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A UX-Driven Approach to Connect Buyers and Sellers in Off-Market Real Estate

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Abstract - estate industry works through a fragmented process. Wholesalers look for buyers for their properties, while buyers look for investment opportunities that may not be available on conventional property marketplaces. Properties are often circulated through personal networks and databases rather than through one shared channel. This creates problems in property discovery, lead generation, buyer-seller communication, verification, and deal management. OffMarket is a real estate platform designed to address these problems by connecting wholesalers and buyers through one digital experience built for off-market transactions. This study documents its design and looks at how UX principles can simplify interactions within a multi-sided real estate platform.

Design/methodology/approach – The design process covered problem identification, workflow analysis, competitor analysis, information architecture, user-flow development, wireframing, interface design, and responsive prototyping. It focused on two user groups, wholesalers and buyers, whose requirements differ but are closely linked. No primary user research was carried out; design decisions draw on published research, workflow mapping, and a competitor comparison. Wholesalers need to list and manage properties, share listings, monitor deal performance, identify likely buyers, and talk to interested leads. Buyers need map-based property discovery, personalised BuyBox preferences, property information, verification, and direct contact with sellers.

Findings – The design puts particular weight on reducing friction between property discovery and deal engagement. It gives users a clearer route from finding a property, to making contact, to managing the lead. Seller and buyer verification, messaging, property matching, notifications, and structured lead interactions are built into the platform so that transactions are more transparent and better organised. The study describes how UX design can help structure complex interactions within the off-market real estate ecosystem.

Practical implications – OffMarket proposes a transaction-oriented experience that brings property discovery, buyer matching, communication, and lead management into one platform, in place of the separate channels the process now relies on. Wholesalers and buyers each get tools built around their own goals, inside a shared environment. The case study also identifies opportunities for future development through improved matching algorithms, personalised filters, notification systems, and intelligent deal recommendations.

Originality/value – Existing UX research on real estate platforms mostly deals with specific parts of the experience, such as search. Few studies look at off-market platforms that need discovery, communication, verification, and lead management to work together. This case study addresses that gap. It sets out the design decisions behind a platform that serves wholesalers and buyers in the same ecosystem.

Keywords: Real Estate Technology; Property Discovery; Digital Lead Management

1. Introduction

Digital platforms have changed how people search for, assess, advertise, and buy property. Off-market deals do not fit the usual marketplace pattern, though. Properties tend to travel through networks, databases, private contacts, and direct negotiation. That makes it hard for buyers to find suitable opportunities and for wholesalers to get properties in front of them.

Two user groups sit at the centre of this space. Wholesalers find properties and potential buyers, and they work to agree terms between the two sides. Buyers, often investors, look for properties that meet specific investment criteria. The two groups deal with each other through private exchanges, databases, and separate distribution channels, so the process is fragmented and information is hard to track.

From a UX point of view, both groups have to be considered. Buyers need to discover and evaluate relevant properties. Wholesalers need to manage properties, buyers, and leads. Between them, the process involves several users, stages, and tools, so the experience can quickly become complicated. Users still need to stay focused on their main goals: finding suitable properties for buyers, and managing opportunities and leads for wholesalers.

OffMarket is a platform that brings property discovery, listing, lead management, and communication into one place. Buyers can search and explore properties and contact sellers directly. Wholesalers can list properties, manage leads, and engage with buyers.

Designing one platform for both groups raises three UX challenges. The groups have different goals within a single ecosystem. Off-market transactions are complex, which puts pressure on information architecture and navigation. And the

platform has to show key information clearly at decision points, such as evaluating a property, contacting a seller, or managing a lead.

This paper presents a UX case study of OffMarket. It looks at how a digital real estate platform can meet the needs of more than one type of user, with a focus on property discovery, information organisation and presentation, communication, and lead management. It also identifies areas for future development.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews research on digital transformation in real estate, the user experience of real estate platforms, trust and information quality, property search and personalisation, and multi-sided marketplaces. It ends by identifying the gap that this study addresses.

