



RESEARCH REPORT

Merchandise Websites



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Merchandise Websites

Merchandise websites are a sub-category of online stores. Their primary function is to facilitate the browsing and sale of the products that are usually related to a brand, event, artist or a specific niche. These websites usually do not offer huge amounts of products. They might sell T-shirts, posters, vinyl records and other fan-related products. The target audience for these websites is the respective fans.

For this research, we have picked three examples of merchandise websites to analyse – [corru.store](#), [store.mxdvs.co](#), and [shop.glassanimals.com](#). These examples specifically are modern and art-focused and therefore primarily target younger audiences.

Analyzed Websites

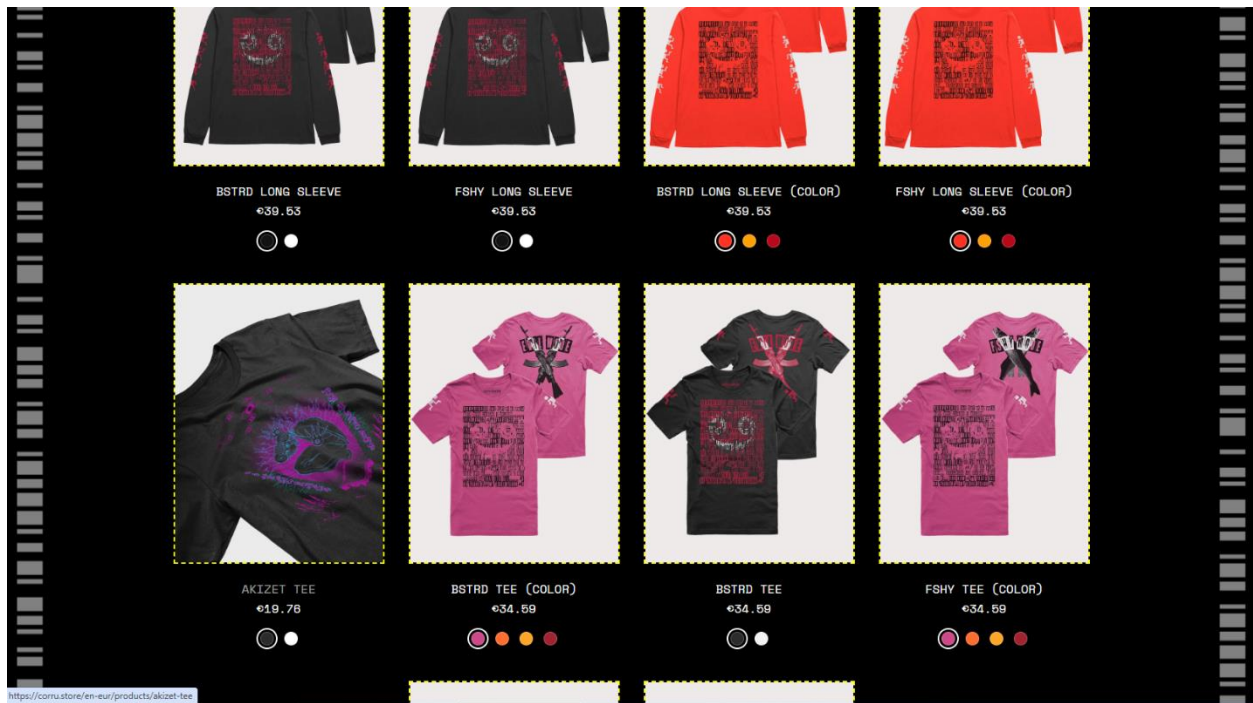
Website 1 – corru.store



Usability

The site menus are very easy to navigate, with not much room for confusion. The headings/links for each category are laid out well by differentiating themselves from the rest of the site and having a signifier that you can see more if you click. The user profile and cart options in the upper right corner are a bit small and hard to notice. Additionally, the 'Join Now' button is very clear and visible, but the login button is grey and on a black background.

There are loading indicators for adding items to the cart, along with a pop-up showing the item in the cart once it is added. Most elements are also highlighted upon being hovered over (e.g shirt picture changing). There is an error message for attempting to add items to your cart before selecting a size, the same for when entering an invalid login. Items are well-categorized, but there are no search functionalities on the site.



Responsiveness

The website seamlessly adjusts to any device dimensions, with vertical views adding a hamburger menu and having the grid resized where each item still takes an equal amount of screen space. Most touch targets are appropriately sized for mobile users, with the exception of the size chart and social media links being too small.

