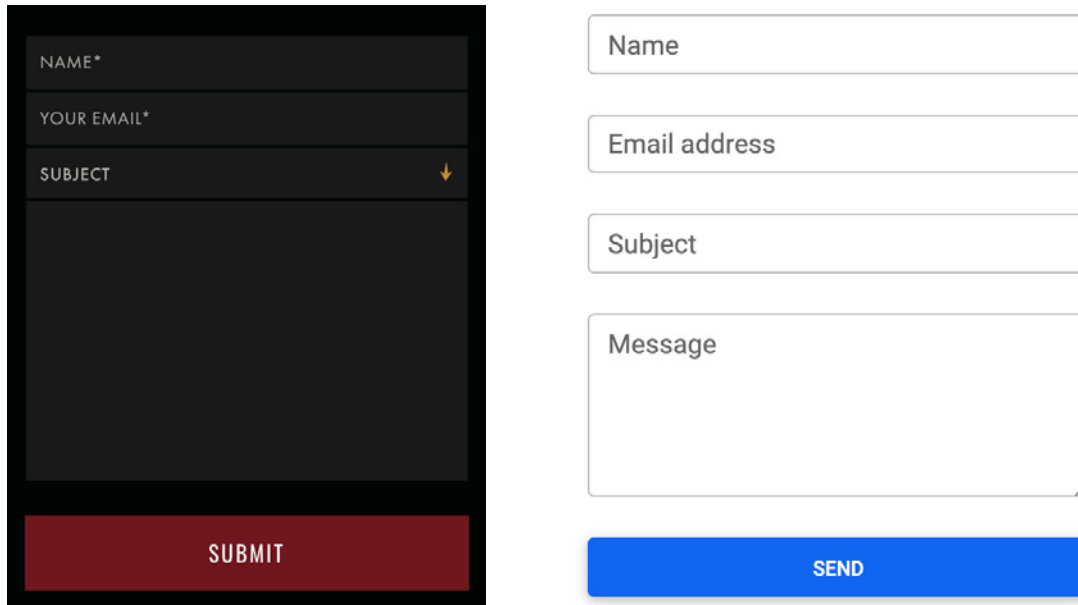

Suggestions

Invest in the software. Texas de Brazil likely has little to no control over much of the third-party services they rely on. The only way to get around this would be to build and leverage their online apps and technology.

External Consistency. The website has unique branded UI components, which are cool, but comes at the price of not matching what users see on other websites. While this seems mostly okay, it might have been best to use conventional UI components.


Comparing it to common UI form elements, it's not drastically different. However, it is enough to make someone think and take a look at the form to realize what it is.

Some areas on the website start to get questionable if they are buttons or not.

Probably the biggest violation of this principle is on the locations page. There's a big map with all the locations spread out, but unfortunately, the form for filtering and searching is at the bottom of the page. For most searching interfaces, the controls are placed at the top.
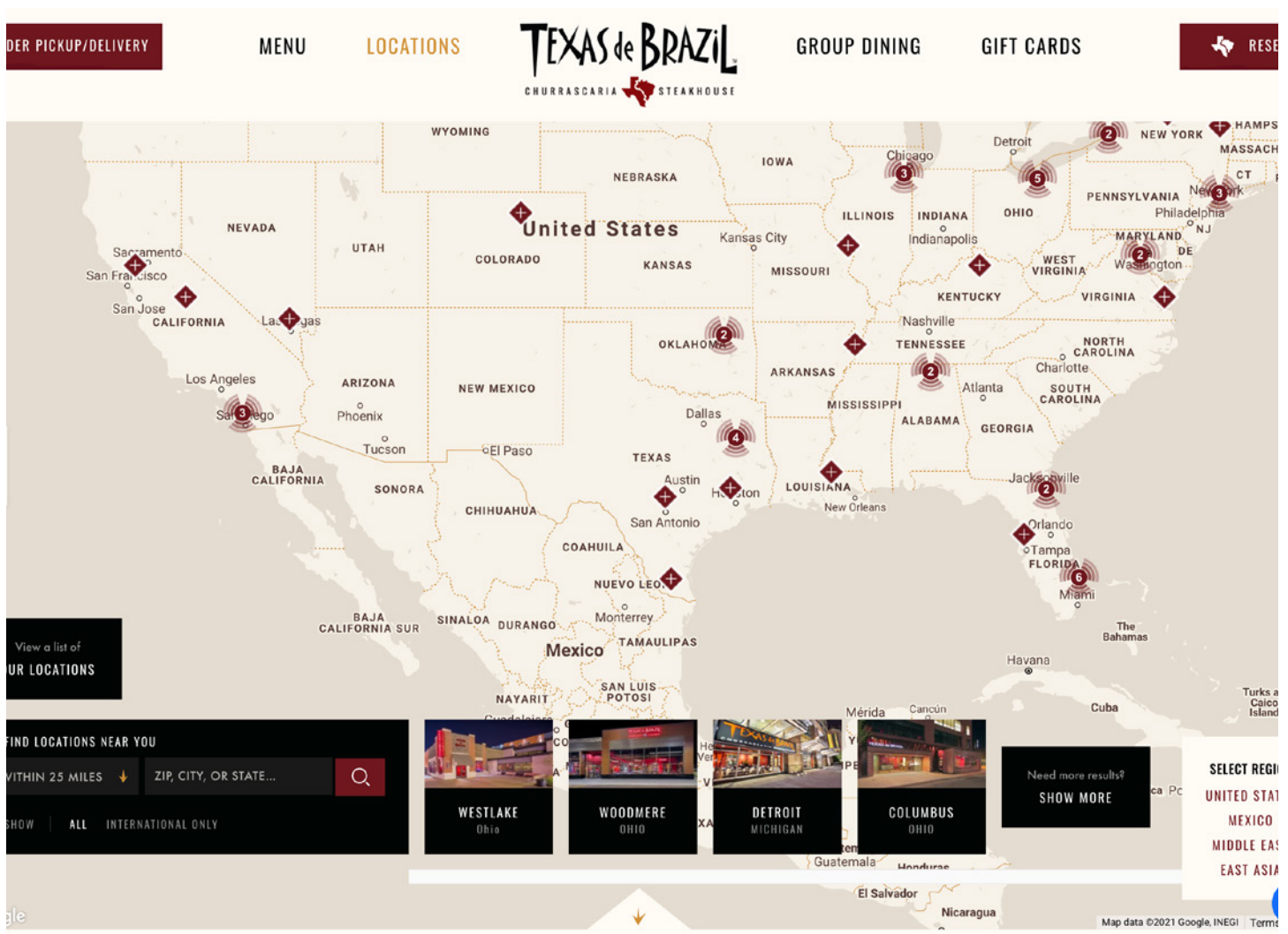
Suggestions

