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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 What is Zalando**

Zalando is a leading player in the online fashion retail industry. It has established itself as an essential destination for fashion-forward consumers looking for a diverse selection of clothing, footwear, accessories, and beauty items. Zalando caters to a diversified customer, embracing a wide range of styles, likes, and preferences, with a user-friendly design and a large catalogue.

### **1.2 Purpose and Potential Users:**

The primary goal of Zalando is to provide customers with a smooth and enjoyable shopping experience, including access to the latest fashion trends, timeless wardrobe basics, and a curated selection of top brands. Zalando aims to fulfil the different demands of its users, whether it's casual clothing for everyday use, formal attire for special events, or sportswear for active lifestyles. Its user-friendly website is aimed at fashion consumers ranging from youths shopping for trendy streetwear to professionals looking for workplace clothes.

Zalando also functions as a platform for fashion-conscious families, providing a wide variety of apparel and accessories for men, women, and children. This inclusiveness shows Zalando's commitment to providing a comprehensive shopping experience for all members of the household.

### **1.3 Link to the Service:**

Below is the link for direct access to the Zalando platform <https://www.zalando.fi/>.

## **2. Review of Zalando Using Usability Heuristics**

### **2.1 Usability Heuristics Overview**

Usability heuristics are a collection of general rules that may be used to evaluate the user interface design of digital goods and services. These heuristics, proposed by Jakob Nielsen, a famous usability expert, give a standard framework for evaluating possible usability difficulties and possibilities for improvement. By following these principles, designers can improve the overall user experience and guarantee that the interface meets user expectations.

### **2.2 Reviewing and analysing Zalando by utilising the 10 usability heuristics**

#### **Heuristic 1: Visibility of System Status**

This heuristic highlights the need of giving users more clear and timely feedback on the system's current state or activity. It keeps people informed of ongoing processes, activities, or changes, avoiding misunderstanding or doubt.

**Usability Issue:** The visibility of system status on Zalando is typically well-implemented. For instance, when a user adds an item to their shopping bag, a small notification appears confirming the action. However, in certain situations, especially during high-traffic hours, there may be a tiny delay in updating the shopping bag indicator, possibly causing the user to experience a brief period of misunderstanding.

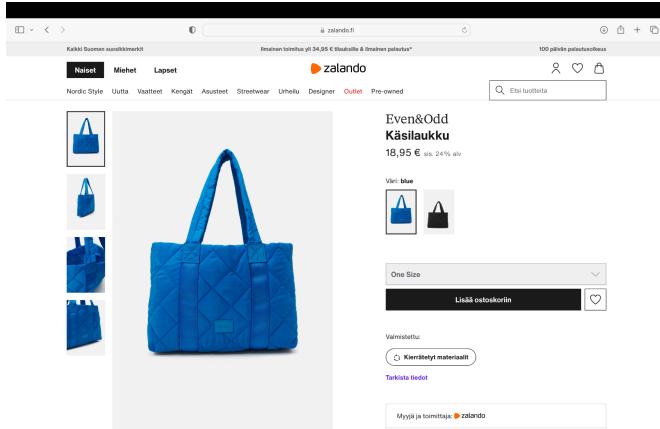


Image 1.

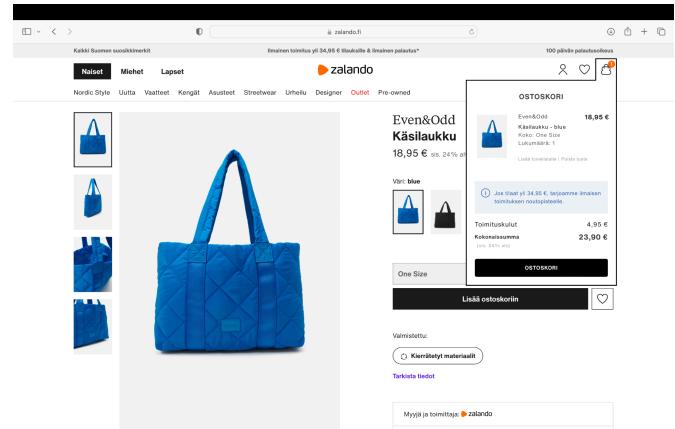


Image 2.

