

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

MOBILE APP DESIGN FOR ECOMMERCE



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Introduction

To Mobile App Design For Ecommerce

Mobile commerce on the rise

The growth of smartphone usage has changed the retail landscape and consumer behavior drastically. A large share of online purchases are now taking place on mobile, especially in apps.

In 2018, global time spent in app nearly doubled, up 45% from 2016, including a 70% increase in the US. And this trend is only increasing from here: By 2021, mobile transactions are projected to double on a worldwide scale, accounting for 75% of total ecommerce sales.

(Data: Global M-Commerce 2018 Report, Researchandmarkets.com)

People today have 2x more interaction with brands on mobile more than anywhere else, including desktop, in-store,...

Providing an intimate, direct channel to consumers, mobile has grown into the primary way for consumers to connect with their favorite brands. This represents a massive opportunity for brands to reach, influence and convert shoppers. On the other hand, it also raises the bar of what they expect from your brand. More than ever before, consumers have higher expectations of the experiences they have with brands on their phones. If their expectations aren't met, they're likely to turn their heads somewhere else, seeking for a better experience. That puts even more pressure on brands to improve the user experience on mobile, which, in turn, is shifting the nature of loyalty.

One of the most important drivers of mobile commerce growth is the development of mobile applications.

We're in the age of mobile apps where smartphone play an increasingly important role in consumer's shopping journey. As mobile shopping growth keeps increasing, apps are top of mind for retailers to enhance the overall customer experience and drive business growth.

Today's consumer spends an average of 3 hours per day on mobile, and most of the time is spent within apps.

(Data: The State of Mobile 2019 Report, AppAnnie)

New opportunities come with new challenges

With shifting customer behaviors, brands are facing a bigger challenge:

According to a research by Google, 73% users will switch from a poorly designed mobile experience to an alternative one that make shopping easier.

At the same time, consumers are willing to spend up to five times as much for a great shopping experience compared to a poor one (Forrester data)

Now more than ever, a strong mobile experience is critical for ecommerce success. Optimizing mobile app design for better user experience is a must for brands to keep up with the transitions most consumers are making to mobile. Mobile experiences include unique interactions that don't exist in the desktop world. It requires a whole new set of principles and best practices to shape a strong mobile experience, so there are different areas to improve when designing your mobile app.

Optimize mobile app design for a better shopping experience

The principles of creating great user experience may look different for every brand, but at the end of the day, it all boils down to address customer needs and help them do what they want to do throughout their shopping experiences.

These experiences include all interactions shoppers have with your brand on your mobile app: search for products, browse the catalog, add items to cart, fill information to check out and more. The more helpful experience you give your app users, the more you can keep them loyal to your brand. Growing long-term relationships with loyal customers is important if you want your business to be successful.

The ultimate guide to mobile app design for ecommerce

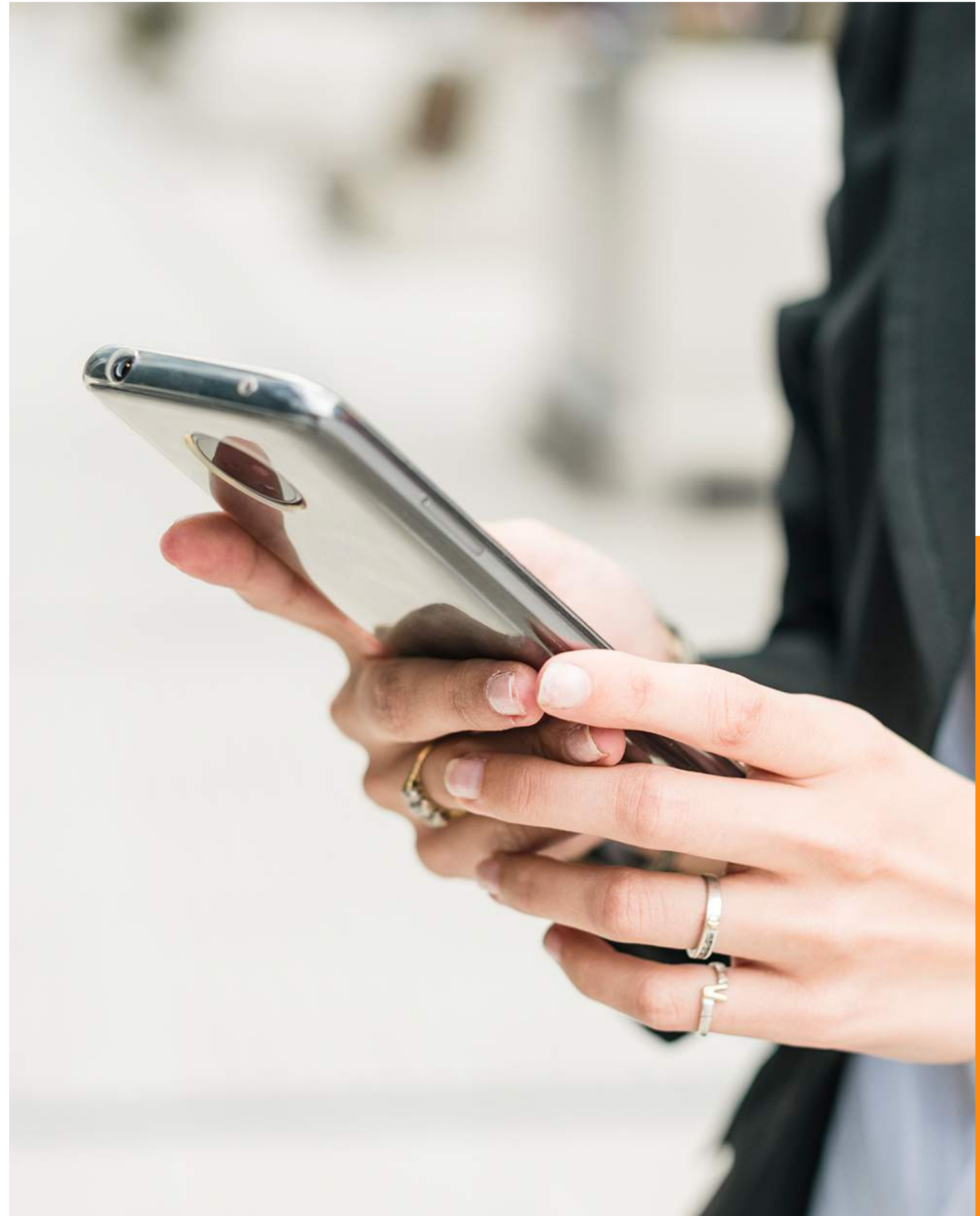
In this guide, we'll go deep into different aspects of mobile user experience for ecommerce app to help you make customer-focused decisions that improve your app design. The guide provides a view into how users interact with your app in a shopping context while introducing a whole host of pitfalls to watch out for when designing an ecommerce app. Typically there are several usability issues that potentially keep users from completing their desired tasks. These issues are analyzed and refined into **30 principles on how to best design your mobile app for ecommerce**. Understanding what makes a great mobile experience is the key to remove friction from the shopping journey and make it easy for your customers to convert.

Streamlined mobile user experience has transformed from a nice-to-have advantage to the critical part of running a business.

As mobile commerce and especially app transactions continue to rise, brands should take note: In order to grow, it's imperative to stay on top of the user experience for mobile shopping apps. Optimization of mobile app design will reflect the changes that drive engagement, loyalty and eventually revenue.

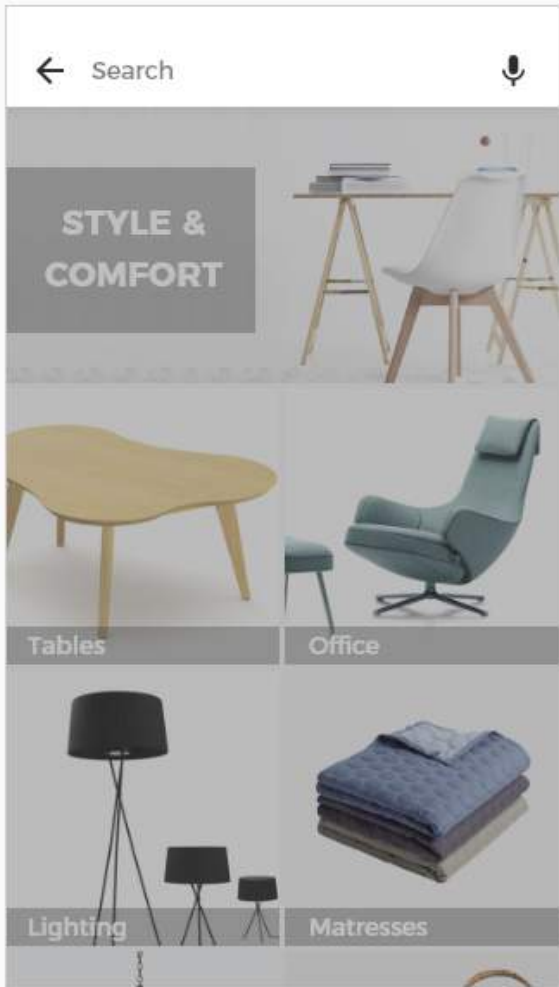
Product Search

One of the most common issues mobile users have with ecommerce apps is the ability to find the product they need. Providing a quick and efficient product search helps save people's time and efforts in looking for the right item in your app, which is crucial to engage them further in their buying journey.

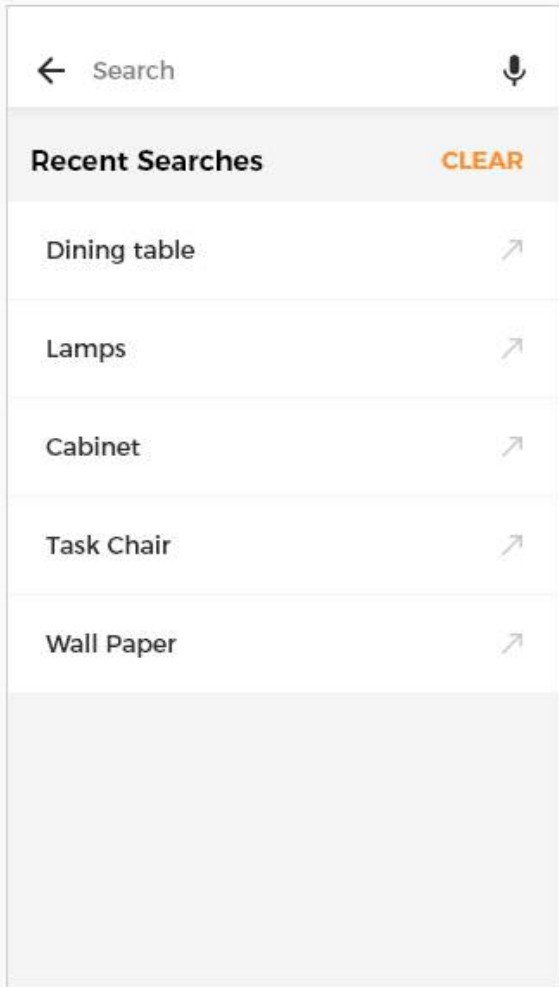


1. Show recent searches

By making recent search terms readily available, you can offer your customers a quick option to perform a repeated search with one tap. Presenting previous searches saves the users' time and effort in typing out the same keywords again, while adding a layer of personalization to their shopping experience. The enhanced search function makes it easy for users to conduct repeated purchases and encourages them to return to your app more often. If you have this function enabled in your app, make sure your users are also able to clear their saved searches.



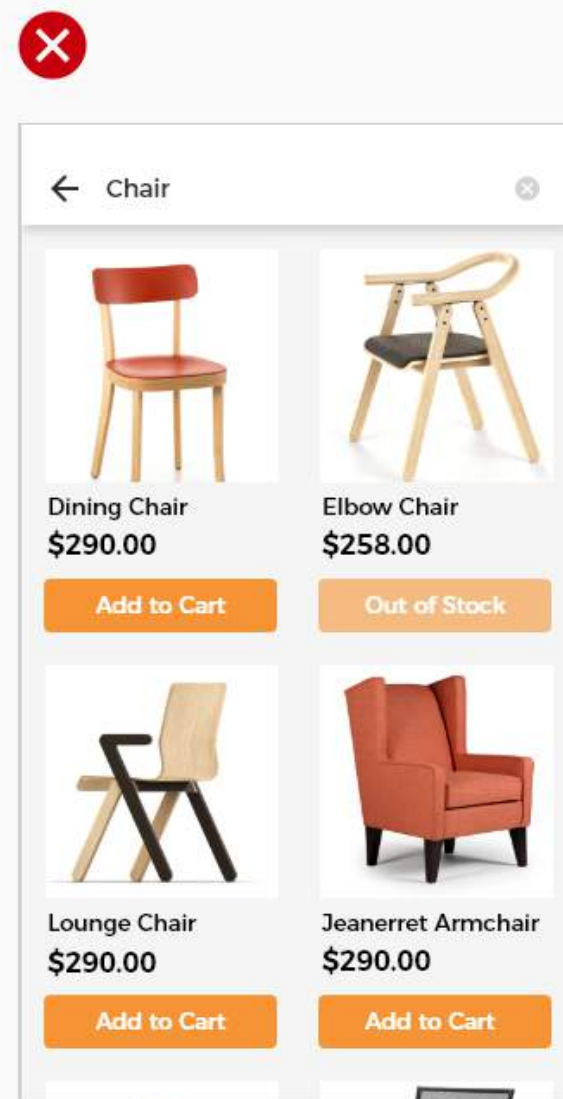
Even in the case of a repeated search, users are required to type in the search query once again.



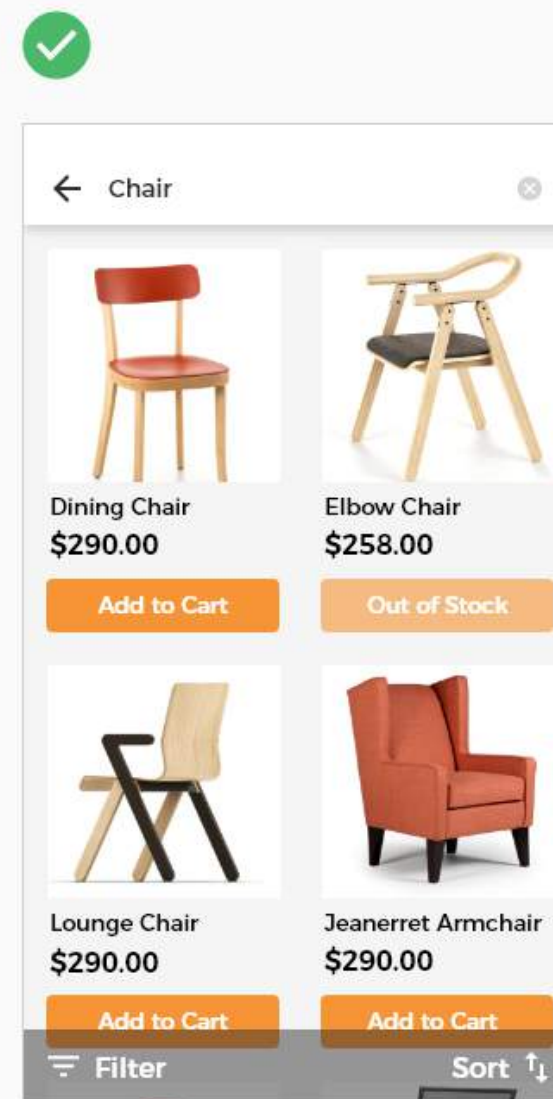
Users can conveniently repeat a previous search with a single tap or clear search history.

2. Allow users to sort and filter search results

Most users would abandon your app if they can not find what they need quickly. A long list of search results require extensive scrolling on a small screen can get users overwhelmed. You can avoid this by giving them the ability to refine search results with useful product sorting and filtering options. Customers will be able to look at your wide range of product offerings and specify it to the few ones that match their needs and preferences.



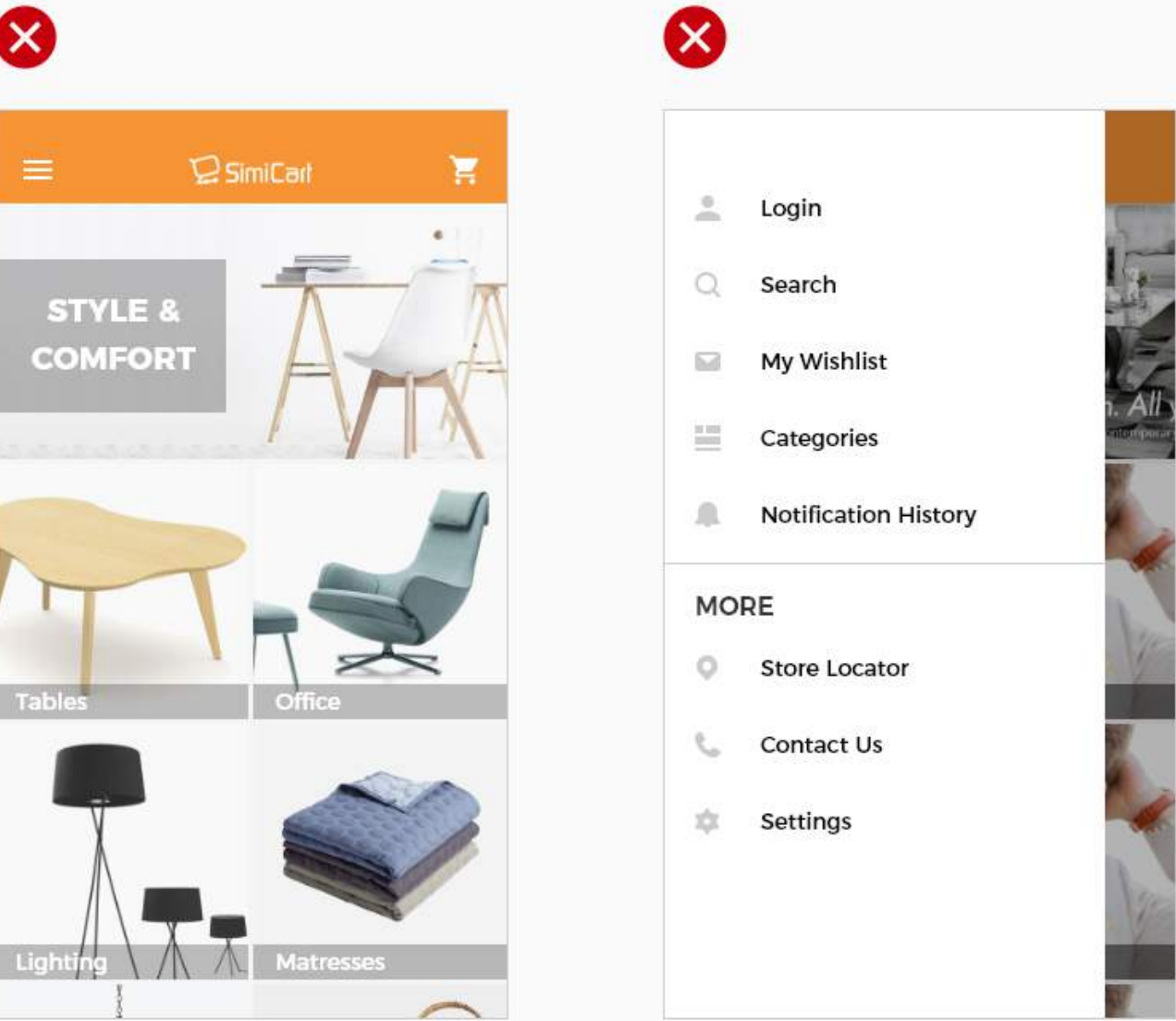
Sorting and filtering options for search results are excluded or hidden, which requires users to review too many items.



