Part 1-A: Usability Test on Homepage

User Experience 1:

When viewing the site, one user said that they thought it was a gift guide website, but they were not sure what it was going to do—whether it was going to suggest gifts or how to know that the buyer bought the right size or bought the right item. For example, if the user bought a computer and the person really wanted a sweater this app would tell her that the person would actually want a sweater. As far as the site’s appearance, the orange color and the cartoon characters on the site were displeasing to the user. The screen when scrolling through the page also moved too fast and the user, when she stopped scrolling, would end at a part above or below the part she indicated. When looking at the sketches of the app on the website, the user was not sure how she would use the app since she did not have any of the methods to log in to the app. She did not have a Facebook, Twitter, or Gmail account. After further looking at the screenshot, the user liked that it appeared she could create an account without these methods. On the menu screen, the user was confused as to what the contact name was and asked if this was the person she was giving the gift to. She also did not know what the star symbol would do. When the app says, “create new” it was unclear to the user whether the button was suggesting to create a new gift or a person. It was also unclear to the user why she needed to have information in the contact name part such as full name, nickname, etc., because the user would know for whom she was making the gift so it seemed extraneous. As for the gender screen, the user said it was limiting because she could not indicate if she wanted to buy an item for a friend’s pet or for a friend’s house. The graphics and information on the site also portrayed to the user that the site was for
guys, not for grandmothers or anyone not in their twenties. The graphics on the site were less reserved than the user would have liked. It also seemed extraneous to the user that the app was asking her to pick different hair shapes, eyes, etc., when she did create a character because it did not seem like it added to the nature of the app. When picking stores it seemed useless to her to have to write in the stores; she would have preferred a drop down list especially since some people write store names differently. For example, JC Penney’s may be written as JC Penney’s, JCP, or JcPenneys. Additionally, the user was concerned about picking sizes online as different stores have different sizes. When looking at the bottom of the webpage at the contact section the user found a number of misspellings, the captcha part was not working, and there were many links at the bottom of the page such as a “map” link that went to another site for building web pages. In general, the user did not understand the site’s purpose, and it was not self-evident. She said she did not find the tasks hard to complete, but it took time to figure out how to complete them. Overall, she did not like the website, but she said the idea was not bad. The part she liked the least was where users added hair, etc. onto the person and chose measurements for the person. As for Krug’s questions, the user was able to identify all of these points on the website, although some points were not obvious to the user.

User Experience 2:

The second user believed the website was a site for giving women’s clothes as a gift. He wondered why the site did not have models, and suggested that the cartoons should be pictures. He too wondered why he needed to have a social media or Google account to log in and wondered why he would need these to access the site because he would not want to share gifts on his social media if he had one, because then the people he bought gifts for would know what he
bought for them. He was confused by the button “create new” and wondered what he would be creating. He was also confused about the purpose of the button called “requests” and what the difference was between tailored gifts and normal gifts. He also wondered why there was a button for creating contacts because even though he was viewing the sketches on the website, if he was viewing it on his phone he would already have a contacts list on his phone. When creating the character he did not know what the icons were indicating. He thought he was going to buy just clothes with the app and was wondering why there were other items listed. He questioned why he would not simply go to a store’s website instead of using the app and said that listing the sizes was not going to tell him what’s the best gift option. Additionally, he questioned why the filters were on a separate page. For the bottom part of the webpage, he found the captcha part not working, and the spelling was incorrect in the “contact us” section. When answering the reflection questions he indicated that he did not understand the site’s purpose, it was not self-evident, he did not feel he was able to accomplish tasks easily, and he did not find a part that he liked best. The user was able to answer Krug’s questions, but he found the tasks difficult to do.

Part 1-B: Usability Test on App

User Experience 1:

In addition to the previous comments the user made when viewing the screenshots of the app on the website, the user made these remarks when viewing the app on the tablet. On the filters page, the user was confused as to why she could only click on a select number of stores. When she clicked on “tailored gifts” it would go to the filters page and she was not sure why the app functioned this way. She was also frustrated with the fact that the app would not keep her information when she entered it. After creating a person and typing in and selecting the
information the app would not retain the information. She suggested having a “save information” button so that she could guarantee that the information was saved.

