UX Audit
Design evaluation

magicbricks
Oct/Nov 2019
A UX Research study has been carried out in the framework of a comprehensive design revamp of the Magicbricks portal. A research database including observations and findings, and a video playlist including most user interviews, complement this report.

Methodology
The study evaluated the platform involving perspectives of both users and UX experts.

- evaluation through user interviews and user tests in Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai (37)
- UX expert review by UX studio professionals (3)

Additionally, key stakeholders (+8) were interviewed in order to identify the focus areas of the study.

Focus areas
- Discovery of user journeys for the Buyer and Tenant, Owner and Agent segments, with a focus on digital touchpoints
- Usability of the MB platform for App, desktop and mobile sites, benchmarking against competitors
Contents

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1. Executive Summary
“Everyone knows about Magicbricks”
The platform is among the top choices of most users due to the large volume of listed properties and leads, and the trust from having been in the industry for many years.

However, in terms of design, many users prefer newer platforms like Makaan and Housing.com. These products are described as neater, more visually attractive, easier to use - compared to MB, which is usually perceived as cluttered, full of pop-ups and advertisements, and at times, confusing.

Users are not aware of all the content, tools and services currently offered. These are not obvious to them even after they arrive at the platform. There is, however, a significant interest among users for advisory content and support (e.g. mediation, household services) from well-established companies, that is not currently met.
Main issues identified by users are not design related - but design could help. Their major pain-points are connected to interactions between stakeholders (segments) and advertising.

Interactions
- Buyers, tenants, and owners have limited trust on the information received, seek more transparency.
- Agents would prefer having less leads but of higher quality (genuine interest and lower competition).

Advertising
- A general perception among segments that users get to see what MB wants them to see.
- A shared frustration amongst owners and agents about constantly being asked to purchase a paying service, or upgrading it once they have purchased one.
Too much information at once
The amount of content presented in one screen compromises legibility and comprehension. A lack of consistent visual hierarchy requires an effort from users to differentiate what is important from what is not. We recommend a more progressive disclosure.

Language
Many ‘lingo’ words like Propworth, Magic Cash, etc. are often ignored by users because they are not recognisable. There is also a certain conflict between emotional language and technical expressions.

Design inconsistencies
Similar concepts are often presented in different visual language and layers, sometimes in the same screen. This is an even bigger problem across devices. We strongly recommend the development and consistent use of a Design System.
Owners and agents seek more flexibility
Both segments demand further possibilities to manage their leads and a better integration across devices and other systems. Currently, these users tend to manage their leads outside of the platform.

Buyers and tenants would like to see feedback from other users
A very high interest and desire to see reviews and ratings from locals and previous experiences in order to make more informed choices regarding localities, builders, landlords, etc.

Search options do not always fit the users’ mental models
Many users expect further flexibility to search: keywords, help, specific tools - and show frustration when the system does not respond to these needs.

Too many notifications and not always useful
An overload of notifications and pop ups can irritate users and make them miss out on important information
2. The current product
Main findings
The current product

2.1 General
Cluttered UI

There is a general feeling that the website is too cluttered. Many users say they prefer other platforms such as Housing or Makaan just because they have a “cleaner UI” and are more “user friendly”.

On content-heavy pages, such as the SRP, PDP or owner dashboard, users usually struggle to find the information they are looking for.

A few users commented that the font size is in some parts too small, across all devices.
Cluttered UI

The combination of big amounts of content with lack of visual hierarchy and white space result in a significant cognitive load for the user.

Instead of showing everything up front, a more progressive disclosure of information could help declutter the interface, and the use of icons could help users scan through the content more easily.
Cluttered UI

Magicbricks

General

- Smaller card - less space
- Bigger picture
- Less crowded
Cluttered UI: Homepage

What users really care about
Cluttered UI: Homepage

Desktop
The content on the homepage doesn't add much value for users and creates a first impression of clutter. Some users also felt MB was trying to push their content instead of asking them what they wanted.

The data collected from Hotjar confirms very few users click on the buttons below the search and almost no one scrolls below the fold.