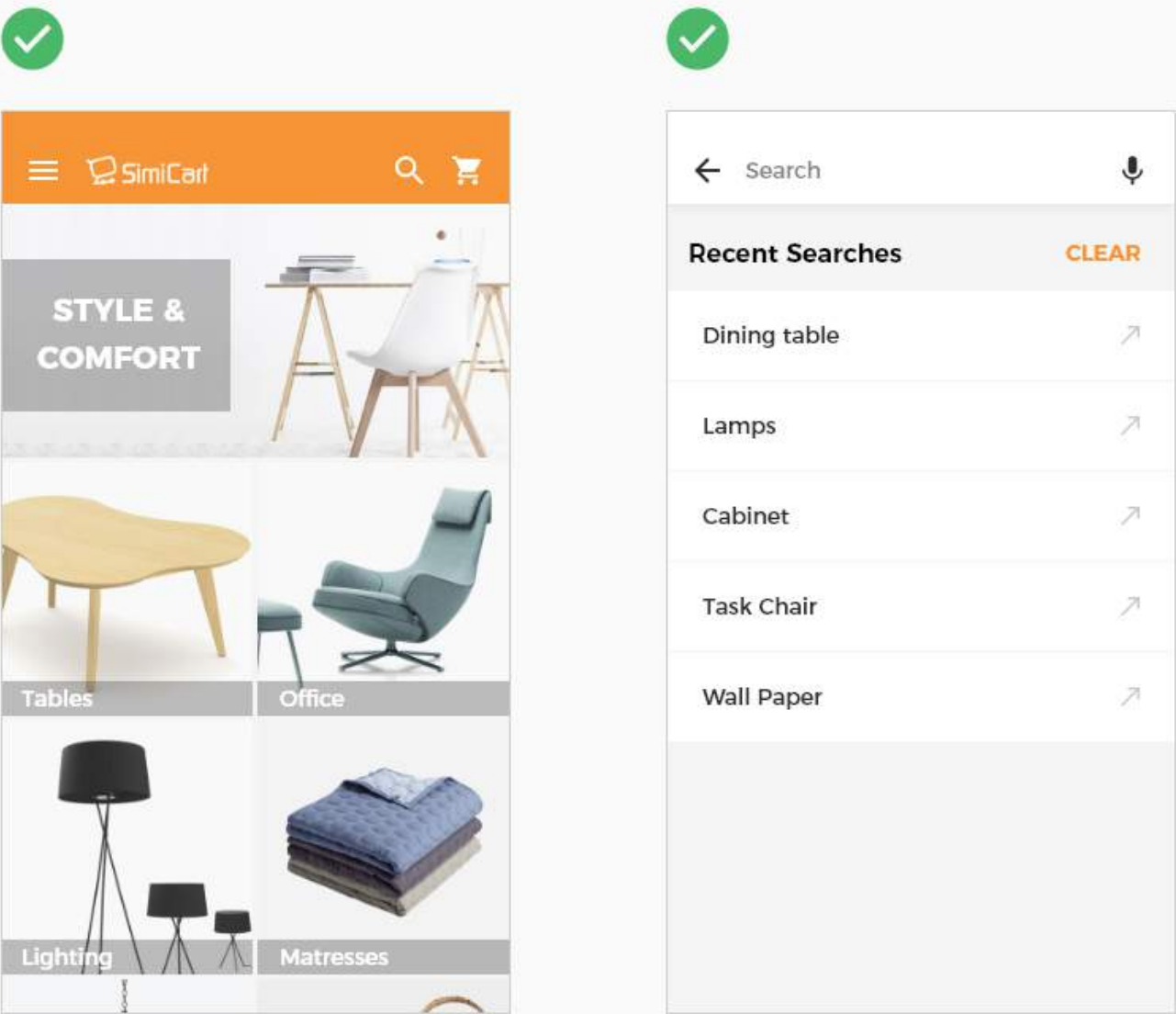
Sorting and filters are provided to help users narrow down the search for more relevant results.

3. Prominently display search option

While most users adopt search function as the primary way to find products, the ability to spot search option is critical to craft the entire search experience in the app. For ecommerce apps, it's beneficial to align the prominence in placement of search option with user expectation. Making search option easy for users to locate is the key to guide them through the purchasing path.



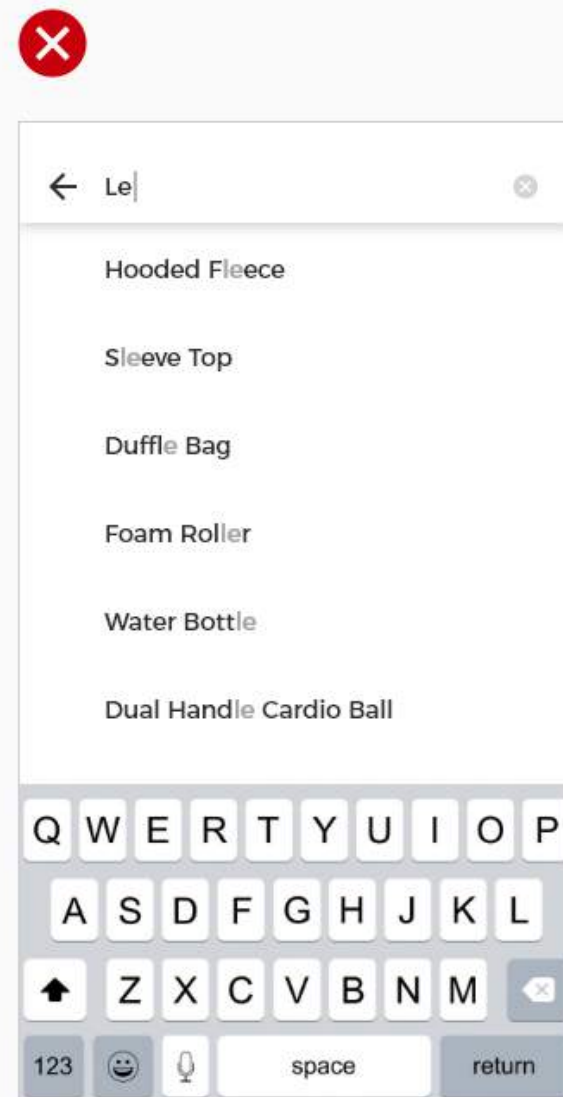
The search option is hidden in a navigation drawer, taking extra steps for users to reach.



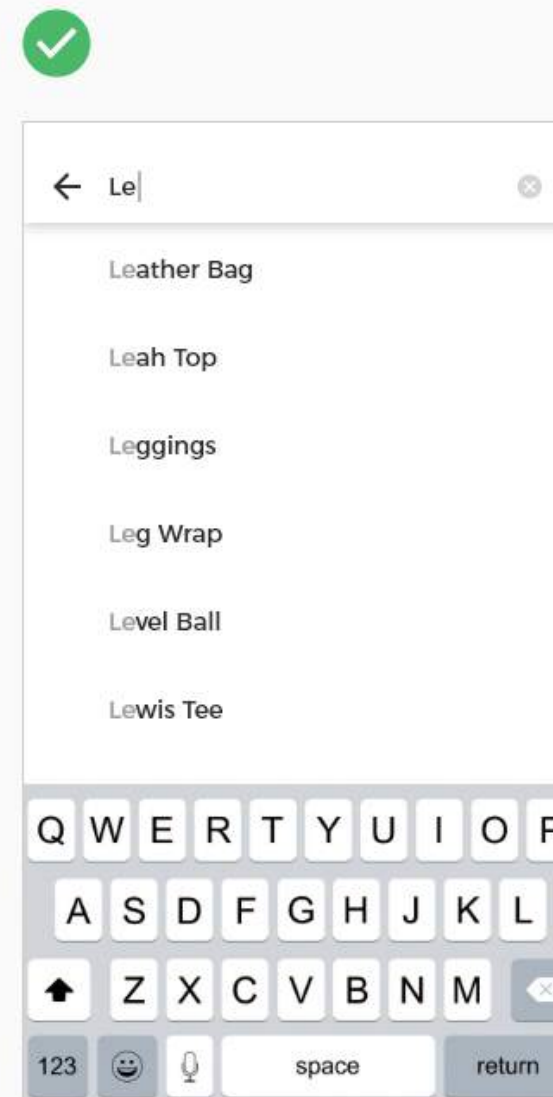
The search option is prominently displayed on the top menu, making it accessible from all screens.

4. Show relevant search results

Users typically prefer using product search to browsing, especially on smaller screens. Effective and useful search is essential for users to find the product they need. Providing a high quality search indexing saves users' time in completing the search process and drive them towards conversion.



Poor product search indexing gives users irrelevant search results.



Helpful indexing gets users more targeted and efficient search results.

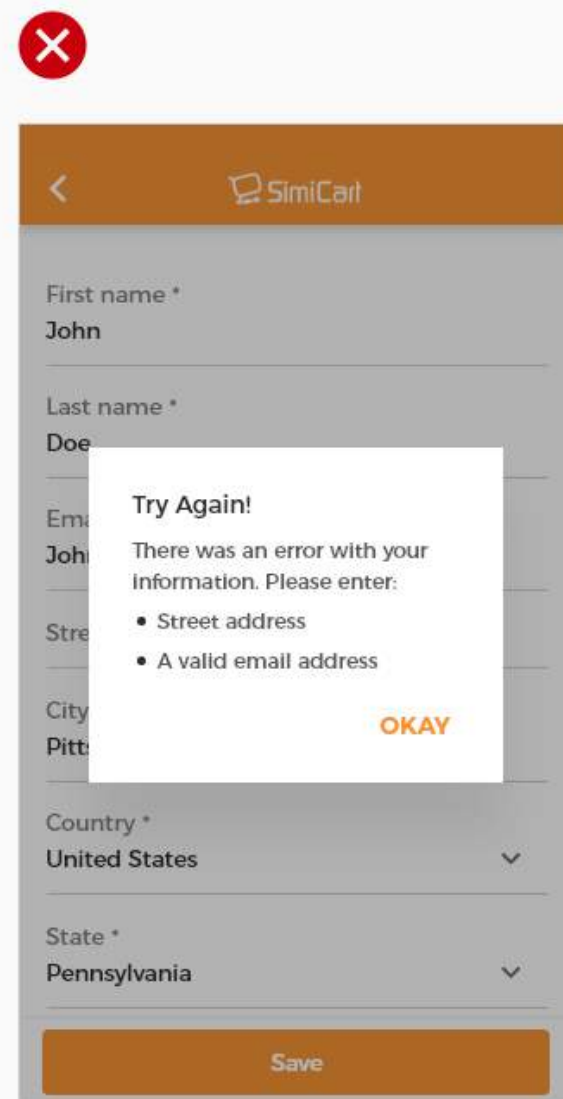
Form Entry

As mobile shoppers have particularly short attention span, complex and time-consuming form entry can cause them to abandon the checkout flow. To avoid this, make sure the form entry process is as easy and painless as possible.



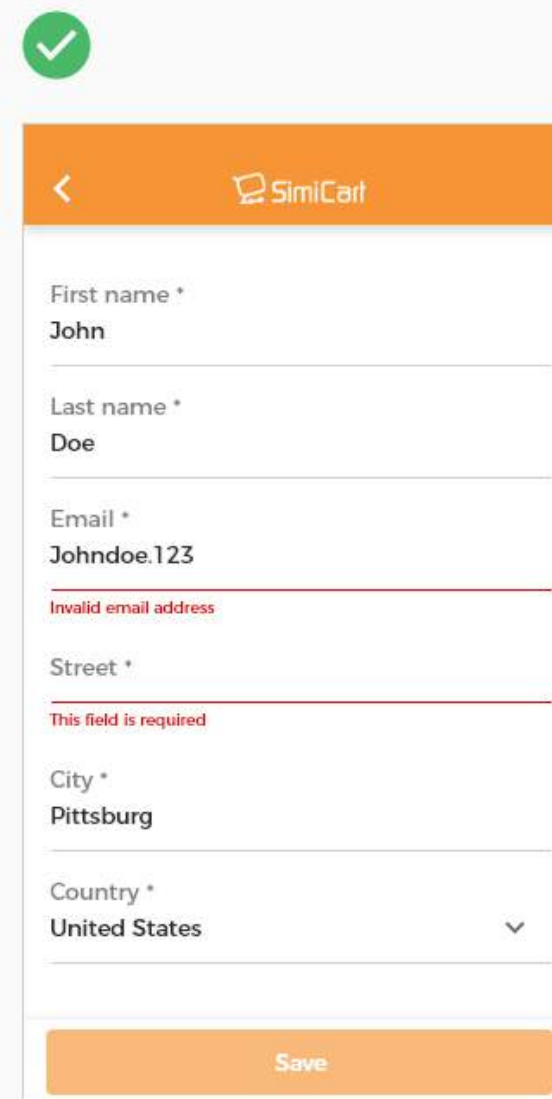
5. Communicate form errors in real time

Form errors are inevitable as they are a natural part of user data input. The key question then is how to make it easy for users to resolve those form errors. Users can get frustrated when going through the entire form entry process only to find out upon submission that they have made an error. This can be eliminated with a real-time data validation, as users filling out the form. Once information is entered, automatically validate and inform users if there is any error. With properly implemented inline validation, the form allows users to locate errors and fix them quickly.



The image shows a mobile app interface for 'SimiCart' with a brown header. The form contains fields for First name (John), Last name (Doe), Email (John), Street, City (Pitt), Country (United States), and State (Pennsylvania). A modal dialog box is displayed in the center with a red 'X' icon, titled 'Try Again!', containing the text 'There was an error with your information. Please enter:' and a bulleted list: '• Street address' and '• A valid email address'. An 'OKAY' button is at the bottom right of the modal. A 'Save' button is at the bottom of the form. A red bar is at the very bottom of the screen.

Form inputs are not validated until they are submitted.

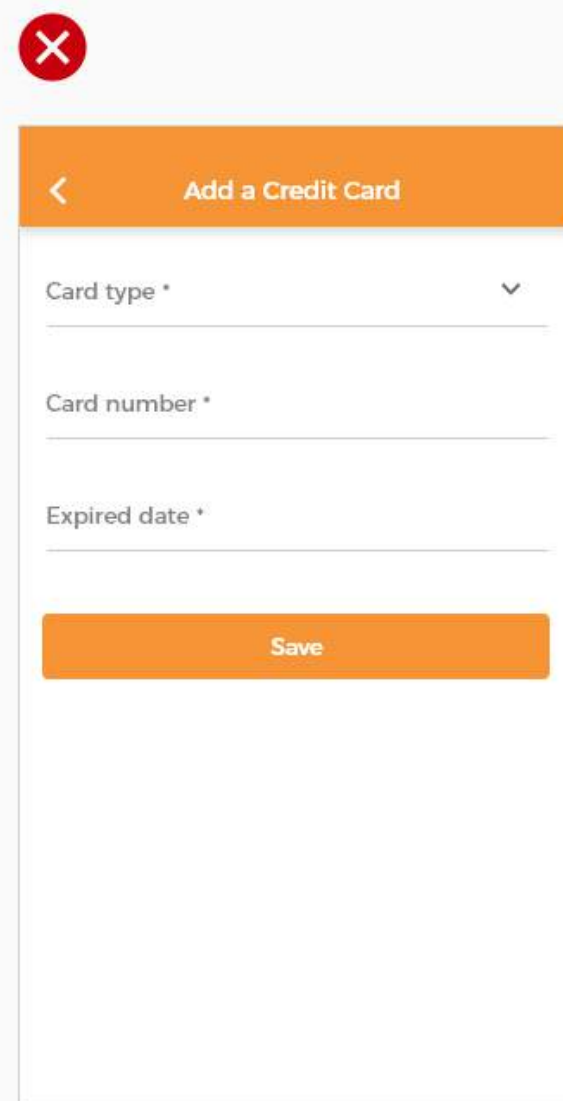


The image shows the same 'SimiCart' app interface but with real-time validation. A green checkmark icon is in the top left. The email field 'Johndoe.123' has a red underline and the text 'Invalid email address' below it. The street field is empty with a red underline and the text 'This field is required' below it. The 'Save' button is orange. A green bar is at the very bottom of the screen.

As users progress through the form, their data input is validated in real time.

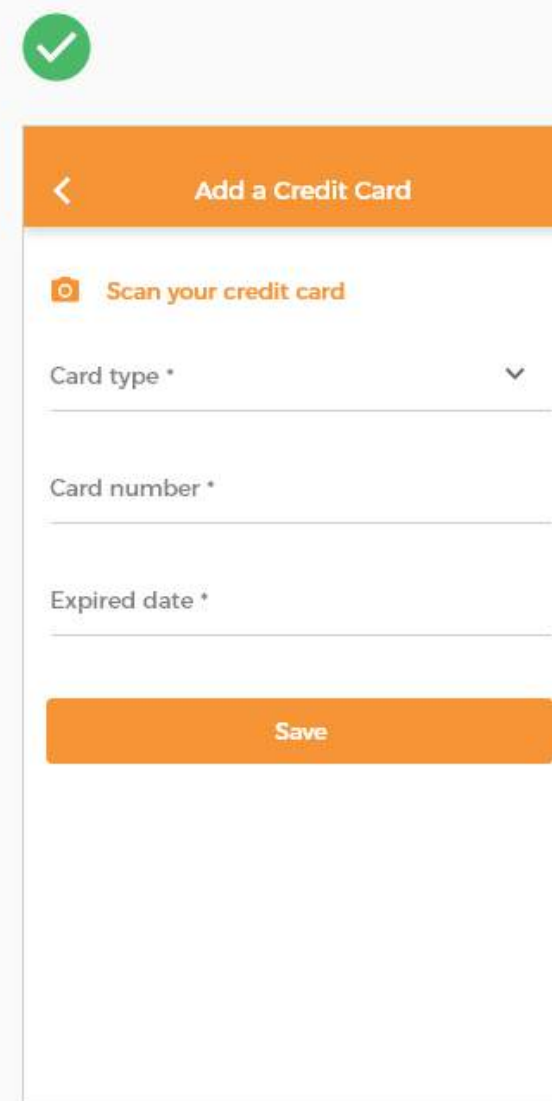
6. Allow users to scan card and auto-fill card information

Entering credit card number for online payments is not the most enjoyable experience, particularly on a small phone keyboard. To minimize errors from keying the digits manually and save users' time and effort, make use of device capabilities such as the camera to collect credit card details. With an option to scan the credit card with their mobile devices, users can have card information automatically filled in the form and make online payments more easily.