- Simplify UI components when it comes to inputs and buttons.
- Place the location search controls above the map.
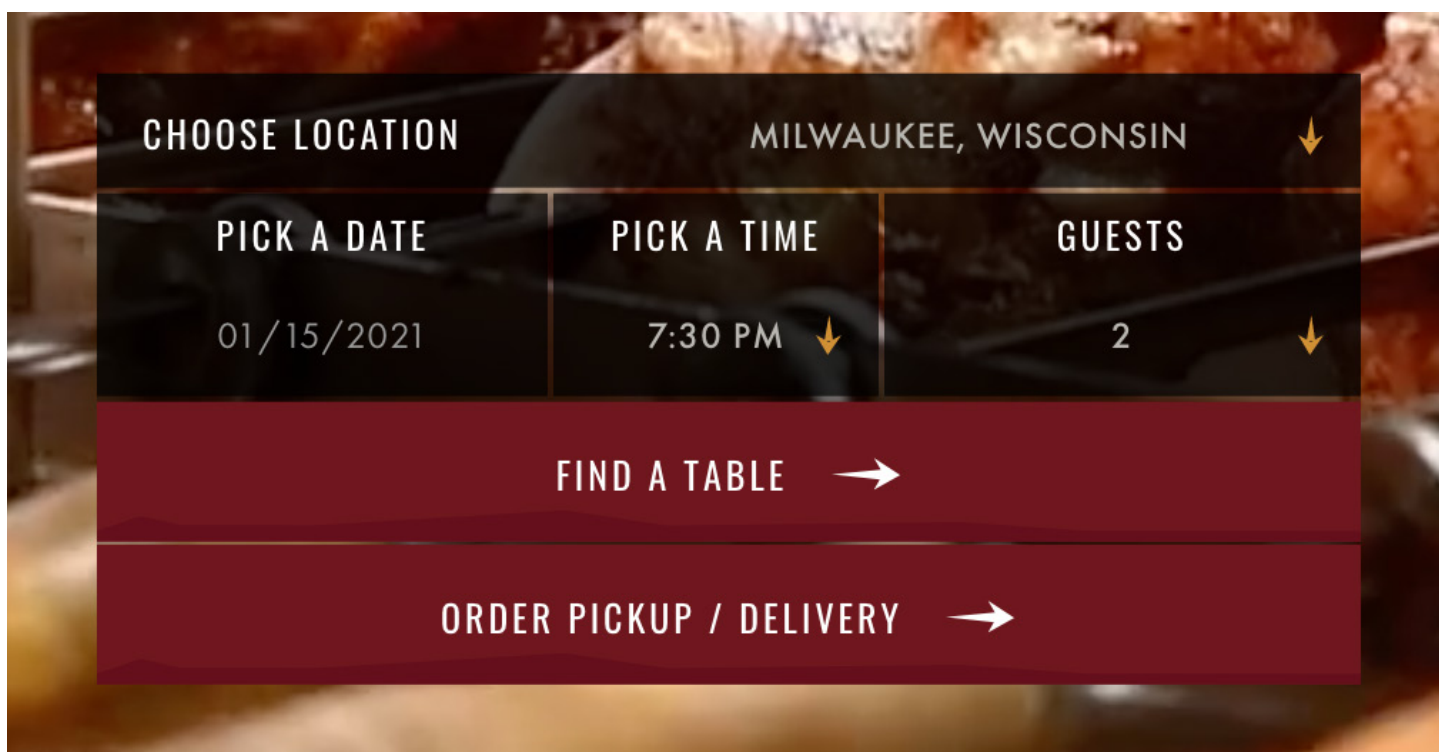
#5 Error Prevention