Users’ main intent here is to search or post properties.
Access to post property

At the moment there are up to 4 access points to 2 visually different post property flows on Homepage for desktop. Top right CTA (1) does not look like an actionable button. First-time users reacted with confusion and some struggled to find any of the CTAs.

There is no CTA to start this process on the App Homepage - what was perceived negatively by some users.

No related issues were identified on mobile site.
Although Makaan also displays promotional content, the search bar is given more importance and space, and the general feeling is one of minimalism.
Housing also places the search bar in the center of attention, while still displaying other content below and avoiding a sensation of clutter.
Personalized content

The platform doesn't always take into account previous actions the user has taken when showing content:

- Users still get the “contact owner” CTA after contacting the owner.
- Users still get the “Follow” CTA after they have followed a property.
- Owners get asked the same questions about the property over and over again although they have already answered them. They also get messages saying they haven’t uploaded any pictures although they have.
MB ‘lingo’ isn’t always understood

Abbreviations make it harder for the user to understand industry-specific concepts

- Users do not recognise the concept of Magic Cash
- Most people don’t know what RM & UC (PropIndex) or Q-o-Q (rates & trends) stand for
- Propworth and PropIndex are also not understood by everyone
- The concept of fresh properties isn’t clear to many users
Visibility and awareness

Many users are not aware of all the information, tools and services Magicbricks is currently offering. (Map search, tools)

- Even when users are aware of them, in many cases they struggle to find them on the site or recognise their value, because many of the terms are not self-explanatory, e.g. Propworth, Magic Cash.
- When you guide them through the site and test different tools they are surprised to see so much content, in many cases relevant to them.
- Content and tools are not properly integrated between the pages. For example, news articles about a particular sector could appear in the locality section.
Visibility and awareness

All these tools and content could be used to engage users beyond their (generally short) immediate goal and make them come back to the portal.

MB is in good shape to adopt a more trusted partner/advisory identity due to abundant information, tools and collected data, as well as visibility and a recognised success rate among users.

However, there is a general feeling towards all these sites that they “show you what they want you to see, not necessarily what is good for you”, due to the abundance of promotional content that isn’t always relevant the user.

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Clickability

Some tap targets are very small (e.g. Read more). It is important to make them all big enough for the user to tap comfortably.

Affordance

Individual affordance is generally good, recognisable and provides good feedback, but should be consistent across all devices.
Inconsistencies in visual design

The screenshot on the right is a good example of the inconsistencies that happen throughout the app, website and mobile site.

Although most users won’t point this out, these inconsistencies are harmful for the overall experience.

To tackle this, it is important to build a comprehensive design system, that is understood and strictly followed by everyone across the different design teams.
Pictures

Photos play a crucial role in advertising or searching for properties, and they are currently one of the main pain points shared by all segments:

- Buyers, tenants and owners all complain about their quality (resolution).
- It is often the case that properties only have photos from the outside, only from the inside, or simply not enough to decide whether or not the property is of one’s interest.
- Agents dealing with properties under construction find difficult to get photos other than brochures - which many times do not fit in the technical requirements (pixels, size) or have watermarks.
- Uploading pictures is seen as a tedious process for owners and agents, mainly because they have to be uploaded one by one.
- On mobile, when seeing pictures full screen, users are sometimes unsure which picture corresponds to which room, due to the current system of scrolling and tabs. See video
Too many pop ups

There are too many pop ups and they also usually appear at the wrong time.

- Users are already asked to rate the app (NPS pop up) before they get to use it
- Access to the device's location is requested at the very beginning, before showing any value and without connecting it to any benefit.
- Agents and owners get many pop ups on their respective dashboards, mostly reminding them about the different packages.
- On the mobile site, recurrent pop ups prompting users to download the app are also perceived as too pushy.
- The chatbot sends too many messages.
More reviews and ratings

Users would like to see more reviews and/or ratings from other users in order to take more informed decisions. They would mainly appreciate references about:

- Properties, from neighbors, previous tenants or other people who have visited the property
- Localities, from anyone who lives or has lived there
- Providers of ancillary services, from previous customers
- Agents, from previous customers

Key elements to consider here are: how to persuade users to provide this content? How to guarantee honest feedback? These have to do with incentive mechanisms (economic, recognition, emotional, community,....) and require not only research but also iterations. Some starting ideas collected from interviewed users: Magic Cash, temporal boosts or lottery prizes.
Inconsistent labeling

- In the PDP, the CTA Ask the advertiser confuses many users, that don’t know who it refers to.