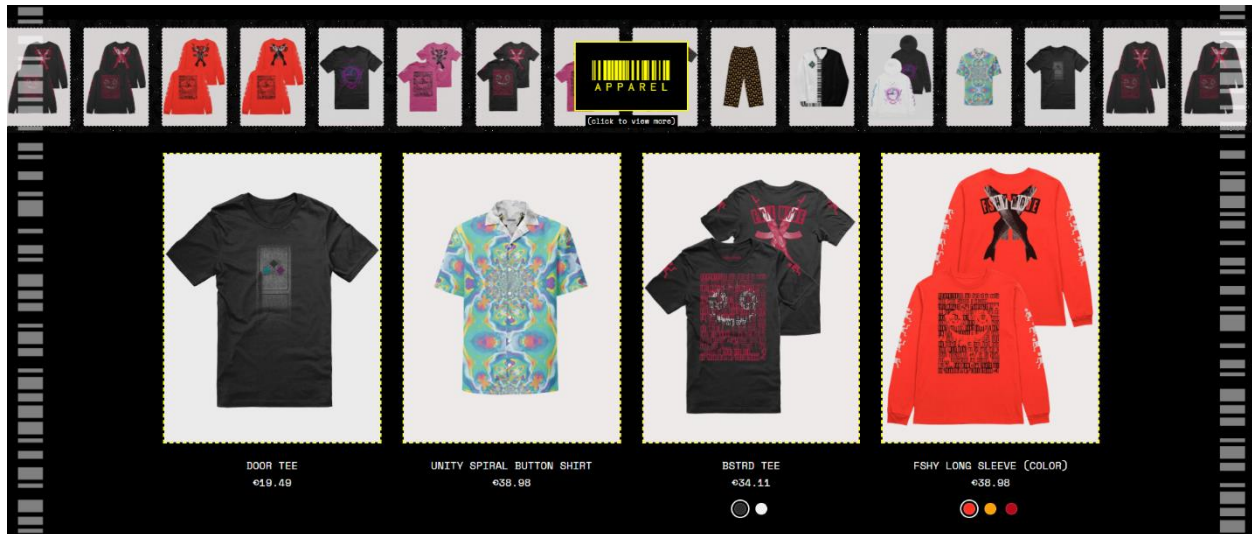
Accessibility

All the images featured on the site have alt text, but this text is rather non-descriptive, only stating the product and image number e.g. “Door Tee product image (2)”. The website can be navigated using a keyboard, but certain elements such as product size and color cannot be selected. Most of the text has an appropriate amount of contrast (bright colors on a black background), but there is the occasional small grey text that blends into the background. Performing a Lighthouse scan, the hamburger menu did not have an accessible name, many background images were missing an empty alt attribute (to signify they are decorative), the cart and social media links did not have discernable, and there was a heading that was not in the expected sequentially descending order

Aesthetics

The overall design is clean, professional and visually unique and engaging. The color scheme, typography and spacing is consistent across all pages. The design very strongly aligns with the

website's branding, it follows the same aesthetic as the web game all the products are derived from. There may be some visual clutter due to moving background elements, but it is minor enough not to be distracting for most people.



Content Quality

The content is well-structured, there are headings under every relevant section. The text conveys information clearly, keeping a casual tone without any jargon or technical language. Someone unfamiliar with the source material may be unfamiliar with some of the references, though. The site's content is for fans of the web game "corru.observer" who would like to purchase merchandise for aesthetic purposes and to support the creator. There are spelling and grammar "errors", but they are intentional and contextually relevant to the elements of the source material they are referencing. The barcode symbols provide thematic callbacks to the source material.

Interactivity

Most of the interactive elements, such as the buttons and cart are intuitive and functional. The exception is the 'supporters' page accessible on the top right of the site. It is an unused feature from the online store template the site uses, the page advertises "Join now to unlock exclusive corru.store content" but when the user presses the join button, they receive an error that "There are no tiers configured". The store button also does not work on this page. Animations are very smooth, with the user being greeted by scrolling decorative barcodes and an image of a character moving in from the right side of the screen. The product images cleanly fade into a different image and buttons turn to a different color when hovered over. Forms are validated effectively to guide user input, with error messages showing up if the user makes a mistake.

