

Summary:

The ZARA website is an online shopping brand that has a major focus on its image. So much so that on first glance of the website it is nothing but pictures. Pictures flutter by as they change rapidly and then transition to new ones. Overall the ZARA website's design is not incredibly flawed, it received a score of 75/100, but it does have some impactful issues. This score is mostly due to an excess of smaller positives that make up for its larger faults. The most impactful shortcomings of the website present themselves immediately on the home page. ZARA has an unconventional navigation system presented upfront, which can be problematic for new users. After reaching the item catalog pages the shopping experience has a more natural feel. However, finding the hidden routes to easily navigate the webpage makes reaching the catalogs a challenge. The website's greatest shortcoming is slowing the customer experience down and lowering time on task.

Problem Areas:

The most substantial problem area is the home page as described before. It violates several UX laws and generally creates problems for the user.

A specific problem the home page has is the navigation UI is too small and hard to find/use. Using Fitt's Law to examine the page shows one of many problems. The functionality of logging in, searching, and moving pages, etc, is all too small and spread apart. It takes tons of time to look around and move the mouse pointer to the small words on screen. Also the navigation buttons do not actually take the user to the page specified. Instead it moves the dynamic photo gallery to the image related to that section. Only by clicking on the image can the user reach that portion of the site.

Not to mention how the homescreen has too much stimuli upfront. When first entering the website it is easy to forget the point is to shop at all. The pictures and dynamic slideshow takes up 100% of the screen space. The different ways to interact with the site get lost on the image as there are no borders around the different clickables. The Law of Common Region is broken by this fact, as every navigation element gets swallowed by the images on screen with no borders to separate them.

Even the navigation bar being at the bottom of the screen violates Jakob's Law of familiarity, since most websites have the master navigation bar on the top. However, most of these issues disappear when taken to a page other than the home screen. Unfortunately a user is routed to the homescreen, or at least a section of it, very often when shopping.

The site also frequently violates the "Recognition rather than recall" heuristic by not allowing for item comparison, as well as not making certain options visible to the user. ZARA is very much designed for a second time user.

Help and documentation is also complicated since the help chat bot is not always functional. The contact us page is also hidden behind a drop down menu with another drop down menu inside.

The search functionality is also not as great as it could be. Once found it will change the screen entirely and bring up a new menu. Here you can search for items, however there is no real time dynamic suggestions or help for mistypes. A new navigation bar shows up at the top of the screen to filter between sections of the store, but it is disconnected from the search functionality. The filter system is also not as intuitive position-wise as it could be.

Improvements/Suggestions:

The home page issues and problem areas are a case of the aesthetic outweighing functionality. My personal suggestions that could quickly fix the problems mentioned would be to create borders around your menu navigation. As well as make the navigation buttons take the user directly to the page instead of only clicking on the pictures doing so. Also, having the navigation index that is normally hidden by fault displayed on first landing would increase productivity. Having an easy to see, separated navigation system is exactly how users are prepared to move around the website.

The search functionality could be greatly improved with a few convenient quick links, as well as moving the filtering searches option closer to the search bar. Once purchasing an item it is pretty straight forward conventional checkout, but the cart page could make it easier to remove and compare items. In fact most of the functionality all around the website could be improved by simply adding symbols rather than words. Most of the "buttons" on the site are plain black simple text. These are hard to click and often hard to see. Having more simple symbols with the words would greatly speed up workflow.

I would suggest using time of task as well as error rate metrics to evaluate a redesign. These metrics would catch the largest portion of what I believe to be the problems with ZARA. After making some of the changes suggested above I believe time on task would significantly drop for the website, making users much quicker at finding and buying items. As well as reducing error in terms of finding themselves on the wrong pages. Not being able to easily navigate absolutely adds to the complexity and amount of time it takes to get where a customer wants to be.