5-1. Customer-oriented eCommerce design

Alexander Nikov

Outline

1. eCommerce usability
2. eCommerce user interface design
3. eCommerce usability guide
4. Usability Best Practices for eCommerce systems
5. User-oriented shopping carts design

Usability

- “the ease with which a user can learn to operate, prepare inputs for, and interpret outputs of a system or component” - IEEE Standard Computer Dictionary
- A key component in Human-Computer Interaction (HCI)
- A primary focus in the design of Web sites
- A “usability subculture” has evolved as a result of Web technology
Usability Variations

- Usefulness, and user experience
- Usability engineering and usability method
- User-centered design

Web Usability Experts

- Analyze and critique
  - Conceptual models
  - Web site navigation schemes
  - Web site widgets
  - Web page sizes, colors, vocabulary
  - Each other
    - Blah, blah, blah...

Why Is Usability Important for eCommerce Web Sites?

- Primary interface to customers
- Users expect instant gratification
- Users experience usability before they are committed to buying
- Expectations arise from best site across industries
- Competitors are “just a mouse click away”
- Value of usability for the time-constrained information seeker
- Usability as the critical success factor for Web projects
Why Is Usability Important for eCommerce Web Sites? (cont.)

- eCommerce Web site = electronic storefront
  - Web site user interface = electronic clerk
  - Online shoppers can afford to be less tolerant with an inept electronic clerk

- eCommerce Web site = electronic catalog for direct sales
  - Catalogs are convenient for mail-ordering and large inventory
  - Too much focus on display and publicity
  - Web site user interface = “read-ability/usefulness” of catalog
  - How many paper catalogs get thrown away?

Return On Investment (ROI)

- External ROI
  - Increased sales
  - Decreased customer support costs
  - Savings gained from making changes earlier in the design life cycle
  - Reduced cost of providing training

Myths of Usability ROI

- Analog comparisons are not required
  - “Cost of bad Web design: Loss of approximately 50% of potential sales from the site as people can’t find stuff” (Jacob Nielsen, Alert Box, 1998, cited by Forrester)

- Executives will believe “voodoo economics”
  - “There are one billion users on the Internet, and half of them could come to your site. If the average cost of an abandoned shopping cart is $20, then you will lose $10 billion a year in sales of your designer pet food” (Rosenburg, 2003, parody of J. Nielsen)

(Daniel Rosenberg, Oracle)
Conversion Rates

• A conversion rate is loosely defined as the percentage of Web site visitors who complete a desired action
• This action can take many forms:
  – Clicks beyond home page
  – Purchases
  – Membership registrations
  – Newsletter subscriptions
  – Sample downloads
  – Sales inquiries, etc.

(“Using Conversion Rates to Measure Web Site Effectiveness and Improve ROI”
http://www.websiteprofitdoctor.com/MC_BP_articles.asp?article=03_11_03_01.txt)

Conversion Rates (cont.)

• A high conversion rate depends on several factors
  – The interest level of the visitor
  – The attractiveness of the offer
  – The ease of the process
• The interest level of the visitor is maximized by matching the right visitor, the right place, and the right time

(“The #1 Internet Marketing Metric”
http://www.marketingterms.com/dictionary/conversion_rate)

Conversion Rates (cont.)

• “…average conversion rates are in the 3% to 5% range; below 2% is considered poor; and 10% and above is awesome.”


Conversion Rates – Elements That Affect It

• User Interface
• Convenience
• Performance
• Effective advertising
• “Word of Mouth”
Conversion Rates Influenced By Many Factors (cont.)

1. Target inappropriate audience (marketing and UCD)
2. Unclear marketing message (marketing)
3. Slow page load (usability)
4. Un-engaging look and feel (usability)
5. Clumsy site navigation (usability)
6. Ineffective presentation (usability)
7. Inadequate selection (usability)
8. No access to real time help (usability)
9. Uncompetitive price
10. Ineffective tools to assist selection (usability)

Web Site Credibility Influenced by Similar Factors

- Design should focus on
  - User experience – familiar needs and mental models
  - User expectations
  - User ease and comfort
- User-centered design templates can help
  - Simplicity
  - User control
  - Consistent navigation
  - Search
  - Shopping carts
  - Personalization
Design Templates Enable Universal Access

Ten Most Violated Homepage Design Guidelines

1. Emphasize what your site offers that's of value to users and how your services differ from those of key competitors
2. Use a liquid layout that lets users adjust the homepage size
3. Use color to distinguish visited and unvisited links
4. Use graphics to show real content, not just to decorate your homepage
5. Include a tag line that explicitly summarizes what the site or company does
6. Make it easy to access anything recently featured on your homepage
7. Include a short site description in the window title
8. Don’t use a heading to label the search area; instead use a “Search” button
9. With stock quotes, give the percentage of change, not just the points gained lost
10. Don’t include an active link to the homepage on the homepage

(Jacob Nielsen’s Alertbox, November 10, 2003)
What’s Wrong With These Guidelines?