  Replace by Ask the owner/agent

  Have a question? Ask advertiser directly
  Enter your questions here
  Ask now

- The size of the properties is referred to as Super area on desktop, whereas on mobile it is covered & carpet area.
The current product

2.2 Buyer and Tenant
Search

- Many users would appreciate a more free and flexible search - just like Google. They often try to look for keywords or support but the search bar only recognizes existing entries.

- Users don't appreciate getting results that don't match with their search, such as properties nearby the area they are looking for. They want their filters to be respected. This also applies, in most cases, to sponsored content - some users click on attractive listings to then realise they do not comply with their requirements.
Map view is highly appreciated by a lot of users, but not given enough visibility (both on mobile and desktop). Many of them did not know it existed, and even after interacting with it, some users weren’t able to find it.

In the map search, when hovering on a property from the list, the corresponding one on the map should also be highlighted, and vice-versa.
Search: Issues that are specific to the mobile app:

- The search bar on the app sets the wrong expectations.
  - Some users think it will enable them to type their search and are disappointed to find filters. Video
  - Others look for filters but can't find them because they don't expect these filters to be behind the search bar. Video

Search bar should land on a text field.
Search: Issues that are specific to the mobile app:

- Searching through the options in the menu is confusing because Properties for buy, Properties for rent, and New projects all take you to a screen that looks exactly like the homepage. Video
Filters:

- Filters should not only show which filters are active, but which options have been selected. Example: not just BHK but 2 BHK

- On desktop, the floor filter only lets users select one floor.

  Suggestion: let users set a maximum and minimum floor, like in the mobile app.
SRP

- On desktop ‘shortlisting’ icon is not given much visibility, and can be mistakenly connected to ‘Share feedback’. Video
  Suggestion: It’s “natural” place, following best practices of other websites, would be in the top right corner of the card

- Users generally feel the share feedback button isn't very relevant since they don't know much about the property at this stage. Also, they don't understand that its purpose is to report fake listings
  Suggestion: The “share feedback” CTA could be renamed “report listing”
SRP

- Most users subconsciously ignore the ‘No more results’ message, i.e. there isn’t any result fitting all criteria. This leads users to frustration when they find that some criteria is not meeting their original requirements.

- Users do not always know where each sector/area is. In order to locate easily a property, it would be useful to show how far it is from one or more reference points of the user’s choice, such as their workplace and that of their partner, or their parents’ residence.

Video
On desktop, many users fail to see the tabs at the top of the page.

The Exclusively on MB, Verified properties, and Similar properties sections makes users think they have reached the end of the page and they don't see what's beneath it.
The information given about the different localities is perceived as insufficient, not specific and missing a qualitative dimension. The star rating is purely quantitative and most sectors get great ratings in all variables, which raises the skepticism of many users.

Security is usually one of the main concerns of buyers/tenants, regarding both the locality and the building/society. Users want to know if the building will have 24/7 guards and CCTV cameras. That information is sometimes available but should be more highlighted.
Agents

Buyers and tenants frequently mentioned as a major source of frustration being called by too many agents and having to repeatedly explain their requirements. Agents also post many fake listings and aren’t always transparent about their fees.

