

Online Shopping Experience Issues and Solutions

About this document:

This document is a general commentary on the major problems with the current GSGCNWI Online Shop and some suggested solutions. The goal of this document is not just to find flaws, but:

1. to explain how and why these things negatively affect the site as a whole
2. to suggest how these problems may be fixed

Numbers in parenthesis such as (032) will refer to an accompanying screenshot in the “Online Shopping Experience (Screenshots)” folder. Numbers in parenthesis preceded by a URL, such as (<http://www.girlscoutsgcnwi.org/volunteer-resources>, 016) means screenshot #016 will be of the page at <http://www.girlscoutsgcnwi.org/volunteer-resources>.

1. Finding the online shop:

Navigation from the main site's homepage is not located with related content:

The online store is accessed from the main GSGNCWI site (<http://www.girlscoutsgcnwi.org/>) by clicking on the “store” link in the secondary top navigation (000). The url for the shop home page is <http://www.girlscoutsgcnwi.org/shop>.

Issues:

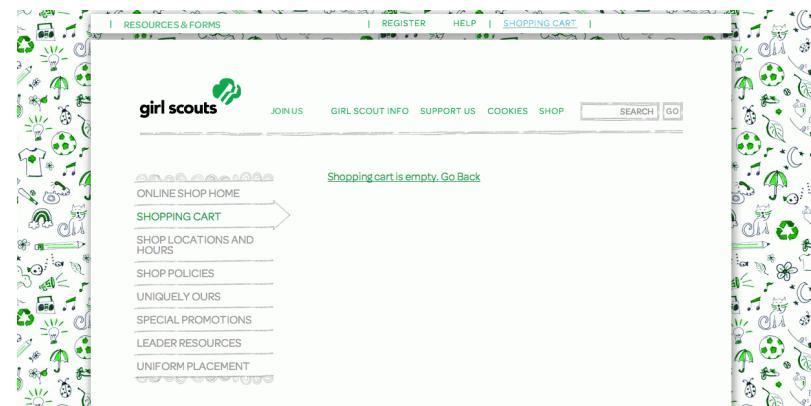
The store is grouped with unrelated items in nav B. There is a shopping cart link in nav A (002), but it is not placed near the store link. Store has no promotion elsewhere on the page. The presence of the shopping cart link is confusing since it appears on every page on the **main site**, not giving a clear differentiation between the shop and the main site, or their separate purposes and content.

Suggested fix:

One clear link to the store on either nav A or nav B is sufficient, with no link or display of the shopping cart when on main site. Promotion of the shop elsewhere on the main site homepage, possibly with sale or other seasonal items, would help catch attention and encourage awareness of store in sections D and/or E.



navigation to store on main site homepage (000)