2.1 Digital Transformation in Real Estate

Digital technology has changed how information is produced, accessed, and shared in the real estate industry. A recent systematic review of digital transformation in real estate (Al-haimi et al., 2025) covers artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, blockchain, and augmented and virtual reality, and how they have changed interaction between professionals, investors, buyers, and other stakeholders. The review reports gains in operational efficiency, data-driven decision-making, and user engagement. It also lists obstacles to adoption: high implementation costs, data security concerns, resistance to change, and integration and regulatory difficulties. Digital transformation in this sector is therefore about more than technology. It also shapes how people use these systems and how they deal with one another through them. For a platform like OffMarket, which aims to improve interaction between stakeholders, the user experience matters a great deal, because users will base their decisions on the information the system gives them.

2.2 Real Estate Online Platforms and User Experience

Online platforms let a wide range of stakeholders search for and transact in property. Ullah et al. (2021a) surveyed 65 users of real estate online platforms and found that information quality, service quality, and ease of use act as the main causes of acceptance, with usefulness and intention to use as outcomes. They advise platform managers to give users more transparent, high-quality information and easy-to-use content. In a second study of 407 users in Sydney, Ullah et al. (2021b) found that reliability, accuracy of information, and credibility were the three most important factors. Features that attracted users included content structure and web design. These findings matter for the property-detail and discovery screens of OffMarket, since users depend on that information to make decisions. Interface design and information design cannot be treated separately here. Property cards and details, verification options, location, valuation, and seller information should be organised so that users can compare listings and decide, without making the interface too complex.

2.3 Information Quality, Transparency and Trust

Research on online marketplaces treats trust as central to buyer-seller interaction. Pavlou and Gefen (2004) studied buyers in Amazon's online auction marketplace. They found that trust in the marketplace intermediary builds trust in the community of sellers, and that this trust reduces perceived risk and makes transactions more likely. Real estate transactions are high in value and depend heavily on the information provided, so a digital platform in this field has to deal with trust directly. Ullah et al. (2021b) point the same way, since reliability, information accuracy, and credibility were the factors their respondents rated highest. Platforms should therefore help users judge how accurate the information is and how trustworthy a particular listing is. On OffMarket, verification options, the way property information is structured, seller information, and communication channels can each support trust, both in the platform and in individual listings. These features do not remove the risk from a transaction. They give users more confidence when choosing a property and dealing with a seller.

2.4 Property Search and Personalisation

Search is one of the main functions of any real estate platform, but a large number of options can confuse users and make them spend time on irrelevant listings. Yuan et al. (2013) found that the Internet lets homebuyers search more intensively and visit more properties, but that it also wastes time and energy. To make search more efficient, they built a recommendation system based on an investigation of search behaviour, combining case-based reasoning with an ontology. A user test supported its effectiveness. Steegmans and de Bruin (2021) used user-generated data from Funda.nl, the largest online housing platform in the Netherlands, to study how people search. Their data allowed them to separate serious searchers, who intend to buy, from recreational ones. Together, these studies show that search data can reveal what different users are looking for. They support search options that reflect what users need, including personalisation that helps them find relevant listings without browsing unrelated ones. For buyers on OffMarket, personalisation can reduce the number of options they face and make searching more focused on the task.

2.5 Multi-Sided Marketplace Experience

OffMarket, like other real estate platforms, works as an online marketplace that brings different stakeholders into one transaction process, in this case buyers and wholesalers. Both sides need to be considered if each is to have a good experience. Metehan et al. (2025) developed and tested a scale for the buyer experience in online marketplaces, covering its cognitive and relational sides. It has four dimensions: variety,

service excellence, competitive pricing, and promotional effectiveness. Variety, service excellence, and competitive pricing were found to predict customer loyalty. For OffMarket, this suggests that buyers gain from a good range of relevant properties. The study looks at buyers only, though. Wholesalers, who need an efficient way to list properties and engage potential buyers, have to be considered separately. User roles therefore matter in decisions about information architecture and navigation. A design that serves only one side would leave the other without a clear route through the platform.

