

Impactful Consumerism in E-commerce Store Design and Development: A Case Study of Prototypical Craftsential.com

Afeez Babatunde Siyanbola, Michael Abiodun Oyinloye, Adeyemi Adedola Olayinka and Tolulope O. Sobowale

Abstract

This study explored the concept of impactful consumerism in e-commerce store design and development as it influences the behaviour of contemporary online shopper's using craftsential.com online retail store as a case study. Online user experience enriched by the functionality of visual components embedded incraftsential.com ecommerce site graphic user interface and its role in facilitating seamless shopping are espoused in this study. The study discussed the importance of relevant website interactive features, visual components and sections inbuilt in craftsential.com e-commerce store including the navigation bar, animated visual banner, side design, delineating side banner, product galleries, product description page, hybrid components and the footer. Findings showed that elements and principles of graphics are fundamental in achieving impactful consumerism, appropriate application of colours enhances site aesthetics and direct visitors eyes when shopping online and robust synthesis of art and technology on e-commerce platforms prioritize user experience in relation to human factors such as usability, emotion and functionality. Therefore, the study recommended that design and development of e-commerce stores should be hinged on user-friendly and product customization features, conception and development of e-commerce store has to be anchored on simple and intuitive graphic user interface and graphic user interface features should afford shoppers a sense of control and product individualization.

Keywords: Craftsential.com; Graphic User Interface; Hybrid; Visual Architecture.

Introduction

The consumption patterns of contemporary consumers are inclined towards craven need for satisfactory goods and services that makes their lives enjoyable. Consumption is considered to be an essential aspect of life. Webmaster dictionary defines consumerism as the promotion of the consumers interests, it also theorize that an increasing consumption of goods is economically desirable. Consumption dynamics are pre-determined by diverse factors and motives. It is apparent that consumer's beliefs and culture is fundamental to their choice of products. Sha (2005) in Richard Robbins acknowledged the influence of culture in consumption preferences and the importance of consumerism in leveraging a robust economy in the following:

“Our consumption of goods obviously is a function of our culture. Only by producing and selling things and services does capitalism in its present form work, and the more that is produced and the more that is purchased the more we have progress and prosperity. The single most important measure of economic growth is, after all, the gross national product (GNP), the sum total of goods and services produced by a given society in a given year. It is a measure of the success of a consumer society, obviously, to consume”.

Over the year's consumerism has been largely influenced and swayed through the effective design strategies adopted by graphic designers in representations which inevitably form the basis of visual interaction. The corporate word immensely relies on graphic design components to drive its brand management, awareness and identity in the market. Ethos of graphics design profession is hinged on visual visibility, comprehensive and social responsibility in design delivery. Selection of product preferences in the market is largely influenced by the merchandizing reflected in product presentation and packaging. Often times, food packaging connects the product to the consumer. Therefore, attractive visual identity shapes the acceptance and patronage of goods in the market place. Studies have shown that the design of packages is an effective tool of stimulating sales (Akbari, 2014)

However, history has it that the evolution of graphic design over the past 100 years stems from purely aesthetics to meeting functional, cultural, social and production requirements. Development in the change and growth of consumerism has its influence on graphic design. Graphic design helps advertise and separate products from one another, often encouraging public awareness. Design has assisted in product innovation and sales

(Stonehouse, 2009). Graphic design has garnered considerable clout as a tool for the corporate world to inform public opinion and behaviour. Its role in advertising, brand identity and information communication, has been instrumental in building a consumer dream world that perpetuates a system of value (Leblanc, n.d). Perhaps the most persistent impulse of twentieth-century art and design was to physically integrate form and content (Bierut, Drenttel, and Heller, 2006). Design is also responsible for social and personal interactions with commodities. Advertising employs images of families set against a product to suggest certain personal fulfillment are only possible if you own their product (Stonehouse 2009).

The images, colours and catchphrases which come together to form the ethos of a package wrapping, poster advertisement or online shopping site hold powerful sway over the generations of consumers who have been conditioned to respond and not to question their market preference. Consumers demand for a wider range of goods results in fierce competition between manufacturers and like products.