This doesn’t mean agents are never useful. In fact, many users said they eventually found what they were looking for through an agent, and some are willing to pay to have an advisor in who they trust, but they want to have more control over which ones they talk to, and would appreciate a higher degree of transparency regarding:

- Whether they are contacting an owner or an agent
- Who are their contact details going to be shared with
- The fee that will be asked by the agent
Agents

Suggestion: a more comprehensive agent profile would be appreciated. It could include:

● Reviews and ratings from served customers
● Number of served customers
● Photo and logo
● Personal bio, to see how the person writes
● Links to social media
● Areas/sectors in which they have more properties and expertise
Shortlisted properties

Mobile app: some users struggled to find their list of shortlisted properties. They generally expect to find it in the options in the hamburger menu. Video
Ancillary services

Users have expressed an interest in having at their disposition a one-stop-shop platform where, apart from buying, selling and renting property, they can find complementary services.

The added value of this would be the comfort of not having to search elsewhere, and the trust they have in services recommended by MB and its users. However, there seems to be a preference, once again, for a system of ratings and reviews from other users, as well as photos of their work, to help make the decision of which contractor to choose.

Also, for services such as interior design, plumbing and other household services, there is a preference for local suppliers, that might know better the building or area, or of whom there might be examples of their work in nearby properties.
Ancillary services

The services that seemed to be most interesting to the interviewed users were:

- Technical advice: Since buying a property is a big and potentially risky investment, buyers want to make sure they won’t get bad surprises (ex: plumbing/water issues). If reparations are needed, they would like to get an estimate of how much the operation will cost.

- Legal advice: Another major concern is getting advice on all the necessary paperwork and documentation needed, as well as making sure the property fulfills all legal requirements.

- Interior design and implementation: Some users said they might be interested in renovating parts of their newly purchased property, particularly the kitchen.
The current product

2.3 Owner
Owner

Post property

Owners arrive to the platform seeking a streamlined process to post their property that is recognisable, quick and easy to complete.

The current process of posting a property is described as “lengthy” and “very comprehensive” by users - yet, similar to other platforms. In some extreme cases, users complaint about spending over 45 mins to complete all steps. A general assumption is that all fields must be completed prior to continue.
Post property

A significant amount of interviewed users post their property using laptop because a bigger screen makes it easier to read - most do not even try it on their phones.

On desktop, users are presented a wide diversity of UI elements: radio buttons, dropdowns, toggles, and text fields, together with a lot of text in similar font size and type. It requires a significant effort from the user to make sense of what is on the screen.

A stronger visual hierarchy can help a lot to improve readability. The type of information that the platform is asking the owner to input could be illustrated with icons. A combination of both would reduce the cognitive load on users.
Many owners do not recognise and/or understand what Magic Cash is. They are also not willing to spend too much time trying to understand it, either because its value is not clearly presented or perceived as low.

Those who take the time to understand it, appreciate the concept.
Owners are aware of the importance of having quality photos on their listings. They want this process to be as simple as possible, and would welcome some tips on how to take better photos.

Uploading photos is currently perceived as a big pain for owners, because:

- They cannot upload several photos at once - need to go one by one
- Photos need to comply size requirements, resulting in some users having to edit them (resize, crop undesirable details, etc.) using specific software
- The system does not flag up duplicates and poor quality images,
- They cannot add a short description, e.g. ‘bathroom next to smaller room’
- Many owners prefer to post property on laptop, but generally take photos with their phone, so they have to send the photos to the laptop first, then upload manually.
Access to post property

At the moment there are up to 4 access points to 2 visually different post property flows on Homepage for desktop. Top right CTA (1) does not look like an actionable button. First-time users reacted with confusion and some struggled to find any of the CTAs.

There is no CTA to start this process on Homepage for App - what was perceived negatively by some users.

No related issues were identified on mobile site.
Dashboard

For most users, the main motivations to regularly check their dashboard is to get an overview of all received leads and optimise their listing accordingly. They want to keep track of leads, so none is missed. An ideal dashboard, in their minds, would allow them to do these things effortlessly.
Currently, users tend to manage their leads outside of the platform: they write down phone numbers and keep track of the interactions elsewhere: on paper, notes-taking Apps or even spreadsheets.

The reasons given can be summarised in that they find it easier. In fact, a repeated desire is to be able to export these leads somehow. At the moment is not possible to do so from App - not even copy-paste it.
Owner

Dashboard

There is a general feeling shared by owners that many leads are “fake” - from other owners, agents or even companies like MB themselves, to increase number of leads. It affects the credibility of the platform. Although not connected to UX design, reducing such feeling could be a great differentiator.