2.6 Emerging Gap

Most research on the user experience of real estate platforms deals with specific parts of the platform, such as the search process or the role of smart real estate systems. A growing body of work covers digital transformation in real estate. Yet the literature rarely addresses the UX needs of off-market platforms, which have to combine property discovery, information organisation, communication, and lead generation in one service. A full look at the user experience of an off-market platform is needed to understand how well it can serve the different stakeholders in a transaction. OffMarket covers most of the main stages of an off-market sale: discovering properties, getting relevant information, verifying details, communicating with the seller, and managing leads more efficiently.

Taken together, the studies reviewed above point to four needs: clear and well-organised information, visible signals of trust, personalised search, and attention to both sides of the marketplace. The OffMarket design is built around these needs, and the sections that follow describe how.

3. Research Objectives

The study set out to address the following objectives in designing a platform for off-market real estate:

- To identify the problems in off-market real estate that affect property discovery, lead generation, buyer-seller communication, verification, and deal management.
- To design a single platform experience that meets the separate but connected needs of wholesalers and buyers, without forcing either group to work around the other.
- To reduce friction between property discovery and deal engagement, giving users a clear path from finding a property to making contact and managing the lead.

To document the design process from problem identification to a responsive prototype, and to note where the platform could develop further.

4. Methodology

This research is a UX design case study of OffMarket. It is built on a literature review, a set of research-based personas, a mapping of the transaction workflow, a competitor comparison, and an iterative design process. That process included problem identification, persona development, workflow analysis, competitor analysis, information architecture, user-flow development, wireframing, interface design, and responsive prototyping. The study did not include primary user research such as surveys or interviews, so the personas and the design decisions described here have not been tested with users. The work focused on two user groups, wholesalers and buyers, and on the points where their needs meet: discovering a property, making contact, and managing the resulting lead.

4.1 Problem Identification, Persona Development and Workflow Mapping

The starting problem is the one described in the introduction. Off-market properties are passed around through private networks and direct contacts. Buyers struggle to find deals that match their criteria, wholesalers struggle to reach the right buyers, and the process is hard to track from listing through to lead. The design task was to give both groups one place to list, discover, contact, and follow up.



Fig. 1: End-to-end workflow from wholesaler posting to buyer contact (Jain & Gaur, OffMarket, 2026)

The study did not include surveys or interviews. The needs of the two user groups were drawn from four sources instead: the published research reviewed in Section 2, a mapping of the workflow between wholesaler, platform, and buyer, a comparison with an existing competitor, and a set of research-based personas. This is a limitation, and it is discussed again in the conclusion. The design decisions in this paper should be read as informed by literature, workflow analysis, and persona synthesis, not as validated by users.

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Nine personas were developed, five buyers and four wholesalers, built from the workflow analysis and the literature reviewed in Section 2 rather than from direct interviews. Each persona sets out a role, a location, goals, frustrations, and behaviour, so that design decisions could be checked against a specific point of view rather than an abstract user group. The buyer personas range from an experienced full-time investor who moves quickly but distrusts inconsistent information, to a new investor who is still learning the terminology and is uneasy about sharing a phone number early. Despite these differences, the buyer personas converge on the same needs: relevant property discovery, a personalised search, clear property information, visible verification, and a direct way to contact the seller, all of which the design already treats as core buyer requirements. The wholesaler personas range from an independent operator managing everything alone to one who tracks listing performance closely. They converge on a different set of needs: a quick listing flow, access to buyers who are actually interested, organised leads, and notifications when a listing gets activity. Across both groups, the recurring problem is the same: information and communication are scattered across WhatsApp, calls, email, and spreadsheets, which is the fragmentation problem the introduction describes from a different angle. This convergence supported treating discovery, verification, and lead organisation as shared priorities rather than separate features for each side.