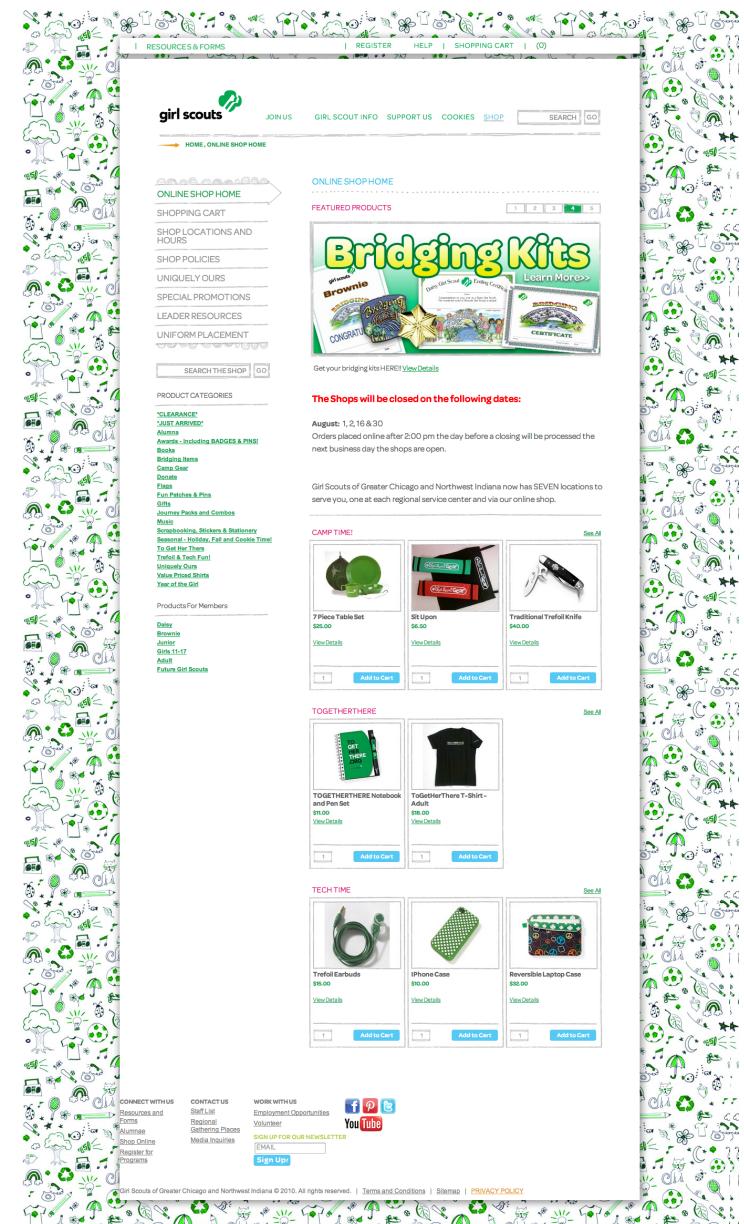


"shopping cart" link (002)

URL not memorable or uniquely identifying:

The url of the store is <http://www.girlscoutsgcnwi.org/shop>. It can also be accessed directly via <http://shopgirlscouts.com> (001).

- <http://girlscoutsgcnwi.com/shop> (the **.com** version of the official council site, which is **.org**) is owned by a non-affiliated third party and is a “parked” site without content.
- <http://gsgcnwi.com/shop> (shortening “**girl scouts**” to “**gs**”, a commonly used acronym) is owned by a non-affiliated third party and is a “parked” site without content.
- <http://gsgcnwi.org/shop> is also owned by a non-affiliated third party and is a “parked” site without content.
- <http://shopgirlscouts.org> (the **.org** version of the council's **.com** url) redirects to a non-affiliated store which uses the girl scouts logo without permission at <http://www.four51.com/UI/Customer.aspx?autologonid=a7392206-f33a-42b7-9c3b-d977faf5eadd>. (003)
- <http://girlscoutsshop.com> redirects to <http://goshop.girlscouts.org/> and gives an error.
- <http://girlscoutsshop.org> does not appear to be owned.
- <http://girlscoutshop.com> points to the official GSUSA online store (005)
- <http://girlscoutshop.org> redirects to <http://www.girlscoutshop.com/EASTERN-MASSACHUSETTS-COUNCIL> (006)



shop homepage (001)

Issues:

The actual URL of the store

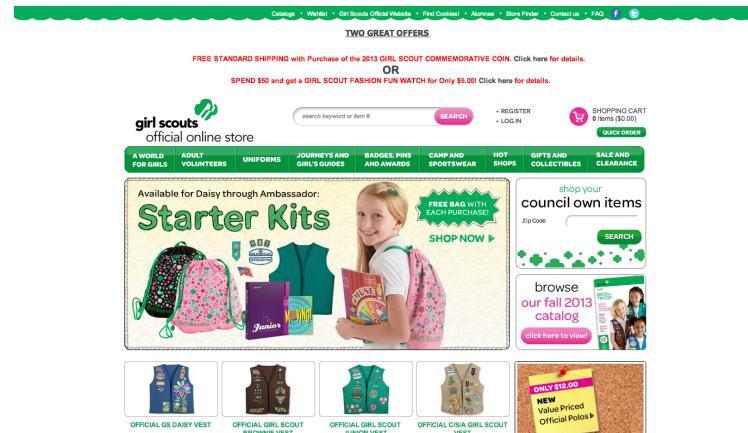
(<http://www.girlscoutsgcnwi.org/shop>) is not memorable and has a non-parsable acronym as the base url (GCNWI). If a user does not have the acronym memorized or is not familiar with the full name of the merged council, the URL is difficult to recall. This is especially true for new volunteers/leaders who are just joining the organization and would not yet be fully acquainted with all of the common acronyms.

Even if the user does know the council name and its abbreviation, the user still faces several problems. The .com version of the domain is not owned by the council, and the common shortening of "Girl Scouts" to "GS" presents problems as well, as the websites pointed to by the fully shorted acronym "GSGCNWI" are not owned by the council and are parked websites. I myself have accidentally gone to these sites when trying to access the real GSGCNWI site.

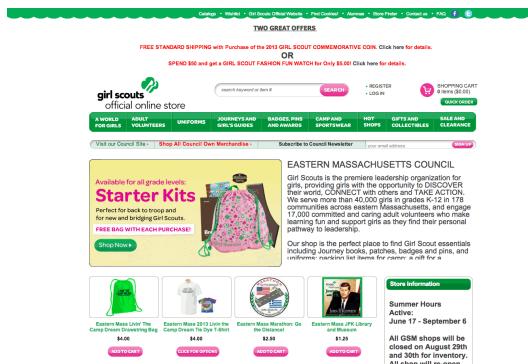
The friendlier URL, shopgirlscouts.com, has a parked site in the .org position and is also easily confused with the other URLs that point to unrelated stores. It is difficult to differentiate by memory the particular URL of this store as opposed to similar Girl Scouts shops and the various stores also share many similar visual aspects, making it easy to confuse a visitor who is unfamiliar with the differences. Interviews and data have shown that users are unaware that GSGCNWI has a store separate from GSUSA.



