

Analysis of Impact of Visual Merchandising Factors on Consumer Behavior in E-Retailing

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Retailing whether it is offline or online, visual merchandising plays a pivotal role. A customer is first impressed by the façade looks and the way products are displayed on the window of the retail outlet. In a brick and mortar store it's the store windows that plays this role, whereas, in a e –retail outlet, it's the web landing page which decides if the customer will navigate further or not. The paper studies the factors of visual merchandising which plays role in designing the web page and visual appeal of the product on the web page. Here, the concern of study is the Amazon apparel product web pages, product display, easy navigation to successive pages, customer reviews. The research will be conducted in empirical manner on female section of ten basic category of garments. The web pages will be extracted and studied for the presence of elements of visual merchandising. These factors will be analyzed by survey review forms to find the gap in the product navigation and product appeal on the web page. After analysis new web pages having more appeal and fulfilling the gap will be recommended.

Keywords: Visual merchandising, e-retail, Amazon, Apparel, navigation, web pages

1. Introduction

E-retail offers its users a great deal of suitability and diversity. it's not only provides advantages but carries, with it some disadvantages. Bauerly M and Liu Y (2006) [1] Consumers often face challenges such as the powerlessness to physically examine products, shipping delays, security concerns, and the complexities in the process of returning items. These issues highlight the need for e-retailers to continuously improve their services and offer more customer-friendly policies to lessen these challenges.

Khanan. R., et.al [6] Navigation issues are a common shortcoming in the e-retail experience, causing obstruction leading to potential loss of sales. Some of the key problems consumers encounter with website navigation impacting the e-retail experience are navigation issues significantly, as they lead to confusion, frustration, and potentially lost sales. Clear, spontaneous navigation is crucial for ensuring that customers can easily find and purchase products. E-retailers need to invest in user-friendly design, strong search functionality, and mobile optimization to reduce these navigation challenges and create a seamless shopping experience.

Many e-retail websites display a complex, Najafi, I. (2012) [8] overcrowded menus that distress consumers. When product categories and subcategories are not clearly organized or when there are too many options displayed at once, it can make it difficult for users to find what they're looking for quickly. A disorderly interface can lead to frustration and rejection of the shopping process.

An ineffective search bar is a major frustration for online shoppers. Chopdar PK and Balakrishnan J (2020) [2] Additionally, search results may not be filtered properly, displaying irrelevant or outdated products, making it harder for users to locate what they need.

Without clear filtering and sorting options, users can waste time scrolling through hundreds of products. E-retailers often fail to provide appropriate filters for size, color, price range, or customer ratings, forcing consumers to browse items that don't meet their preferences. Lack of sorting options by relevance, price, or popularity can also make navigation cumbersome and frustrating.

A poorly optimized mobile or tablet interface disrupts the user experience. When navigation differs between desktop and mobile devices, it creates confusion and slows down the shopping process. Elements such as dropdown menus, buttons, or product pages sometimes do not load correctly or might be hard to click on smaller screens, leading to high bounce rates and lost sales opportunities.

Encountering broken links or "404 error" pages while navigating through an e-retail website are discouraging. Consumers expect seamless access to product pages, and encountering errors during their purchase process diminishes trust in the site and lead them to abandon their shopping cart altogether.

Poorly labeled product categories leads to confusion, especially when the names are unclear or not spontaneous. For example, a consumer searching for home decor might not realize that those items are categorized under "Lifestyle" instead of "Home." This lack of clarity makes it difficult for consumers to browse and can result in a frustrating and inefficient shopping experience.

Frequent pop-ups, advertisements, or prompts for email sign-ups distracts and upset users while navigating an e-retail site. These interruptions often slow down the browsing process, causing users to lose track of their shopping journey or become frustrated enough to leave the site entirely.

Slow-loading websites can significantly impact user experience. When consumers have to wait too long for pages to load—especially product pages, images, or the cart—they may abandon the site altogether. Speed is crucial in e-commerce, and delays in navigation lead to frustration,

causing potential customers to lose interest or pursue alternatives on faster websites.

Inconsistent UI design across different sections of an e-retail site confuses consumers. If the layout, fonts, or button styles change unexpectedly between product categories or checkout pages, it disrupts the flow and makes navigation harder. Users rely on consistency for familiarity and efficiency. Any deviation from this can create confusion and reduce trust in the platform.

Consumers may struggle to find key features such as the shopping cart, wish list, or account login buttons if they are not prominently displayed. When essential elements are hidden or difficult to locate, it slows down the shopping process and leads to foiling. For example, a consumer might have difficulty finding where to apply a discount code or check shipping options, negatively affecting the shopping experience.

Breadcrumbs help users understand their current location within the site hierarchy and allow them to backtrack easily. When breadcrumb navigation is absent, poorly implemented, or inconsistent, it becomes harder for users to trace their steps or return to previous categories, forcing them to start over. This leads to inefficiency and blocking, especially when browsing multiple categories.