It is not obvious for users when they are logged-in or not. Owners can only access to their dashboard after login-in, but not all of them know it and it is not explained in the App. This results in users unsuccessfully trying to locate their dashboard in the menu. Video

Some owners discover that their chat has been deactivated, but are not informed why.
Owner

Homepage/Search

Once a user logs in as an owner, they can’t search properties anymore.

This is a problem because many users that are trying to sell a property are also interested in buying another one, or want to check the prices in their area.
Paying users do not receive a very different experience than free users, only some constraints are loosened a bit.

They would like to see more evidence of what they pay for, e.g. being informed when and how promotional emails are released, and to receive a more personal (premium) treatment.
Advertising packages

There is a general demand from paying users to reduce the presence of information regarding advertising packages, because they have already purchased one.

Many free-listed owners also react negatively to the amount of in-platform calls to upgrade. They are aware of these options and don’t need to be exposed to it continuously.

A number of users also shared the perception that package prices are constantly changing,
Owner:

Notifications

When asked, owners identified SMS as a preferred way to be informed about leads over in-App notifications, because of two main reasons:

- they do not need to open the App.
- the App has so many notifications on a daily basis that the user ignores them, eventually, and do not want to risk missing a valid lead because of this.

Some users demand to reduce the number of notifications, and a focus on relevant leads, changes of status (e.g. chat has been deactivated) and tips to optimise their listing. For many, most of the notifications they currently receive are not relevant.
The current product
2.4 Agent
Post property process

Because they interact with the platform on a daily basis, the agent’s ideal process is one full of autofill features or shortcuts. Some desired options are the possibility to create new listings using most of the characteristics of an old one, or to upload large amount of photos at once and then assign them to different properties.

Again, many agents -or someone from their team- use a laptop to post properties, because they perceive it easier. Then use App from the ground.

Some agents described the current process as “tedious” because they have to update or post every new listing manually from scratch.
Agent:

Dashboard / MagicBox

Agents success depends on their ability to maintain a good relationship with buyers during the whole process. They want a platform that allows them to manage a large quantity of leads and properties with confidence.

The current dashboard is generally perceived as “good” and “relevant” across platforms. However, at the time of managing leads, many agents decide to do this outside of the platform and also requested an ‘Export’ feature.
Notifications

Many agents must react quickly and make contact within a few minutes when they receive a new lead. During that first call they need to pitch the most relevant details of one or more properties to the potential customer.

They do not find very useful to receive emails or SMS about new leads that refer to Property IDs, because they do not use these numbers, and would prefer to get other details/references.

General notifications are not relevant for most agents. A common use case for this segment is to look for alternative properties that fit in a customer’s requirements, but when they do that they start receiving daily emails and notifications and do not know how to stop that.
Photos and videos

Perhaps even more than owners, agents want this step to be simple and quick. They also would like flexibility to accommodate materials coming in a variety of formats, and to save files for later use.

The current system is seen as rigid and slow:

- Cannot upload more than 1 photo at a time
- It is important to save photos for later use, but this option is not available
- Photos from project brochures are not valid
- Some agents have access to videos from builders, uploaded to Youtube, but cannot add links
Summary

suggested actions
Suggested actions

1. Unified design system
   Implement a consistent design language across flows, product teams and devices. Avoid ‘lingo’

2. Unclutter design
   Favouring key actions, using progressive disclosure and eliminating redundancies

3. Unsolicited actions/content
   Reduce pop-ups and pushed purchase requests: present this information to users differently. Provide more options to manage notifications

4. Tools and additional services
   Give more relevance: integrate along the user flow, make easy to find and recognize

5. User engagement
   Explore and try out ways to motivate users’ reviews
Suggested actions

6. Dashboards
   Rethink owner and agent’s dashboards: add more data management features

7. Design a cross-device experience
   Make use of the opportunities of having multiple platforms, create integrated experiences

8. Photo uploading
   Make it easier for users to upload photos, edit them, add descriptions, etc.

9. Agent’s Profile
   Explore the implementation of an Agent’s profile that creates value for all segments

10. Search options
    Consider offering your users an open search feature so they can quickly find what they need
3. New designs
first impressions
Early-stage prototypes were also tested remotely with 3 users in order to collect some first impressions towards the new design language.