unaffiliated store (003)



GSUSA store, a different organization (005)



eastern Mass council store (006)

Suggested fix:

Easy to remember and simple words help build brand awareness and keep customers returning to the store. "girlscoutshop.com" was on the right track - However, because it overlaps with so many other domains that are not owned by GSGCNWI, it's risky to use as the base url. Instead, a new domain which is easy to remember yet distinct from other existing Girl Scouts sites should be chosen, one where all of the common variations and misspellings on the name can also be purchased to redirect to the main site. An example would be "ilovegirlscouts.com", where the domains "ilovegirlscout.com" would also be owned, as well as the .org versions of both. The current urls should continue to redirect to the shop for users who have bookmarked the current URLs.

2. In-store navigation

Store navigation is buried:

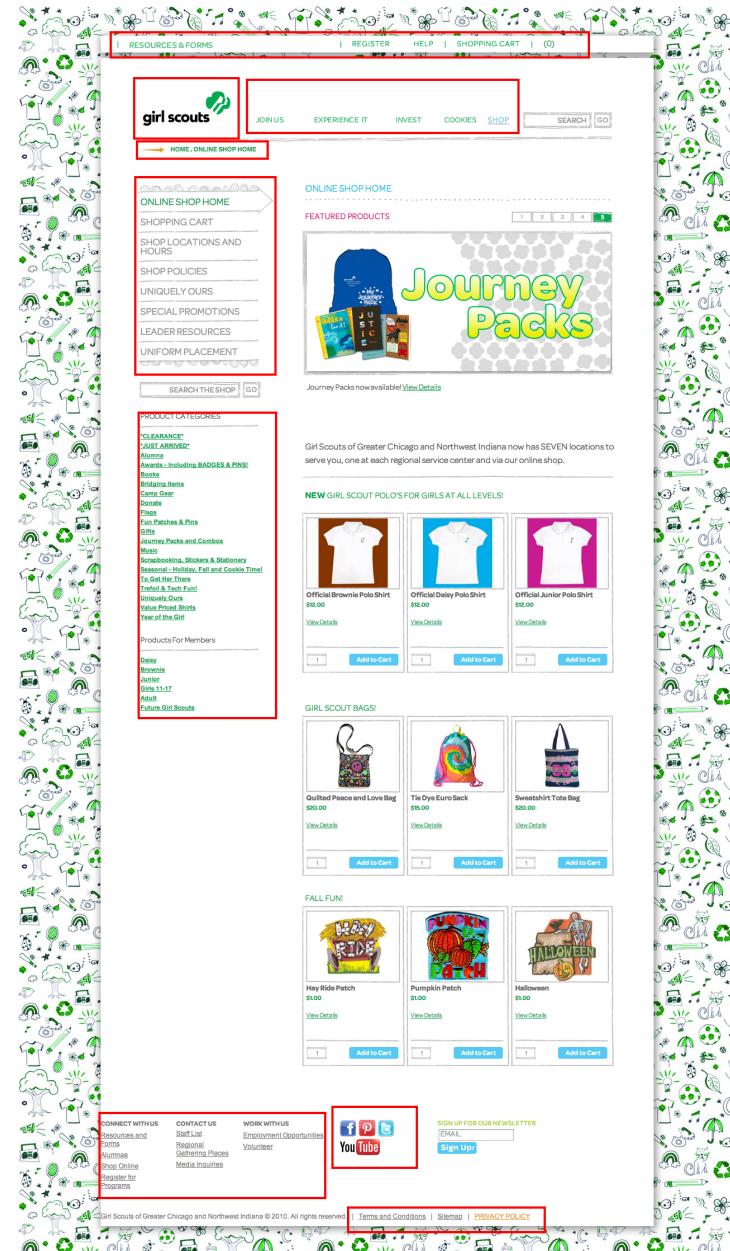
(081) - in this screenshot, all of the various types of navigation have been highlighted. There are several pages which have unique navigation on them (024). In total, there are between eight and nine different areas of navigation on most pages of the store.

Issues:

Most of the navigation on the page is unrelated to the store. The most relevant navigations are the Breadcrumbs (022) and Product Categories (025). Parts of the Left Navigation (023), are potentially relevant, such as shop locations and hours, while the links to the store and the shopping cart are redundant, and the other links in Left Navigation lack clear content and purpose. The footer at the bottom contains the standard legal disclaimers, but the “site map” link is out of date and does not represent the current site, and should be considered for removal or a relevant replacement.

