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Boots for beginners.

BOOTBARN.COM USABILITY STUDY

s Open Season Transparent Western Boots - Broad Square Toe,

Information Overload.

01

Lack of comprehension.

The users surveyed did not understand boots. They didn't know the terminology, they did not know the brands. They need help understanding what they are looking for.

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02

Too many pop-ups.

Users are inundated with a variety of pop-ups from the moment they access the site. This is distracting.

03

Option paralysis.

Just like a Boot Barn retail store, there are many options for users to pick through. Sometimes there are too many.

Explanations could help.

The current interface suffers from "Expert Blindness" by assuming users already understand industry-specific jargon and brand names. This creates a disconnect for beginners when specific combinations, like "Ariat + Cowboy," aren't clearly labeled or easy to find. To bridge this gap, we recommend adding an interactive "Boot Finder" tool that translates simple needs into the correct technical categories to guide novice shoppers, and easily discovered explanations the keep users on the page.

Big problems.

Finding a store. It's an issue.

"Oh wow. That was really small. But that said, no stores found, please try a different search. That was not helpful at all. Like that should have been a little bit larger. I really didn't see that at all."

"It should not take that long, but I don't know why it is taking that long. Let me reload the page. I think this down on my end... it is not giving me any, although it says city, state, but it is not giving me. Okay. Yeah, it's not able to find..."

Finding a store is deeply flawed. If an exact location is not known, the store locator hangs when a town is entered into the search.

Usability issues.

02

On the unpredictable behavior of the filter menus auto-expanding:

"...why did they open up all those filters again after I closed them? That's annoying. So hold up. If you close all these and then what's the last one? It should open up something new and click it. They all reopen. That's annoying."

01

On the page "jumping" and interrupting the filtering process:

"That kind of stunk that it, I wasn't done clicking my features and then it already like moved me up to the top. That was kind of annoying. I should have been able to just like make my selection..."

03

On the difficult "runaway" hover states in the main navigation menu:

"Yeah, sometimes when these menus actually run away, it's very complicated, so it should stay when you move your mouse. Okay, it's, I need to go around the box to still stay within the menu."

Participant Successes.

Intuitive General Navigation: Half of the participants (2 of 4) successfully completed the study tasks without reporting any difficulties or navigational hurdles.

Positive User Sentiment: Some participants found the overall flow to be seamless, with one user explicitly stating "nah" when asked if any aspects of the navigation were particularly difficult.