There was a slight delay to get from image 1 to image 2

## Heuristic 2: Match Between System and the Real World

This heuristic is focused on matching the system's language, terminology, and interactions to the user's mental model and real-world experiences. It makes sure that consumers can easily relate to and understand the functionality of the system.

**Good Design Solution:** Zalando efficiently uses this heuristic by utilising familiar terminology and categorizations. For example, the navigation menu offers simple names such as “Naiset” (Women), “Miehet” (Men) and “Lapset” (Children) which correspond to consumers' natural expectations when browsing fashion categories.



Image 3: Navigation menu

## Heuristic 3: User Control and Freedom

This heuristic focuses on giving consumers the opportunity to reverse actions or move back to a previous state. It ensures that users feel in control of their interactions and that they may recover from mistakes or unwanted actions.

**Good Design Solution:** Zalando provides a simple shopping experience with obvious exit points and the ability for users to alter their selections. Users, for example, may easily remove products from their shopping bag, and the platform offers a clear “Peruuta” (Undo) option after an item is removed.

Image 4: There is an option to remove item (“poista”)

Image 5: After removing there is the option to undo (“Peruuta”)

## Heuristic 4: Consistency and Standards

This heuristic highlights the value of consistency in design features and interaction patterns, both inside the application and in comparison to industry norms. It emphasises predictability for users.

**Good Design Solution :** Zalando.fi uses a grid layout with uniform-sized rectangular thumbnails to display product images across various category pages. This layout allows users to quickly scan and compare products. Regardless of the category being browsed, users can expect a similar presentation of product visuals. This consistency enhances the user experience by providing a familiar and predictable visual structure.

Image 6 and 7: Consistent grid layout despite showing different pages

### Heuristic 5: Error Prevention:

This heuristic highlights the proactive design of a system to prevent users from making mistakes. It involves providing clear instructions, confirmations, and safeguards to minimise the occurrence of user mistakes and reduce frustration.

**Usability Issue:** On Zalando, there are instances where users may experience a lack of clarity when filling out certain forms. For instance, if a user tries to submit a payment form with incomplete or incorrect information, the platform's error message might not always offer precise instructions on how to fix the problem. This could cause user confusion and require trial and error to continue.

The screenshot shows a payment page with a consistent grid layout. At the top, a message says "Pikatoimitus ei valittavasti ole käytettävissä tähän tilaukseen." Below this, there are two main sections: "TILAUSTIEDOT" and "LASKUTUSOSOITE". The "TILAUSTIEDOT" section includes a "Next" button, a product image of an orange t-shirt, and text: "T-paita - orange", "Väri: orange", "Koko: 44xR", "4,50 €", "Alunperin: 9,00 € -50%", and "Myyjä: Next". The "LASKUTUSOSOITE" section includes a "Sama kuin toimitusosoite" checkbox and a "MAKSUTAPA" section with a "SVEA" logo. A red error message "SYÖTÄ ETUKOODI TAI LAHJAKORTIN KOODI (vapaaehtoinen)" is displayed above a "Syötä koodi" input field. At the bottom, there's a "HINNOITTELUN SÄÄNNÖT SELITETTYNÄ" section with "Alunperin" and "Tuo tuotteen ensimmäinen listaushinta." To the right, a summary table shows "Välisumma 4,50 €", "Toimituskulut 9,95 €" (with a note about a free delivery threshold), and "KOKONAISSUMMA 14,45 €" (with a note about VAT). A red "TILAA NYT JA SIIRRÄ MAKSAAMAAN" button is at the bottom.

Image 8: When paying with bank transfer and adding wrong information you are redirected back to the payment page above without an error message.

### Heuristic 6: Recognition Rather Than Recall

This heuristic highlights how important it is to provide information in a way that reduces the amount of information that users must remember. Instead, relevant choices, actions, and information should be clearly apparent and easily accessible.

**Usability Issue:** Users may run into a situation where they have used several filters to limit down their product search when visiting Zalando. The platform lacks a clear “Clear All” option for users who want to remove all of the filters at once. Users may become frustrated trying to reset each filter one at a time as a result.