Suggested fix:

The navigation in the store should only be related to the store, with one exception being a clear way to return to the main site, which will open in a new window so as not to let the customer forget about their purchase.



too many navigation areas which lead off-store (081)

The screenshot shows the Girl Scouts website with a sidebar on the left featuring a repeating pattern of green icons related to scouting (e.g., campfire, tent, umbrella, recycling). The main content area has a header with links: 'RESOURCES & FORMS', 'JOIN US', 'REGISTER', 'HELP', 'SHOPPING CART', and '(0)'. Below this is a 'girl scouts' logo and navigation links: 'JOIN US', 'EXPERIENCE IT', 'INVEST', 'COOKIES', 'SHOP', 'SEARCH', and 'GO'. A red box highlights three circular buttons labeled 'donate', 'join', and 'volunteer'. The main content area contains a section titled 'SHOP INFORMATION' with a note: 'The Girl Scout Shop will be CLOSED on Monday, September 23rd!'. It lists three shop locations: Chicago Shop, Homewood Shop, and Joliet Shop, each with address, phone number, fax number, email, and operating hours.

mysterious trefoil nav (024)

This screenshot is similar to the previous one but shows a different breadcrumb navigation pattern. The sidebar icons are the same. The main content area has a header with links: 'RESOURCES & FORMS', 'JOIN US', 'REGISTER', 'HELP', 'SHOPPING CART', and '(0)'. Below this is a 'girl scouts' logo and navigation links: 'JOIN US', 'EXPERIENCE IT', 'INVEST', 'COOKIES', 'SHOP', 'SEARCH', and 'GO'. A red box highlights the 'HOME, ONLINE SHOP HOME' link in the breadcrumb trail.

breadcrumbs (022)

The screenshot shows the Girl Scouts website with a sidebar on the left featuring a repeating pattern of green icons. The main content area has a header with links: 'UNIQUELY OURS', 'SPECIAL PROMOTIONS', 'LEADER RESOURCES', 'UNIFORM PLACEMENT', 'SEARCH THE SHOP', and 'GO'. A red box highlights the 'PRODUCT CATEGORIES' section, which includes a 'CLEARANCE' section with items like 'Alumnae', 'Badges', 'Books', 'Brigades Items', 'Cookie Gear', 'Donate', 'Floss', 'Fun Patches & Pins', 'GIRL', 'Journey Patches and Combos', 'Mail', 'Scrapbooking, Stickers & Stationery', 'Scoutoree - Holiday, Fall and Cookie Time!', 'To Get Her There', 'Trefoil & Tech Fun', 'Honor Our', 'Value Photo Shots', and 'Year of the Girl'. It also lists 'Products For Members' and 'Daisy', 'Brownie', 'Junior', 'Girl Scout', 'Adult', and 'Future Girl Scouts' sections. Below this is a 'NEW GIRL SCOUT POLOS FOR GIRLS AT ALL LEVELS' section with three t-shirt options: 'Official Brownie Polo Shirt', 'Official Daisy Polo Shirt', and 'Official Junior Polo Shirt', each with a 'View Details' and 'Add to Cart' button. Further down are sections for 'GIRL SCOUT BAGS!' with three bag options and 'FEATURED PRODUCTS' with a 'Journey Packs' item.

product categories (025)

This screenshot shows the Girl Scouts website with a sidebar on the left featuring a repeating pattern of green icons. The main content area has a header with links: 'RESOURCES & FORMS', 'JOIN US', 'REGISTER', 'HELP', 'SHOPPING CART', and '(0)'. Below this is a 'girl scouts' logo and navigation links: 'JOIN US', 'EXPERIENCE IT', 'INVEST', 'COOKIES', 'SHOP', 'SEARCH', and 'GO'. A red box highlights the 'ONLINE SHOP HOME' link in the breadcrumb trail. The main content area features a 'FEATURED PRODUCTS' section with a large image of 'Journey Packs' and a small image of a blue bag.

left nav has some useful links (023)

Product categories:

Product Categories (025) is one of the areas of navigation on shop pages located on the lower left hand side of the page.