- Represent a misconception of important elements of eCommerce/corporate Web site design
- They emphasize design not functionality
- They focus on elements not consistency
- Usability becomes blurred with marketing

The Future of eCommerce Web Site Design

- User-centered design will become more important in an increasingly competitive market
- eCommerce Web site design must be prepared to accommodate universal access

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Why Worry about eCommerce Usability?

- Up to 50% of potential sales lost because shoppers cannot find what they want
- 83% of shoppers left eCommerce sites due to poor navigation and slow downloads
- 78% of shoppers abandoned their online shopping carts
Why Improve Usability?

- After improving eCommerce usability:
  - IBM got 400% increase in sales
  - DEC got 80% increase in revenue
- Improving usability estimated to:
  - Increase number of buyers by 40%
  - Increase order size by 10%

Page Format

- Design page size for AOL users
- Design page to download in less than 10 seconds (40K)
- Put user interface elements in familiar locations
- Put shopping cart summary on every page
- Put sign-in entry fields on home page
- Include links for contact us, privacy policy, security info, and referral

Navigation

- Make nav simple, intuitive, and consistent
- Tell user where user is, how user got there, how to get back, where else to go
- Provide global and local nav controls
- Use breadcrumbs
- Allow user to get to any product in 5 clicks or less
- Provide specialized browse functions

Navigation (continued)

- Put search entry field on every page
- Design search to put user's searched-for hit on first page of search results
- Allow user to search by product name, product category, brand, model/item number, and price
- On search results page, allow user to perform another search, refine results, and sort results
Catalog

- Let user directly enter the catalog
- Organize catalog into familiar sections
- Allow user to sort products in a section
- Provide link to put product in wish list and to email page
- Show shipping cost
- Include product comparison tool
- Include expert product reviews and allow users to enter reviews

Registration

- The more streamlined registration process is, the more likely users will register and buy
- Require only e-mail address, password, permission to email promotions, and permission to leave cookie
- Get other user info during checkout and via periodic, optional, one-question, multiple-choice popup surveys
- Allow user to edit and delete registration
- Don’t show full credit card number

Checkout

- Checkout is biggest reason people cannot buy from site
- On shopping cart page, show:
  - Hyperlinked product names
  - Entry fields for quantities
  - Prices
  - Dropdown list of shipping choices and costs
  - Order subtotal, including shipping + taxes if user is registered
  - Check boxes for removing products
  - Check boxes for moving products into wish list
  - Button to refresh the page
  - Links to return to shopping and to checkout

Checkout (continued)

- Don’t require user to register to check out
- Put checkout fields on single, vertically scrollable page
- Provide obvious links to privacy policy, security policies, delivery guarantees, and customer service guarantees
- For signed-in member, fill in checkout fields
- For errors, put notice at top of page, explain at each field what was wrong and how to fix it
- Provide complete, editable order summary
Checkout (continued)

- Provide order confirmation that includes:
  - Order number
  - Instructions for canceling order
  - Directions for tracking order and shipment
  - Customer support info
  - Promotion (optional)
- Require password when changing shipping address

Conclusion

- eCommerce usability is important
- User interface design best practices improve usability of eCommerce sites

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eCommerce usability guide

- provides guidelines and advice for implementing easy to use eCommerce websites. It focuses on online catalog/selling functionality for wholesalers, distributors and retailers.
Website navigation

- Website navigation should answer three simple questions:
  - Where am I?
  - Where have I been?
  - Where can I go?