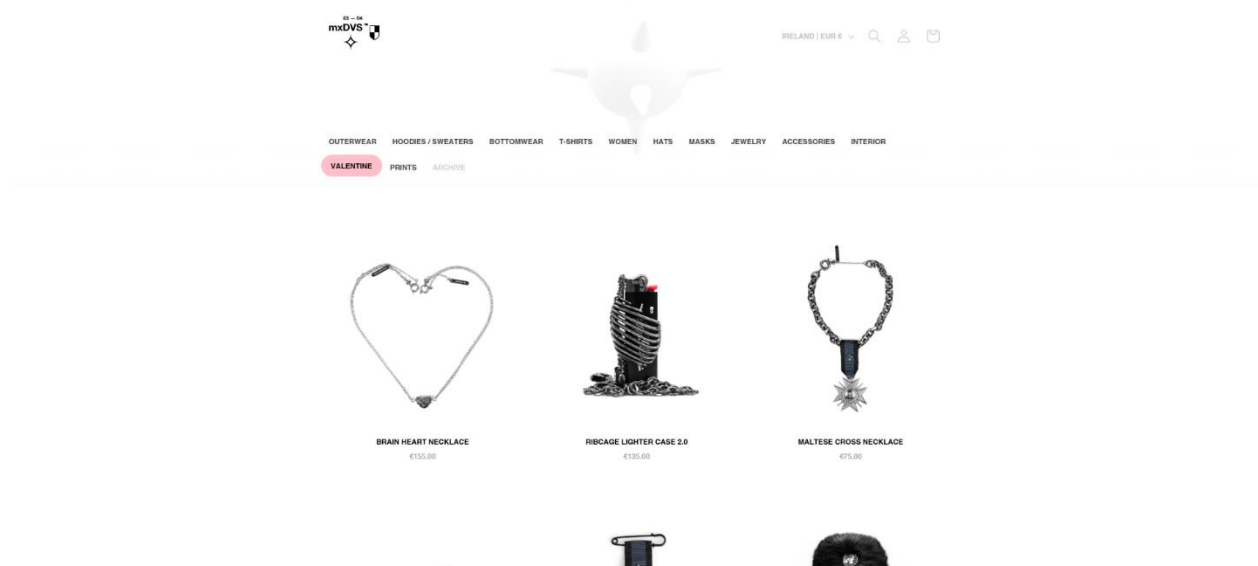
Consistency

The entire website uses the 'Space Mono' font, except for using a custom font and different color for certain paragraphs meant to emulate a character from the source material. All other design elements (CMYK, Barcodes) are applied consistently throughout the website.

Interactions work consistently and reliably throughout the entire site, except for the aforementioned 'supporters' page. Branding elements (barcodes in this case) are displayed uniformly throughout the website. The website maintains a consistent layout, ensuring familiarity across pages.



Website 2 - store.mxdvs.co



Usability

When it comes to navigation, mxdvs has a quite simple navigation scheme, where the categories are all on the top of the webpage, making it easy to find any categories that the customer may be interested in. Everything is clearly labeled, and if necessary, can be searched manually using the website's search engine.

The important actions are clearly visible, showing the “add to cart” in white text on a black background, which helps contrast the website's clean white aesthetic, while a sign up is not necessary on this website, the customer can choose to sign up as it is located in the top right of the screen.

NAILED (KN)IT

€155.00



A HEAVY-WEIGHT RIBBED KNIT WITH A DISTRESSED APPEARANCE, ALONG WITH A STRIKING FRONT AND BACK PRINT FEATURING THE PHRASES "NAILED IT" ON THE FRONT ALONGSIDE A GRAPHIC FROM A PAST PHOTOSHOOT, AND "HITTING THE NAIL ON THE HEAD" ON THE BACK ALONGSIDE OUR D-LOGO. IN ADDITION TO THE DISTRESSED ELEMENTS, THE KNIT ALSO SHOWCASES INTRICATE CABLE DETAILS.

UNISEX / BOXY
OVERSIZED CROPPED FIT
650 G/M² — 100% COTTON

NYALL IS 185CM AND WEARING A SIZE MEDIUM

SUPPLIED IN MXDVS TOTE BAG

SIZE CHART

SIZE

✓ SMALL

SUPPLIED WITH

✓ TOTE BAG

ADD TO CART

★★★★★ 1 REVIEW



Although the sign-up button, shopping cart, and magnifying glass are all next to each other, they have a lower contrast than the rest of the site, making them blend into the background a fair bit. Some users with a visual impairment may have trouble finding these 3 buttons.

When it comes to visual feedback, the most noticeable feedback is in the form of adding items into your cart, whenever a customer selects an item that they want to add into their cart a visual indicator pops up, signaling that it has been successfully placed into the customer's cart, offering the option to continue browsing and or checkout.