Cross-Platform Stability: Participants successfully navigated the test across both Mac and Windows platforms, suggesting that the primary desktop interface remains stable across different operating systems.
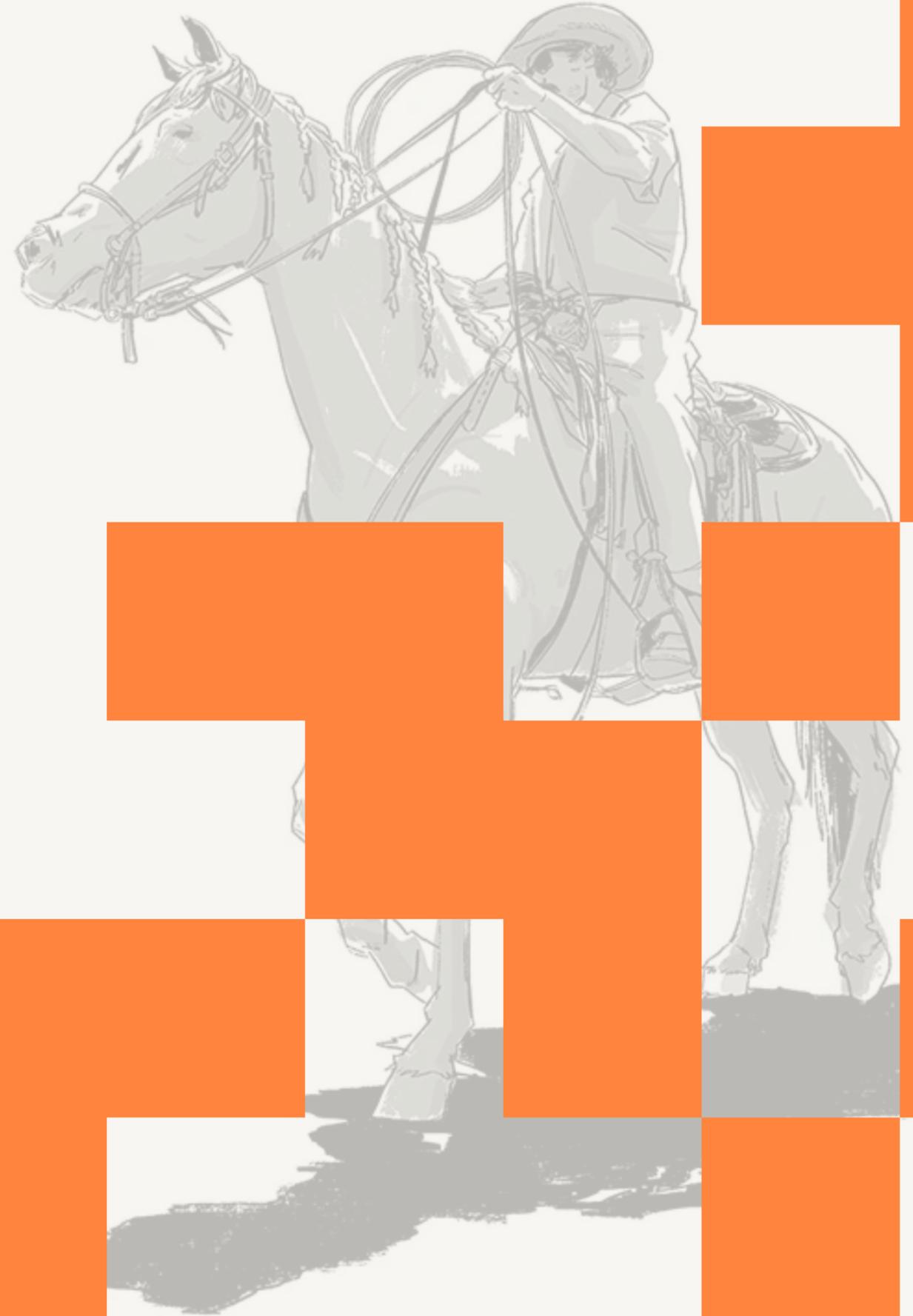
Areas for Growth.

Location Search Friction: Multiple participants encountered specific difficulty when "searching for a location," suggesting that the store locator tool may require a more intuitive interface or clearer input promp

Terminology and Labeling Gaps: A notable challenge arose during product discovery, where a participant struggled to find the specific "combination of Ariat + Cowboy" because they did not understand the terminology.

Expert Blindness: The feedback indicates that for users unfamiliar with specific brands, the current information architecture does not provide enough "explicit" guidance to help them bridge the gap between their intent and the site's technical categories.

Executive Summary.

Overview

This study evaluated the usability of the Boot Barn website through unmoderated testing sessions conducted with four participants in the United States between March 2 and March 5, 2026. The goal was to identify critical friction points in navigation and product discovery to ensure the interface meets the needs of both novice and expert shoppers.

Key Findings

- **General Navigational Success:** Half of the participants (2 of 4) successfully completed the tasks without any reported difficulty, suggesting the core interface is intuitive for standard browsing.
- **The "Expert Blindness" Gap:** A significant barrier was identified regarding industry-specific terminology and brand labeling. One participant noted that specific pairings, such as "Ariat + Cowboy," were not "explicitly written," making them difficult to find for users who do not already possess expert product knowledge.
- **Location Search Friction:** One participant encountered specific difficulty with the store locator functionality, indicating a need for a more streamlined geographic search process.

Primary Recommendation

To bridge the terminology gap, it is recommended that Boot Barn implement an interactive "Boot Finder" tool. This feature would translate a user's plain-language needs (e.g., "rugged work") into technical categories (e.g., "Steel Toe Western"), guiding novice shoppers through the catalog without requiring prior brand expertise, and also provide descriptions of relevant terminology.