

Design Critique Report: Hollister Co.,

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Overview

This is an online shopping interface for an apparel, accessories, and fragrances retail brand called Hollister Co.. The website allows you to browse and purchase clothing, search for specific products, create an account, search for stores, check out relevant news about the products, and other typical actions of an online retail interface. Fig 1.1 is the homepage of the website.

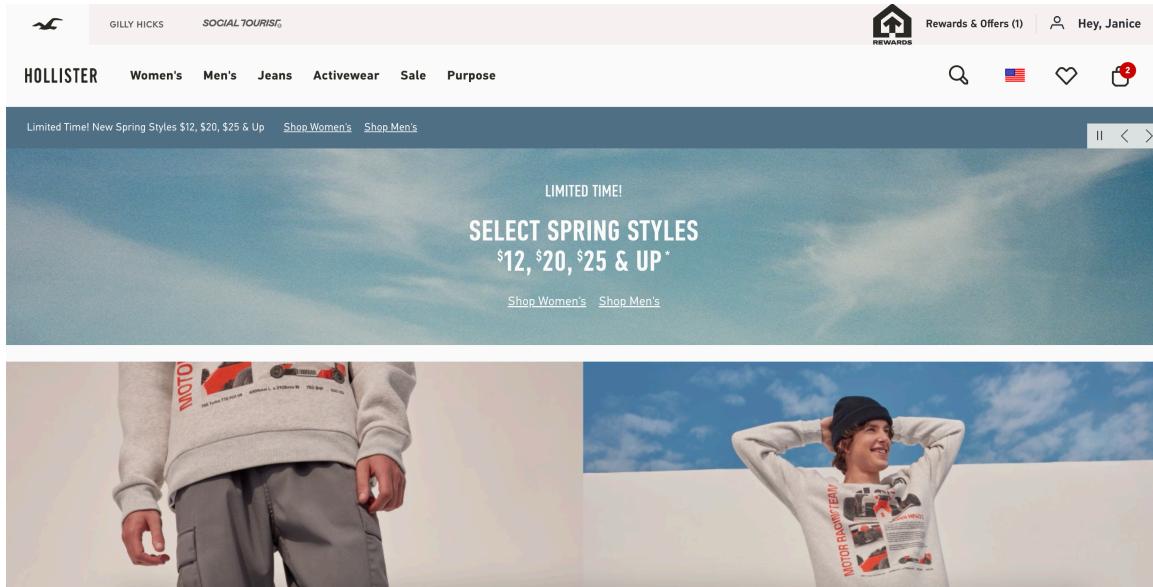


Fig 1.1 Homepage

As shown in Fig 1.2, hovering over an item in the navigation bar will lead you to a drop down menu that show the contents of that section. For example, this is the sub-content of the women's tab in the navigation bar.

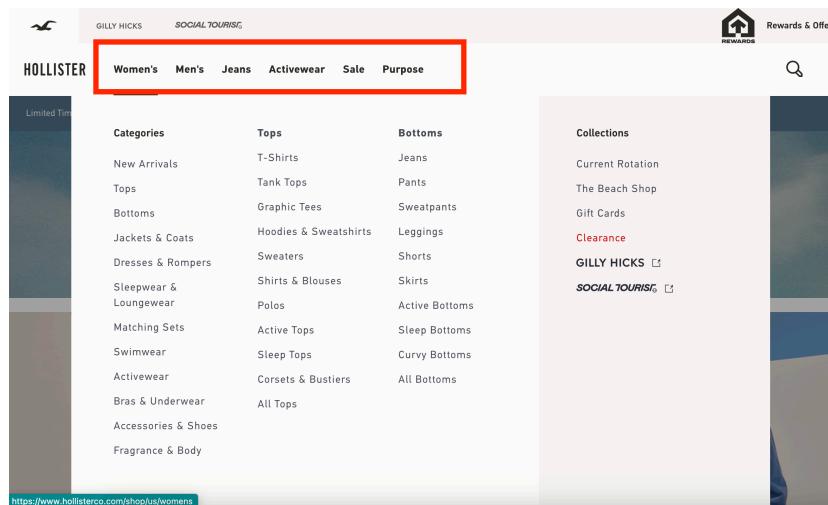


Fig 1.2 Navigation bar

Once the user chose an item in the subcontent menu, the website will go to that page showing relevant products, with more subcontent on the left navigation bar, and filters at the bottom. As shown in Fig 1.3.