Certain clickable elements, such as buttons, links, or images, may not be responsive or intuitive. For example, if product images don't enlarge when clicked, or if navigation buttons don't react immediately to user interaction, the customer might feel the site is unprofessional or malfunctioning. These non-responsive elements create a barrier between the consumer and their ability to browse products smoothly.

A lengthy or complex checkout process can be a significant barrier to completing a purchase. When the checkout involves too many steps, unnecessary fields, or redirects to new pages, it creates friction. Consumers expect a seamless transition from shopping to purchase, and lengthy processes can increase cart rejection rates.

Predictive search, where the search bar suggests products or categories as the user types, is a common feature in many modern e-retail websites. When this feature is missing or poorly implemented, consumers may struggle to find the specific product they are looking for, especially when they are unsure of the exact name or spelling. This results in wasting time and effort, lowering user satisfaction.

Consumers often rely on their browser's "Back" button to return to previous pages. However, on some e-retail sites, Rameesh.M.,et.al[9] clicking the back button either resets the search results or sends the user to an unrelated page. This disrupts the browsing experience and forces users to restart their search, which can be especially annoying if they've invested time in filtering and selecting products.

When filtering options are either too complex, incomplete, or poorly labeled, it can hinder the shopping experience. Consumers may find that they cannot filter products by important criteria, such as size, brand, price, or customer reviews. In other cases, applying a filter may result in the complete removal of relevant products, leaving the customer with no choices at all. This barricades the search and lead to inefficiency when browsing a large inventory.

Some e-retail sites make it difficult to return to the homepage after navigating through multiple

product categories or pages. A missing or poorly placed home button forces users to rely on other means to get back to the main page, which can be an annoying and time-consuming task. This lack of clear navigation can lead to a feeling of being “lost” on the site.

When users are navigating a website, they expect visual signals like highlighted or underlined links to indicate clickable items. When these cues are absent or inconsistent, consumers might miss important links or buttons that lead to key product pages or checkout options. This can lead to confusion and missed opportunities for conversion.

For global consumers, a lack of support for multiple languages or currencies can be a navigation barrier. If users cannot easily switch to their preferred language or see prices in their local currency, it makes the shopping experience more cumbersome. Navigating through unfamiliar terminology or converting prices manually adds unnecessary complexity and may lead to abandonment.

Some e-retail websites rely on infinite scrolling, where products continue to load as users scroll down the page. While this can be useful for continuous browsing, it can also be problematic. Infinite scrolling can make it difficult to reach the footer, which often contains important links such as customer service, shipping information, or return policies. It also makes it harder to backtrack or remember where specific products were located.

Excessive use of pop-ups, such as promotional offers, newsletter sign-ups, or survey requests, can disrupt the navigation flow. When users are bombarded with pop-ups, it interrupts their browsing and can cause frustration, especially if the pop-ups are difficult to close or appear repeatedly on every page.

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To study the customer reviews on visual appeal on e- retail web page
2. To study the customer reviews on the easiness of navigation process
3. To study the customer reviews on easy finding of choice of Apparel
4. To recommend the design of web page for easy landing, navigation and selection of Apparel

3. Research Method

The research study is based on the survey conducted among respondents of age 20 to 40 years picked from different locations in Delhi NCR having a similar habit of shopping of apparels from on line mediums. 150 such respondents were studied using a survey method. The study is conducted with the experiences of users on Amazon e retailing. The result is limited to the survey conducted by the respondent located in Delhi NCR region.

4. Findings

The research is empirical and is based on survey to study the customer responses for e- retail

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shopping experience and the challenges they face while navigation, finding their product and till they close the shopping. Survey was conducted on 150 respondents. Set of questionnaires were formed and was circulated through emails. Out of 150 respondents, 51 percent respondents have expressed their views that they visit e retail shopping sites at least once in a month. The other responses as per survey has the following findings:

1. customer reviews on visual appeal on e- retail web page

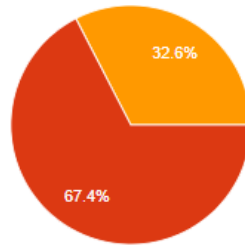


Fig.1

As per the survey conducted to study the gap in the visual merchandise aspects at e-retail site, it is found that there is a gap in the presentation of visuals, navigation and search for the product. It is found that the respondents were not clear on the idea of the concept of visuals. Whatever is there on the landing page of e-retail site is liked by 67.4 percent of respondents and rest are unsure about the presentation of the web page. 32.6 percent mentioned that they do not know if they are ok with web page visuals or not.