The only "error" message that I could find was when the shopping cart was empty and I tried to access it, which was clearly labeled, displayed and guided me to the main page of the store.

The search functionalities are simple and effective, the user can enter a keyword – i.e. "sweater" to find knitted items that may be what the user was interested in.

OUTERWEAR HOODIES / SWEATERS BOTTOMWEAR T-SHIRTS WOMEN HATS MASKS JEWELRY ACCESSORIES INTERIOR

VALENTINE

PRINTS

ARCHIVE

SEARCH RESULTS

SEARCH

sweater



FILTER:

AVAILABILITY

PRICE

SORT BY:

RELEVANCE



COMBAT KNIT 2.0

€115.00 €85.00



MEDIEVAL LOGO KNIT

€140.00



MEDIEVAL LOGO TOP

€45.00



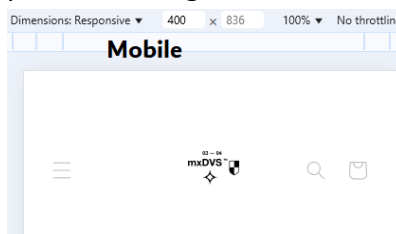
NAILED (KN)IT

€155.00

Responsiveness

The website does seamlessly transition between a mobile, tablet and a computer environment.

All of the buttons are appropriately sized when accessed on a different sized screen, they all retain the same place, making the layout well organized and not confusing, the only change there is to the layout is that the sign-up/sign-in button gets “removed” and the categories are put into a burger menu.



The images are properly resized and cropped when browsing on a device such as a phone or a tablet.

Accessibility

The alternative text only reads out the item name, it does not describe the item.

The webpage is semi usable when using only keyboard, it allows the user to select a category and an item, however the user is not able to change the size of the item, it only lets the user add the item to cart.

Most of the webpage has a good contrast, however some elements use a light grey on a white background, making them harder to see or read –. i.e. icons at the top right



BELGIUM | EUR € ▾ 🔍 👤 🛒



ACCESSORIES INTERIOR

Apart from not effectively using the alternative text, making the shopping experience quite stiff for people who may use a screen reader. The other elements of the webpage work well with a screen reader.

Aesthetics

The design of mxdivs is very minimalistic and feels premium, as white-space is used extensively, making the products stand on their own without any unnecessary jargon. It is a good mix of simplicity and the brand's own identity.

The color schemes, typography and spacing are all maintained across the website, making the website seem "complete."

The design of the site does reflect the purpose and branding, being a streetwear/alternative clothing site, the design reflects that well.

The use of images is done well, all the images are of high quality, having little to no compression, otherwise there is only one multimedia element, which helps tie the brand in together.

Content Quality

The content structure is maintained well throughout the website, using headings and subheadings, being easy to understand at first glance.

The information is displayed in an organized fashion, speaking for the homepage and the individual items to purchase. The only information displayed is necessary towards the user's product/interests.

I have not found any spelling/grammatical errors when browsing the website, it all feels very professional and tied together.

As I have previously mentioned, the images and multi-media elements displayed on the webpage are complementing and adding up onto the webpage.

Interactivity

The interactive elements on the webpage are handled well, every clickable element is clearly highlighted upon hover and gets an underline upon clicking, showing the user where they currently are.



The transitions and animations are subtle but smooth, they help enhance the flow and feeling of the website, making the website feel more pleasant when in use. I.e., Scrolling down a page makes the items flow seamlessly into view

As mentioned before, the website offers hover effects over its key components, such as clothing and categories.