Summary: Users often perform actions by mistake. They need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted action without having to go through an extended process.

Findings

Issue

The default selected restaurant location isn't considering where users are located. This is a problem because it's very easy to start the reservation process for a date and time at a location in a different state.

Suggestions

There are a couple of different solutions to improving this interaction. One could be requesting a user's location and populating the default location to be the one closest to the user.

Texas de Brazil would like access to your location

Deny   Allow

Another could be leaving the select blank and have users select their desired location before continuing in the reservation process.

Choose Location

Please Select...

#6 Recognition Rather than Recall

Summary: Minimize the user's memory load by making elements, actions, and options visible. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the interface to another.

Findings

Issue

The names of food items are not constantly visible. Users have to recall available items from the list on the previous page or guess the name of a menu item at a glance from a photo and can only request the names one at a time.
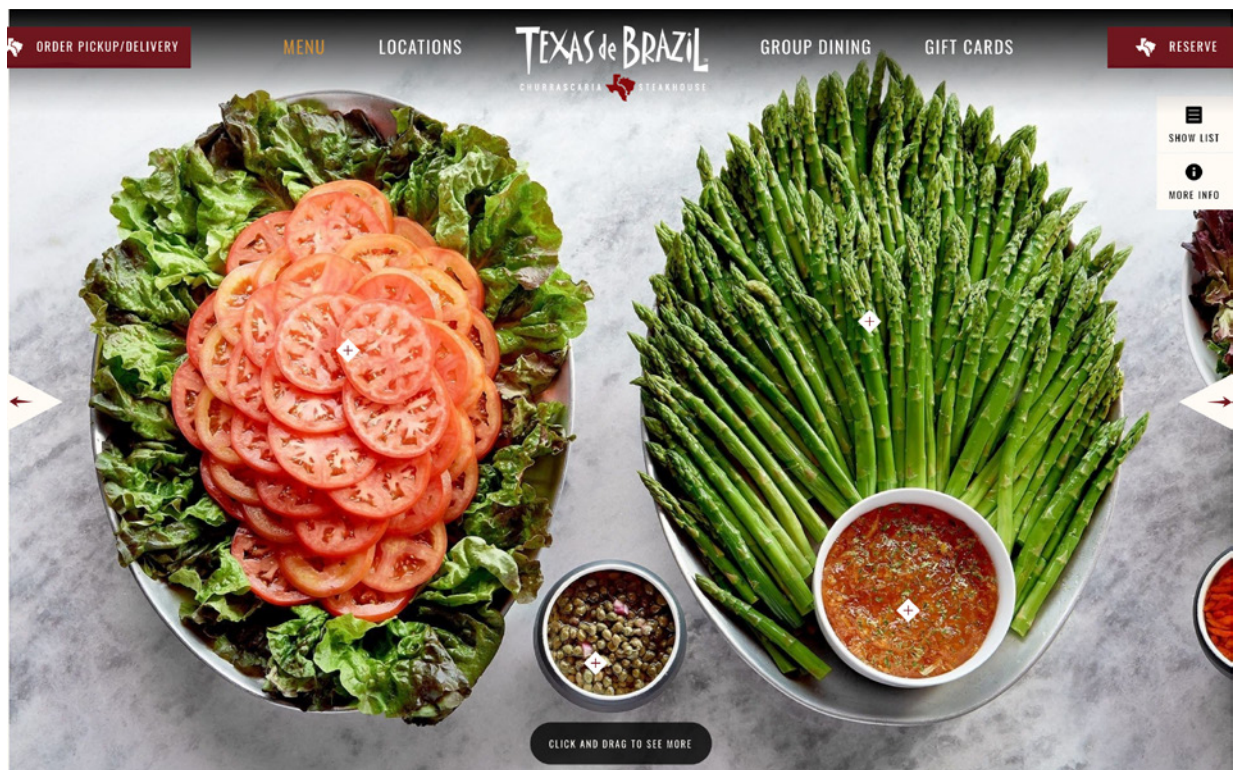
Suggestion

Without doing an entire redesign of the menu, one solution could be to keep the names of menu items always visible.