A mobile app interface for adding a credit card. At the top, there is a red circle with a white 'X' icon. Below it is an orange header bar with a back arrow and the text 'Add a Credit Card'. The form contains three input fields: 'Card type *' with a dropdown arrow, 'Card number *', and 'Expired date *'. At the bottom is an orange 'Save' button.

Users are required to manually type in card information, which potentially causes input errors.



A mobile app interface for adding a credit card. At the top, there is a green circle with a white checkmark icon. Below it is an orange header bar with a back arrow and the text 'Add a Credit Card'. The form starts with a camera icon and the text 'Scan your credit card'. Below this are three input fields: 'Card type *' with a dropdown arrow, 'Card number *', and 'Expired date *'. At the bottom is an orange 'Save' button.

Users can proceed quickly by scanning credit card and auto-filling information.

7. Allow users to auto-fill address using location

Filling out long checkout form on mobile devices can be slow and frustrating, which potentially leads to user drop-off and cart abandonment. To make things easier for users, device location can be utilized to speed up the process by automatically filling in the address fields. With device location enabled in app, users allow the app to detect their current location and complete the checkout form much faster. Optimizing the checkout form with address autofill help reduce abandonment rate and improve.

<

SimiCart

First name *

Last name *

Email *

Street *

City *

Country *

▼

State *

▼

Save

Filling out a long checkout form is time-consuming, which is a barrier to conversion.

<

SimiCart

☒ Use location to check out faster

First name *

Last name *

Email *

Street *

4171 Stiles Street

City *

Pittsburgh

Country *

United States

▼

State *

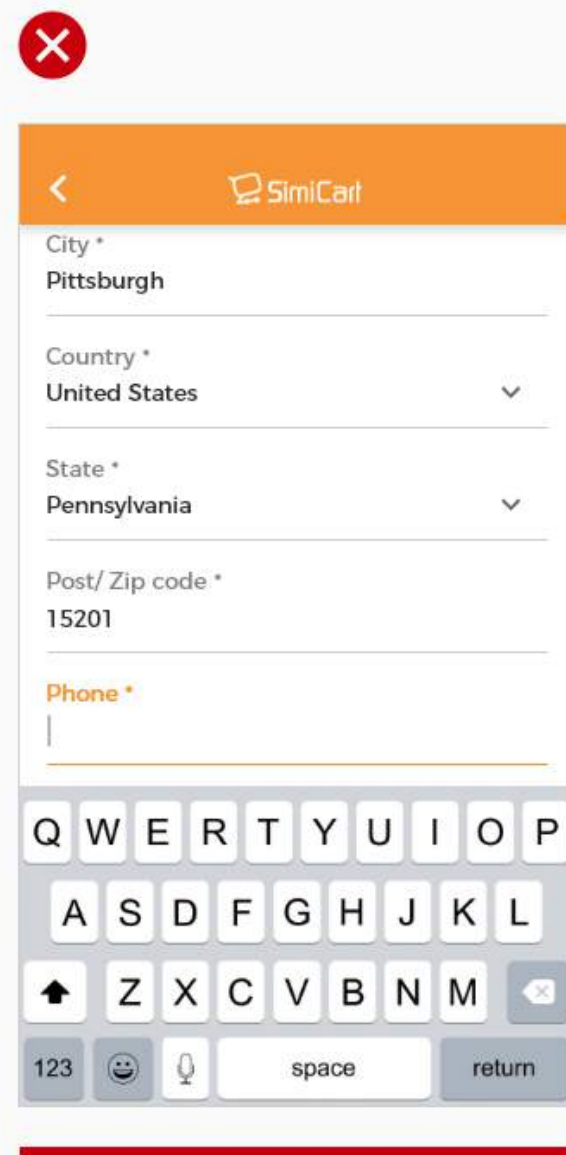
▼

Save

The option to auto-fill multiple address fields using location is available to boost efficiency.

8. Match the keyboard with required text inputs

Make sure that form entry is user-friendly by matching the keyboard with required text inputs. For form fields that require numeric entry like phone, postal code,.. users should automatically be provided with a number keyboard, instead of a conventional keyboard. Forms that are able to interpret multiple input formats and adapt to how users enter the information help them proceed through checkout faster with less effort.



City *

Pittsburgh

Country *

United States

State *

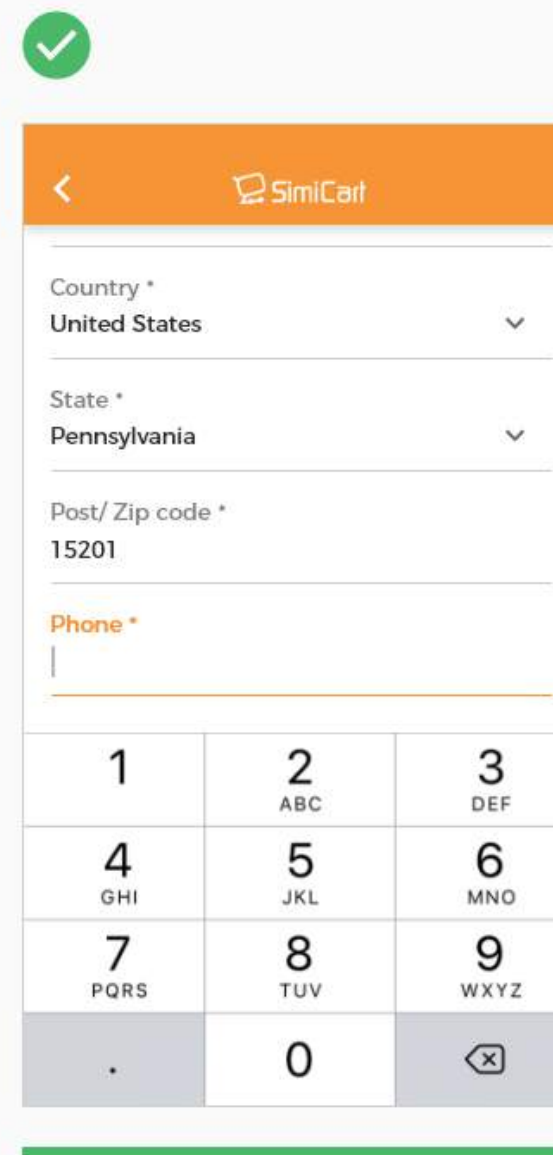
Pennsylvania

Post/ Zip code *

15201

Phone *

It takes an extra step for users to switch to number keyboard to key in their phone numbers.



Country *

United States

State *

Pennsylvania

Post/ Zip code *

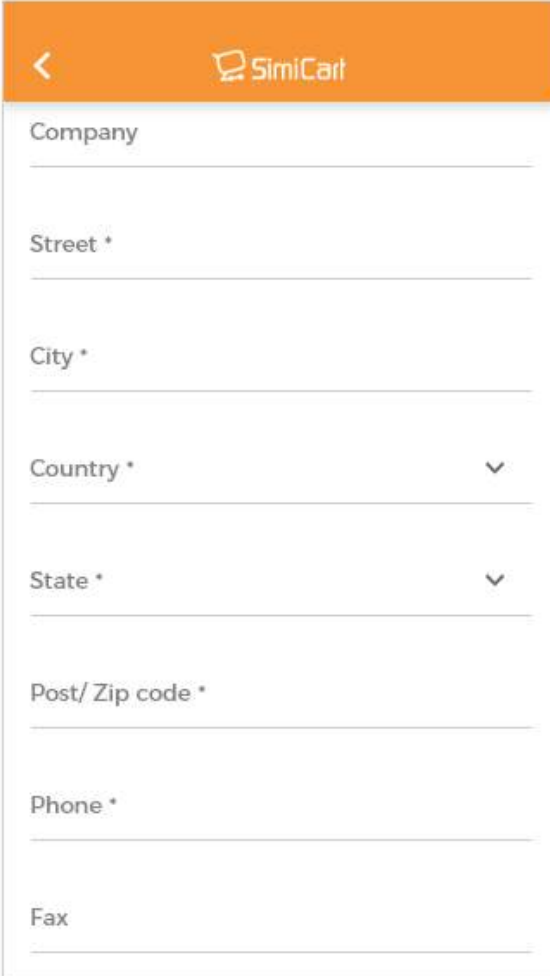

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Phone *

For fields that require numeric inputs like phone, automatically provide users with a number keyboard.

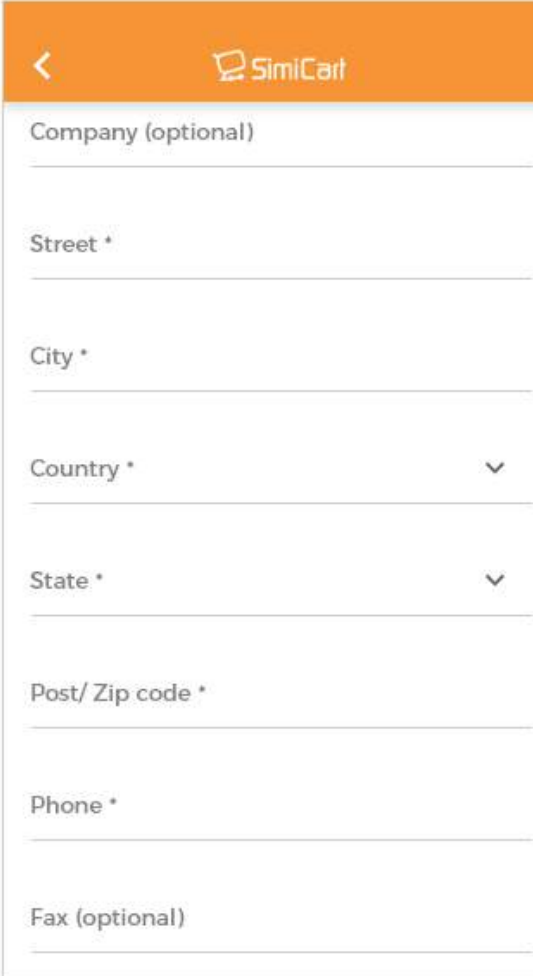

9. Mark both required and optional form fields

For a long checkout form, failing to explicitly mark both required and optional fields can lead to unnecessary validation errors, user confusion over which fields they must complete, a slower checkout process, and even cart abandonments. When a field is unmarked some users will have to guess to figure out whether an unmarked field is required or optional. This is especially problematic on mobile, where users have little page overview.



A mobile checkout form for 'SimiCart' with an orange header. The form contains the following fields: 'Company' (unmarked), 'Street *' (marked required), 'City *' (marked required), 'Country *' (marked required with a dropdown arrow), 'State *' (marked required with a dropdown arrow), 'Post/ Zip code *' (marked required), 'Phone *' (marked required), and 'Fax' (unmarked). A red bar is at the bottom.

Users who assume a fax number is required, and who don't have one, may abandon, assuming they can't complete the checkout.

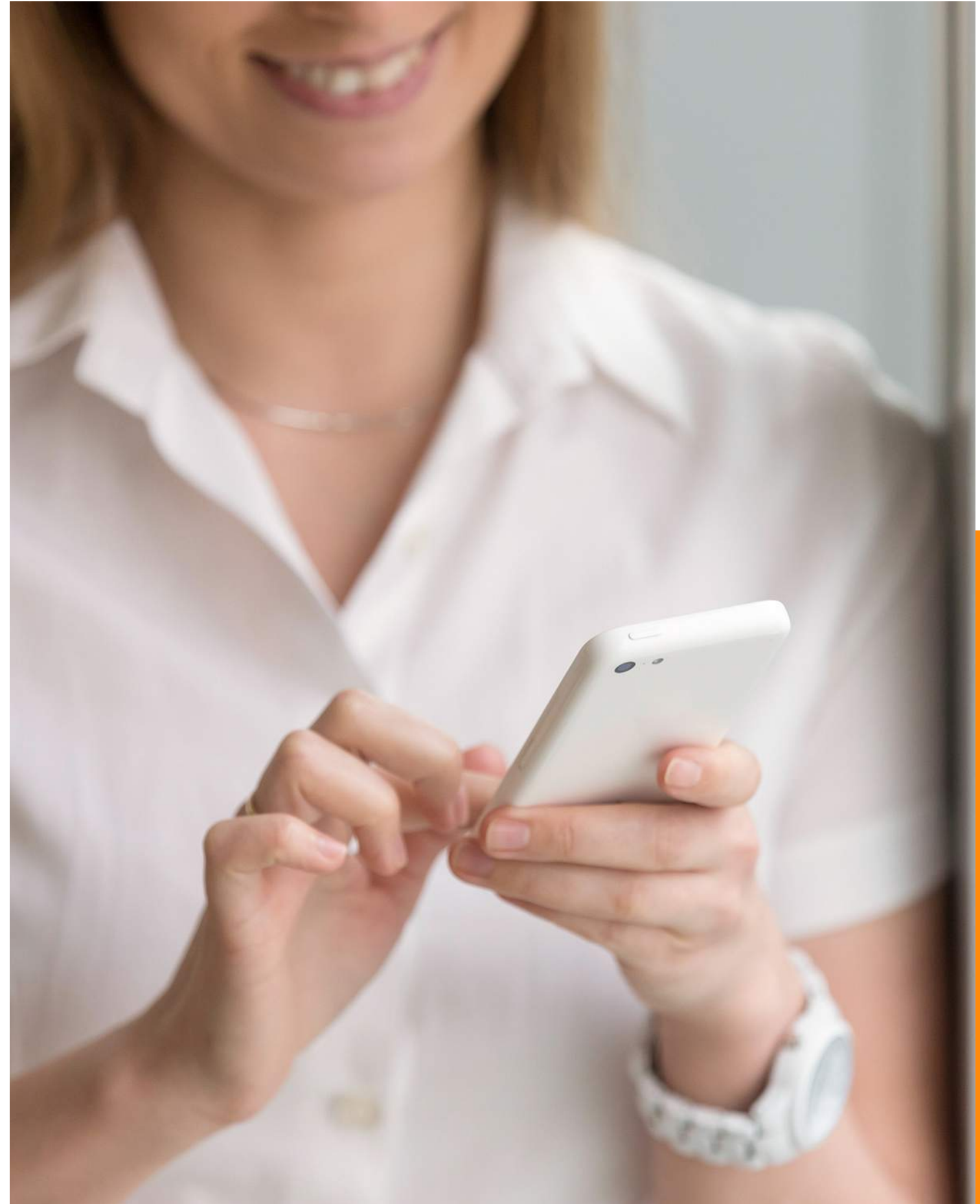


A mobile checkout form for 'SimiCart' with an orange header. The form contains the following fields: 'Company (optional)' (explicitly marked optional), 'Street *' (marked required), 'City *' (marked required), 'Country *' (marked required with a dropdown arrow), 'State *' (marked required with a dropdown arrow), 'Post/ Zip code *' (marked required), 'Phone *' (marked required), and 'Fax (optional)' (explicitly marked optional). A green bar is at the bottom.

Make it easy for users to determine which fields are required and which fields are optional by explicitly marking all of them.

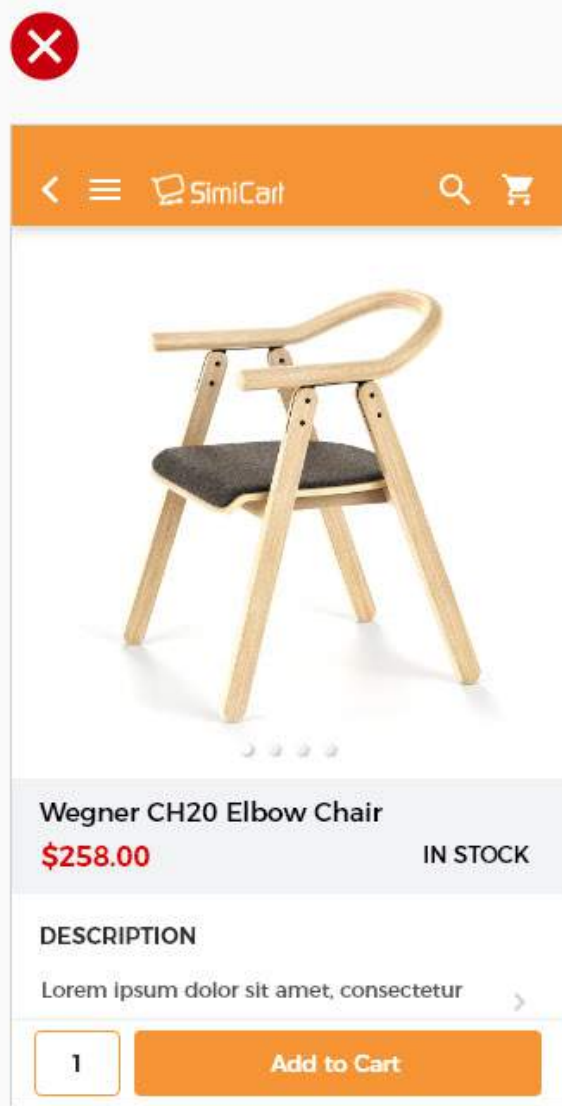
Product Catalog

The ability to access product information easily, including scanning product image, viewing product details, spotting special products and checking stock availability, is extremely important to mobile shoppers when making purchase decisions. Capture their purchase intent by present your in-app product catalog in the most delightful way to users.

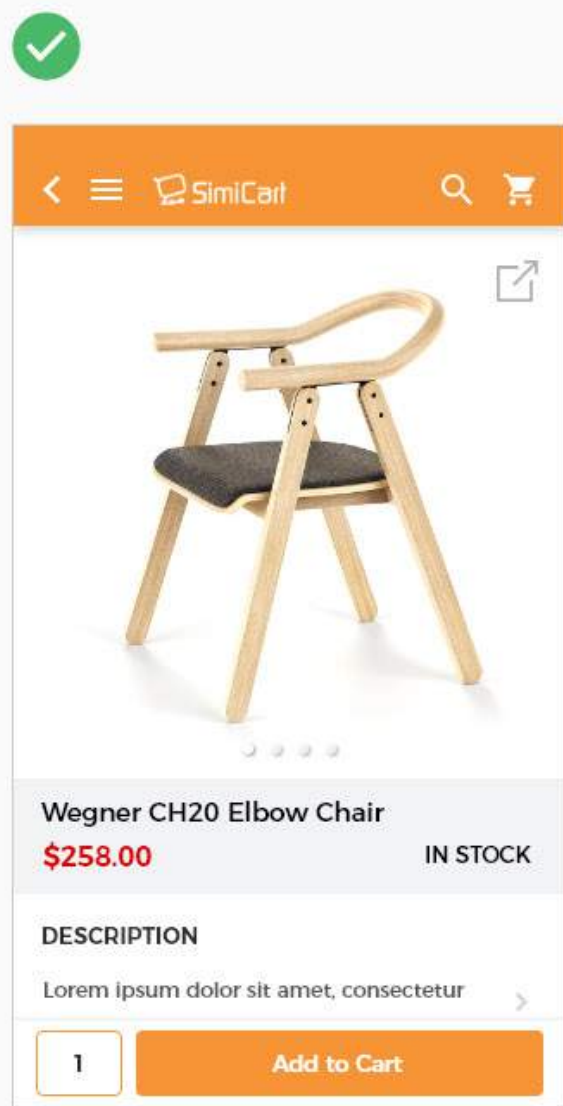


10. Allow users to zoom in product images

Product image is one of the most important elements on the product page. The ability to have a clear view of the product is critical for users to make product decision with confidence. Unlike desktop screens, viewing product image from a small mobile device can be a challenge for users. To help them get a better view, allow users to zoom in and out the product images with their preferred level of magnification.