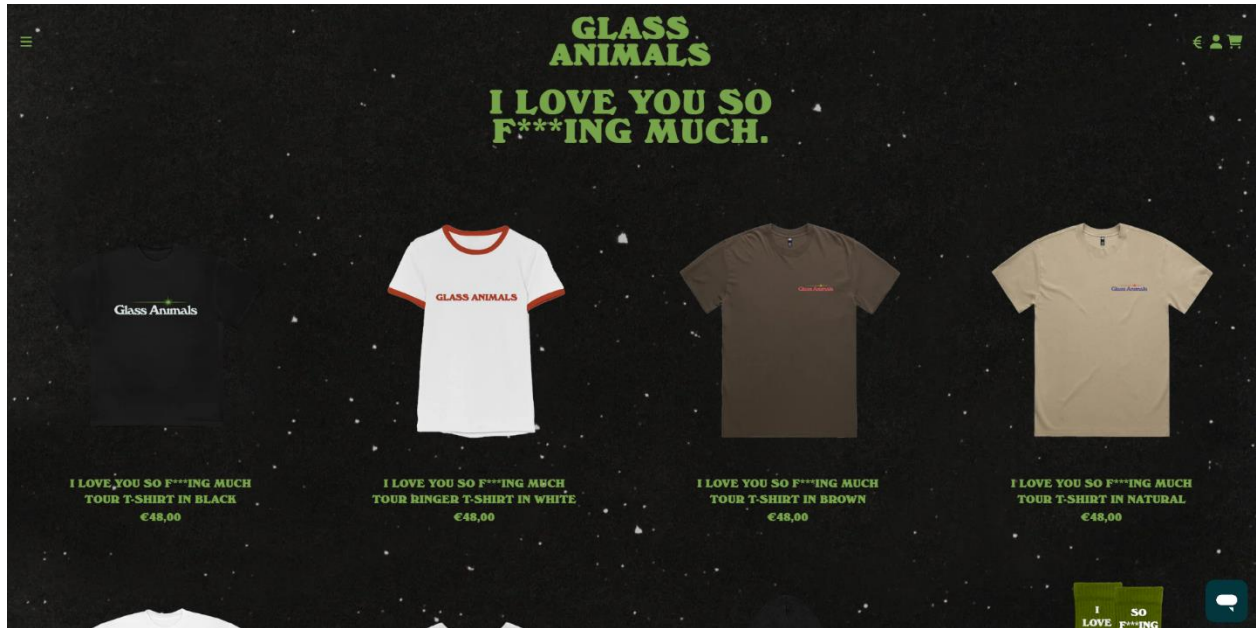
The only validation I have found is upon clicking the add to cart button, the user gets a notification that the item has been added to cart

The dynamic galleries on the webpage are interactive and responsive, showing the user different photographs of an item that they may be interested in ordering.

Consistency

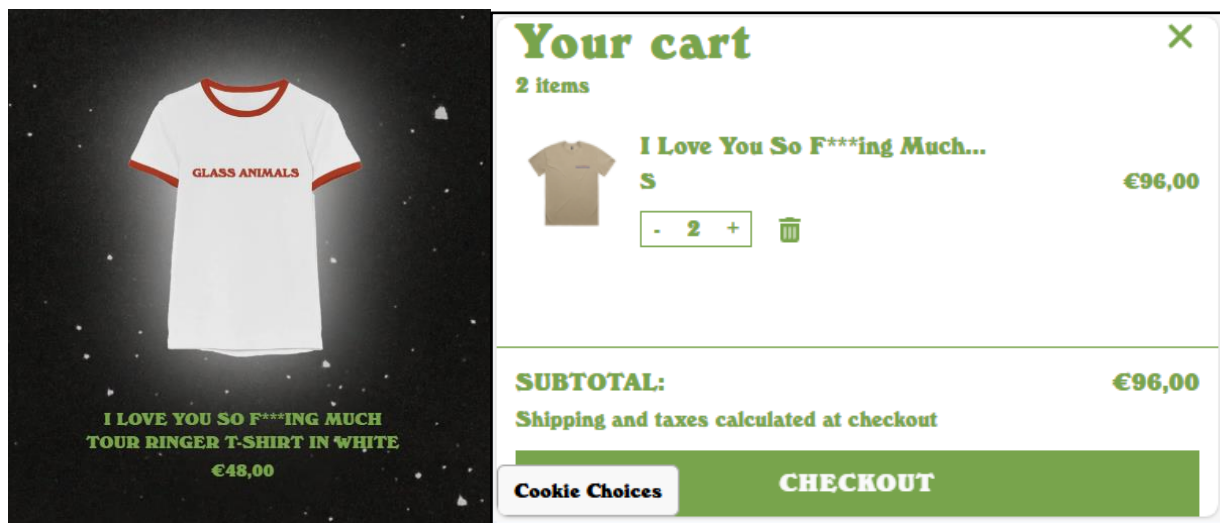
As mentioned before, the webpage maintains consistency across all of its features, logos are intuitively placed, items are organized well and the webpage has user feedback in mind, and the layout remains the same across all platforms.

Website 3 - shop.glassanimals.com



Usability

The site is easy to navigate; Selected items get highlighted, making the interactions clear and responsive.



After adding an item, the shopping cart automatically opens, allowing the user to pay and finish the order right away or go back to shopping.

The cart, profile, and currency buttons are only shown as icons, lacking a word description, which could make them inaccessible for unexperienced or visually disabled users.



The sign in menu has premature error messages that can be confusing for users.