The workflow was mapped as a three-lane flow covering the wholesaler, OffMarket, and the buyer. On the wholesaler side, a user signs up, creates a profile, and posts a property. Posting is free, and a paid option is available. Once a property is posted, OffMarket starts a posting workflow. It collects contact details for more than 100 investors in the property's area through InvestorBase, and sends them the deal details by text through TextGrid. Investors also receive the details by email.

On the buyer side, an investor who receives the message visits OffMarket, sees the deal, and clicks "Contact Seller" if interested. What happens next depends on whether the buyer has already signed up, and this step is described in Section 4.3. Mapping the flow this way makes the role of the platform clear. It starts the outreach on behalf of the wholesaler, and it controls the point at which a buyer gets the seller's contact information.

4.2 Competitor Context and Design Goals

Three goals g For competitor context, the study compared OffMarket's pricing with InvestorLift, an established platform for wholesalers and buyers. InvestorLift's pricing page lists an entry-level Pro plan at $479 a month, billed annually, which comes to $6,000 a year (InvestorLift, n.d.). OffMarket offers free property posting and a paid option at $49 per posting. On this basis, OffMarket aims to lower the cost of entry for wholesalers and reach a wider group of users. This is a pricing comparison only. It does not cover the features or user experience of InvestorLift.

Guided the design. The first was a smooth user experience: a stable, fully working platform on every device. The second was easier deal engagement, by simplifying how deals are posted, discovered, and promoted so that buyers and sellers can connect without friction. The third was easy payment, so that users can pay for deal promotion and other premium services without trouble. These goals match the findings in Section 2 on ease of use and trust, and the second goal in particular follows directly from the persona work in Section 4.1, where both buyers and wholesalers described their time being lost to scattered, unstructured communication.

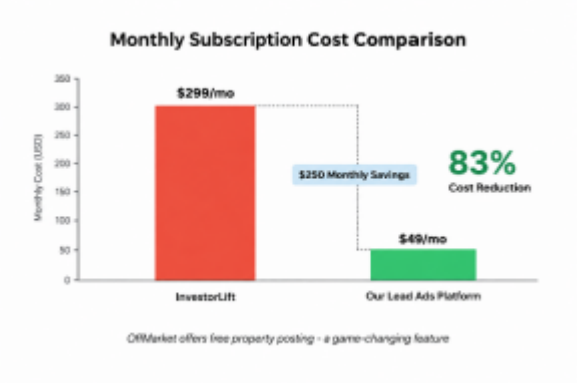


Fig. 2: Cost comparison with an established competitor (Jain & Gaur, OffMarket, 2026)

4.3 Buyer Registration, Verification and Lead Handling

The contact step is where the flow does most of its work. A buyer who clicks "Contact Seller" takes one of two routes. A buyer who has already signed up goes straight to the seller's contact details. A buyer who has not signed up first sees a registration pop-up asking for a first name, last name, and email address. The buyer then verifies a phone number by entering a four-digit code sent by text. Only after this is the seller's contact information shared.

Registration and verification therefore come at the moment when a buyer has already seen a deal and wants to act, rather than at the first visit. This follows the point made in Section 2.3 that verification can support trust between users.

On the wholesaler side, the wholesaler receives an explainer notification and email after posting, and buyer information is expected within 48 hours. If a buyer's details arrive within that time, the lead is stored and appears in the wholesaler's leads. If no buyer message

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arrives within 48 hours, the flow records a failure. The 48-hour window gives both the wholesaler and the platform a clear point at which to judge whether a posting is working.

4.4 Business Model and Pricing

OffMarket takes a freemium approach. A wholesaler can post a property for free, and a paid option is available at $49 per posting. In the flow, the paid option is offered as an upsell after the free posting step. Buyers can view a deal without an account and register only when they contact a seller.

InvestorLift's entry plan is a fixed $479 a month, billed annually (InvestorLift, n.d.). OffMarket charges per posting rather than a flat subscription, so a wholesaler pays only for the deals they choose to promote, and the free option lets a wholesaler try the platform without paying. The pricing also supports the third design goal, making it easy for users to pay for promotion and other premium services.