There is no option for users to zoom in product images for a better view of the desired product.



Users can handily zoom in product image and control the level of magnification as they prefer.



11. Provide full product options

For products with multiple options, let users browse all available product variations and their current status: availability, sizes, color choices,.. Lack of information about product options may lead to confusion and frustration. The product detail page should be designed to make product variations clear and intuitive to understand.



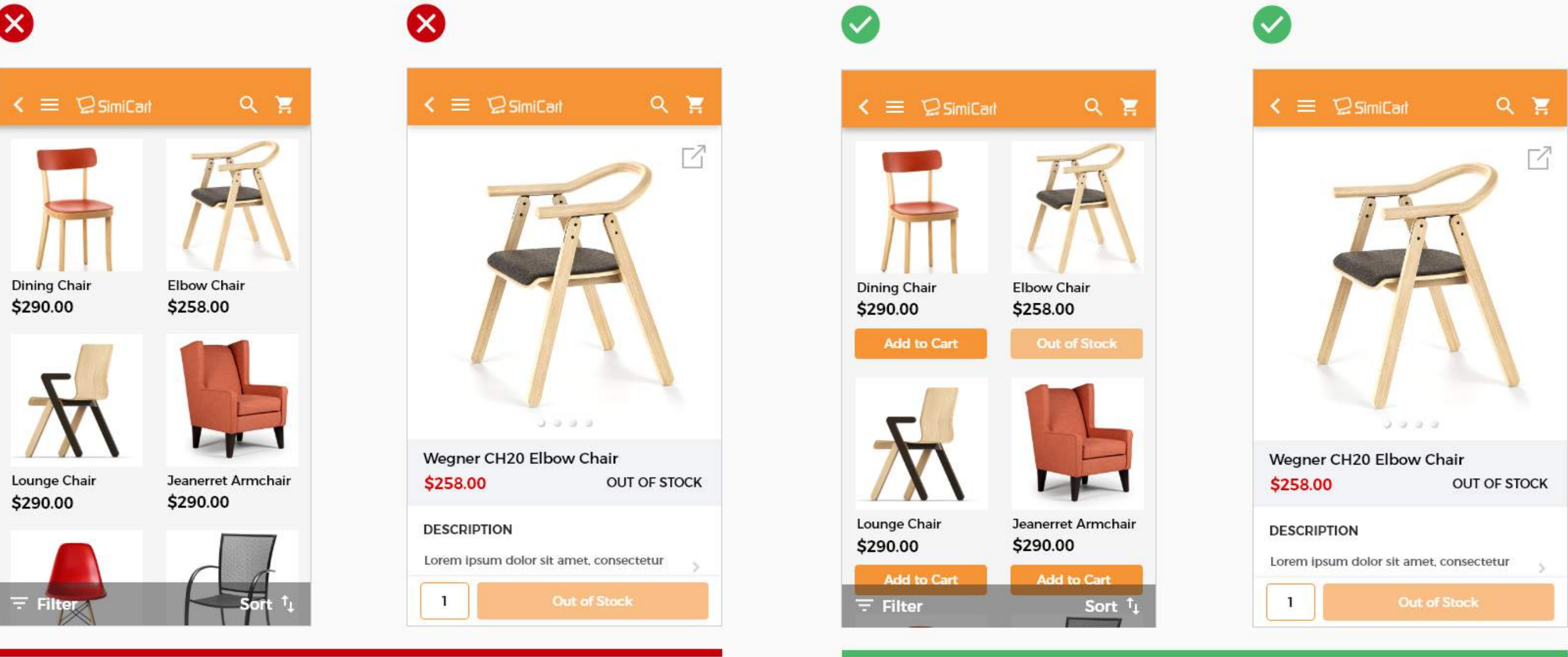
It's not clear to users if some options are ever available or just currently unavailable.



Allow users to quickly understand all product options, which of them are available or currently unavailable.

12. Show stock availability on product listings

Users appreciate it when the product listings enable them to learn about stock availability. They may get frustrated browsing through a long list of products just to find out that their desired item is out of stock. Once again, be sure to show stock availability on listings to avoid this disruptive experience. Customers will still be able to look at your wide range of product offerings while staying informed of its current availability.

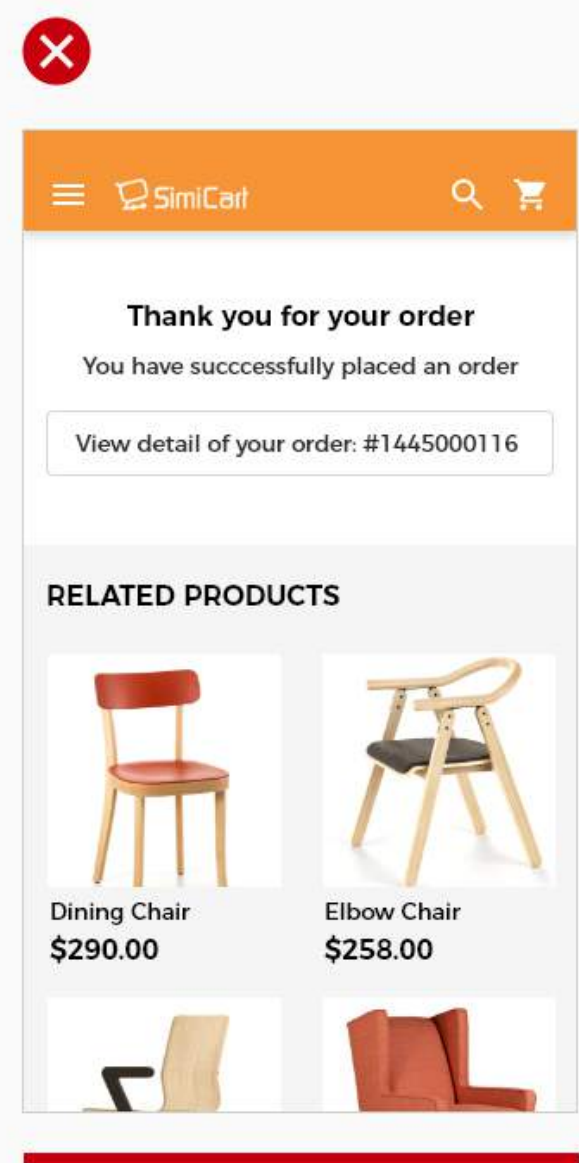


Users are not informed of product availability until they reach the product detail page.

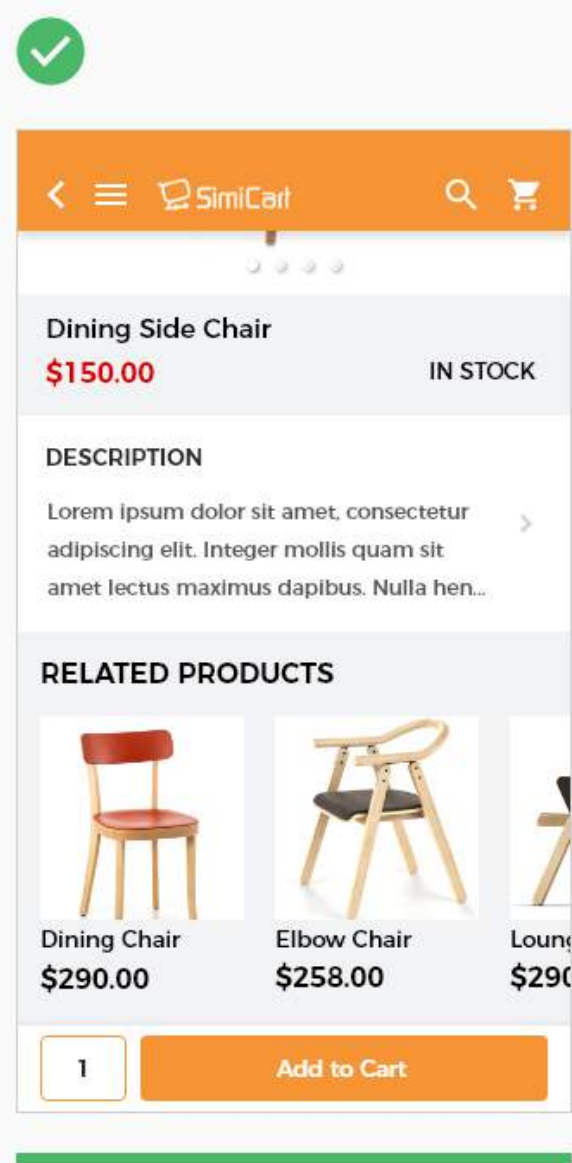
Product availability is shown upon product listings to ensure a smooth product exploring experience for users.

13. Show product recommendations prior to checkout

When users need product recommendations on alternatives or add-on items, they expect the app to surface related products before they reach checkout. The best way to achieve that is to show product recommendations on product page, in the cart or relevant pages prior to check out.



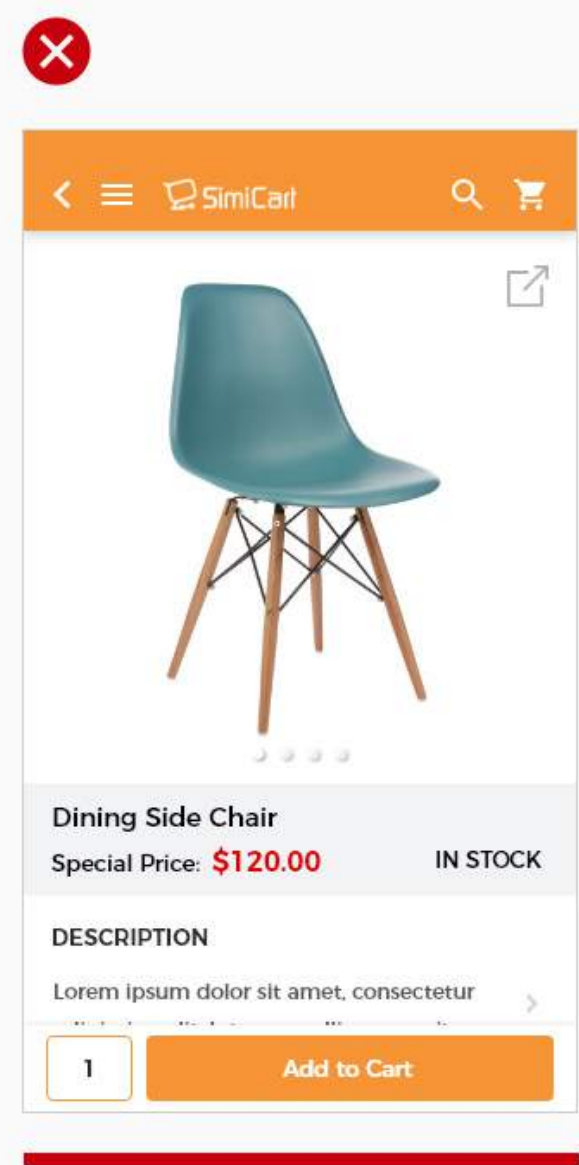
Product recommendations are provided after the purchase is complete, which is ineffective to users.



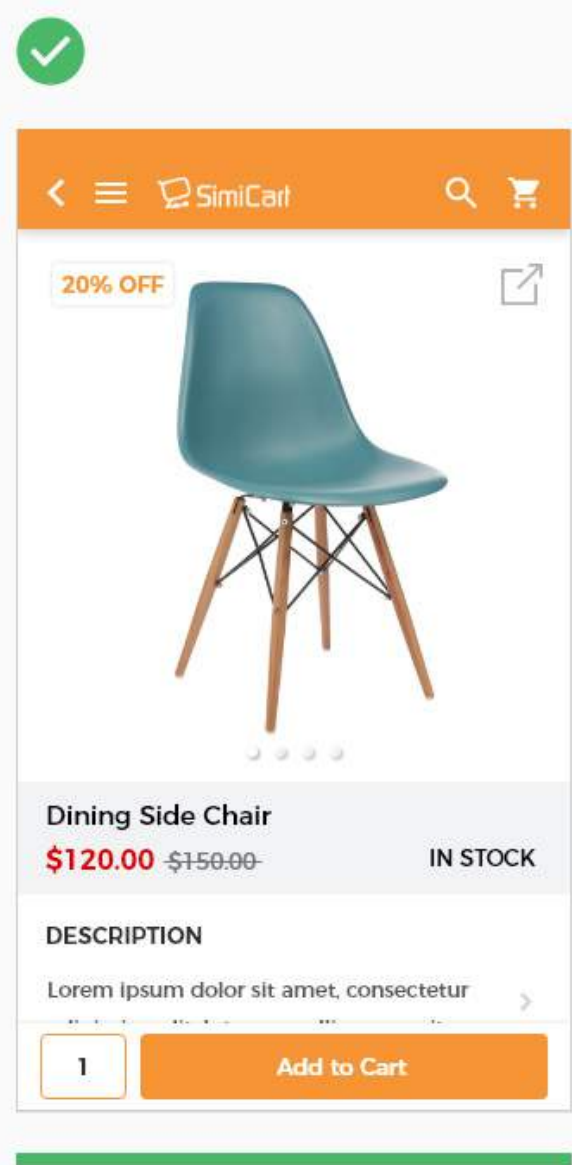
Product recommendations provided before users reach checkout help guide better purchase decision for users.

14. Show both regular / special price and percent discount

Make the most of your promotions by showing users how much they'll save on a discounted product. Both regular and special prices should be displayed as a comparison. Labeling your products with percent discount is a great way to catch users' attention.



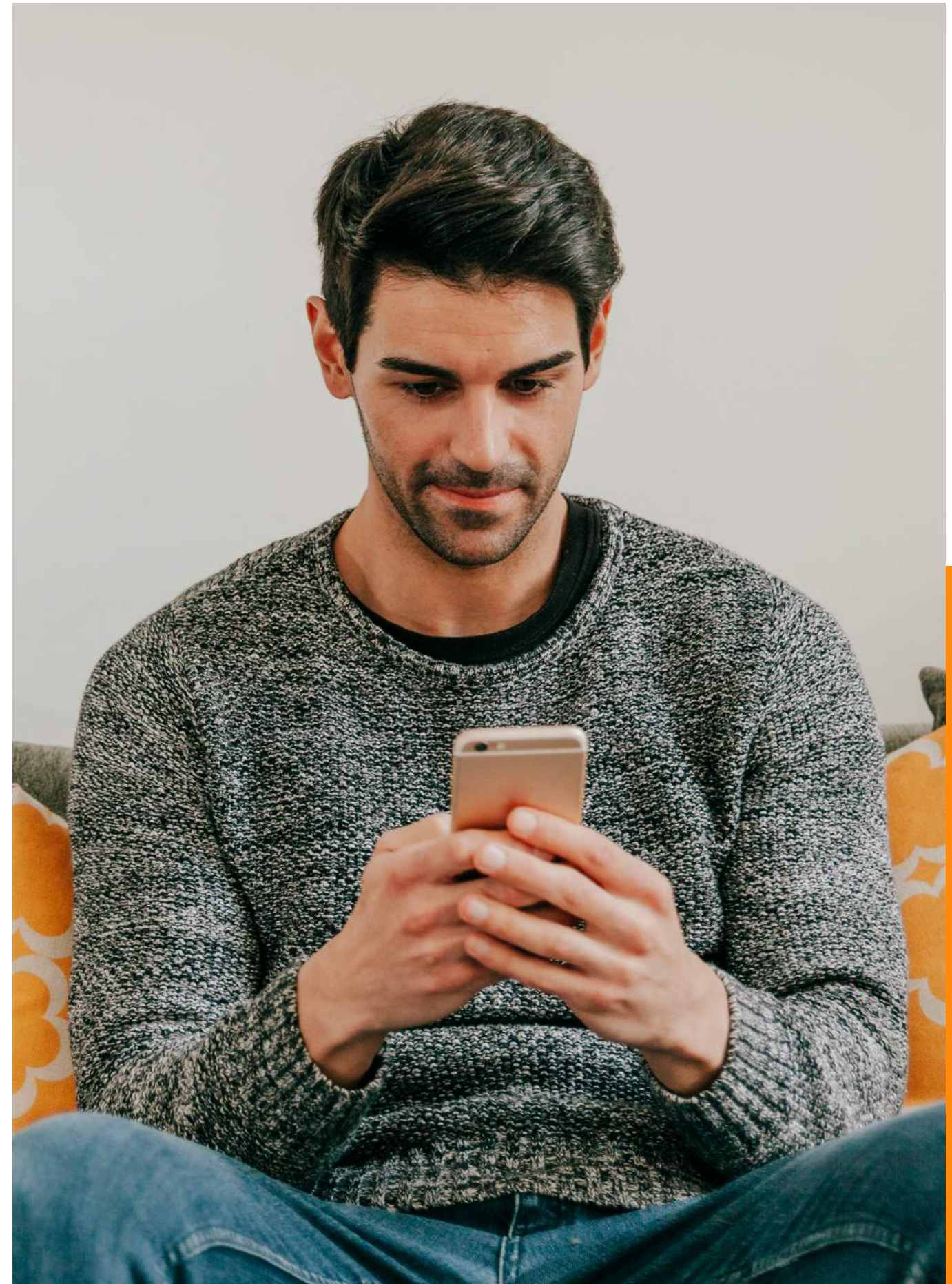
Users are unclear of the discount as the original price is not showing.



Original and new prices, as well as discount percent, are all displayed to show users how much they'll save.

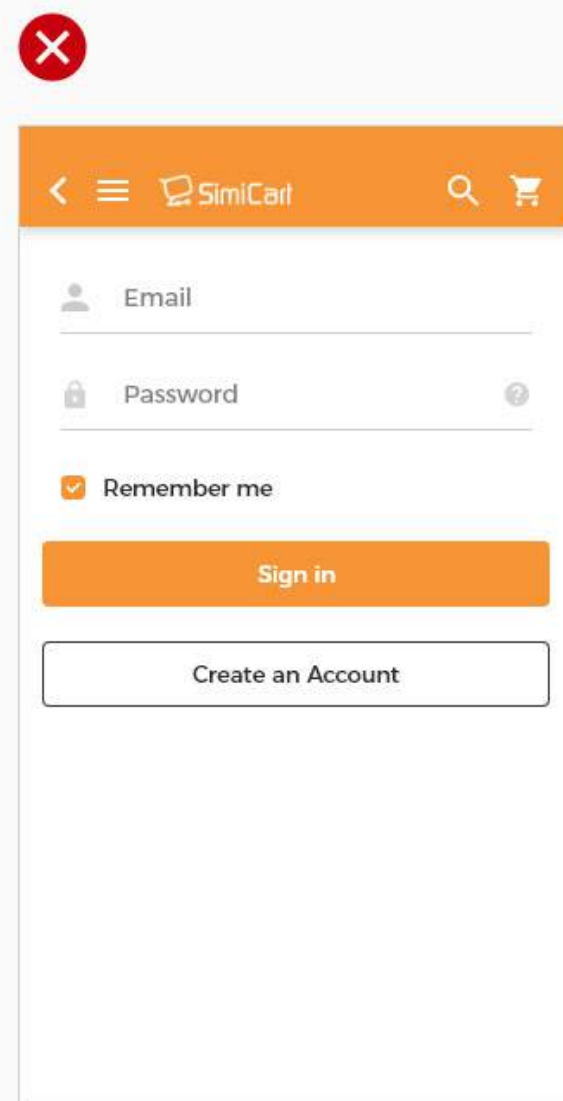
Customer Account

Growing customer base is one of the top priorities for most businesses. By encouraging mobile shoppers to create a customer account, your brand can deepen customer engagement and conversion opportunities while taking a step further in nurture long-term customer relationships.