E-commerce

E-commerce is defined as the act of buying and selling of goods and services online in which the e-vendor delivers at buyer's doorstep or buyers pick up at specified locations. Online shoppers enjoy diverse product choices, individualized products, service information, shopping convenience, uptime shopping, time saving, competitive pricing and privacy (Katole, 2011; Kaufman-Scarborough and Lindquist, 2002; Margherio, 1998). E-commerce expressively explores the dynamics of internet technology to enhance socio-economic activities in leveraging business transactions that transcends borders. The embrace of online retailing in the developed world is unprecedented. Statistics shows that the Internet users grew in the United Kingdom from 15.4 million in 2000 to 52.7 million as at March, 2012, recording 84 per cent penetration rate and in the United States of America, it grew from 95.3 million in 2000 to 245.2 million as at March, 2012, achieving 78.3 per cent penetration rate (Internet World Statistics, 2012).

With mobile penetration in Africa peaking at 80 percent, consumers more than ever before are interested in e-commerce via their mobile phones. The 2014 Mobile Media Consumption report by InMobi, which includes data from 14,000 users across 14 countries, including Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa, predicted that 83 percent of consumers plan to conduct mobile commerce in the next 12 months, up 15 percent from the current fig-

ure (Aderibigbe, 2014). Nigeria, Africa's largest economy, is leading the way in e-commerce growth, with 65 percent of the country's 50 million internet users having at one time or the other shopped online (Aderibigbe, 2015). According to Ehidiamen (2015), Nigeria is Africa's largest mobile market with more than 125 million subscribers, the statistics released by the independent national regulatory authority for telecommunications industry in the country, the Nigerian Communications Commission. Ehidiamen further disclosed that Nigeria also ranks the 8th country in the world with high Internet users. These figures are indicators of the resilience of online retailship in penetrating areas not reached by physical retailing in Nigeria and Africa as a whole.

Ecommerce Design and Development

In the design and development of online retail stores graphics designer's coordinates web design section of the store which constitute of photography and graphics design. Computer programmers and developers create the sites database and collaborate with graphic designers to drive the functionality of the e-commerce site visual fabric which represents the pathway for human computer interaction. Usability of e-commerce retail stores accentuates consumerism and enhances the user experience of shoppers online.

Consumerism in online retailship is influence by sites simplicity, ease of navigation, interactivity, merchandizing, expressive visual imageries, detailed information on displayed products and seamless accessorization. The interests and desires of shoppers are enriched when designers and developers enables visual functionalities that provides consumers the opportunity to determine their choice of products in respect to preferred specifications. Shoppers should be able to alter and congregate product listed according to their taste and lifestyle. Contrast in colour use and the spatial arrangement of visual indicators grab shoppers by hand and direct them through the shopping process.

Hybrid

Hybridize online retail stores simulate some of the traditional features of physical retail environment in e-commerce stores. Hybrid retail store platform is the next version of the traditional e-commerce platforms, where-in the platform combines the searchbility, accessibility and flexibility of a comprehensive web-store, with the proximity and efficiency of the offline neighborhood stores (Singh, 2011). Hybrid online retail platform has fea-

tures that support shoppers to determine their specification and configure the products intended for purchase.

User experience in Web design

Gube (2010), defines user experience (abbreviated as UX) as how a person feels when interfacing with a system. The system could be a website, a web application or desktop software and, in modern contexts, is generally denoted by some form of human-computer interaction (HCI). User experience (UX) focuses on understanding what users need, value, their capabilities, and also their limitations on websites. Jordan (2000) proposed a pleasure-based design approach based on the hierarchy of consumer needs that consists of four levels: safety, functionality, usability, and pleasure experience. Jordan (ibid) defines pleasure as “the emotional hedonic and practical benefits associated with products”. Advanced interactive functions may require [plug-ins](#) if not advanced coding language skills. Choosing whether or not to use interactivity that requires plug-ins is a critical decision for user experience design.

Graphic User Interface (GUI)

The look and feel of website design is referred to as graphic user interface (GUI). Interface allows users to interact with electronic devices through graphical icons and visual indicators such as secondary notation, as opposed to text-based interfaces, typed command labels or text navigation ([Aronhamukwaya](#), 2016). The goal of user interface design is to make the user’s interaction as simple and efficient as possible, in terms of accomplishing user goals. It enables users to communicate with a computer through the use of symbols, visual elements and cues. Graphic design and typography are necessary in ensuring usability, prompting how users perform certain interactions and look and feel of the design. Design aesthetics may enhance or detract the ability of users to use the functions of the interface (Norman, 2002). Arrangements of graphics elements on an e-commerce homepage seemingly determine the shopper’s assessment of the vendor’s credibility.