The site lacks a search and filter menu. It works in this scenario because the shop does not have that many options but would make it difficult to use in the context of larger sites.

Responsiveness

There are no issues with the responsiveness of this site. The design is simple and easily collapsable, making it work for both desktop and mobile devices. It uses a burger menu that also stays consistent across devices.

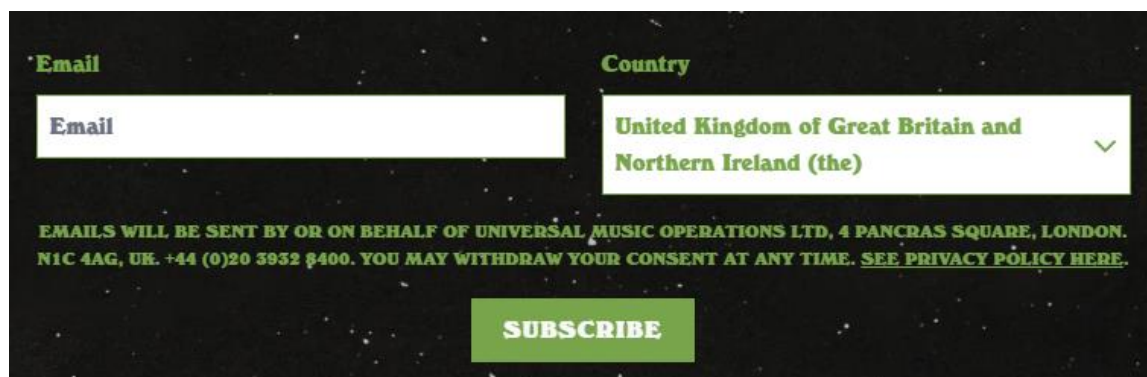
Accessibility

Not all buttons and links have accessible names. When running the Lighthouse test, the Performance part scores very low, making this website inaccessible for people with poor connection speeds.

Aesthetics

The aesthetics are clean, visually engaging, consistent, and fitting for the website's purpose. To separate the browsing part of the site and the purchasing section, the aesthetic goes from dark to light mode, clearly indicating when the user is in the payment/legal part of things.

In a few sections, smaller text in all capitals does not stand out.



Email	Country
<input type="text" value="Email"/>	<div>United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the) ▼</div>

EMAILS WILL BE SENT BY OR ON BEHALF OF UNIVERSAL MUSIC OPERATIONS LTD, 4 PANCRAS SQUARE, LONDON. N1C 4AG, UK. +44 (0)20 3932 8400. YOU MAY WITHDRAW YOUR CONSENT AT ANY TIME. [SEE PRIVACY POLICY HERE.](#)

SUBSCRIBE

Content Quality

This website does not have a need for a lot of content, therefore there is not much to inspect. No issues found.

Interactivity

The elements show great responsiveness. For items where it is relevant, there is additional preview as well when hovered over. All forms and modals are also clear, apart from the aggressive way the error indications are handled (mentioned in Usability). The pop-ups that appear when opening the site can be frustrating to have to close.

Consistency

Everything across the site is consistent apart from the cart tab, which is the only part of the website that uses a white and green color palette instead of a black and green one.

Comparison Table

	Pros	Cons	Features
corru.store	<p>Simple website design where all relevant sections are easy to access</p> <p>Unique aesthetic to make shopping on the site feel more interesting</p>	<p>Broken and unusable 'supporter' page</p> <p>Visuals could be overly stimulating for some users</p>	<p>Categories for different product types or drops</p> <p>Shopping cart to put purchased items in</p>
store.mxdvs.co	<p>Intuitive search and filters.</p>	<p>Hard to use if the user relies on screen readers.</p> <p>Low contrast in some areas of the page.</p>	<p>Hovering over items displays a new image of the selected item.</p> <p>Shopping cart gets saved if the user chooses not to purchase now.</p>
shop.glassanimals.com	<p>Consistent, responsive and clean layout and aesthetics</p>	<p>Not made accessible for users with poor connectivity</p>	<p>Additional preview for items when hovered over</p> <p>Automatic cart opening</p>

Audience and Context Research

Context

After looking into our 3 competitor websites, we have a strong idea of what our target audience is. Our target audience is young adults who are looking to get merchandise of the specific artist they like. This can vary, though, as there may be older or younger people who are fans of the artist, and this factor needs to be considered when making the design to achieve best possible accessibility.

The users will not only access the website at home, on desktop, but they will also be likely to use the website on mobile devices, on-the go, and on slower speed broadbands.