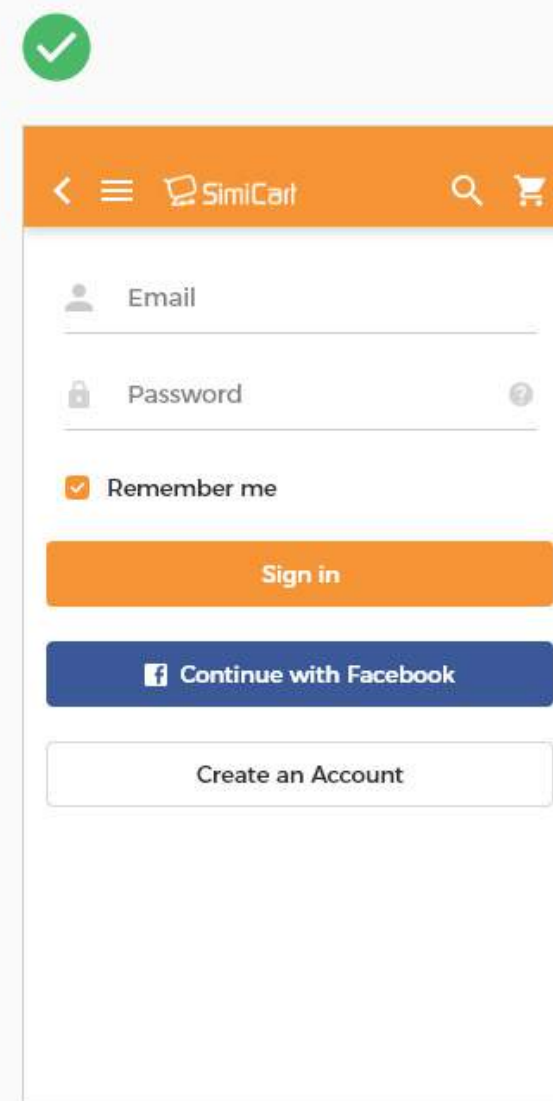


15. Enable fast login using social accounts

Most users are bothered by having to create new accounts. Some of them would rather leave the app rather than complete registrations. In this case, providing a quick option to login via social accounts is a good solution. Third party login simplifies the account registration experience for users, which minimizes the number of steps required to create an account and enable one-click login to the app. Adopting a fast login method helps reduce the risk of abandonment and increase usability for the app.



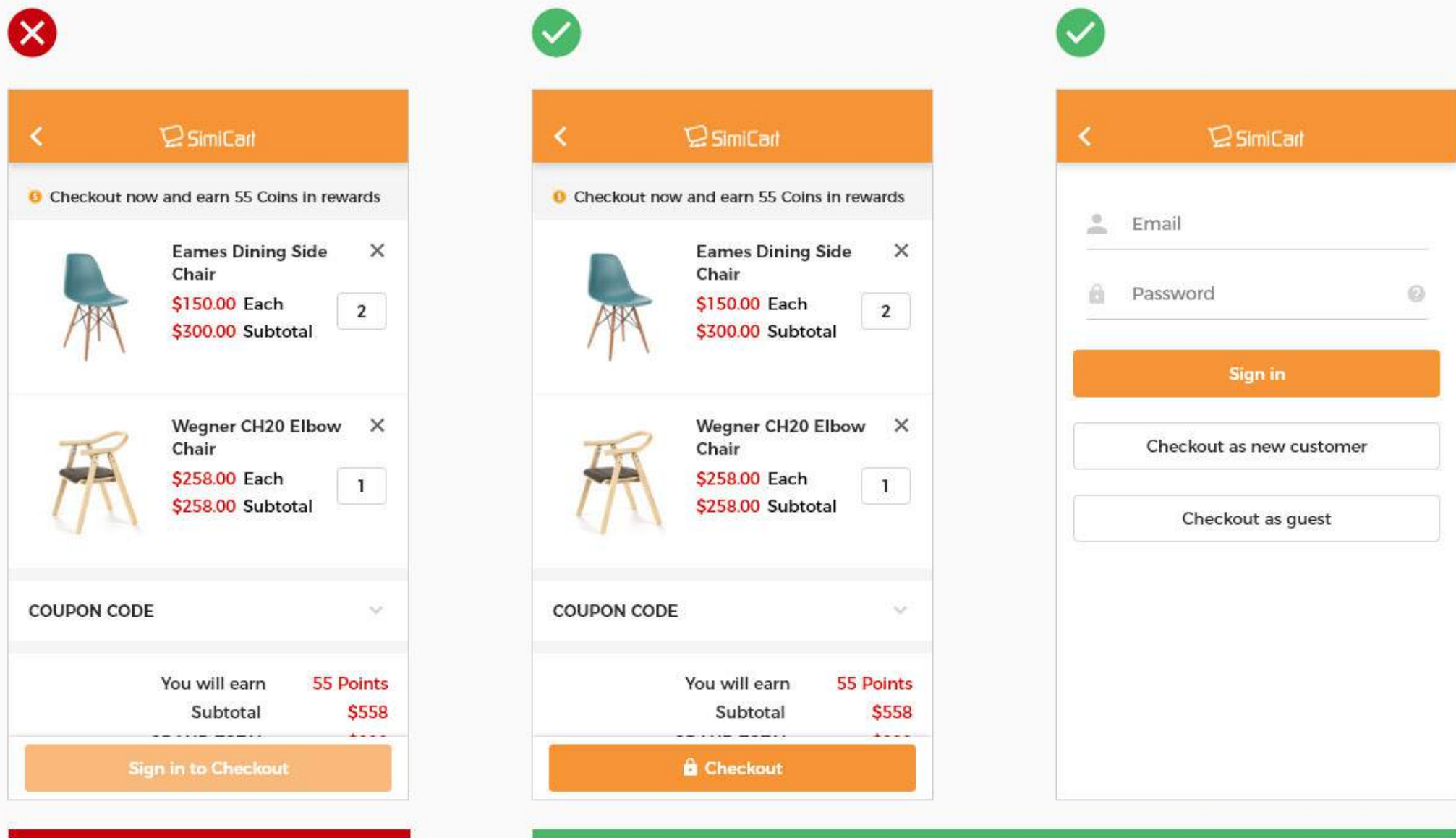
With limited login options, users have to recall username and password, which takes more time and potentially causes errors.



Offer a fast social login option to make account authentication a seamless experience.

16. Allow users to checkout as guest

For users making their first purchase, they may expect a convenient way to quickly checkout, which does not require them to create an account in order to complete a purchase. Forcing users to register at the start of the experience can annoy them or drive them away. A common solution is to provide guest checkout at the point of conversion. Prompt customers to sign in to save purchasing information for more efficient future experience while offering an option to checkout as guest and sign up later.

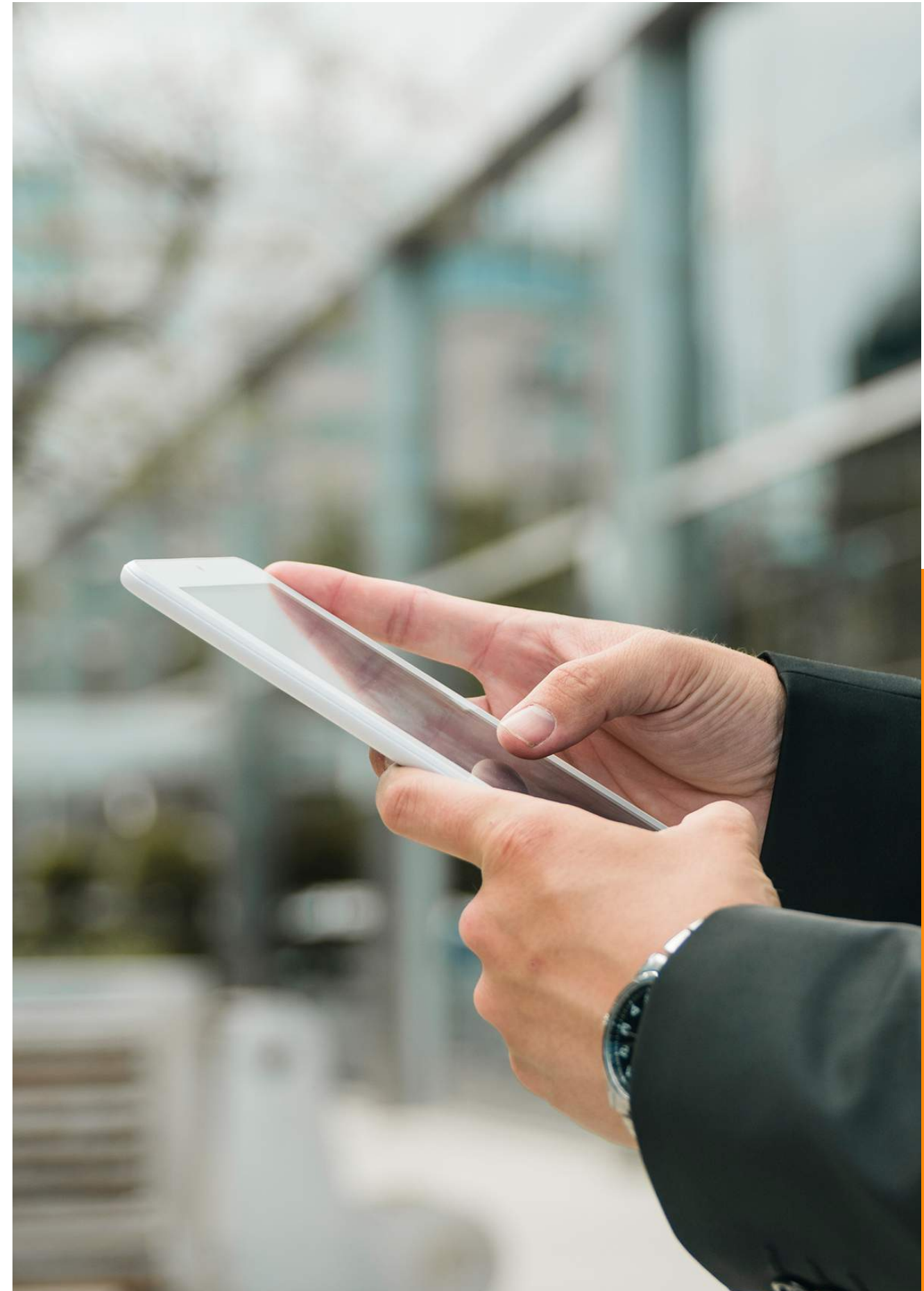


Users are forced to sign in or create an account to checkout, which can be a barrier to conversion.

Prompt customers to sign in to checkout while providing an option to checkout as guest and sign up after completing checkout.

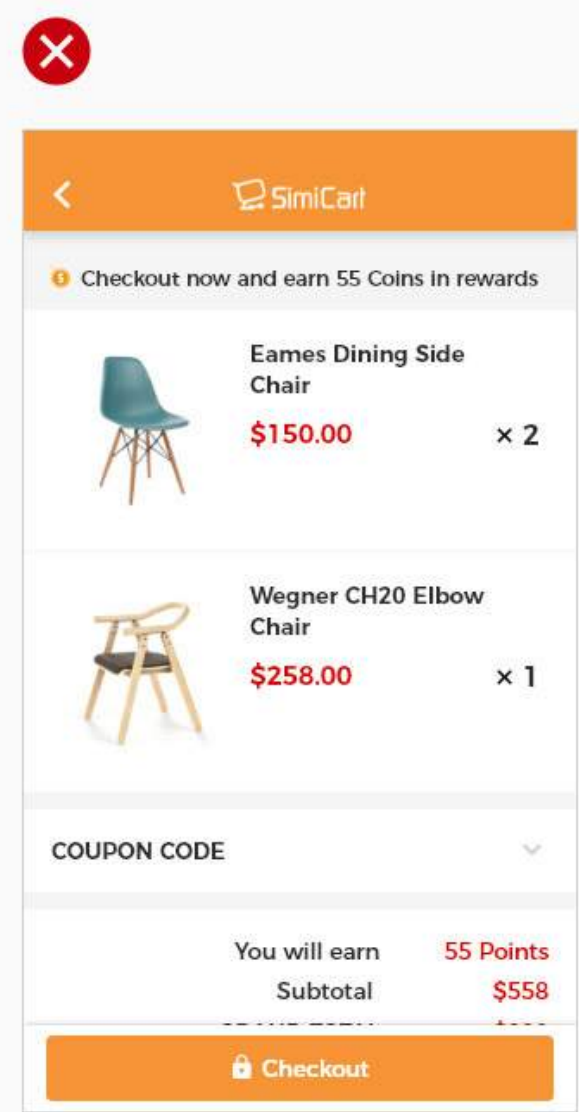
Shopping Cart

Cart abandonment remains the no.1 problem for online retailers. A high cart abandonment rate signals a poor user experience, especially on mobile. Optimizing mobile cart page is among the core areas of focus for most brands to resolve this issue and maximize mobile revenue.

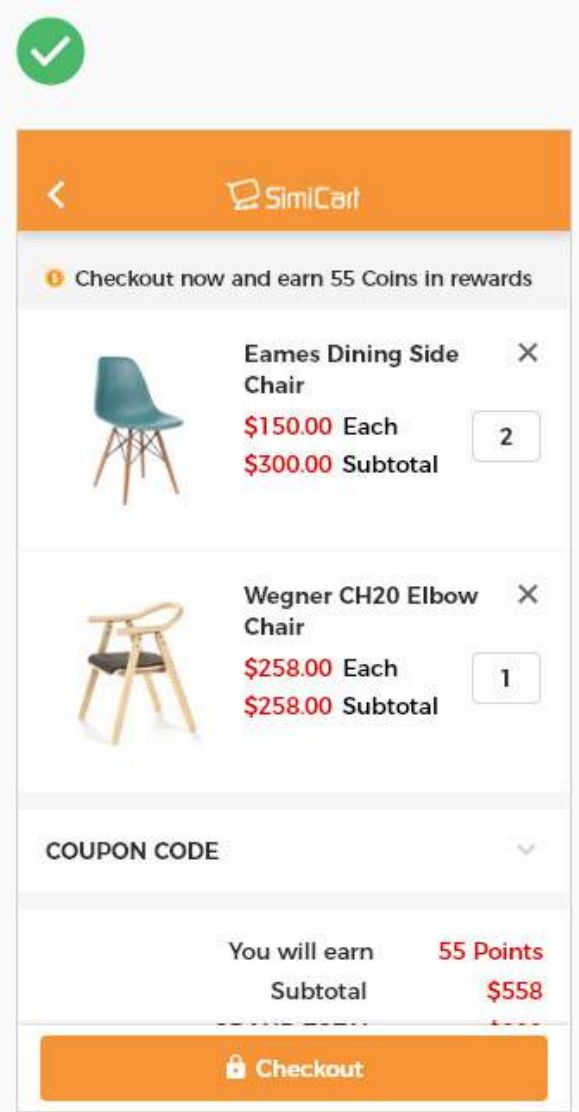


17. Allow users to edit cart items

The ability to edit items directly from the cart is critical for users at the point of conversion. Allow users to easily and efficiently change quantities, delete cart items so they don't have to go back in the purchasing flow to adjust items to their preference.



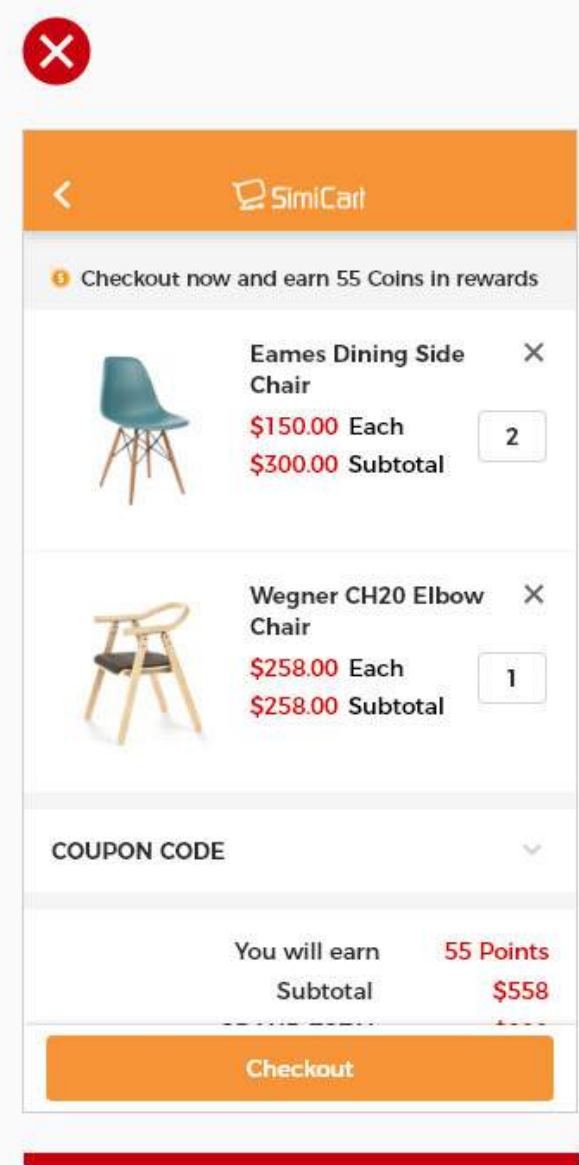
Users become frustrated if they can not adjust the item quantity while reviewing order details.



