HEURISTIC EVALUATION FOR ALIEXPRESS

Overview of AliExpress:

AliExpress is a Chinese online retailer which was launched in 2010 and owned by Alibaba group. It facilitates for small enterprises to sell to customers worldwide. It is the most popular e-commerce website in Russia and 10th most popular in Brazil. It is like eBay website where sellers are independent and use this platform to sell products to the buyers.

It started as a business-to-business model for selling and buying of products through their website, then it expanded to consumer-to-consumer and business-to-consumer model. Also, it started business for the payment services and cloud. Private people and businesses both can be registered as a seller on AliExpress. AliExpress primarily works as an e-commerce platform and does not offer its own products to the customers. Most of the retailers on this website are Chinese and connect these retailers to international buyers. English is the default language of this website; however, it is available in multiple languages such as English, Spanish, Russian, French, German, Italian, Dutch, Portuguese, Indonesian, Turkish, Polish. It supports multiple currencies as well such as USD (US Dollar), CAD (Canadian Dollar), AUD (Australian Dollar), SGD (Singapore Dollar), EUR (Euro), GBP (British Pound), RUB (Russian Rubel), JPY (Japanese Yen), etc.

Overall findings:

I conducted a heuristic evaluation of this website and, the observations are as follows –

1. Website features and functionalities such as navigation bar, category of items, search features, register, login, add to cart, wish list, etc. are well designed which fulfils the e-commerce common need of users, and it is like other e-commerce websites which is easy to use for the users.

2. The homepage contains categories section from where users can navigate easily. It is available in multi languages and multi-currency which is user friendly across worldwide. Users can easily search items using search box.

3. The navigation system of website in top navigation bar is well designed. Links are descriptive, well labeled and clear. Location can be seen using breadcrumb and highlighted text. Users can easily navigate backward and forward also.

4. The search box is available in the home page in top-middle position where users can search for the items. Search can be performed using filtering options of All categories. Also, search results can be sorted and filtered. Search section is also available in item/product details page. It provides autosuggestion features while searching. It does not show recent searches of users. Users can search by clicking autosuggestion items.

5. Users can submit their feedback through home page by clicking pencil icon in bottom of vertical sticky bar. Also, an alert is given to the user before committing an action. Feedback can be accessed

from account (Home>My Account>Manage Feedback) as well. Customers can submit their feedback from Customer Service section in footer of the home page.

6. Register/Login form is provided in the top-right position of navigation bar under account dropdown which is good. Shipping address form is also provided in the account. Website does not have for complex forms. Required and optional fields are indicated in the form.

7. Errors are well defined in the system, and it is shown by standard red color text whenever there is an error or inappropriate uses such as failed to login, registering, making transactions, adding shipping address.

8. The text used throughout the website is consistent but, in some cases, it is not consistent. Content of the website is good.

9. The help section in top of navigation bar consists of dropdown with different type of help options. Customer service and Help section is provided in the bottom of home page as well. After clicking on help center users landed to help center pages in which different type of help options are provided such as Frequently asked questions, Popular Solutions, Topics with questions, Searching for questions, 24/7 online chat services, feedback submissions. In dispute and report menu users can open dispute and submit report. On hovering mouse on Help Center item (in Customer service section in footer section), it is neither highlighting nor underlying like link.

10. The performance of the website is good, loading of web pages, images, and videos are not slow. The website is owned by popular company Alibaba group, it is reliable and used in many countries. It has not any major issues which hinders the user experience.

Problem areas and description:

The main problem area of the home page layout design is categories menu in left side, on hovering over categories menu it covers the main section of home page.

Spaces for product items are compact due to left and right margin in the main section.

Sticky tab bar in the right side of home page gives old design feelings and some repetitive features such as wish list, coupons are there which is already present in navigation bars.

Another major problem is not consistency of search box through all the pages, in home page search box is larger and in the top middle position, however, in product details page search bar is in top-right side and it is much smaller in size comparative to home page search box.

 In addition to this, after clicking the search box it does not show for recent searches of users in the autosuggestion drop down. Also, in some cases it does not suggest appropriate auto suggestion for example after typing "latop" it does not show autosuggestion for laptop which is misspelled by the users.

Furthermore, In home page top navigation top navigation bar menus, left side Categories menu options, sticky tab menu buttons in right side appears clickable that is on hovering mouse cursor changes and text color changes or highlighted, however, Register and Sign in button does not appears clickable since background color or text color does not changes, only cursor changes which will be difficult for new users to the internet. Same problem is observed in home page footer section menu in the sections of Shopping with us, Customer Service, Collaborate with us.

Improvements and Suggestion for problem areas:

I would suggest removing the unused white space in left side and right side of the main section of home page and use this space for listing for product items which results into a greater number of listing product items, and it will solve the problem of gap problem between two items also.

Also, Sticky right tab in the right side of home page can be removed which contains some already provided features like wish list, coupons in navigation bar menu, it will result into more standard and clean design along with extra space.

In product details page search box is smaller and in top-right side, which is smaller and not like home page, Search box can be made similar to home page so that it will be consistent throughout the design. Also, autosuggestion items can be improved whenever user types a misspelled words by using good logic in backend of application. Most recent searches should be shown in suggestion when user tap the search box.

Link or highlight or change of color should be added on hovering mouse on Register, Sign in button in account menu of home page. Similar issue can be fixed in footer section for the Shopping with us, Customer Service, Collaborate with us menus.

Help, Browse by Category, AliExpress Multi Languages sites, Alibaba group menus in the footer section of home page can be listed as vertically rather than horizontal list which will result into easily readable and good user experience.

More languages and currency of the countries can be added to make the use of the product across worldwide.

Some of the product description is less, more description should be provided for these products which will results into good user experience.

Most of the texts in buttons/links in top navigation bar and in the left side categories menu of home page turns out to red when hovering the mouse over it. It can be replaced with standard blue color.

Metrics:

I would advise them to utilize satisfaction and time on task as measures to gauge improvement. The home page will look fantastic with the new layout once everything is aligned and organized correctly, which makes users feel satisfied to use the website. It would also mean that the features were easily discovered and that new users can easily navigate around without needing help for the navigation links, which reduces the time on task.