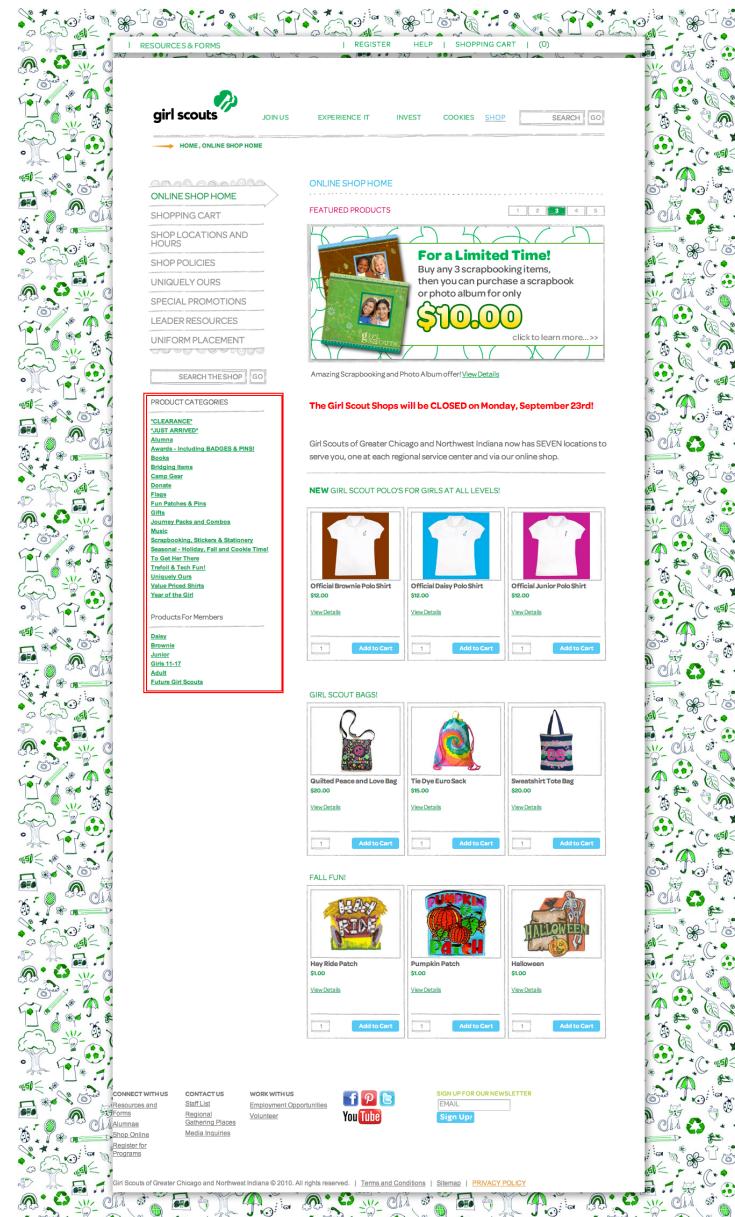
Issues:

The Product Categories are difficult to navigate. As an example, I began with the simple task of trying to find a green t-shirt with the Girl Scout logo, one I had seen in stores and knew was online. There is no obvious starting place to look for shirts, such as a category for "clothing". "Gifts" does not have clothing, neither did "Trefoils and Tech", which may have been a logical place to look since the logo is a trefoil. There are some sale shirts, but not the ones I am looking for, and there are program specific shirts, but I am also not interested in these.

The actual location of these items is not in the Product Categories at all, but under "products for members" > "adult" and then on page 2, it is called "Profiles T-shirt - Adult." This same shirt is listed in "Daisy", "Brownie", "Junior", and "Girls 11-13" in different sizes, but no one place had both the "adult" and "girl" sized versions of the same shirt design.

Suggested fix:

The product categories are the main source of navigation for any store, and special emphasis should be placed on them to ensure they are coherent and intuitive, guiding users to the items they are looking for or suggesting items they may not be aware of. A series of [card-sorting exercises](#) have been run with customers run to mirror the mental model and reorganize the categories (see "New Store Categories" document).



main store navigation categories (025)

3. Searching confused by two search bars

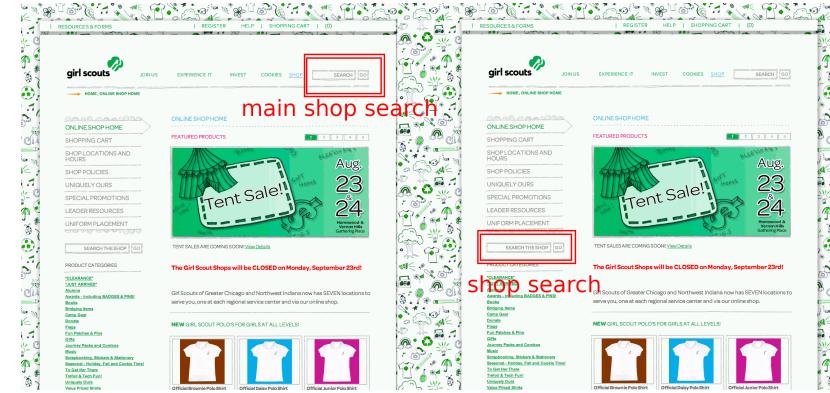
The store search is located on the left side of the page above the Product Categories, while the search for the main site is located at the top (053).

Issues:

There are two search bars which have separate purposes. The main search bar along the top of the page is for the general site, and will not return shop items. The store search is in the left hand sidebar underneath Left Navigation. It is difficult to find since it appears in a non-standard place for search bars on websites. Users look to search in the upper right, where the general site search is. The store search is also far down on the page, appearing below the fold on my current browser and resolution (055). There is also little indication that it is different from the top search, and there is no indication that the top search will not search the store. It would take a dedicated user indeed to fail at the obvious search and then try again if they found the second one.