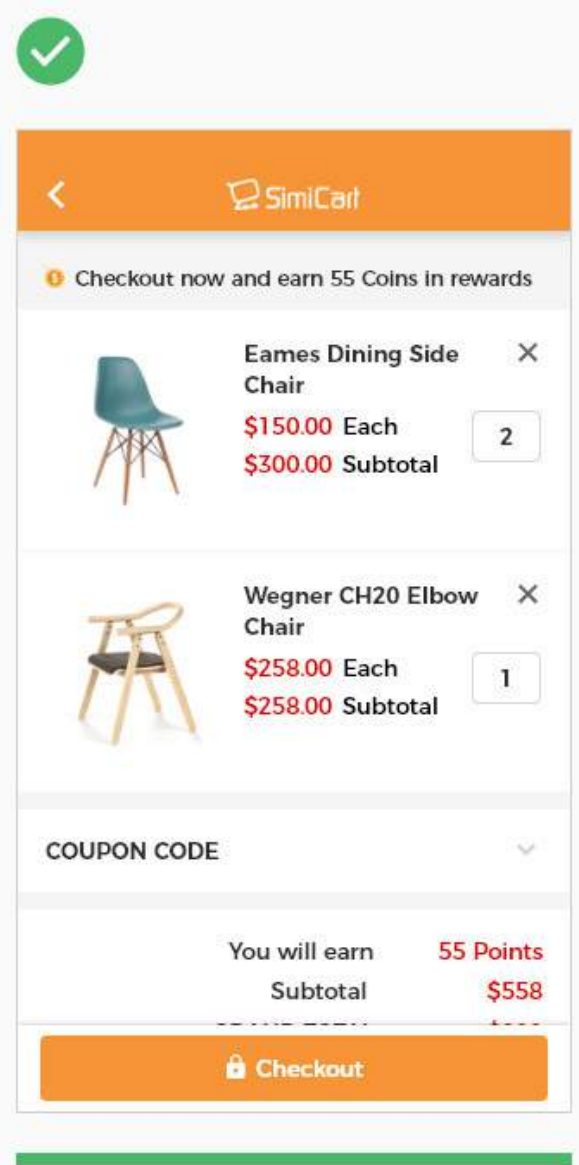
Users can make corrections easily from the cart using quantity selector or delete unwanted items.

18. Show users checkout is secured

Security is among the top concerns for online shoppers - especially when it comes to sharing their personal information and financial credentials during the checkout process. Ensure that the app follow modern data security measures and visually reassure the users that their information will be transmitted securely. Add a security icon to the checkout button is a great way to give users more confidence to proceed.



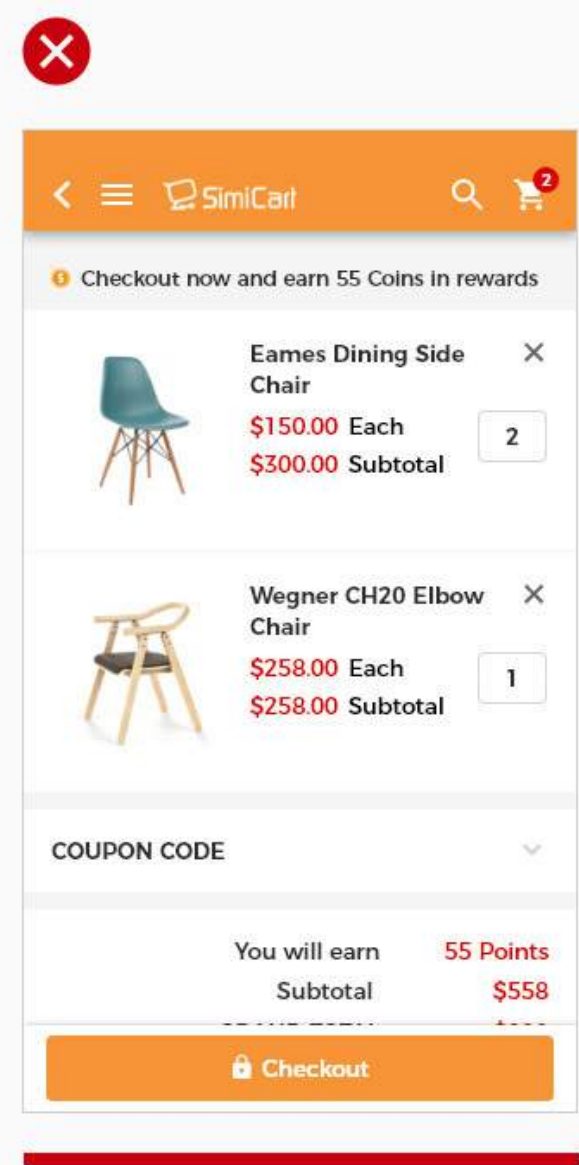
There is no visual security indicator to show that in-app transactions are secure.



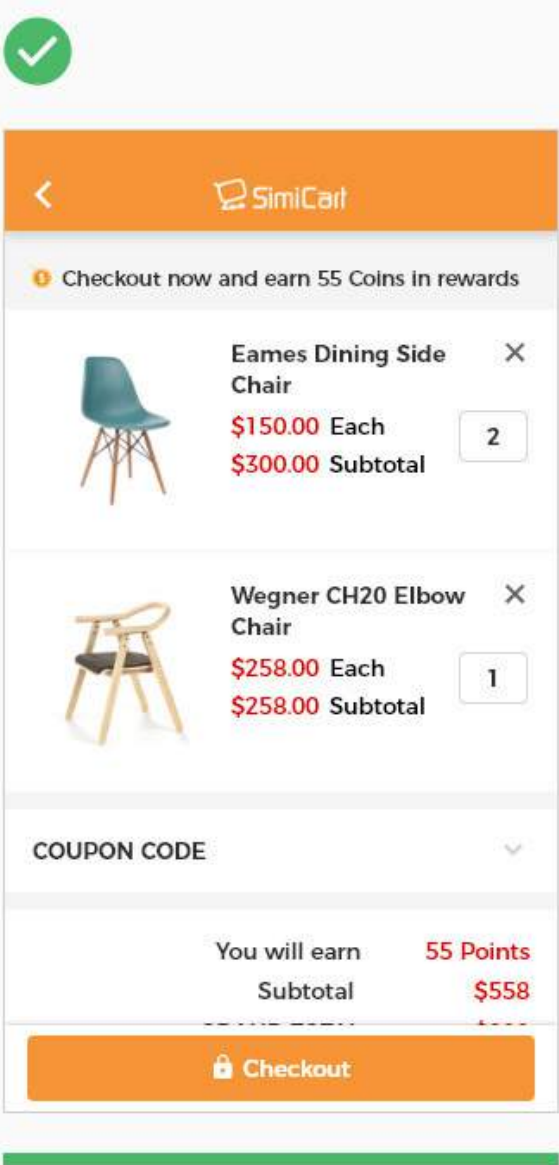
The presence of a security icon provides assurance that the app protect users' privacy.

19. Simplify the cart page header

The more distracted a shopper is during checkout, the less likely they are to complete checkout. To eliminate unnecessary distractions from checkout, minimizing the number of elements in the cart header can increase the likelihood of completed purchases. Simplifying the cart header is the key to create the easiest path for user to either proceed to checkout or continue shopping. Remove all elements not directly related to the checkout process or continue shopping experience to create a simplified view.



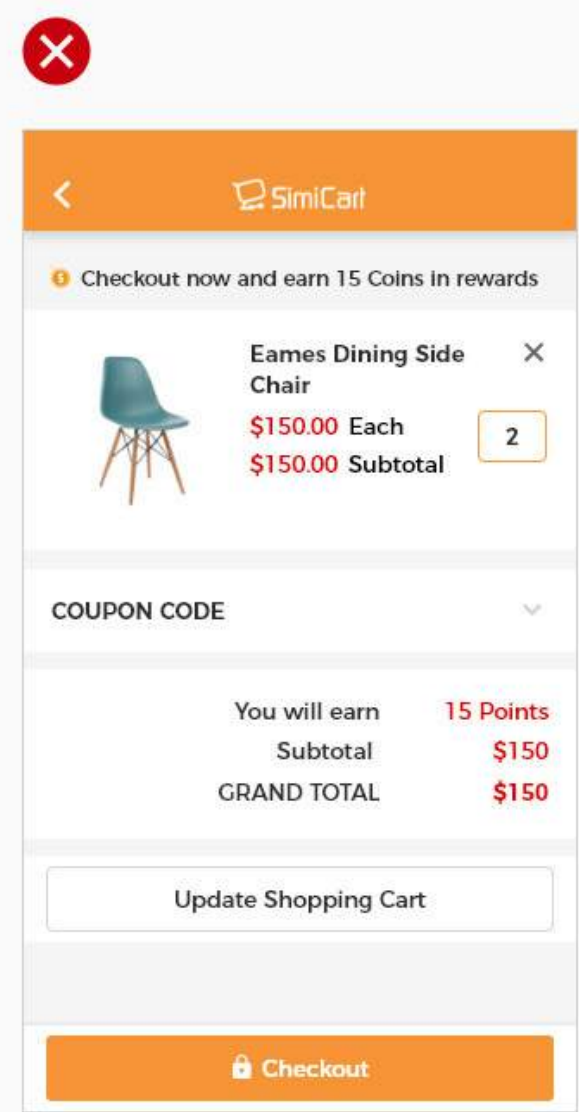
Multiple items in the cart header can create unnecessary distractions during checkout.



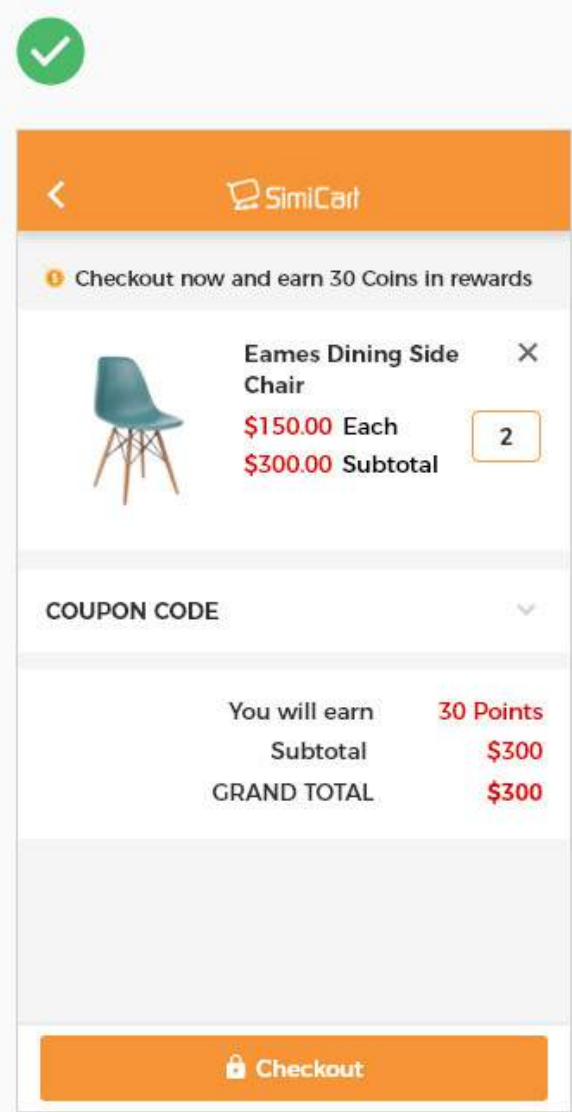
A simplified cart header keep users focused towards checkout path or quickly go back to shopping.

20. Enable cart auto-update

A growing number of ecommerce stores has implemented automatic cart update to reduce the manual steps users have to take as they make changes to the cart. Automatically updating cart items help providing real-time feedback to the users at all times. The improvement in cart update can elevate the shopping experience and ultimately increase conversion and sales.



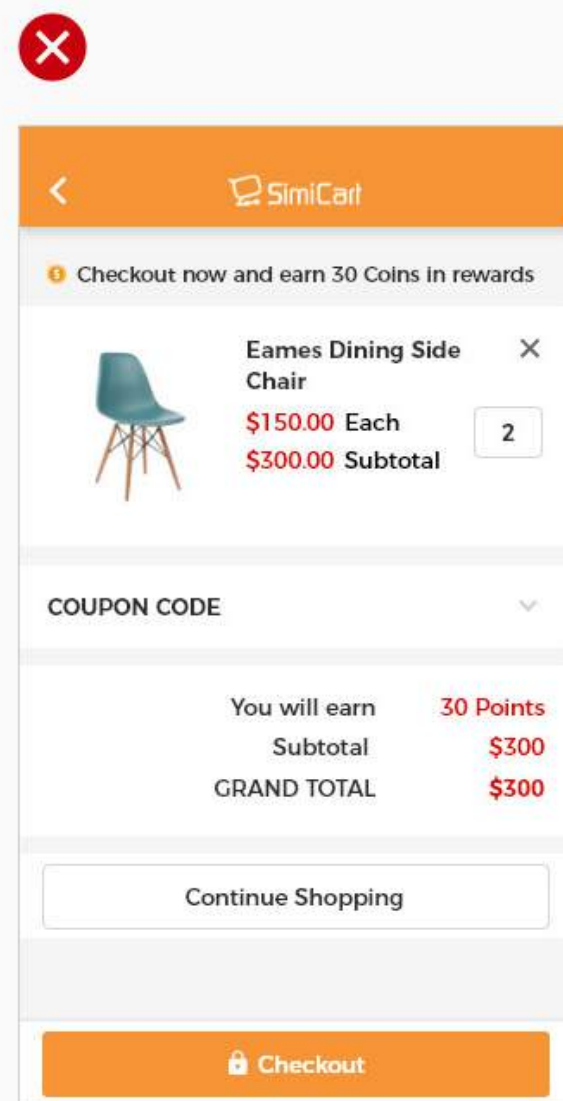
Users have to hit the update shopping cart button every time they make a change to the cart items.



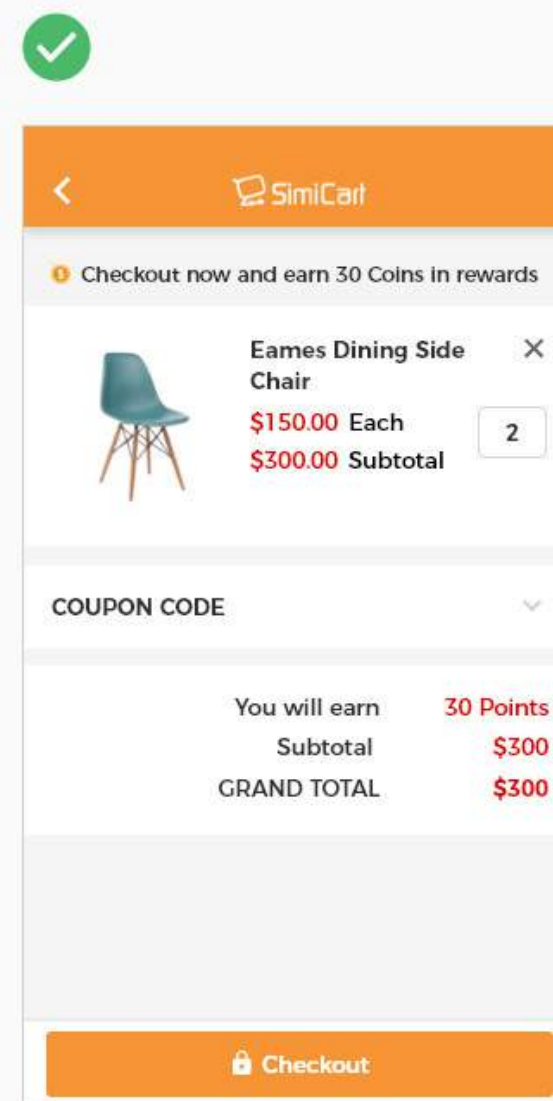
Automatically refresh cart grand total when users change the quantity of items in their cart.

21. Remove continue shopping button from the cart page

Often displayed near the critical call to action on the cart page, the continue shopping button takes up valuable space on the small mobile screen. More importantly, the button directs users away from the checkout funnel. Remove the continue shopping button from the cart page can be a good solution to reduce distractions for the users and nudge them to checkout.



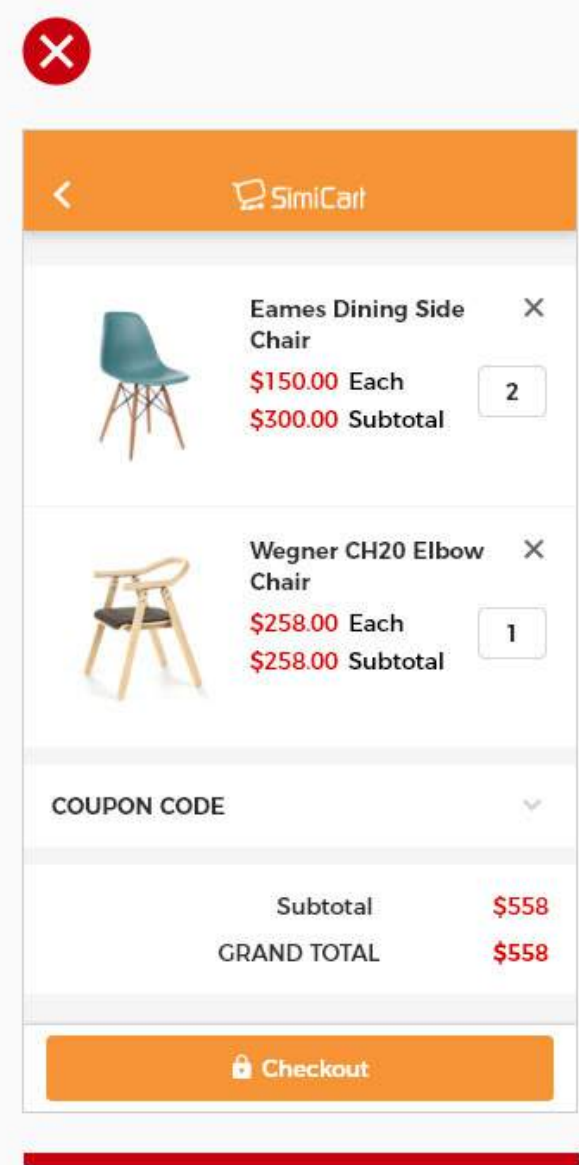
The continue shopping button can be a visual distraction on mobile screens, driving buyers away from checkout.



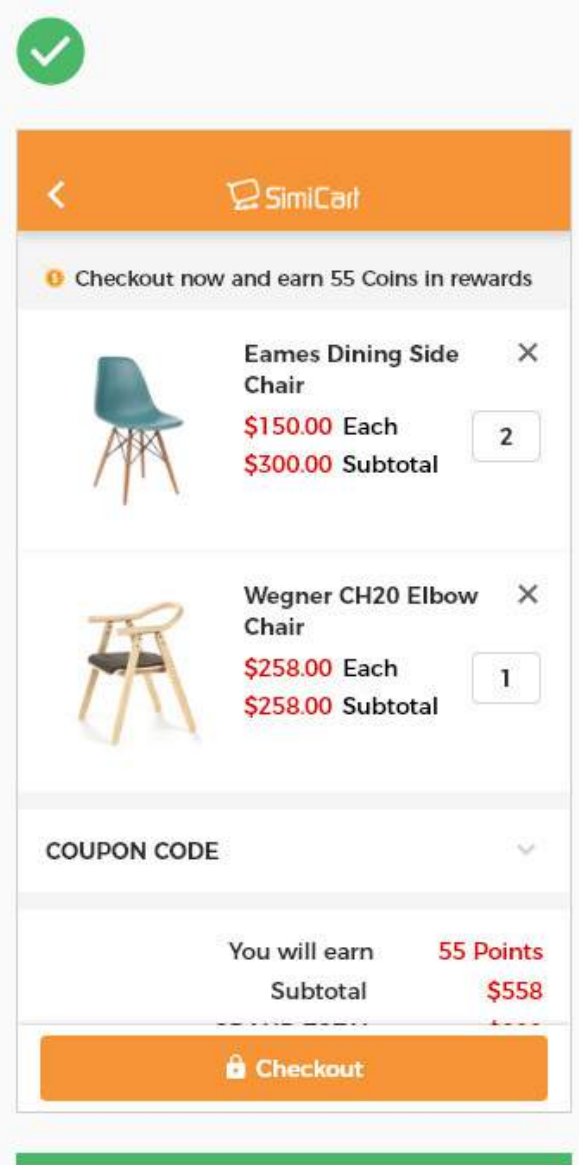
The continue shopping button is suppressed to keep users focused on the important checkout call to action.