Image 9 and 10: The filters need to be removed one by one

### Heuristic 7: Flexibility and Efficiency of Use

This heuristic encourages interface design that accommodates both inexperienced and seasoned users. It entails giving seasoned users access to complex features and shortcuts while maintaining basic functionality for beginners.

**Good Design Solution:** Zalando effectively implements this heuristic by offering features like “Quick View” and “Wishlist”. With the help of these alternatives, experienced users may quickly examine items without having to visit each one's page. Meanwhile, new users can easily browse through products and make selections at their own pace.

Image 11:

When hovering your mouse on top of a product you can see the available sizes in Quick View mode.

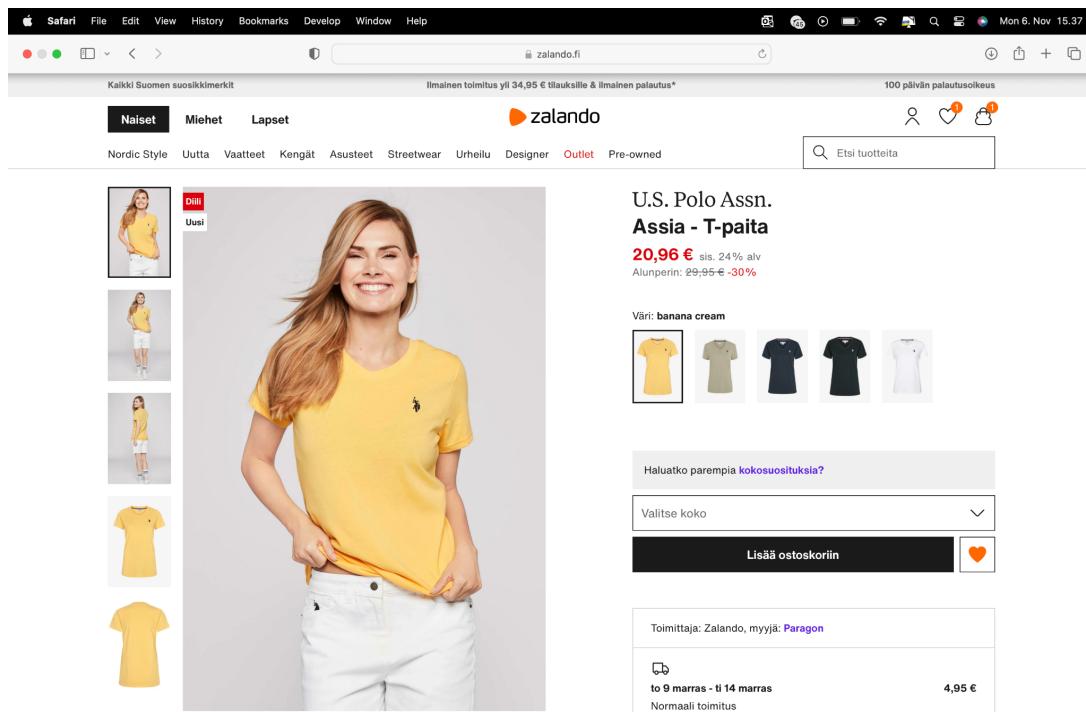


Image 12:

You can save an item to your wishlist by clicking the heart button in the item page.

### Heuristic 8: Aesthetic and Minimalist Design

This heuristic highlights the value of a clear, simple visual design that concentrates on the most important components. Its purpose is to remove features or unnecessary information that doesn't advance the user's objectives.

**Good Design Solution:** Zalando adheres to an aesthetic and minimalist design, displaying products with clear images, concise descriptions, and straightforward navigation. The platform makes sure that the focus stays on the items themselves by avoiding providing customers with too much information.