#7 Flexibility & Efficiency of Use

Summary: Shortcuts — hidden from novice users — may speed up the interaction for the expert user such that the design can cater to both inexperienced and experienced users. Allow users to tailor frequent actions.

Findings

Issue

Lack of accelerators for repetitious usage. Texas de Brazil doesn't have much to offer returning patrons. This is a missed opportunity to capture engaged users and reward them with an easier checkout experience for continuous use.

Suggestions

Enhanced the experience for their returning online patrons by supporting account sign up. By storing some account info, returning users could store previous orders and payment info for faster checkouts and a smoother transaction process.

Order Summary

Receipt of Order

Sign up to save this order and payment method!
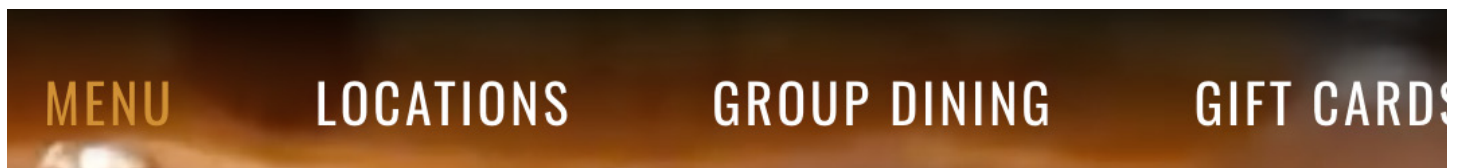
#8 Aesthetic & Minimalist Design

Summary: Interfaces should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed. Every extra unit of information in an interface competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility.

Findings

Issue

There are multiple violations of distracting design that take away focus from users. The biggest issue is probably the background video on the initial landing page. The constant movement naturally pulls in attention to what the video is doing instead of the form for making a reservation or a button for making an online order.

Other areas of concern exist on the site where readability is compromised for design aesthetics. There is an unfortunate amount of text that is low contrast making it hard to read or sometimes even see.

Suggestions

- Replace the background video with a static image.
- Find all occurrences of low contrast text and adjust the design to make it pass AA compliance.

#9 Help Users Recognize, Diagnose, & Recover from Errors

Summary: Error messages should be expressed in plain language (no error codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution.

Findings

Success

This is something that Texas de Brazil does well. There are a few shining moments where care is taken to ensure that users are notified of errors and how to resolve them. The mailing list sign-up is one example of success. The form takes into account that the user has submitted correctly formatted information.

Another example is the form for making a reservation. If time slots are unavailable, they are visually disabled, and the UI suggests other available times close to your reservation. If the day is completely unavailable like a holiday, there is a message for that too.

#10 Help and documentation

Summary: It's best if the system doesn't need any additional explanation. However, it may be necessary to provide documentation to help users understand how to complete their tasks.

Findings

Issue

When searching for dietary restrictions, there was no information available on the menu for what ingredients were included or excluded. Even though there is an entire tool dedicated to users to filter by dietary restrictions, it's buried on the footer, even on the menu page, and completely hidden on a selected menu.

Suggestion

Make the allergy and nutrition tool more prominent on the menu page. Additionally, vegetarian/ gluten-free labels on the menu would go a long way as well.

Food Menu

Nutritional Info

Allergens

It's hard for users to get help. There isn't a quick and efficient way to contact the restaurants. Even on the contact page, the only way to reach out is to fill out a form. It's not fast enough for users who have questions that need answers immediately.

There is contact information available for each location on the website. However, finding that information is a little challenging. To find that info, users need to first go to the locations page, find the location pin on the map, click a location, and finally, a page with all the location information will show.

Suggestions

Add the contact page link to the primary navigation bar and on that page list out the locations by the state with their contact information. It may seem overwhelming since there are so many locations, but there are clever ways to condense this, and even then at least it's easily available for users. Whereas today it is almost completely hidden.

Another solution to get users who need help quickly would be to add a chatbot that queues requests to a real person. This would help users who want immediate answers and don't have time to fill out a form and wait for a response.

Contact Us!

Denver

8390 Northfield Boulevard Suite 1800,
Denver, CO 80238,
Call: 720.374.2100

Oklahoma

1901 Northwest Expressway STE 1069B,
Oklahoma City, OK 73118,
Call: 405.362.9200

> Hi, I have some questions about the menu

> How can I help?

> I'm allergic to peanuts, so I need to know which menu items are safe for me.