- Difficulties in getting from the homepage to the correct product page accounted for 27% of the failures to complete a purchase

Website navigation

- Be consistent
- NEVER use "mystery" navigation
- Speak the customer's language
- Minimize "depth"
- Indicate where user is
- Do not use frames

Browsing and searching

- Use category pages
- Do not overclassify
- Enable sorting
- Support navigation by letter for alphabetical lists

Browsing and searching

- Compare similar products
- Implement search function
- Prominently display search
- Support search for nonproduct terms
Homepage

- Explain what the site is about.
- Make browsing easy
- Provide service information

Product pages

- Show product images
- Display price
- Provide details
- Show item availability

Product pages

- Provide information on guarantees and conditions
- Use conventional names for colors
- Provide select of product options here - not on the checkout
- Avoid multilevel menus to select options
- Make page elements noticeable

Effective online content

- People scan webpages rather than read
- Do not write pompous texts with zero information value:
  - Use simplest words
  - Avoid putting extraneous stuff
Effective online content

- Provide full contact information
- Optimize your images
- Remove outdated content immediately

Visual design matters

- People scan webpages rather than read
- Focus on "above the fold" page area
- Limit different text styles, colors and sizes
- Do not use underline except for links.
- Do not write large blocks of text on the dark background

Visual design matters

- Use graphics sparingly
- Don't make important page elements look like ads and avoid animated graphics.
- Do not use images as a background
- Stay away from Flash
- Design for printability.

Search engines optimization

- Use graphics sparingly
- Include keywords into page titles.
- Fill pages with meaningful content
- Utilize metatags
- Submit your website into directories and related websites
Checkout and Shopping cart guidelines

The purposes of the shopping cart are to:

• Show items, all costs, and the subtotal
• Provide links to information the user may wish to review
• Allow to modify quantities and remove items

• Enable customer to begin the checkout process or continue shopping
• Suggest accessories
• Explain/show the steps of the checkout
• Show shipping charges earlier

• Provide field for shipping instructions
• Enable separate shipping and billing
• Preserve entered information

• Provide order summary before committing the purchase
• Send a confirmation email
• Allow customers to purchase without registering
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Introduction

• Usability – a term that we hear almost everywhere we go on the web and for good reason. Good usability can mean the difference between one site’s success and the downfall of another.
• Usability is especially important in the case of e-commerce websites. While most usability principles of regular websites still apply for e-commerce sites as well, the different specific pages such as shopping carts, shipping methods, shipping and billing addresses, order reviews, payment options, etc. all add another layer of complexity to creating usable online shops.
• Usability is a prerequisite for an online store to achieve its full potential. If people cannot shop, or are unwilling to go through a seemingly unsecured and long order process then the site is useless. It doesn’t matter how inexpensive the products are if visitors can’t find them or if they get stuck on a step in the ordering process.
• After deciding what to purchase, the buyer’s next goal is to complete the buying as quickly as possible, and the website’s job is to hasten and streamline this process as effectively as possible.

1. Using email addresses instead of usernames

• Usually people have much fewer e-mail accounts than random usernames and they tend to remember them more easily. Also, we know that emails are always unique so they make a perfect candidate to replace usernames.
• Buy.com uses this practice among many other eCommerce giants.
2. Using breadcrumbs to ease navigation

- Navigating an online store and knowing at all times where you are as not to order something by mistake or lose your selections, can be tricky. Breadcrumbs are a great method to let the customer know at all times where he is on the site.
- Amazon.com is the leading eCommerce site and a trendsetter in usability practices. They make great use of breadcrumbs.

3. Visible contact information

- Posting contact information in visible places can go a long way in establishing credibility and providing a pleasant shopping experience. Customers will have problems and questions during the buying process and being there for them is a huge usability plus.
- The designers at JCPenney have taken full advantage of this usability approach.

4. Visible search field

- Customers need to find what they are looking for, and this is why many online stores try to keep the search field visible at all times. Also it doesn’t hurt to have a search that can be refined.
- GAP does a great job with their search function.

5. Show recommended and related products

- The goal of usability in e-commerce is to keep the shopping experience as pleasant and easy as possible.
- By showing recommended and related products online stores can significantly increase the user experience and more importantly sales.
- We can see American Eagle Outfitters use this strategy to great effect.
5. Show recommended and related products (cont.)

6. Calls to action

- An eCommerce site without sales is not going anywhere. Promotions, deals, and campaigns all help boost sales and what better way for them to draw customer attention than calls to action.

- Calls to action don’t come much clearer than at JCPenney’s.

6. Calls to action (cont.)

7. Security badges

- Online shopping is still perceived as being unsafe. Online store owners are doing anything they can to demonstrate the security of their platform as best they can. Displaying security logos, badges is a great way of earning the customers’ trust.