User Personas

Persona 1

Profile

Chris Beulen

Age: 26

Job: Student (Arts)

Location: Sweden, Stockholm



Goals: Find a new fitting piece of merch from their favourite artist and easily order it to their home.

Pain Points: Unclear response from the website, lack of search filtering to fit their specific size/preferences, Pop-ups

Behaviours: In-person shopping, closely inspects chosen items for materials

Needs: Aesthetic, eyecatching, and clean sites that convince them that the product is legit and of high quality

Motivation: Wants to be able to shop for and access merch from the comfort of their home or even outside, preferably on mobile.

Environment: On-the-go, mobile device, using data

Competency/Tech Proficiency:

Computers	not proficient;
Mobile	semi-proficient;
Attire	very proficient;
Foreign Languages	semi-proficient

"I like the experience of in-person shopping, but there is not many merch store options where I live."

User Journey

Chris wants to buy a brown-coloured T-shirt from an older collection from their favourite artist.

1. Awareness

- Chris searches on their mobile for “[artist name] merch”
- They open the first result.

2. Consideration

- They scroll through the main page, then proceed to filtering.
- They compare different T-shirts, read reviews, and check the prices.
 - *Pain Point: Unintuitive filters, pop-ups*
 - *Opportunity: Have filters for colours*

3. Decision

- Chooses a t-shirt with the right colour and size.
 - *Pain Point: Sizes/materials are not described, item availability not clearly indicated*
 - *Quote: “I would prefer to be in person to have a closer look, but there are no shops around me.”*

4. Action


- Adds the item to the cart and proceeds with checkout
 - *Pain Point: lengthy process, elements don’t adjust to mobile*

5. Post-Action

- Receives confirmation of purchase

Persona 2

Profile

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Name: Martin● Age: 40● Martial Status: Married● Family Status: 1 Child● Job: System Manager● City: Luxemburg● Education: Mgr		User Access Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Prefers the usage of his home computer, not making quick uninformed decisions on the go	
Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Wants to purchase clothing for his son● Wants to make his son happy with a birthday gift		Needs <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Wants authenticity when purchasing from an unknown website● Needs to feel safe about the purchases online		User Tech Proficiency <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Makes use of advanced filters when online shopping, looking for something that specifically meets his criteria● Makes use of the entire webpage options ideally combining them and uses them in tandem - Filters and search	
Pain Points <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Rather sticks to websites he knows well, rather than browsing new ones● Prefers simplicity and order on a website over flashing bright colors and distractions					
Behavior Patterns <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Is very cautious when purchasing on the web● Prefers a lengthy FaQ and a trustworthy image of a site● Checks the reviews of a site before purchasing anything					
Motivation <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Martin wants to purchase merch of his son's favorite artist for his birthday					
Quote <ul style="list-style-type: none">● "I've never heard of this artist, I'll have to do my research before I purchase anything there"					

User Journey

Martin wants to purchase clothing of his son's favourite artist as a birthday gift.

1. Awareness

- Martin finds the store page of his son's favourite artist.

2. Consideration

- Martin wants to buy his son pants for his birthday, deeply looking through the trustworthiness of the website
 - *Pain Point: Cluttered, hard to read website*
 - *Opportunity: Have everything easily findable and categorized*

3. Decision

- Chooses pants with the right size and makes an informed decision.
 - *Pain Point: Not enough information regarding the purchase and trustworthiness of the purchasing process*
 - *Quote: "Before I'll purchase anything, I have to be 100% sure of the material size and trust the website"*

4. Action

- The item is added to the cart and proceeds to checkout
 - *Pain Point: The item is not detailed shown, the user is not well informed that the item is in the cart*
 - *Emotion: Calm*

5. Post-Action

- Gets a confirmation of purchase, showing exactly where the item is and when it will arrive.
 - *Emotion: Happy, confident*

Persona 3

Profile



Persona: Jimmy Boston

Demographics: 19, Male, Biology student at his local community college in Texas.

Goals: Stand out from the crowd, support and display his love for the musicians he likes.

Pain Points: Doesn't have much spending cash, doesn't know any other fans of the artist he likes.

Behaviors: Listens to the artist and wears band shirts of other artists from Hot Topic.

Motivations: Wants cool looking clothes and accessories so he can find other fans of the artist.

Quote: "Yo bro! Do you listen to this guy's music? it changed my life!"

Access Environment: He usually accesses websites on his mobile phone, as he finds it more convenient than desktop.