Suggested fix:

One search bar in the store in the upper right where the full site bar currently sits. This will only search the store and not the main site. To distinguish between the full site and store search, the header area around the search needs to be visually distinct on each site. The theme should be related but noticeably different, perhaps the same or a similar design, but a different color. The store search should also have the words "Search the Store" near it so it is clear that this search is different from the one on the full site.



the most prominent search will return the user to the main page (054)



the store search may not be visible when a user visits (055)

4. Brick and mortar information

The shop info page provides addresses, operating hours, and contact information for each of the stores and the online shop (080).

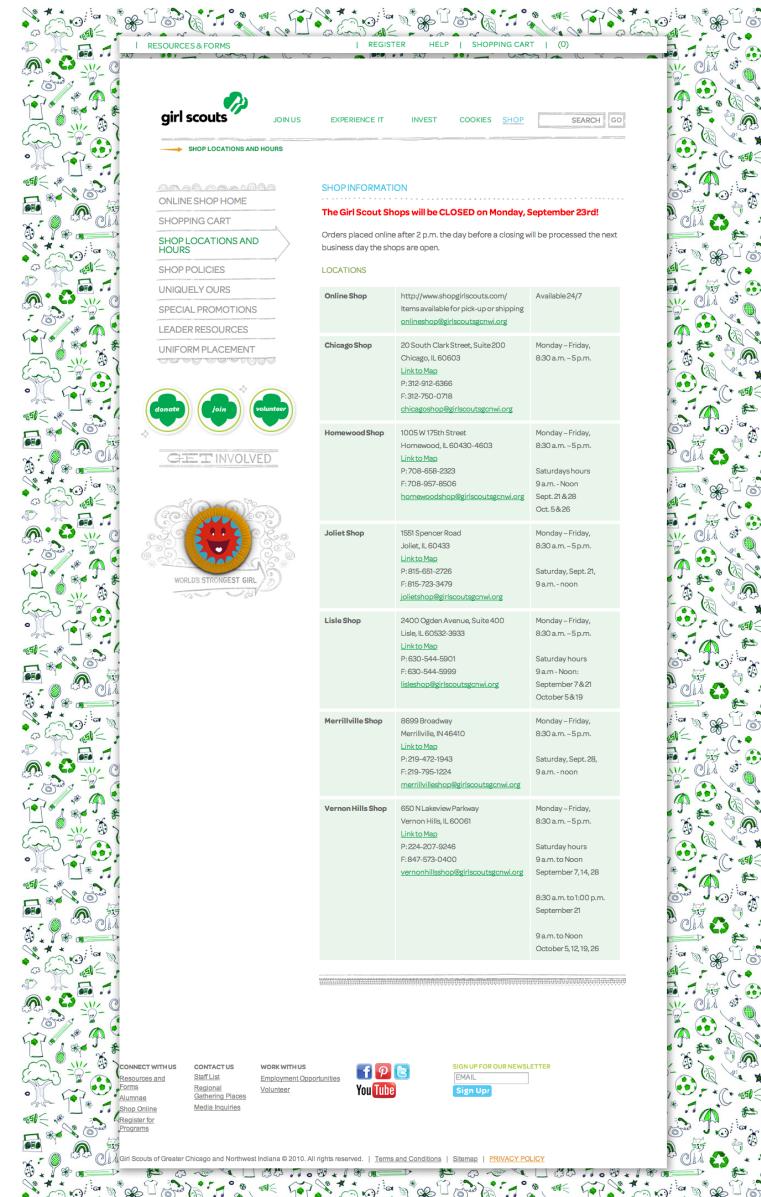
Issues:

It is not clear, if one came in through google directly to the store, that these are only the shops in the GSGCNWI council. The hours change throughout the year, but this is not indicated on the page itself, and the section for the hours is difficult to scan.

Suggested fix:

A slightly different layout to allow the hours to be easier to scan would be useful. It would be helpful to indicate that the saturday hours displayed on the page now are special, seasonal hours since this is a busy time for the stores. Also this page, more than most others in the online shop, should be very clear that these stores are for the GSGCNWI only and that a person can find their own local store locations and hours elsewhere.

This would also be a good place to mention the “pick up in store” policy for shopping online. Interviews with customers indicated some were not comfortable with online shopping and only used the site to browse items that they would later buy in the store. These customers were concerned about giving payment information would be reassured to know that they can still shop online without giving a credit card number and without needing to locate the items a second time in the shop since they could just pick up their order from the desk.



brick and mortar locations and hours (080)