User Experience 2:

When viewing the app on his tablet, not the screenshots on the website, the user added these details to his previous comments. He did not like that he could not delete tailored gifts and he was confused as to why the “x” button seemed to be a button that went backwards and forwards and the check mark would add the gift. He assumed that the “x” meant that he was deleting gifts that he thought would not fit the person’s personality or style. Additionally, when adding in the information about the person he wanted to buy a gift for, he did not know where to go after typing in the stores. He assumed he would then be able to find items matching the measurements he listed at those stores, but instead he was left going back to the main menu. He suggested that the buttons for “next” should be in the same location on each page as it was confusing for him when on the filters page the buttons were at the bottom of the screen, not at the top. When adding in information about the person he was buying a gift for, he found that he had to do all of the steps in order, he could not add eye color then hair, he had to do the steps in the order on the screen. He also found that when he selected tailored gifts he could not then go back and delete them and there were buttons on a couple of screens that were difficult to work with.

Part 2:

The Ultimate Gift Guide user audience is for anyone wishing to buy a gift, regardless of age or gender. The user interface should be useable for both an individual in their twenties and an individual in their eighties. The goals of the user audience will be to provide information about the person they are hoping to buy a gift for and then receiving gift options based on these
interests at the stores that the buyer has indicated. The user should identify the person they are buying a gift for by providing information such as clothing sizes, gender, store interest, hobbies, etc. This information will help narrow down the choices available for the buyer and help determine the “ultimate gift”. After identifying information about the person they are buying the gift for, the user will then move to a new screen where items will appear from the different stores they selected based on the interests indicated when they described the person. If the buyer likes an option, they can click on whether they would like to keep or discard an option. Once discarding an option this will make room for a new option. If the user decides to keep an option it will be added to the user’s cart. After the user has finished shopping, the user can then purchase the items they selected for the intended gift recipient. The site will need to include descriptive words so the user knows what the site is asking. For instance, when the app says to add a “contact” this can be confusing to a user who thinks “contact” sounds more like a person they would add to their phone contacts rather than someone they are buying a gift for, so the word will be changed to “gift recipient”. Therefore, the language needs to be precise and clear so the user is not confused about what information they need to provide.

The user research methods that might be useful are contextual interviews, personas, and surveys. Contextual interviews would be useful because I could spend time observing how someone buys a gift for another person, or I could spend time with a trained professional who helps people buy clothes and gifts. I could observe the tasks they perform and ask them why they do certain tasks and what would make their job easier or more efficient. Although humans are sometimes unable to say what would make something better because they may not know until it is given to them, the feedback they give would still be useful. The idea behind the personas would be beneficial because it would help focus the product. I would be able to create characters
that would be individuals that would use the site and I could see if the features and interface would be easy for them to use. I could also identify if there was some other feature that I needed to add in order for them to complete their tasks. Additionally, it would be useful to conduct a survey asking individuals who have used the site or app in the past to rate or comment on specific features and functions. This option could allow more users to respond and give their input about the site, rather than obtaining information from a few individuals. It would be best to implement the contextual interviews and personas at the start of production in order gain more information about how to fix or improve areas of the site or app. Surveys would be best implemented after the site or app has been created so that users could indicate what they liked, did not like, what was unclear, and what aspects of the site they think need changed.

In order to re-design and develop the site I will need to consider the input I receive from the usability testing. The problems that the users have when viewing and navigating the site will greatly impact the re-design of the site. The major factors that I need to consider are how easily are users able to navigate the site, do they understand the purpose of the site, does the language of the site confuse the users, and are they able to easily complete different tasks when assigned. The process that will be followed is: I will conduct the usability tests to determine the areas that need to be re-designed, next I will re-design the site using sketches and wireframes, then I will have these re-designs tested to see if they fix the problem or if there are elements in these designs that are confusing. After the problems have been resolved, I will then develop the site and continue to retest it to identify any additional issues. The main categories of content on the website are the homepage that provides information about what the app does, a place where the user can view the app without downloading it and where they can understand how to use it, a video to view a demo of the app, a place to download the app, and a part where the user can sign
up for new updates. On the app, there will be the homepage, the screens that allow the user to provide information about the gift recipient, a page that loads possible gift items from stores, a place where the user can purchase and view selected items, and a page where the user can go back and look at what they previously bought for a gift recipient.