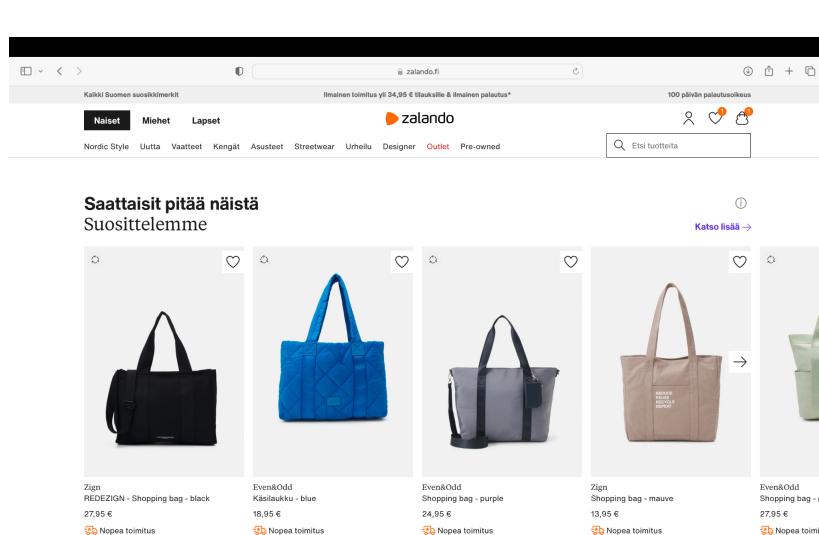


Image 13:

Front page of women's menu

### **Heuristic 9: Help Users Recognize, Diagnose, and Recover from Errors**

This heuristic highlights the importance of giving consumers accurate and helpful information when errors occur. To assist users in resolving problems, the system needs to provide informative error messages and recommend corrective actions.

**Good Design Solution:** Zalando does a great job of assisting users in identifying and resolving issues. For example, the platform shows the fields that need attention and displays particular warning messages if a user tries to submit an incomplete form during the checkout process. It also provides recommendations for corrections, such as adding missing information.

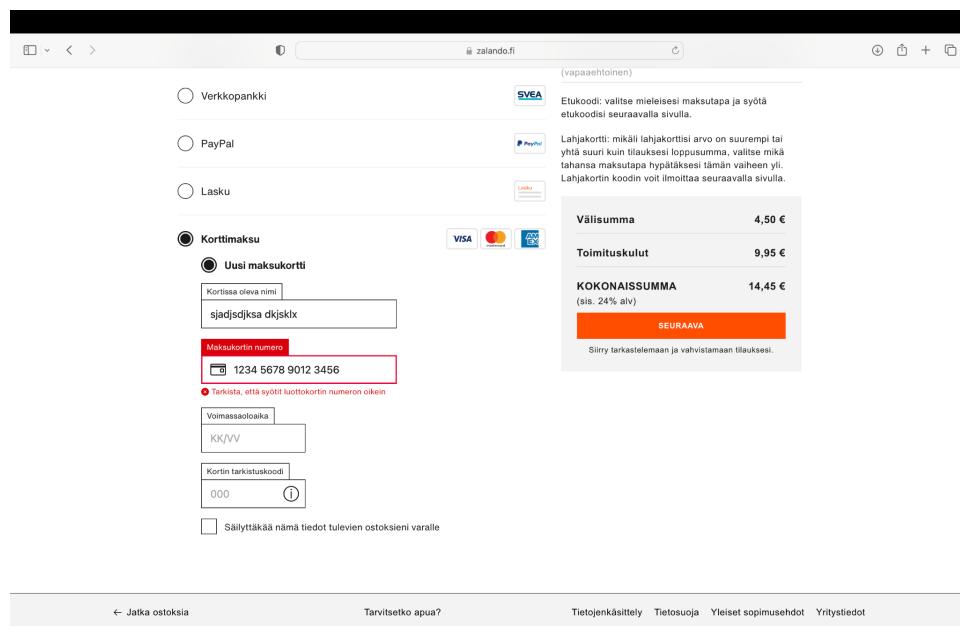


Image 14:

When paying using bank card and inputting an invalid card number, the website provides an error message for the user to check if the number is correct.

## **Heuristic 10: Help and Documentation**

This heuristic highlights that although an ideal interface should be self-explanatory and straightforward, it's also important to have resources easily available for users who require additional help or information. User manuals, tutorials, and FAQs are possible examples of this.