2. Study the customer reviews on the easiness of navigation process

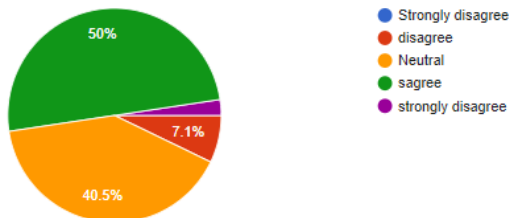


Fig. 2

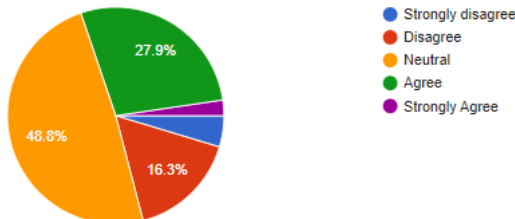


Fig.3

When the survey was conducted it is found that 50 percent respondents found the navigation process of e-retail easy and more than 40 percent were unaware of the process of they do not follow any such navigation process and their search is always random. However, as we see fig 3, more than 27 percent respondents found the Amazon e-retail web page crowded and confusing where it is difficult to find a specific product with specific keywords or layman keywords and mostly customer found them lost while surfing it.

3. To study the customer reviews on easy finding of choice of Apparel

While doing the survey to find the reviews from customers on their experience of finding the apparel easy, visual appeal of apparel section, on the presentation of category of garments and the navigation process finding the likable garment easy or if they will support the opinion that the web page of amazon apparel section can be easier. It is found that the only 25 percent people like the visuals of apparel section on Amazon web page whereas, more than 53 percent were of the mixed opinion if it is alright or need a change and this do not support that they like it and it does not require any change. Fig. 4 clearly indicates that nearly 10 percent of respondents supported the statement that they do not the like the visuals. Fig.5 clearly reflects and supports the statement that presentation of garments is not satisfactory and it has scope of improvement which will make it more appealing to the consumers. Approx. 25 percent of the respondents supported the disliking of the presentation and silently has showed the urge for improvement. More than 40 percent were in a way neutral to their decision to of liking and not liking. They were not in the category of serious surfers.

Fig 6 and 7 indicate the response which says it all that more than 15 percent of respondent agreed to the concept that the apparel section web page can be simpler and can be made user friendly with good visuals, easy navigation and clear searching process of finding the right category of garment. In fig 6 more than 25 percent dis agreed that they find it easy to search for their kind of apparels and in Fig. 7 clearly 45 and more agreed and demanded that the web page apparel section can be simpler and easy for users for its navigation and bagging the right apparel.

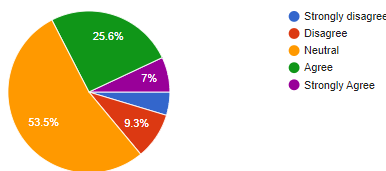


Fig.4

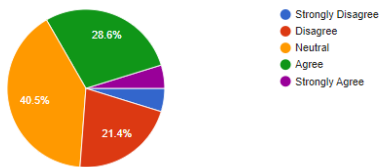


Fig.5

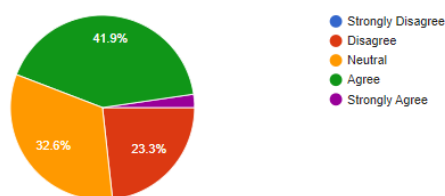


Fig. 6

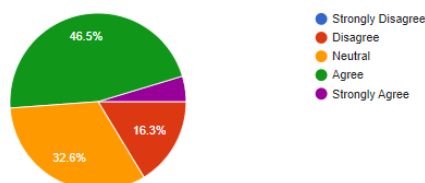


Fig. 7

A few percent approx. 33 were on a mode of or not in the category of frequent shoppers and that's why they were not sure if any changes are required. A few strongly recommended the changes in the visuals of apparel section, easier navigation and apparel presentation.

5. Recommendation

The study and presentation to recommend the design of web page for easy landing, navigation and selection of Apparel

An unattractive e retail website tends to get rejections rapidly by the customers upon the e retail websites which are attractive, appealing and have consumer binding visuals. This is also revealed in the study conducted in this research project. Some e retail websites invest to improve and present a consumer binding visuals to give them better shopping experiences.

It is very challenging to design a high-quality Website which can yield good experience to consumes in navigation on a website. On any e- retail Website design navigation structure is an important aspect which leads the users to get the pages of their interest. Many studies have been conducted in the direction of the navigation structure in various extents.

Many studies have examined Website navigation styles and their effect on Website visibility of the product to the consumers. The Initial investigation in other research and this research has revealed that The design of navigation structure used on a Website does impact its visibility to a search engine surfer. Websites has different navigation menu styles. These are the factors which affect trust, excellence, understandability, usability, grading, competence and friendliness on the website.