- Best Buy clearly presents these badges in the footer.
8. Usability practices for shopping carts and ordering processes

Breaking up the order process

- The order process can be a complicated step in buying online. Breaking up the process into smaller bites is a technique often used.
- Customers need to be able to feel secure when ordering. To dispel the fear of the customer to maybe order something they do not want too, many online stores make sure to show the customer where he is in the process.
- We can witness it best at Amazon.com

9. Use copy in the order process that increases credibility

- The order process is where most potential customers abandon the purchase. Online stores go to great lengths to ensure this happens as rarely as possible. One great technique is to use copy in the process that increases credibility and answers potential customer fears.
- Tesco does this brilliantly
10. Visible cart and content

- Another widely used usability practice is to have the cart and its contents visible at all times. This allows customers to be constantly in control of their purchases.
- Buy.com does a great job at this.

11. Show every fee in the shopping cart

- Hidden fees constitute one of the main reasons customers have a bad online shopping experience. Having a transparent shopping cart is a usability must.
- Dell.com makes sure to do this.

11. Show every fee in the shopping cart (cont.)

12. Confirmation page

- It is very important to have a confirmation page where customers can review their order before finalizing the purchase. Online shoppers have become accustomed to this usability feature so shops omitting this step in the order process are making a huge usability mistake.
- Again, Amazon.com is a prime example.
Conclusions

- Usability is crucial for e-commerce sites and since a happy customer will most likely return, making the experience as good as possible must be one of the main objectives for online stores.
- The current trend in application development requires graphic designers to be knowledgeable about secure code and protecting websites against the techniques used by hackers. Organizations, whose sites provide access to confidential information, are asked to complete audits, such as a SOC audit. These audits promote compliance with information security and control standards.
- While adhering to usability guidelines and best practices is a must, every store is unique in their way. That is why constant usability testing and collecting customer feedback must be an ongoing activity for any e-commerce website.

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What Is a “Shopping Cart?”

- A metaphor employed by eCommerce sites to help customers better understand the online purchasing experience.
  - Shopping baskets
  - Shopping bags
  - And many more
• Billions in sales are lost every year because customers become **frustrated** and **leave** an eCommerce site
• **Trust** and **usability** are the two attributes most often cited by customers as the reasons for choosing a site

...but the shopping cart can make or break a site.
• 65% of buyers leave their shopping carts in mid-purchase (eMarketer 2003)
• IA can help reduce cart abandonment rates

**Keys to Good Cart Design**
• “Programmers need to hear people call their baby ugly.”  *Terrell Jones, president of Travelocity*

1. **Simplify** the process.
2. **Explain** the steps.
3. **Secure** the transaction.
4. **Confirm** the order.
Simplify: Make the Cart & Its Contents Easy to Find

The shopping cart should:
- Have multiple entry points
- Be transparent
- Give product information
  - Availability
  - Quantity
  - Price
- Allow products to be stored for later purchase

Simplify: Break-Up the Ordering Process

The ordering process should:
- Be clear
- Be intuitive
- Be easy to follow

Simplify: Provide Clear Instructions

Clear instructions help:
- Builds trust
- Saves space
- Next step

Explain: Provide Rich Functionality

Rich functionality includes:
- Cross-selling
- Navigational Options
- Detailed Description
- Go back

Continue Checkout Procedure to select the preferred payment method.
Explain: Provide Support During Checkout

- Unanswered questions can translate into lost sales
- Phone support is best for new customers or those uneasy with web purchases
- Support via a chat window like eBay’s “Live Help” or UT Libraries’ “Ask a Librarian” is gaining favor
- FAQs should be provided at the very least

Explain: Show All Costs

Show taxes, shipping and any other purchase costs. No surprises!

Secure: Put Their Minds at Ease

- In order to establish trust, the customer must be comfortable with you and your site’s security
- Think about possible customer concerns at every step
- Your security standards should be easily accessible and clearly written

Confirm: Make Sure the Order is Correct

- Right address?
- Right product?
- Right price?
Confirm: Send a Confirmation E-Mail

Include:

- Confirmation date
- Order number
- Tracking (if possible)

Be brief!

Thank you for your order. Please save this mail except for your records. If you have any questions regarding this order, please reply to this e-mail.

Please be aware that there is no technical support for this product. You can visit http://support.microsoft.com for self-service support options.

If you ordered a download product, you will receive an e-mail with a link to the download(s) ordered, as well as download instructions within 24 hours.

Order ID: 01327586C6519854347536789

Item:

- Product: Vista Professional 2003 Evaluation Download
  - Quantity: 1

Order Total: $140.00