5. Wireframe Directions and Interface Resolution

The interface was developed in stages, from structure and layout through a visual design system to a responsive prototype.

5.1 Low-Fidelity Structuring

The first wireframes were grayscale, so that structure could be settled before any visual design. They covered the core screens for both groups: the buyer's map view and property details, the BuyBox preferences, the wholesaler's listing form, and the lead list. Working without colour or type kept attention on layout, on where filters sit, and on the placement of the main actions, such as Contact Seller.

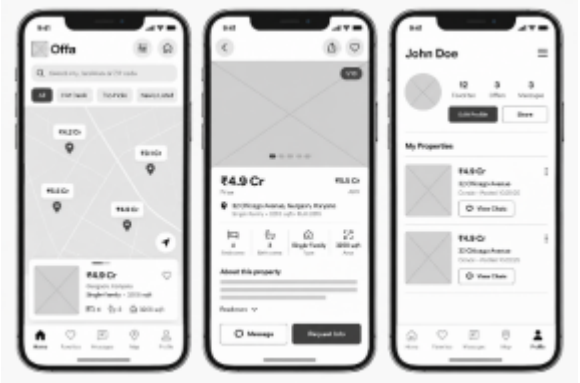


Fig. 3: Low-fidelity wireframes: map, property detail, and profile (Jain & Gaur, OffMarket, 2026)

5.2 Visual Design System Development

The visual design system covers colour, type, spacing, layout, and components. Colour is organised in two scales and two shades. A neutral grey scale and a brown scale each run from 50 to 900, with the base value at 400 (#98A2B3 for grey, #A29999 for brown). These scales cover text, form fields, backgrounds, and dividers. White and black are used as shades. The primary colour is green, and it is applied to interactive elements such as calls to action, links, inputs, and active states. The typeface is Poppins.

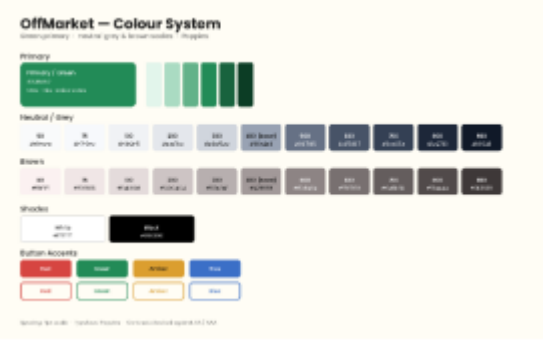


Fig. 4: OffMarket visual design system: colour and type (Jain & Gaur, OffMarket, 2026)

Each swatch lists its contrast ratio against the AA and AAA accessibility levels, so text and background pairings can be checked before use. Spacing follows a 4px system, so margins, padding, and type spacing are all multiples of four pixels. The layout uses responsive grids with small, medium, and large breakpoints and a fluid container, which supports the goal of working on every device. Buttons come in filled, outlined, and text-only styles, each with several interaction states including a disabled state, and in red, green, amber, and blue variants.

5.3 High-Fidelity Prototype and Key Flows

The high-fidelity prototype applies the design system across the main flows for both user groups, and it is responsive across devices.

A buyer usually arrives from the text or email that OffMarket sends when a property is posted, so the first screen is the deal itself rather than a home page. From there the buyer can look at the property, or move to the map to see other available properties.