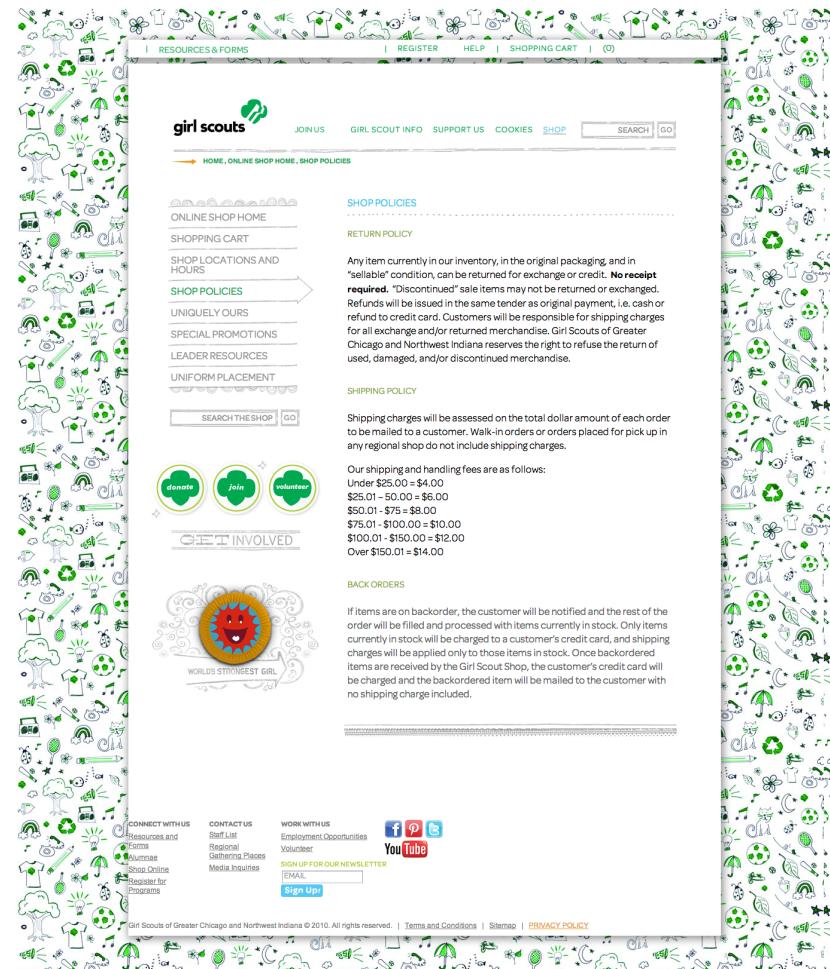
5. Shop policies do not mention “pick up in store” option

Shop policy page:

(<http://www.girlscoutsgcnwi.org/shop-policies>, 010)

Suggestions:

This page should include information about pick-up orders, a concept which is unusual for online stores and should not be assumed to be understood. The GSGCNWI online store is different from most stores in that a customer does not need to pay for an order when placing it, and may choose to pay when picking up the items at the store. This information is important since some shoppers tend to be wary about giving credit card numbers online. These individuals would still be able to take advantage of the convenience of online shopping and still feel secure about the payment options. Since this concept is unique to the online shop, new customers especially will be unaware of the option, and so should have it clearly explained to them in an easy to locate place.



Shop Policy page does not mention in-store pickup (010)

6. Accessibility concerns

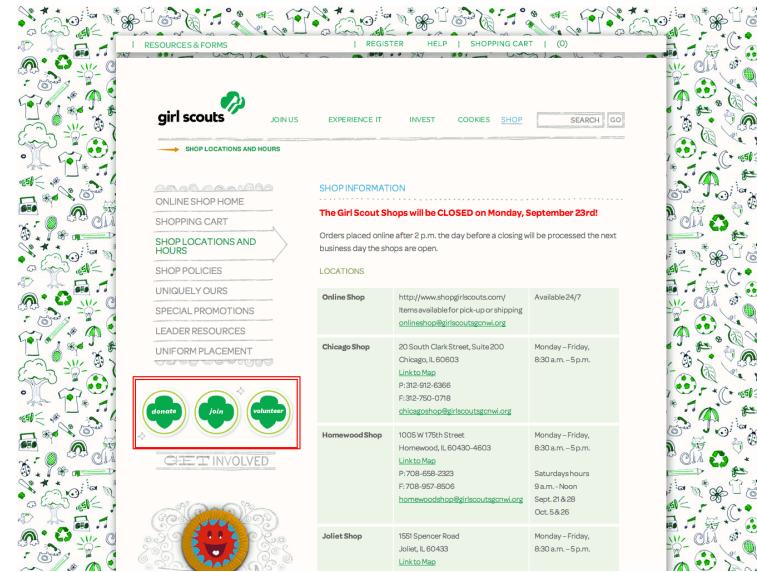
Issues:

The current online store would be difficult to navigate as a user with disabilities. To name a few of the problems: there are images for links (meaning a screen reader could not decipher them) (024), images do not have descriptive alt text (which would be read by a screen reader), the content is not ordered in a meaningful sequence (navigation is difficult, see above and "New Story Categories" document), and the font sizes for category navigation are very small (visually impaired persons would struggle) (025).