22. Show users how many reward points they'll earn

Make the most out of your reward program by showing users how many points they'll earn. If the app have a point rewarding system in place, make sure they have a clear understanding of how many points they can receive for their cart total. Letting shoppers know how they can benefit from your reward program right on the cart page is the best way to prompt them to complete checkout.



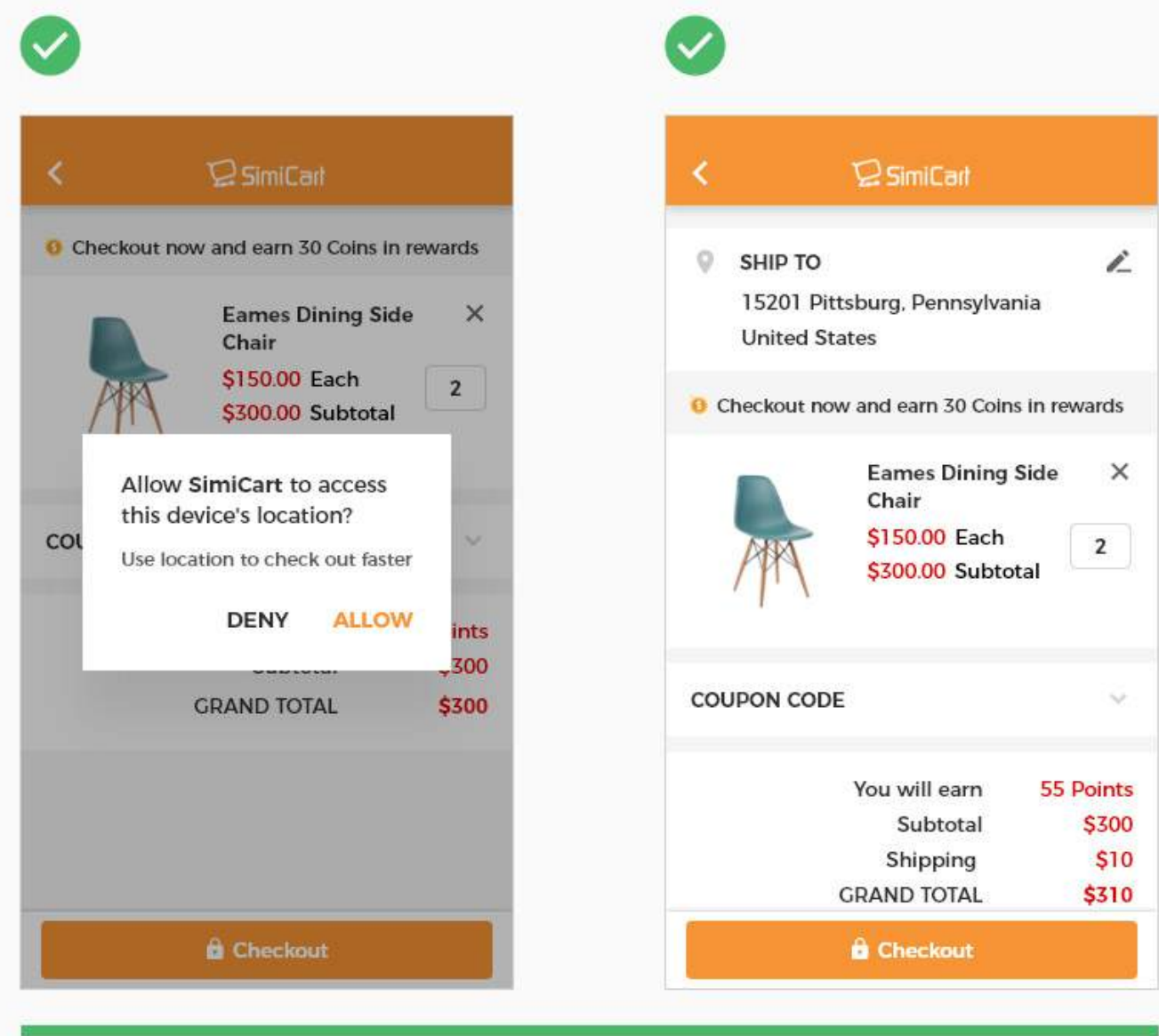
There is no indication that users can earn points for their purchases.



Showing users how many points they'll earn for their cart total gives them more reasons to proceed.

23. Show estimated shipping cost before checkout

One of the most common reasons for cart abandonment is unexpected shipping cost. Shipping and handling charges should be presented to them earlier in the checkout process in order to help them make decisions. To address this issue, estimating total shipping cost prior to checkout (eg. Enable shipping cost estimation directly from the cart page,..) is a great solution.



Real-time shipping cost is estimated on the cart page, allowing users to have a clear understanding of their total cost.

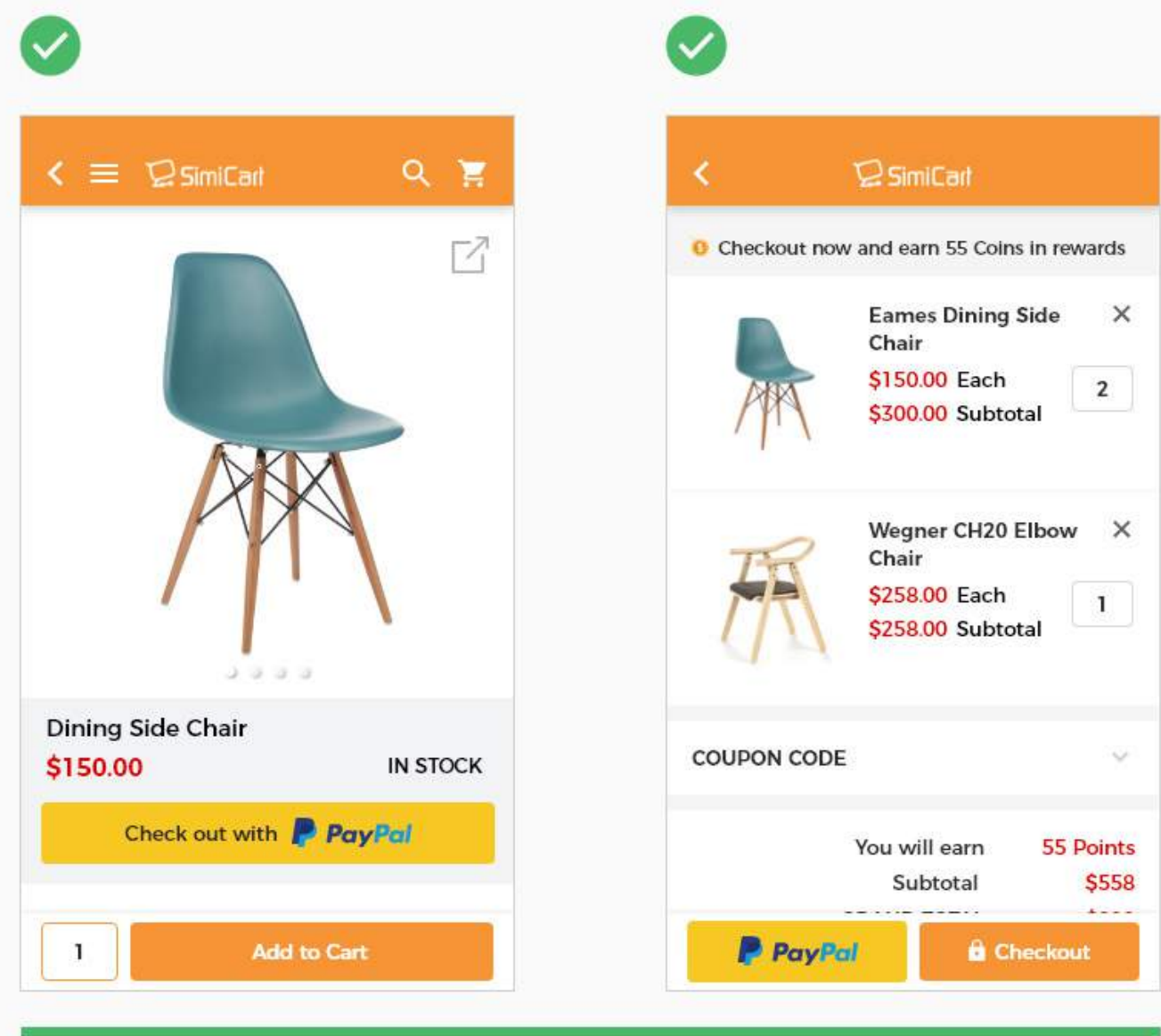
Checkout Process

46 percent of respondents from a study by Google and consulting firm Heart+Mind Strategies said they prefer to use their smartphones for the entire purchase process. To capitalize on this, make mobile checkout a seamless process and allow them to complete orders without any friction from the comfort of their smartphones.



24. Add Paypal checkout shortcut

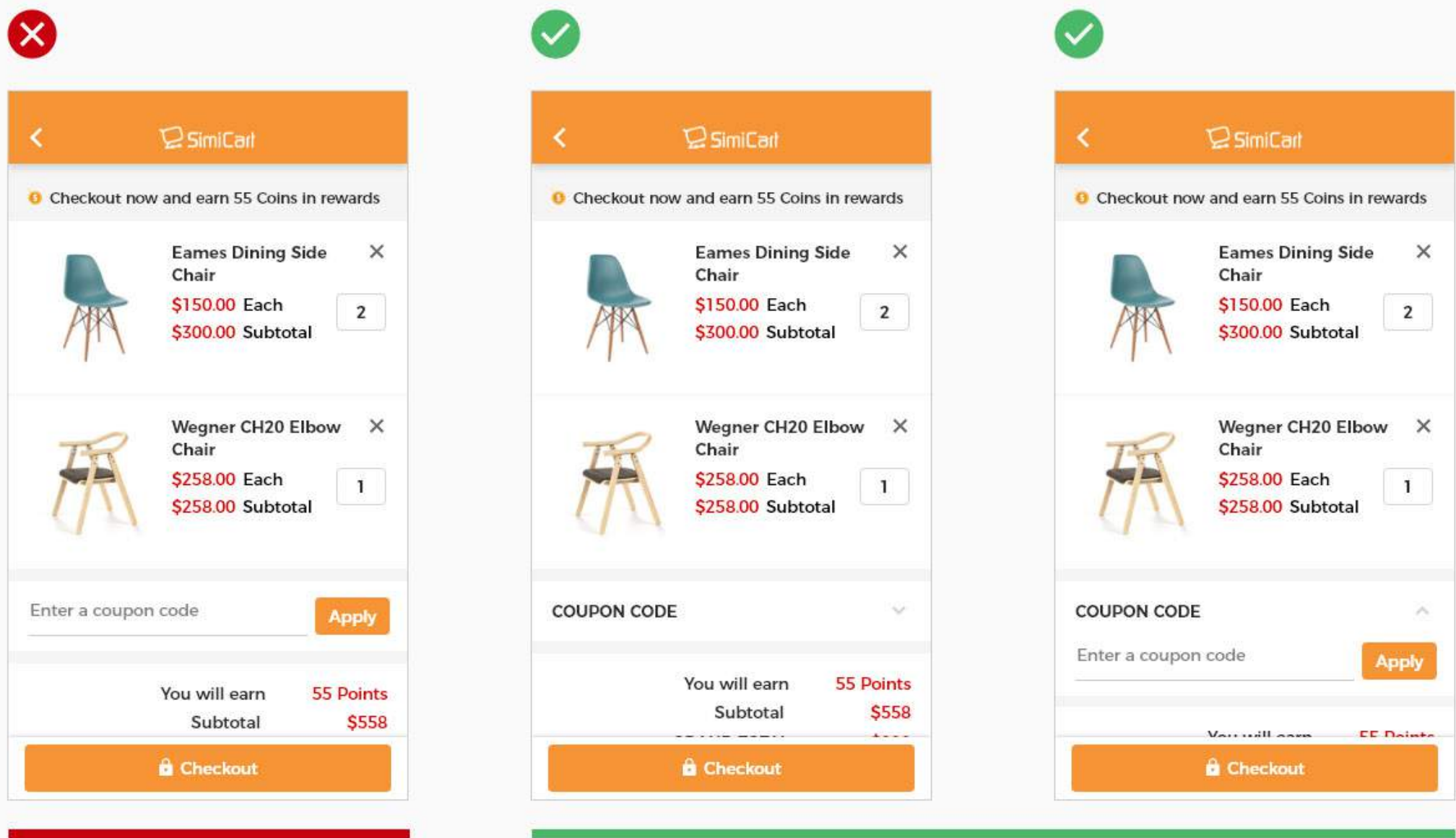
Users expect a seamless payment process when shopping online. Providing third-party payment options like Paypal can simplify the payment process and increase the sense of security. Checkout with Paypal only requires two steps to complete, bypassing entering credit card information and shipping details. By minimizing the number of manual steps users have to take, such as filling out additional forms, the app saves time and energy for users to complete a purchase.



Add the Paypal checkout button to different locations at the top of the checkout funnel like the product page, the cart page.

25. Collapse the coupon code field

Providing coupon code at the point of checkout is a popular tactic to increase sales in online shopping. However, when the option to use coupons during checkout is made too prominent, it easily distracts users from completing their purchases. Many users don't have the coupon codes to redeem and leave checkout in hunt for one, which ends up not returning to complete transactions. If your app have coupon and discount codes available, make the coupon less prominent by collapsing the field to minimize distraction from the checkout flow.

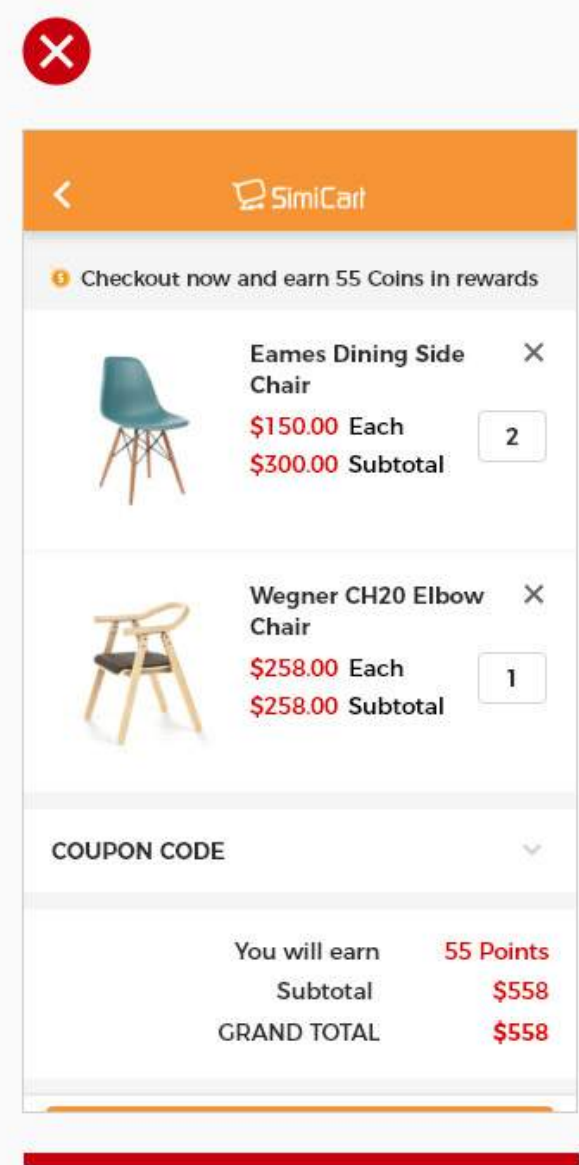


There is no option for users to zoom in product images for a better view of the desired product.

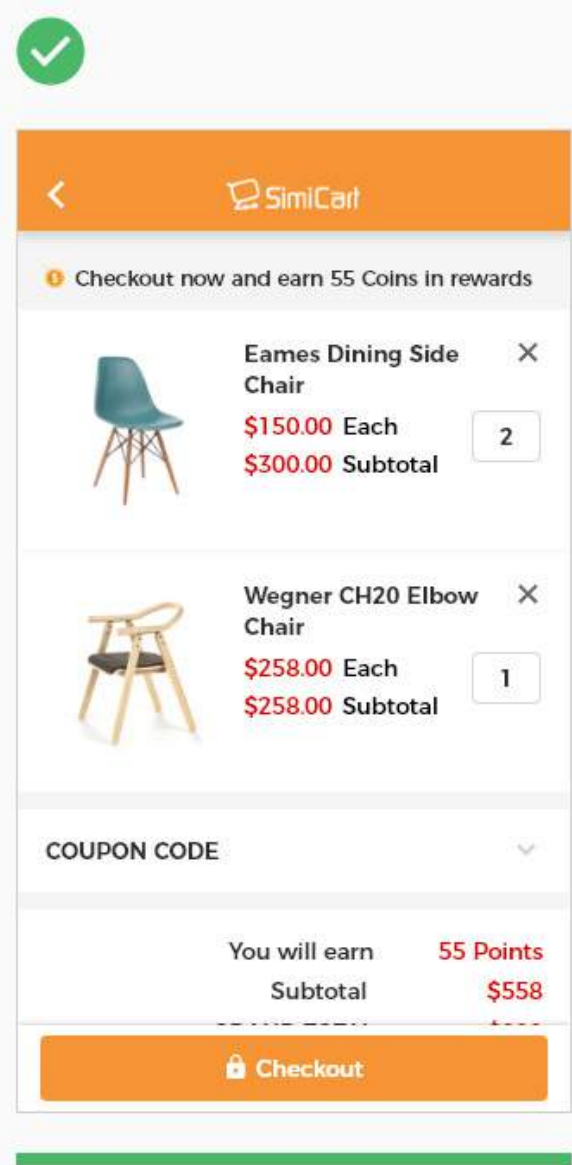
Users can handily zoom in product image and control the level of magnification as they prefer.

26. Show floating checkout button

The more you nudge users towards the checkout funnel, the better your chances are of a completed purchase. Make the next step call to action prominent by showing the floating checkout button. This ensures that there’s always one button available for shoppers to proceed to checkout regardless of where they scroll to on the cart page.