In order to improve the navigation structure, a systematic study of the Navigational user interface elements such as a local navigation menu, breadcrumb trails, pagination, tags, linked logo and icons and other related navigational aspects of Website design is necessary. A relevant study and presentation of these can control the relation and the ability to help users

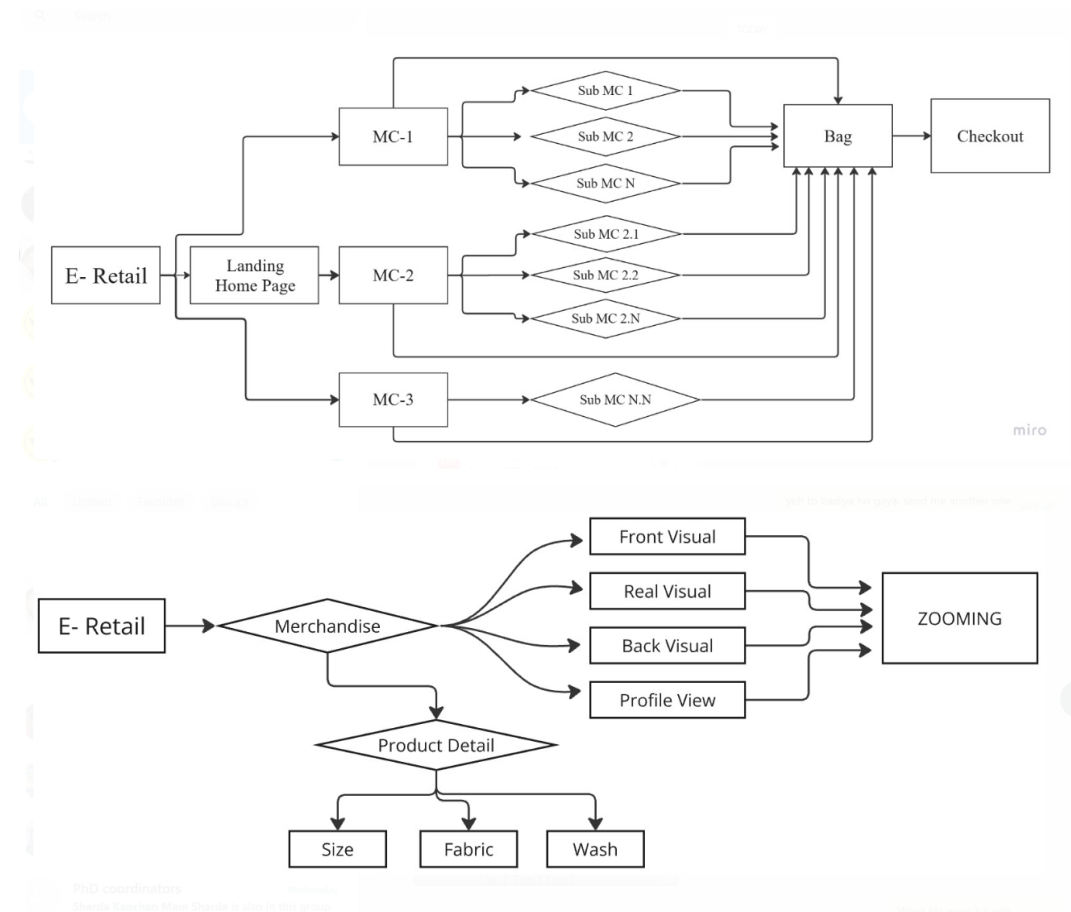
find desired products on a website.

In the current research, the study was conducted on large scale e-retail websites and consumer’s response suggested the following:

1. Change in design on the Apparel section landing page of the website
2. Change is visual appeal of Apparel so presented
3. Navigational user interface essentials

Henceforth, the model and design for the website so suggested is as:

Suggested model



It is suggestive to add more light affects while shooting the pictures of apparels, and pictures may be clicked from more different angles to provide a better view of the article or product. There is lacking of zoomed images of the product, which is suggested to be enhanced. The apparel section landing page is found a little distracting and leaving a customer to land on a page of their choice after lot of navigation. Hence it is suggestive that landing page may have clear easy to understand limited search keywords instead of many and each may further have sub options of variety.

6. Conclusion

The findings in the research will work as a guiding tool to the web designers for e-retail websites. The findings will help them to align the content in a user friendly way. The study helps in adopting and developing a visually appealing graphics and images which influence the customer and will make their shopping experience memorable and inspire them to visit the site again and helping producing revenue to the parent and affiliate company.

It is concluded that the application of different navigation menu styles has numerous effects on customers' satisfaction while surfing through e-retail websites. Moreover, the different styles of navigational user interface elements and its relation with its ability to be used by a user can improve the experience and help finding variable products easily.

This paper hence provides a structural model to present a systematic structure for the navigation system on a e-retail website and also provides areas of improvement in visual appeal, presentation of apparel and by providing solutions to the apparel section improvement areas.

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