Aim

The aim of this study is to explore the visual components that enhance impactful consumerism on “craftsential.com” e-commerce platform.

Objective

To describe the features of Craftsential-commerce site visual interface.

To enumerate the hybrid components of Craftsential e-commerce site.

Methodology

The research methodology for this study is exploratory. According to Kothari (2014), the emphasis of exploratory researches is to discover ideas and insights. This study explores the functional features of “craftsential.com” e-commerce platform that enriches shopping and consumerism.

Discussion

Craftsential.com is a prototype model e-commerce platform in Nigerian. The site is developed to exclusively focus on promoting Nigerian made indigenous products. The online store is uniquely crafted to respond to the diverse lifestyles and taste of customers. It has enhanced features that enable buyers to easily accessorize and determine their product specifications. The products listed on the site are made-in Nigeria product. The visual interface features on the e-commerce site are described in the following:

Navigation Bar



Plate 1. Navigation Bar

Source: craftsential.com(2017)

This is also referred to as the menu bar, it's an essential part of a website graphical interface. The navigation bar (See Plate 1) houses label links or dropdown menu that enable site users to navigate and interact effortlessly when accessing relevant sites information. Typically, it's a slim box at the

top that extends to the two sides horizontal sides of the site pages. The labels links in the navigation bar are Homepage, Newproduct, My Account, Blog, Sell on Craftsential, Contact us. There are also Register, Log in, Shopping Cart, Whishlist link on the side left top of the main menu.

Animated Visual Banner



Plate 2. Animated Visual Banner Source: craftsential.com(2017)

Rollover is a JavaScript technique that produces an effect in which the appearance of a graphical image changes when the user rolls the mouse pointer over it (Techopedia, 2016). However, the animated rollover banners (See Plate 25) on craftsential.com e-commerce store homepage were scripted to spontaneously fade in and out at interval on the homepage site. The rolling banners are eight and the respective designs advertise products selected randomly from the twelve product galleries on the site.

Side Design



Plate 3. Site Design Banner

The side banner (See Plate 26) complements the animated visual banner and promotes a particular product gallery on the homepage. This design specifically advertise the beads product gallery and also looks up to the same gallery.

Delineating Side visual Banner



Plate 4. Delineating Banner (Version 3)

Source: Researcher's fieldwork 2016

These two banner designs (See Plate 4) on the left side of the homepage delineate the twelve product galleries in to two sections which are "Fashion and Accessories" and "Decorative Make overs". These two banners are part of the sites atmospheric cues that is mearnt to grab shoppers attention and direct them to their preferred choice of product categories. Visual Ensembles Representing the Product Galleries

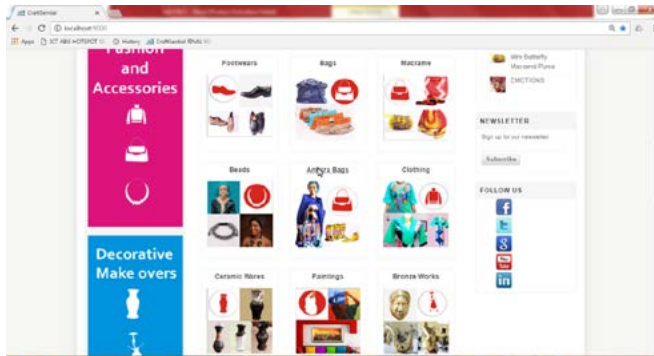


Plate 5. Visual Ensembles Representing the Product Galleries

Source: craftsential.com (2017)

Each of these visual ensembles is the pathway to the twelve galleries on the e-commerce store. In each of the ensemble there is a clip art in white outline on a roundish red background which symbolizes the product in the galleries while the adorning surrounding images gives an invite that looks up to the products in each of the galleries. The choice of the roundish red colour is to arouse the interest of the online shoppers whom are typically impulsive in proceeding to check the products available in any of the product galleries.

