

Designing your e-commerce store for success

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Case study: How T|W Tote designed their website to engage with customers

Previously, you learned how to design an e-commerce store for success. You also explored strategies that help attract and engage customers. This case study will explore how an online retail company, [TW Tote](#) (stylized TW Tote), designed its website to attract customers and create a distinctive brand experience.



Company background

One day while commuting to work, Washington D.C. resident Shallon Thomas noticed that the paper bag he used to carry his lunch didn't match his stylish corporate attire. Frustrated by the lack of well-made, fashionable lunch bag options available online, Shallon and his business partner Sherika Wynter decided to found TW Tote. The idea was simple: create a collection of polished, professional lunch bags at a reasonable price.



Their first collection of lunch bags launched in 2018 and featured gender-neutral designs made with sustainable materials. While the business experienced early success, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 forced them to rethink their flagship product. With many people not going into their office jobs, TW Tote decided to expand their marketing efforts. They changed the name of the product from "TW Lunch Tote" to "TW Tote." With this new product title, the bags were marketable to not only those who brought meals to work but to anyone carrying food and personal items.



The challenges

Shallon and Sherika knew that an e-commerce website for their company would be a great opportunity to attract and engage with their customers. Sherika, who has a background in industrial design, says that since many people enjoy e-commerce shopping more than in-store shopping, an e-commerce store would be part of their long-term strategy to sell and promote their products.

Marketing effectively

Their first challenge was designing a website that balanced attracting their target customers and reaching other customer demographics. While their target customers are males between the ages of 25 to 45, Shallon and Sherika believed that their bags are versatile enough to be enjoyed by many different types of working professionals.

Creating a brand experience

In the beginning, TW Tote relied on its social media presence to display the company's mission, values, and brand voice. Shallon and Sherika's second challenge was deciding how the TW Tote website could also be used as a tool to convey those elements and create a positive brand experience.

The approach

Shallon and Sherika decided on a variety of approaches to solving their business's problems, including improving the store's design, focusing on blog posts, and using Google Analytics.

Design and layout

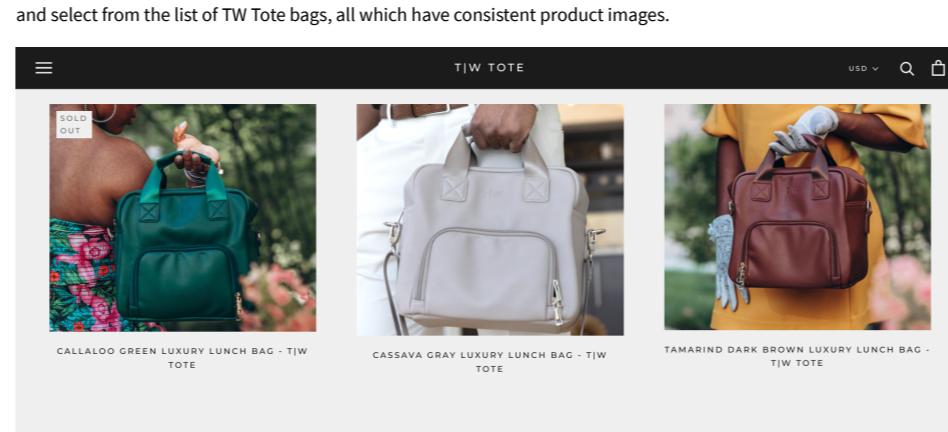
While creating the online store, Shallon and Sherika made visual design decisions to market their products effectively. First, they chose a website theme that was appropriate for their target audience and other potential customers. For example, the website has neutral colors that can appeal to many audiences.

Second, the website uses photography to emphasize TW Tote's brand voice and mission. The homepage features large, high-quality images of models holding TW Totes. All the models have different backgrounds and personal styles.



The company updates their website's header image every three to four months to keep audiences interested and engaged with their brand. The owners say that showcasing these images upfront was intentional for customers to picture themselves using the product, regardless of their sense of style.

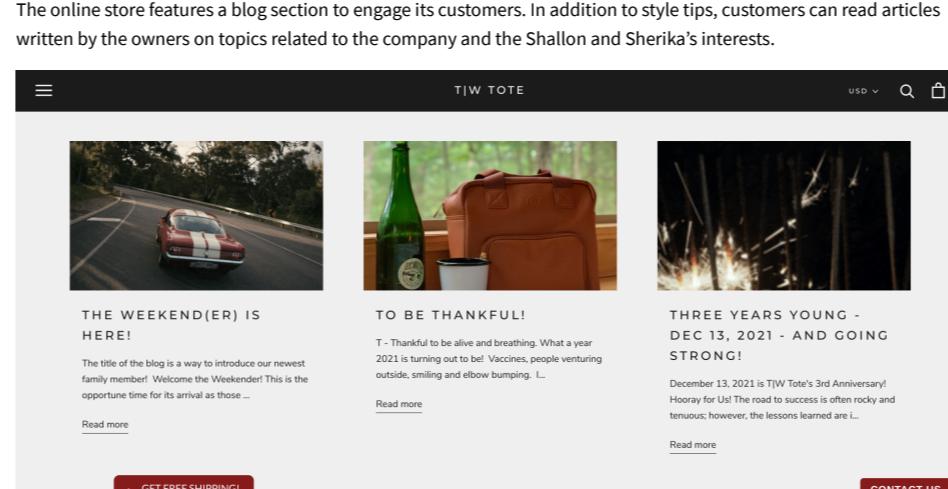
Third, the website's simple layout creates an easy shopping experience. Customers can navigate to the product page and select from the list of TW Tote bags, all of which have consistent product images.



Once selected, customers have the option to monogram their bags with their initials before proceeding to the checkout menu.

Blog posts

The online store features a blog section to engage its customers. In addition to style tips, customers can read articles written by the owners on topics related to the company and the Shallon and Sherika's interests.



With posts such as "More than just a professional lunch tote" and "We celebrate Juneteenth 2021", their blog gives Shallon and Sherika a way to communicate directly to their audience in their own words.

In addition, keywords used in the blog posts help TW Tote's website appear on Google search engine results pages (SERPs) when they are searched by people, leading to potential customers.

Google Business Profile

TW Tote uses Google tools to attract a variety of audiences to their website. Specifically, the company uses Google Business Profile to add distinctive attributes to attract visitors to their website, including "identifies as Black-owned" and "LGBTQ friendly." Customers searching for brands with these attributes on Google can now easily discover the TW Tote website.

The results

Its approach to visual design, layout, and personalized content has helped TW Tote gain an audience that understands its brand identity and values. The website's sleek, gender-neutral theme complements the brand's mission of creating a product that can be used by anyone, while the photos and blog posts convey the brand's story and values.

These decisions helped TW Tote shoppers become interested in the brand and learn more about its values and mission, leading to new and returning customers. Customers leave the site feeling a little more connected to their purchase.

Conclusion

The design decisions made when creating an e-commerce website can achieve a variety of goals. Thinking strategically about how your website connects to your customers' shopping experience will have a lasting impact on how they interact with your products.

Mark as completed