Technical Proficiency: Moderately proficient, uses his phone to browse apps and websites every day but is less proficient on navigating through desktop

User Journey

Buy a new piece of artist merchandise to support and show off an artist he likes

1. Awareness

- Jimmy looks up online if anywhere sells merchandise of his favourite artist.
- He notices the store isn't the first result on Google
 - *Opportunity: Advertise the merch store so users don't have to look it up themselves*

2. Consideration

- Jimmy reads reviews to see if the merchandise is of good quality
 - *Pain Point: Is unsure of what to buy, website does not have a search bar for finding specific items.*
 - *Thoughts and Questions: What item of merchandise should I buy? I am unsure of what to buy. I wish this website would have a search bar for finding specific items.*

3. Decision

- Chooses a piece of merchandise to buy.
 - *Thoughts and Questions: I like this one! I think I shall take it!*
 - *Quote: "I would prefer to be in person to have a closer look, but there are no shops around me."*

4. Action

- Adds the item to the cart and proceeds with checkout.
 - *Touchpoints: Selects item size -> Adds item to cart -> Goes to check out -> Inputs credit card details -> Inputs shipping details -> Confirms purchase*
 - *Emotions: Excitement*

5. Post-Action

- Receives confirmation of purchase, receives merchandise in the mail, wears it outside, leaves a review
 - *Quote: "I'm glad I purchased this piece of merchandise, I'm so happy with it!"*

Feedback

While working on the user personas, we roleplayed as our user personas and recorded their interactions on the 3 websites to see how they would interact with them.

Chris on store.mxdvs.co

What worked well?

The layout and the use of standards - the process was easy and quick, there was nothing distracting. Use of icons and buttons that were clear without needing to use complicated language made it accessible even for a foreign person.

What was confusing?

The filter did not look like it was working, and it lacked category options. When selecting an item, the description layout was not intuitive - the main aspects Chris was looking for were below the less crucial ones.

What improvements would make the process easier?

Better filtering, more interesting aesthetics for a more memorable experience (e.g. option to switch between light and dark mode?), better item description layout.

Martin on corru.store

What worked well?

Liked the quality guarantee for items

What was confusing?

Too many moving elements, Martin was confused by the visual clutter and weird web design. Martin also did not easily find the item he was looking for (clothing, FAQ), the spoken language was not familiar to him. Home buttons did not seem clickable

What improvements would make the process easier?

The website would benefit from less visual clutter and clearly defined structure of the website, bigger contrast, and clearer visuals, especially for buttons.

Jimmy on shop.glassanimals.com

What worked well?

He understood what the album sections were due to being a fan. He liked the visuals due to them being mostly clear and easy to understand, the t-shirts were next to one another in the store rather than being separately ordered.

What was confusing?

There was a confusing mailing list pop up at the start, there were no filters for product type or price, it was hard to see all the t-shirt options. The currency symbol could be confused for a price filter. There was no product detail section for materials or sizing. He didn't realise there were multiple pages at the bottom.

What improvements would make the process easier?

Filters for the product type and price. The currency symbol could be made clearer for its intended function. There could be details for the product type. The mailing list pop up could be removed.

Project Goals and Objectives

This project's goal is to create a merchandise website that is intuitive and easy to use to be accessible to users of any background and age while having a modern and clean look to appeal to the primary target audience and make the shopping experience enjoyable.

Goals

- Provide an official, legitimate, easily accessible website for fans of an artist to purchase merchandise.
- Have it be easy for users to add and remove items to their cart and purchase them without any confusion.
- Allow users to write concise, trustworthy reviews for the items they have bought.
- Have items be easily searchable by users and properly tagged for ease of access.
- Have customer support and helpful resources be readily available to users.

User-Focused Objectives:

- Our website will have an easy to remember name and url so that users can easily recall and share it with others.
- The website will offer a simple grid-like structure with enough breathing space for the items with relevant information. Each item will be responsive, upon hovering and interacting with the item elements, a preview of the item will appear, displaying multiple images of the item. The cart will be always accessible, with it being easy to add and remove items
- Users will be able to leave a rating out of 5 stars accompanied by their thoughts on any products they have purchased, they will not be required to have an account.
- We would like to implement a filter that uses item tags, it would have options for price and clothing category sorting, helping the customer in finding the right item as simply and efficiently as possible.
- There will be a 'contact' link at the bottom of every page, ensuring users can easily access a form where users can send messages to the website customer support.

Value Proposition

Unlike other merchandise sites, this website will combine the uniqueness and aesthetic appeal of heavily stylized sites that omit accessibility and usability, and the practical aspect of less visually interesting sites that have user-friendly design and features.