Part 3: Scenarios

First Scenario:
A grandparent, who is 80 and male, likes watches and old films. His daughter wants to buy him a gift for fifty dollars. His daughter always has trouble buying him a gift every year, but this year she wants to find something that is in either of those categories, as she knows he tends to like gifts like that. She also wants to be able to use a 20% off sales promotion at Macy’s if she finds a gift there.

Second Scenario:
A grandmother wants to buy toys for her two grandchildren, Sara and Angela. They have to be the same toy otherwise they will fight over their toys. The grandchildren are six and eight. She does not want any other options besides toys that cater to children that are in that age group. She also wants the app to tell her what are the most popular toys because she is out of touch with what is new. She would like to use express shipping, as she has to have the gifts before she leaves on vacation soon and does not want the items to sit outside while she is gone.

Part 4: Reflection
Perception is influenced by a user’s goals as users who are unable to complete a task or who find a problem with the interface of an app or website will have a significantly different view of the site than someone who can easily interact with the interface. If the user is unable to complete a task or the task is difficult to complete, the user will not be satisfied with the site because it has not helped the user achieve their goals. A user’s experience when viewing and interacting with the site will change how they perceive the site as well. If the experience is negative, they will have a negative view of the site, and vise versa. Sometimes, however, it comes to context; if the user is not who the site is targeting, or the user is expecting extraordinary functions that the site is simply not able to meet then this is not an accurate judgment of the site. The site should be judged based on the functions that it states it can do. These factors were important when re-designing the site. When conducting scenarios, it was important to see what the user’s goals were and what their experience would be like because this would ultimately influence how they viewed the site and if they could complete their tasks.

In order to create a new design for this website and app, I strived to include a number of interface design principles. When following Mathis’ guidelines for user interface design I sought to have simplicity by having a small number of simple rules. I also sought to have familiarity where users could bring prior knowledge from their interaction with other sites and apps to this design. Additionally, I tried to include recognition by putting the buttons in the same place so individuals did not have to recall how to move through the interface. The app does not necessarily permit user flexibility, as the users first have to identify the gift recipient to then buy the gift. However, with the website the user could watch a demonstration video or interact with the site in whatever order they would like. The site does not have immediate, useful feedback, as there are not many options for the user to interact with the site, however the app lets the user
know when they have added an item to their cart. The app also provides safety by letting the user exit out of a screen, cancel, or go back in the menu options. Users have several opportunities to undo their actions. This prevents both sides, the user and the company, from having to deal with errors. Additionally, the language and buttons are clear and indicate to the user what they are meant to do. The buttons are similar to those used in common shopping apps and websites so the user does not have to try to learn a new way to complete their task. This creates affordance because both the app and website easily indicate to the user how they are meant to be used.

The same principles applied when looking at the other user interface design guidelines. When following Stone et al., I sought to make the process from creating an account, identifying the gift recipient, buying the gift, and purchasing the gift a streamlined, visible process. As for affordance and feedback, the language and placement of the buttons indicate to the user how to interact with the site. Also, when the user buys items or moves through the site there is feedback to reconfirm that they are moving along in the process. Many buttons and options were taken out of the old design in order to create a more structured and simplistic design. The buttons were also changed from the old design to be more consistent so the user always knows where to click for the “menu” button or any other “menu” related button on the screen. I included tolerance by making sure the user could always exit out of the screen or cancel the process when they wanted to. Additionally, one of the prime differences between this site and the old site is its function for all users. The site and app should be able to be used by individuals of any age. It was important for both platforms to have accessibility so no individual was excluded from using the site or app. The guidelines by Nielsen and Shneiderman that follow this same user interface design pattern were considered as well. As one of Shneiderman’s guidelines indicates it is important to make the user feel they are in control. The user does not want to feel confused or lost in the design,
they want to be actively engaged so this was an important consideration when re-designing the site and app.