**Good Design Solution:** Zalando offers a broad “Ohjeet ja yhteystiedot” (Instructions and contact information) section that provides a range of resources, including FAQs, size guides, and detailed product information. The user profile menu makes it simple for users to reach this area, guaranteeing they always have the information they need close at hand.

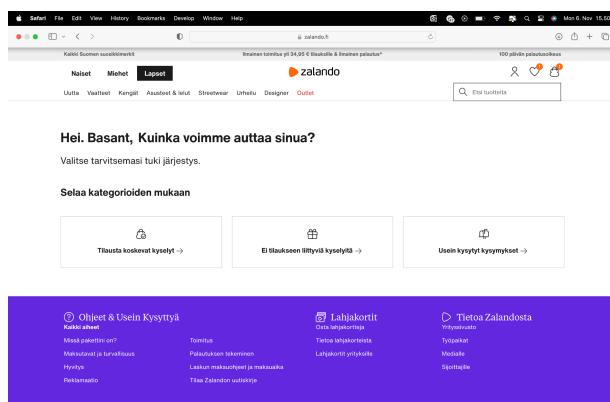


Image 15:

After clicking on the “Ohjeet ja yhteystiedot” button in the profile menu, the user is greeted with an extensive help page

### **3. Reflections**

#### **3.1 Most Difficult Heuristic to Understand**

Heuristic 7: Flexibility and Efficiency of Use (Nielsen, 1994) was the most difficult for me to understand. It needs a deep grasp of designing for both novice and expert users. Balancing the demands of these two user groups while retaining an intuitive design proved to be a difficult concept for me to understand.

#### **3.2 Most Difficult Heuristic to Find Examples About**

Finding specific examples of Heuristic 6: Recognition Rather Than Recall (Nielsen, 1994) on Zalando was quite difficult. While the platform typically follows this heuristic, it was less noticeable when compared to the other heuristics. This is most likely due to the fact that Zalando's design is naturally user-friendly, reducing the need for consumers to recall information.

#### **3.3 Easy to Understand and Provide Examples About**

Heuristic 8: Aesthetic and Minimalist Design (Nielsen, 1994) was quite simple to grasp and find examples for on Zalando. The platform has a clear structure and emphasis on essential product information which made it simple to spot instances when the design followed this heuristic.

#### **3.4 Examples Violating Multiple Heuristic Rules**

While Zalando usually succeeds at following usability criteria, there were a few cases where design decisions clashed with multiple principles. The complex checkout procedure with an overly thorough form violated Heuristic 2: Match between system and the real world while also lacking effective error prevention measures (violating Heuristic 5: Error Prevention). The combination of flaws results in a mediocre user experience, as consumers might possibly make mistakes throughout the checkout process and experience difficulties in correcting them.

#### **3.5 Severity of Usability Problems**

The usability issues found in Zalando were minor and unlikely to have a significant impact on the overall user experience. For example, a slight delay in updating the shopping bag icon (Heuristic 1) or the lack of a “Clear All Filters” option (Heuristic 6) can lead to momentary user frustration but will not significantly affect their ability to navigate or make purchases on the platform.

#### **3.6 Importance of Individual Inspection in Heuristic Evaluation**

Individual inspection is essential in heuristic assessment because it allows evaluators to approach the interface from new viewpoints and with diverse expertise (Nielsen, 1994). This initial phase guarantees that each evaluator can discover possible usability concerns independently without being affected by group dynamics. It encourages a variety of perspectives and allows for a more complete review of the interface.

### **3.7 Using Usability Heuristics for UI Design Guidance**

The 10 usability heuristics are extremely helpful suggestions for creating user interfaces. They offer an official structure for assessing and improving the user experience. These heuristics can be used as a checklist by designers to verify that their interfaces are intuitive, efficient, and user-friendly.

Designers can create interfaces that satisfy the requirements and expectations of a varied user group by keeping these ideas in mind during the design process (Nielsen, 1994).

### **3.8 Applicability of 10 Usability Heuristics Today**

Despite being introduced more than 30 years ago, Jakob Nielsen's ten usability heuristics remain extremely important for usability evaluation today (Nielsen, 1994). The basic concepts they represent, such as feedback, consistency, and user control, remain the foundation of effective UI design as technology evolves.

## **References**

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