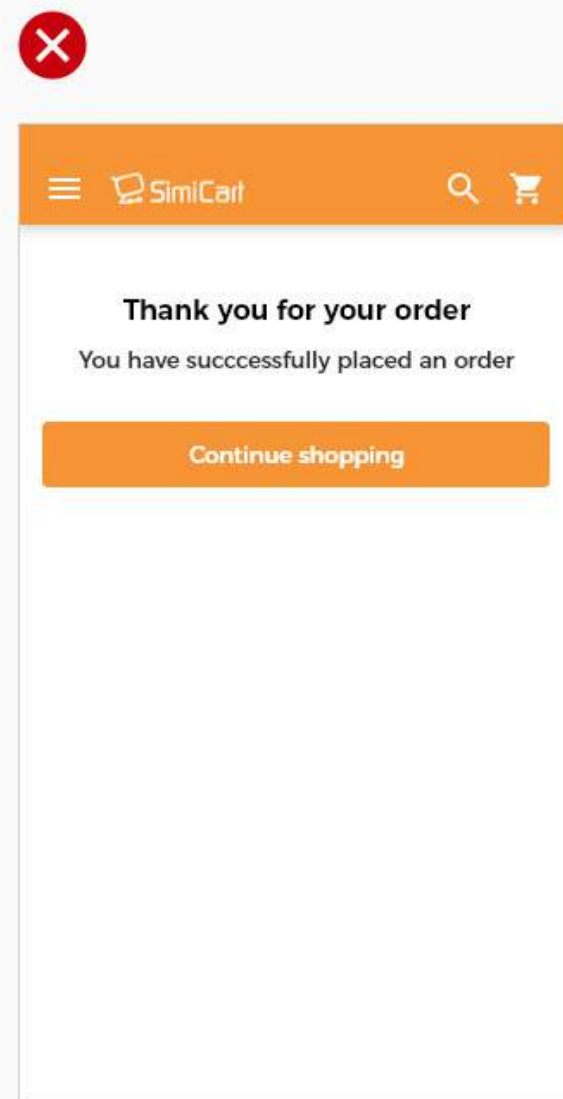
Checkout button is not visible to users until they scroll to the bottom of the cart page.



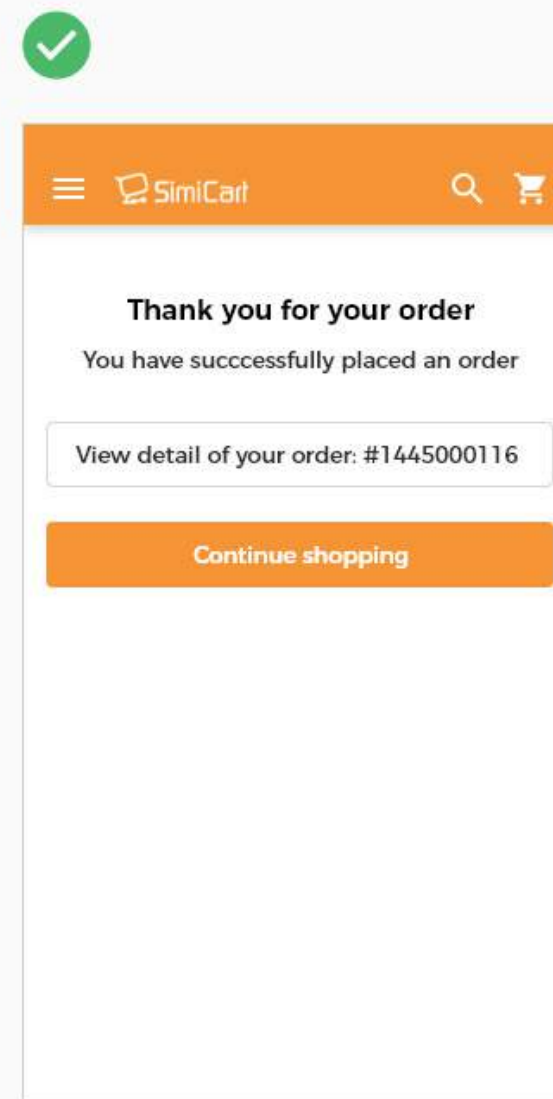
A floating checkout button prompts users to move along the checkout process.

27. Provide an option to review order details after purchase

After completing a purchase, users want the ability to check order details to make sure that no mistake has been made. Provide an option to review all necessary purchase information for users to verify the order right away.



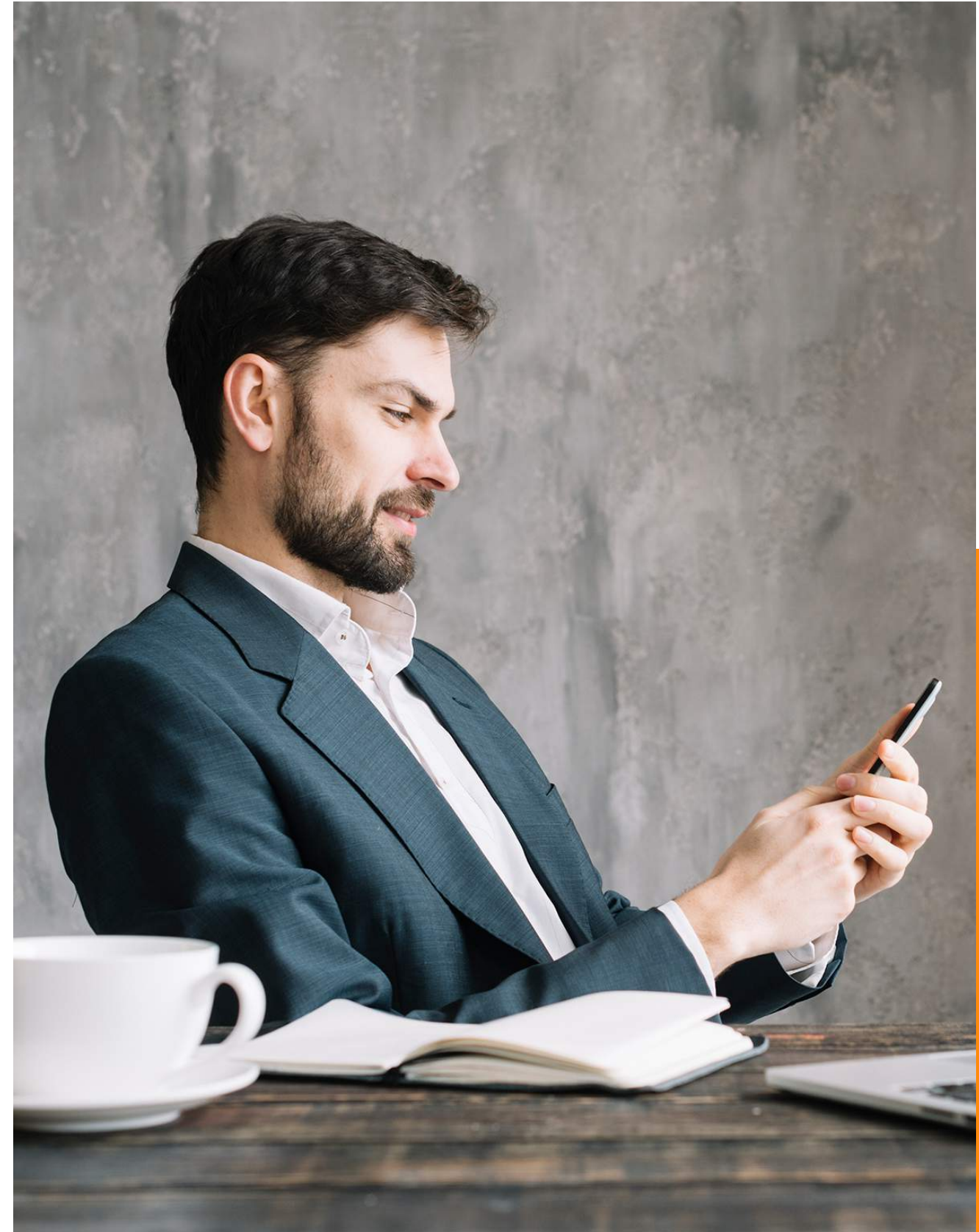
There is no option to review order details after the purchase is complete.



Allow users to view full order details with transaction summary to reconfirm the order.

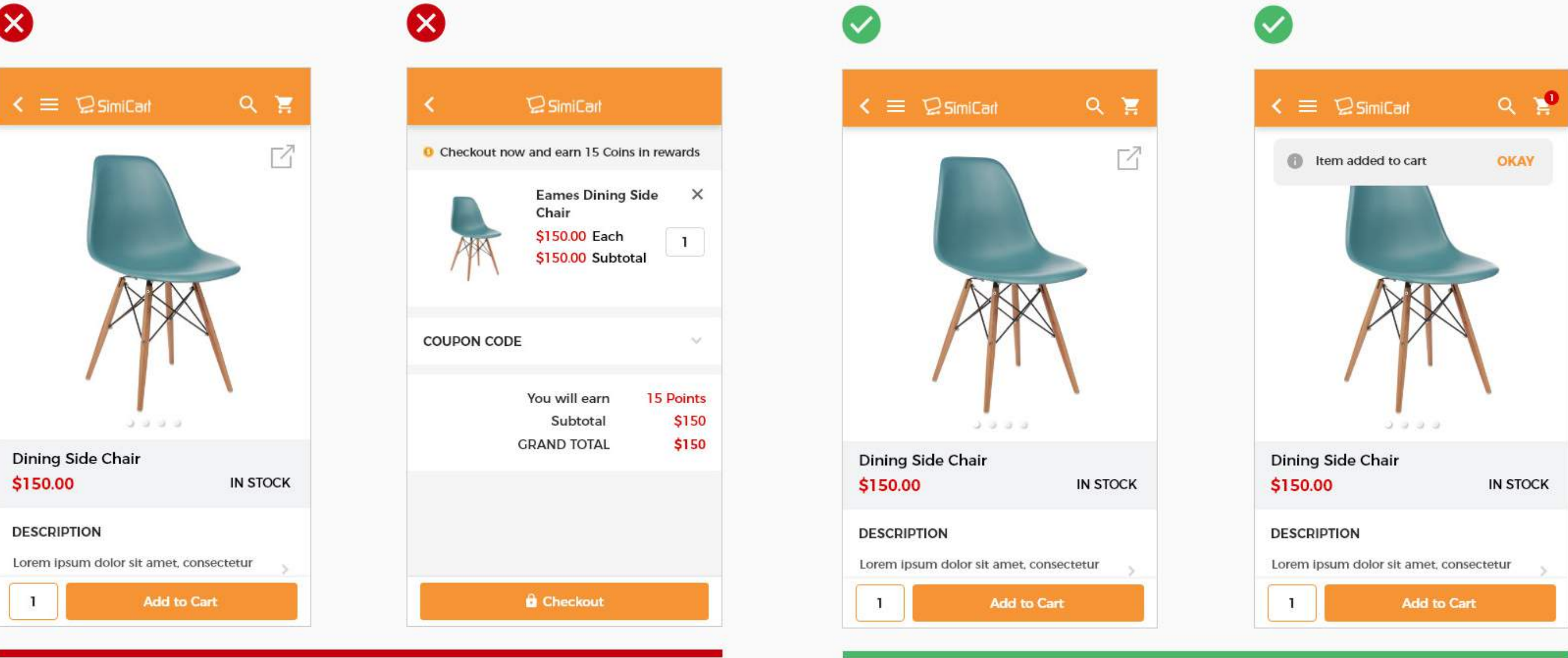
App Usability

In the prior chapters of this guide we have covered highly specific design principles across key aspects of an ecommerce app, including search, form entry, product catalog, customer account, cart and checkout. Beside the presented principles, these general usability recommendations cater to mobile user needs that brands should definitely consider when designing for an ecommerce app.



28. Allow users to continue shopping after adding an item to cart

Adding an item to cart should not force users to the cart page. It causes friction for users who look to add multiple items to cart. Every time an item is added, it takes extra steps for users to go back to shopping. Instead, provide feedback to confirm that the item has been added to cart and allow users to continue shopping.

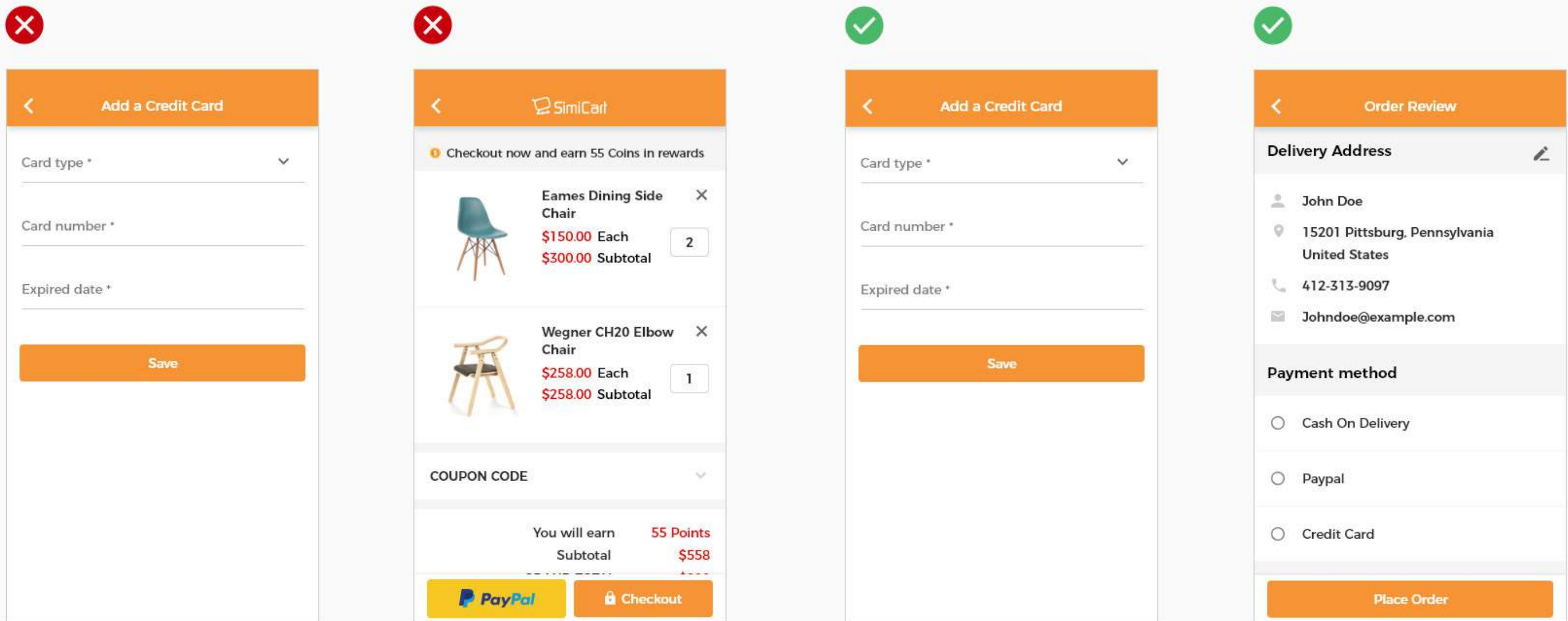


Once item is added to cart, users are taken directly to the cart page, which requires extra steps to go back to shopping.

When users add an item to cart, the app provides feedback and allow users to continue shopping.

29. Allow users to go back easily in one step

As users browsing the app, they want the ability to go back and forth in a single step of the app flow. Don't get users frustrated by forcing them to start all over from the homescreen, which can result in losing any unsaved user data. Leverage back functionality in your app so that users can easily go back in one step.

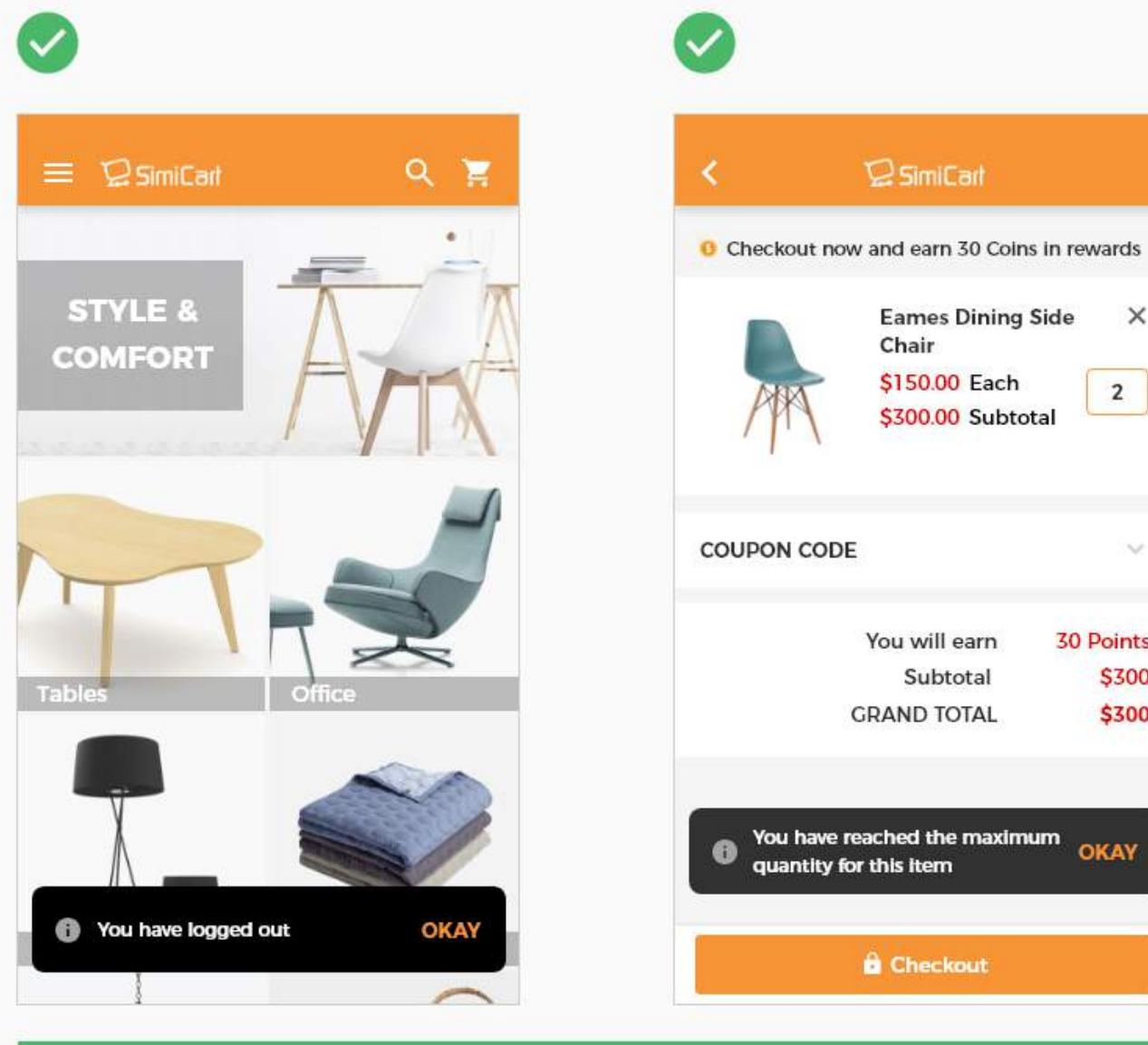


The back button takes users to the first step of the flow, which causes confusion for the user.

The back button takes users back just one step in their current flow, which is exactly what they expect.

30. Show clear visual feedback

Lack of feedback after an action leaves users confused whether the app has processed. After users take an action in your app, respond with a brief message that inform them if the action is completed, which does not interrupt their experience while eliminating the guesswork for users.



Always provide visual feedback right after an in-app action is performed to provide assurance to users.

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