Product Images in Feature Products and Best Sellers

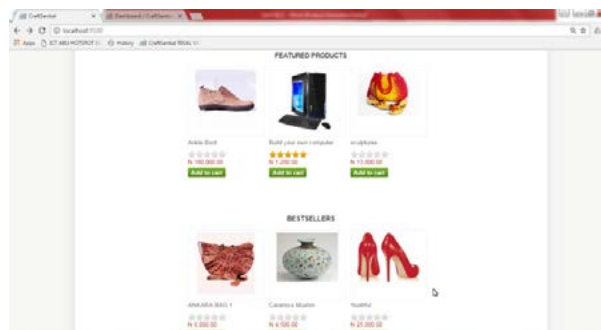


Plate 6. Product Images in Feature Products and Best Sellers

Source: craftsential.com(2017)

Products listed in Feature Product and Best Sellers section of the homepage has add to cart (See Plate 6) features. Shoppers can add these products to cart without surfing through the site pages. This is anchored on the need to make shopping on the developed craftsential.com e-commerce platform seamless and effortless.

Product Galleries

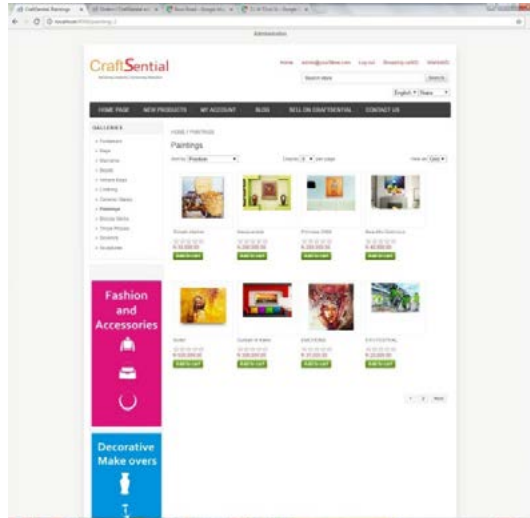


Plate 7. Product Gallery (Version 3)

Source: craftsential.com(2017)

Product galleries (See Plate 30) are site pages containing products belonging to the same category. There are twelve product galleries on the developed e-commerce site, this page can be accessed via the visual ensembles and alternatively through the product gallery labels on the right side of the rolling banner. The spatial arrangement of products, their respective names and prices makes the page appropriate for easy navigation.

Product Description Page

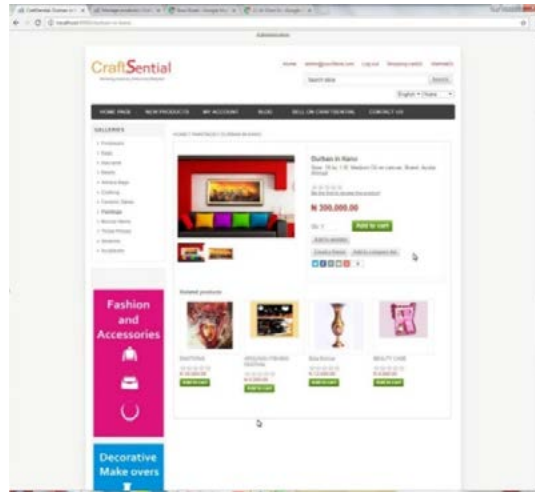


Plate 8. Product Description Page

Source: craftsential.com(2017)

This page (See Plate 8) typically provides shoppers with a comprehensive description of individual products, add to cart features and the different views of product are accessible to shoppers on this page. Related products are displayed on this page to elicit shopper's interest.

Hybrid Features

There are integrated hybrid features (See Plate 8) on the description page that supports shoppers to have control and determine their product preferences. Art and technology are synthesized in this section to enable shoppers build and personalize their choice of products. Koufaris, Kambil, and LaBarbera (2002) showed that perceived control and shopping enjoyment can increase the intention of new customers to return in e-retail context. However, this page can either be linked from the site home page or category page.



Plate 9. Personalization Features on Description Page

Source: craftsential.com(2017)

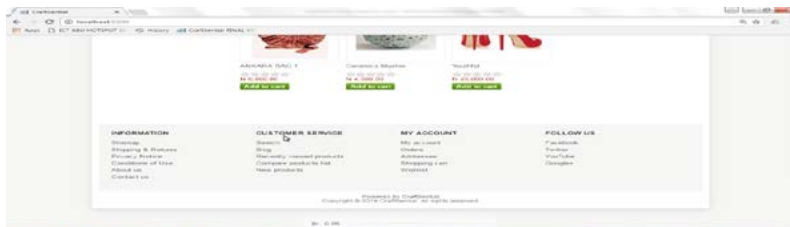


Plate 10. The Footer

Source: craftsential.com(2017)

The footer (See Plate 10) replicates all the links on the sites homepage accordingly. Although most visitors to the site might not navigate down to the footer section of the e-commerce site, the links contained in the footer are also necessary for easy navigation. They arranged according to their relative functions.