Comparison with old screens
Users react positively to the visual change, they do perceive a difference and generally find it “easier to read”, “organized” and “less stressful”.

Navigation
Tabs were easily recognised, as well as horizontal scrolls. Sections were easily differentiated yet some of the names (Highlights + Insights) were questioned by some users.
New designs

Users still communicated that there is too much information (text and data) displayed at once and it is hard to choose what to read.

Some parts are still cluttered with content - again a problem of visual hierarchy, not using enough white space and no visual metaphors.

If you have so much to say you need to build a consistent visual language and might consider a more progressive disclosure of information.
Visualization (Post property desktop)

Map requires a title and explanation to clarify users that their exact address won’t be disclosed.

Reconsider visualization of Premium packages. Discount and Magic Cash Applied are not clear and visibility metrics on paid packages is perceived negatively - could be presented as additional % compared to free option, instead of absolutes.

Use of icons helps users to understand the process (Magic Cash, furnishing and amenities check-boxes)

New designs
Visualization
(Post property desktop)

Magic Cash is now recognised and better understood by users. Icons appear inconsistently next to elements.

Having a progress bar is a great addition, but having both steps and continuous (%) slider seems redundant. Also, the current design is misleading: refers to 4 steps only, yet there are 6-7 screens to be filled-in.
Photos

The new photo upload process seems to respond to many of the demands identified during the study. The user reacted intuitively and recognised most of the possible actions - we still recommend to test it with more users before validating it.

System status

Upon arrival to payment confirmation, the user does not know whether the post is live or not - he is asked to continue filling up data.
Visual styles are not consistent - same concepts with different size, borders, shadows, fonts, text format, checkbox status, visualization, ...

Add Price Details to Sell/Rent Your Property Faster

Your Expected Price

Price: ₹55,00,000
Fifty five lac fifty thousand only

Price per sqft: ₹3400
Three thousand four hundred only

Other Charges: ₹10,000
Ten thousand only

☑ Stamp duty and registration charges excluded

Maintenance Charges: ₹3,400
Three thousand four hundred only

☑ 50 Magic Cash

☑ I don’t prefer getting any response from Brokers
Tone of voice
There is a certain conflict between emotional language and fairly elaborated/technical expressions. Users might understand both, but the platform does not present a uniform identity.
Annex: Research database
how to use it
What for and how to use

A research database containing observations and the most significant insights has been created to help keep track of the findings made. It can be further extended with findings from future research.

The database has been built with a certain structure, allowing to filter and retrieve data quickly. In the Observations page, each relevant comment has been categorised according to:

- Segment that the user belongs to
- User reaction (positive, neutral or negative)
- Device and screen that triggered the observation
- Theme (content, filters, design, labeling, visibility, concerns, others)
- Insight that the observation feeds into.
The Insights page collects the main findings of the study, identified as patterns or repeated feedback from users.

Each of the pages can be filtered as well by any one or more categories for specific search.

If you find any difficulty when using it or need access rights, please feel free to reach us!
Annex: Suggested videos
Suggested videos

A full playlist with video recordings from most user interviews has been created on Youtube. The following videos have been selected from each of the segments. Enjoy!

**Anant** (Buyer)
Anant hadn’t used the MB app before and therefore uncovered many usability issues first time users come across (App)

**Pratibha** (Owner)
Pratibha is trying to upgrade to a bigger home. This video is a great example of how design can trigger a number of frustrations beyond digital interaction. (App)

**Gurmeet** (Agent)
Gurmeet was very critical about leads, the pricing system, and how the different platforms sometimes make his life complicated.

**Akshay** (Owner, tenant and buyer)
This test illustrates very well common pain-points across several segments
Thank you!

Questions?
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