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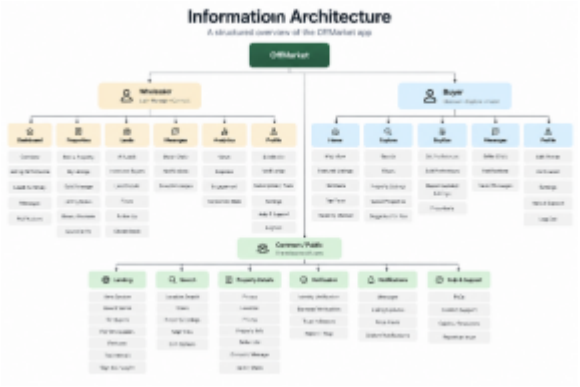


Fig. 5: Information architecture of the OffMarket app (Jain & Gaur, OffMarket, 2026)

For buyers, discovery starts on a map of available properties. Each property opens into a detail page with the property information and the seller's verification status. Buyers set BuyBox preferences, which the platform uses to match properties to what they are looking for. A buyer who taps Contact Seller follows the registration and verification steps described in Section 4.3. The seller's contact information is then shared, and the two can message each other.



Fig. 6: High-fidelity screens: map, property detail, and profile (Jain & Gaur, OffMarket, 2026)

For wholesalers, the flow starts with sign-up and a profile. The wholesaler posts a property for free or pays for promotion, and can share the listing. A dashboard shows how each deal is performing. Leads appear in a lead list as buyers get in touch, and the wholesaler can identify likely buyers and message interested leads from the same place.

Both flows follow the three design goals. Posting, discovery, and contact are kept simple, and the same components and spacing rules are used throughout, so the platform looks and behaves the same on phone, tablet, and desktop.

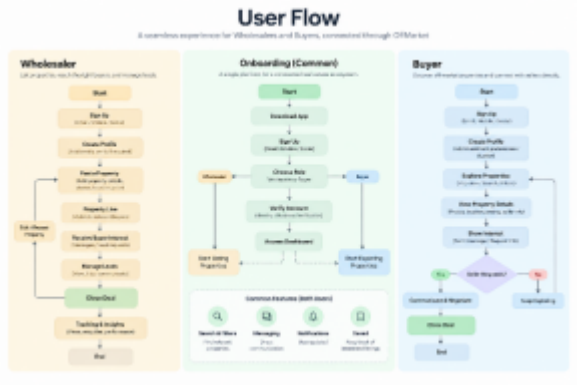


Fig. 7: User flow: onboarding and role selection (Jain & Gaur, OffMarket, 2026)

6. Conclusion

This study documented the design of OffMarket, a platform that connects wholesalers and buyers in off-market real estate. The problem it addresses is a fragmented process. Properties move through private contacts and separate channels, buyers find it hard to locate suitable deals, and wholesalers find it hard to reach buyers and keep track of leads.

The design responds with one platform for both groups. Buyers get map-based discovery, personalised BuyBox preferences, property information, and direct contact with sellers. Wholesalers get tools to list and share properties, monitor deal performance, find likely buyers, and manage leads. Verification, messaging, property matching, and notifications support both sides. Three goals guided the work: a stable platform on every device, easier deal engagement, and easy payment for promotion.

Some decisions came out of the workflow mapping. Registration and phone verification are asked for when a buyer contacts a seller, not at the first visit. The wholesaler side has a 48-hour window in which to judge whether a posting has produced a lead. Pricing is built on free posting with a $49 per-posting option, which differs from the fixed annual plans of an established competitor. The visual system uses a green primary colour, the Poppins typeface, a 4px spacing scale, and colour scales that list their contrast ratios.

The limitation should be stated plainly. This study did not include surveys, interviews, or usability testing, so the design has not been tested with users. The needs analysis rests on published research, workflow mapping, a pricing comparison with one competitor, and a set of personas built from that research rather than from interview participants. The design should be read as a considered proposal, not a validated solution.

The next steps follow from that. The personas should be checked against real users before the design is taken further, since a persona built from literature and workflow analysis can miss needs that only surface in conversation with an actual buyer or wholesaler. Structured usability testing should measure how easily buyers can find and contact a seller and how easily wholesalers can post a property and find their leads. On the product side, the BuyBox needs three improvements: a better matching algorithm, more filters so buyers can refine their searches, and a notification system that alerts buyers when new properties match their BuyBox. This study provides the groundwork for that work.

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