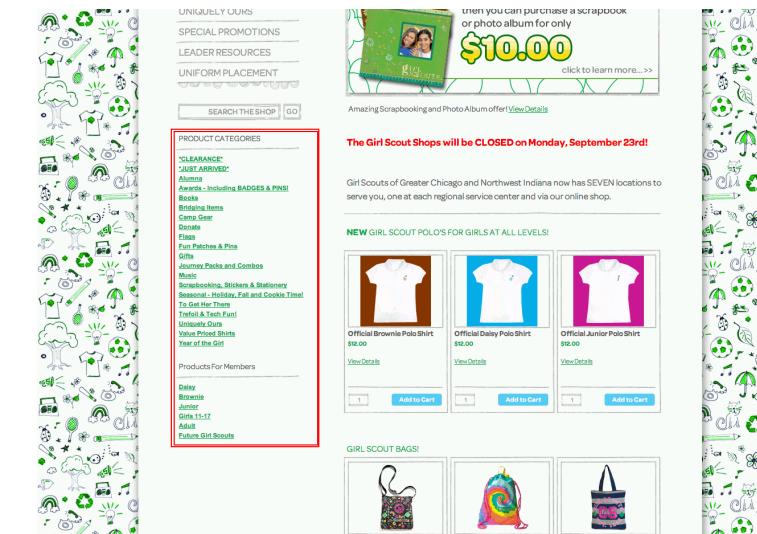
Suggested fix:

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is an international community where Member organizations, a full-time staff, and the public work together to develop Web standards. They have put together a web page with many helpful tools to assist web developers to create sites that are more easily accessible by disabled individuals (<http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag.php>).

The developer of the new site should be aware of these guidelines when designing and implementing the new site.



images as navigation (024)



font size for store categories too small (025)

7. English language only

Issues:

The growing Hispanic population of the Chicagoland area is well documented. After speaking to a membership specialist for the Hispanic outreach program, it became clear that many of the parents of potential Girl Scouts in densely Hispanic areas do not fluently speak English or do not read it well enough to confidently navigate unfamiliar websites. There are currently no Spanish-language Girl Scouts shops online for any council.

Suggestions:

Firstly, when choosing a platform for the new store, choose one that offers built-in language switching optionality.

Second, there is a two-phased solution approach:

1. Identify the "essential" items for parents for each level of girl scout. Ensure that the navigation for getting to these pages and the content contained is well translated. Leave gifts and other optional items for phase 2.
2. Offer a Spanish language option for the entire store. Make sure all content is translated, accurate, and comprehensible to a native North American Spanish speaker. An individual should be formally assigned the job of translating any new content as it arises - please coordinate with [Brianna Peral](#), Hispanic Outreach coordinator. Managers of store and site content need to work together to ensure that any change or addition to the site is given to the individual for translation so that the Spanish language version of the site does not lag behind or become out of date and alienate the users of the Spanish language version.

8. No mobile site

Issues:

The current store is difficult to use on most mobile devices as it maintains the same layout. The average mobile user who hits the online store will drop-off in less than 10 seconds. Avg drop-off time on desktop is slightly over 2 minutes.

Statistics show that mobile shopping is becoming increasingly common, especially with the younger generations. Here is just one link showing some relevant research done by Google about mobile shopping trends:

<http://www.google.com/think/research-studies/mobile-in-store.html>

Suggestions:

The new leaders coming in each year are increasingly comfortable using their smartphones for everyday activities and online shopping. By appealing and catering to their needs, we can help ease their journeys as a leaders and make sure that they can keep track of necessary troop materials during their busy days.

In addition, an online store can enhance shopping in-store, allowing customers to get more information about an item by looking at the item description online. In the GSUSA Fall 2013 Marketing Initiative packet, QR codes were referenced as an easy way to link the online store to the physical one, offering many opportunities to make the entire shopping experience, both online and offline, engaging and helpful. Spend an hour in any store and observe the frequency with which shoppers check their phones, either to check a shopping list or research an item online.

9. Individual item pages

The issues present with the current item pages is explored in the document “OSE - Item Pages”. A short summary is provided here.

Issues:

The largest problems with the current item page is that the names, details, and descriptions lack accurate information and intuitive naming systems. Several names are given to the same or similar designs or use corporate terminology, resulting in a lack of clarity and consumer confidence in items. Some items are missing sizing, measurements, or other key pieces of data to give accurate descriptions of the items. Many items have poor photos, relying on artwork or small thumbnails to represent the items.

Suggestions:

A new policy regarding writing item names and descriptions and preparing photos is needed to ensure a consistent, clear, and friendly experience for the customer.

10. Checkout Experience

The issues present with the current check out process is explored in the document “OSE - Checkout Experiene”. A short summary is provided here.

Issues:

Currently, checkout is hindered by an inability to save information for repeat visits, an inconsistency in naming conventions which makes it unclear when items are the "same" item but differing in color or size, a lack of shipping options, and a lack of field validation.

Suggestions:

Solutions include switching to a new platform to host the store, redesigning the checkout form, adding the ability to log in and retain customer information and see a purchase history, standardizing naming conventions, and revamping how shipping is offered through the online store.