Conclusion

Consumerism on e-commerce store is basically influenced by the ease-of-use and the flexibility features ingrained in e-commerce site visual fabric. Seamless interaction of shoppers with the site stimulates buying. However, craftsential.com e-commerce site navigation system and the well-designed visual atmospheric cues are vital in directing users during the process of shopping. Impactful consumerism in e-stores is a function of the usability and personalization features which are the drivers of modern day shopping experience. Shoppers are swayed to make purchasing decision when products are exclusively designed to enhance their lifestyles. The design architecture of craftsential.com e-commerce platform arouses

consumerism and support the ease of shopping online. This retail site is a model for virtual retail store industry in Nigeria.

Findings

Elements and principles of graphics are fundamental in achieving impactful consumerism

Concise visual weight and direction in the graphic user interface of e-commerce stores enhance navigation.

Crisps, clear product imagery accentuates consumerism on e-commerce stores.

The spatial arrangement of products, labels and application of colours create hedonic shopping on e-commerce sites.

Appropriate application of colours by the site designer enhances site aesthetics and direct visitors eyes when shopping online.

Robust synthesis art of technology on electronic technology platforms prioritize user experience in relation to human factors such as usability, emotion and functionality.

Recommendations

To stimulate consumerism, images of displayed products on e-commerce stores should reflect product merchandizing, clarity and attractiveness that enhances shopping experience.

Design and development of e-commerce store should be anchored on user-friendly and product customization features.

Choice of colours on e-commerce website should be determine by the theme of the site.

Conception and development of e-commerce store has to be anchored on simple and intuitive graphic user interface.

Graphic user interface features should afford shoppers a sense of control and product individualization.

Works Cited

- Aderibigbe N. 'Africa's Emerging Markets Offer Great Potential for E-Commerce Growth' , 2014, www.ventures-africa.com on 20/06/2017
- Akbari Z (2014). The dilemma of flavor, shape and color in the choice of packaging by children. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 2014, Vol. 4, No. 1 ISSN: 2222-6990
- [Aronhamukwaya \(2016\). Programming - GUI and RAD](http://aronhamukwaya.gitbooks.io). Graphical User Interface. aronhamukwaya.gitbooks.io. on 12/09/2016
- Bierut, M, Drenttel W, and Heller S, (2006). *Looking Closer 5. Critical Writings on Graphic Design*. pp. 24, Allworth Press. ISBN 978-1-58115-471-9
- Ehidiamen, J. (2013). How Technology Is Fostering Good Governance in Nigeria. *International Reporting Project*. Accessed 20/06/2015, internationalreportingproject.org/stories/view/how-technology-is-fostering-good-governance-in-nigeria.
- [Gube J. *What Is User Experience Design? Overview, Tools and Resources*](http://gubej.com). Smashing Magazine, Accessed 10/10/2015.
- Kothari, C.R. *Research Methodology, Methods and Techniques*. New Delhi. New Age International Publishers. 2007.
- Internet World Statistics 2012. 'Top 20 countries with the highest number of internet users', www.internetworldstats.com/top20.htm. Accessed 10/06/2017.
- Katole, H. J. 'A study of problems & prospects of internet retailing in India', *International Journal of Research in Commerce, IT & Management*. Vol. 1, no, 3, pp. 114-117.
- Kaufman-Scarborough, C., & Lindquist, J. D. 'E-shopping in a multiple channel environment' . *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 333-350.
- Koufaris, M., Kambil, A., & LaBarbera, P. A. 'Consumer behavior in Web-based commerce: An empirical study', *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, Vol 6, pp. 115-138.
- LeBlanc, C. (n.d): *Design, Consumerism and Sustainability*. A Radical Stance.

nscad.cainrepo.org on 20/06/2010

Margherio, L. (1998). *The emerging digital economy: Secretariat for electronic commerce*. Washington: US Department of Commerce.

Norman, D. A. (2002). *“Emotion & Design: Attractive things work better”*. *Interactions Magazine*, Vol ix, no. 4. pp. 36–42. Accessed 20/09/2015.

Shah A (2005). [Effects of Consumerism](#), *Global Issues*, Updated: August 10, 2005

Singh V. (2011). *What is a hybrid retail platform?* [www.quora.htm](#), Accessed on 23/08/2015

Stonehouse, A. *Design and Consumerism*. 2009.