

Report – Module Assignment 1

Introduction

This report consists of three parts: first, I will go through the design research phase; then, the creation of personas and the storyboard for three user journeys; and finally, the process of producing a paper prototype for the webpage for the male leather shoes company “Letha”. The report outlines and reflects on a series of practical tasks I have completed during this week’s module.

The design research phrase

I started the research by taking a close look at several shoe store webpages, as well as other kinds of e-commerce websites, in order to see how they deal with user experience, and what sort of functionality and other design choices they have implemented. The commonality among these websites is that they focus not only on great appearance, but rather on intuitive functionality, interactivity and convenience of usage.

For instance, the Zalando’s webpage has a section within each product description page where similar items or items that go well together are highlighted for the user. In this way, the website offers the user a personalized shopping experience. At Ecco’s website, they whole process of making a purchase is extremely simple, the user does not even have to create an account. Rather, he/she is guided to the purchase section where in very few steps the process will be completed. Such simplified payment process ensures that the customer will be overwhelmed and/or annoyed, and can very smoothly finish the purchase.

After having a look at a number of relevant webpages, I started to craft some guidelines (see the attached document) for the interviews that I would have with prospective users of the Letha webpage. All the questions are open-ended which allows the interviewees to tell their own experience, instead of putting words into their mouth. Further, I chose interviewees from my own circles, consisting of friends, colleagues, and family. I could also have made an online form and have more people respond to it, but I found it more useful to go more in depth and actually observe the interviewees, as suggested by the Contextual Inquiry technique developed by Beyer and Holtzblatt. Therefore, during the interview process, I sat

down and observed my interviewees, asked them to show me their internet shopping process in general and their process of finding and paying for a pair of shoes online.

The qualitative data that I have collected was then interpreted to draw common lines and create general personas for the store website. While quantitative data, such as web traffic statistics, may be useful to describe the general performance and popularity of a website, a qualitative approach is more suited to gain detailed and in-depth insights about how the user actually are using and experiencing – both positive and negative – a page.

The personas and storylines

After having conducted all my interviews/observation sessions, I proceeded to reflect on what I had seen and heard. I tried to categorize my qualitative data based on recurrent patterns in the responses, and out this came three personas. The personas and the storyboards are attached in their own documents.

The three personas are in many ways different, but all represent potential customers of Letha. Two of them are males that fall within Letha's targeted group, i.e. men between 25 and 40 years of age. These two males mainly differ in terms of technological competency and economic status. The third persona is a female, as I was actually surprised during my interviews to see that it is quite common for women to shop for, or at least influence the shopping decisions of, their male partners or close family members.

The storyboards are by no means beautifully drawn, due to my limited skills in this area. However, I do believe they illustrate the pain points of my personas (for Knut: limited time, for Lasse: a limited budget, for Sofia: the need of a place to store items of interest, that is the wishlist) and set out three realistic scenarios. These storyboards also take into account the responsiveness of the webpage, for instance Sofia is using a mobile device to browse the page. Additionally, my storyboards include several interactive elements of the page: for instance, the wishlist icon and the "shop by category" dropdown list.

The paper prototype

Having finished the interviews, created the personas and drawn up the storyboards, it was time to put to use the insights gained and create a prototype of the webpage. A few notes on the creation of the prototype: For all interactive elements, I have used post-it notes pasted on top of the paper. This is to illustrate what will happen after a mouse click or when a prompt window appears. For the common elements that are identical for all pages, such as the footer, header, URL-bar, etc, I've also cut and pasted instead of drawing the same elements every time.

The prototype has the following highlights:

- Search bar at the top of the page to facilitate easy searching
- The user's current location on the website is displayed right below the menu bar, to facilitate quick returns to parent sections of the site.
- To make it easier for the user to find what he/she is looking for, I created a toggle function where the user can access a number of filters such as color and shoe size. For someone like Knut, this will be very useful as it allows quick filtering based on specific needs. Meanwhile, for users that do not quite know what they want, the filter is totally unobtrusive because they can choose not to toggle it.
- On the product pages, a personalized shopping experience is offered through the suggested items under the "You may also like"-section.
- The website allows the user both to add items to their shopping cart and to a wishlist, which offers interactivity between the user and the website. I had in mind a persona like Sofia when implementing the wishlist. The cart is a common function, but is useful in that the user may go back and add additional items before checking out.
- Items on sale are also highlighted on the page, which will be attractive to personas like Lasse.
- The payment process is very simple. Instead of being taken to a new payment page, the user is presented with a payment form on the current page (which is triggered by a mouse click). The form itself is clean and well-guided with only two steps needed to

make the purchase: first the user chooses a payment method, then fills out the required information.

One note about the required pages. One of the requirements was “Two product pages”. I made one page showing the actual details of one product – what you would typically be taken to after clicking on a product on any give webpage – and also two versions of a product overview page, one showing the display in list mode the other the display in grid mode, which are user selectable on my page and adds to the user interactivity. For users that prefer a quick scan of the available items, the list version will be their likely choice. For those putting emphasis on seeing pictures before opening the detailed product view, the grid mode will be in favour. This interactive design is also mobile friendly; mobile users may prefer the list view, since the loading speed will be faster as the picture size is smaller.

Conclusion

In this report I have outlined and reflected on the work I did during this week’s module. This is the first module of the Interaction Design course, and while there has been a lot of new material to take in, and quite some challenges in terms of hand-drawing the storyboards and the prototype, the process has been both educational and fun.