The screenshot shows the Hollister website's product page for women's clothing. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Women's, Men's, Jeans, Activewear, Sale, and Purpose. On the left side, a vertical sidebar lists categories: Women's, Swimwear, Activewear, Bras & Underwear, Accessories & Shoes, Fragrance & Body, and Clearance. Below these, there is a section for filters with categories: Category (+), Color (+), Size (+), Length (+), Style (+), and Material (+). A large promotional banner in the center says "LIMITED TIME! SELECT SPRING STYLES \$12, \$20, \$25 & UP*". To the right of the banner, there is a product card for a "Feel Good Oversized Cozy Ho" priced at \$39.95, featuring a woman in a grey hoodie. Below the product card, there are color swatches and a "NEW!" badge. At the bottom, there are two smaller images of women's faces.

Fig 1.3 Next Page

The search button lets users search for a product, circled in Fig 1.4.

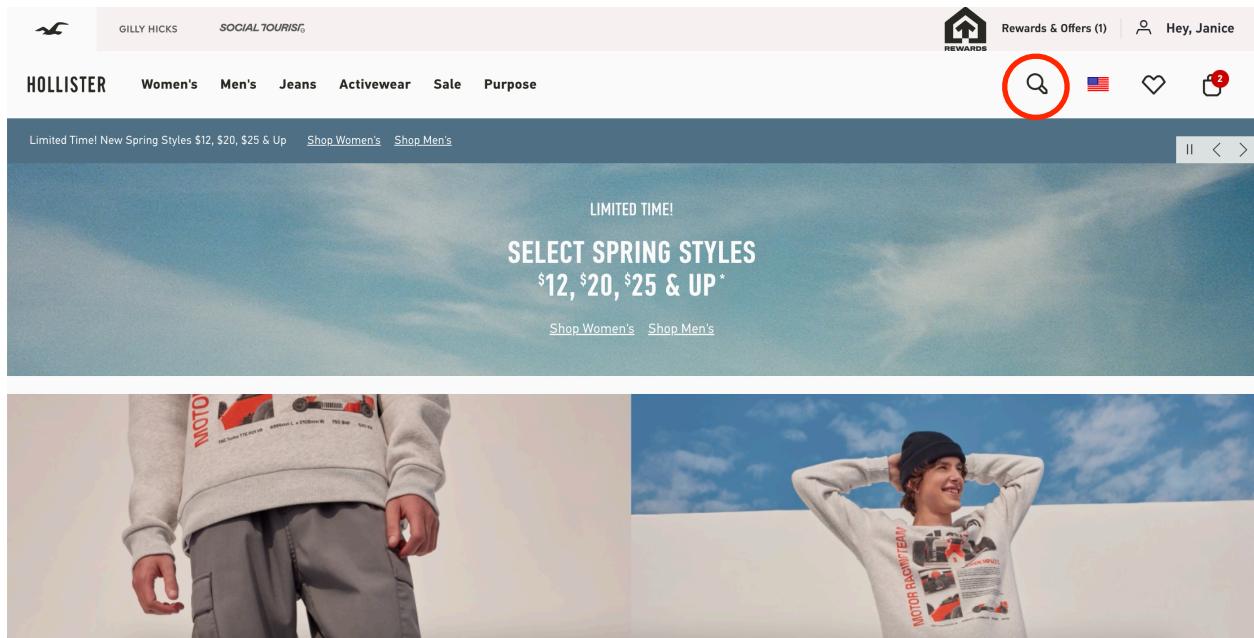


Fig 1.4 Search Button

The flag button lets users choose to shop in a different country and toggle between languages as shown in Fig 1.5.

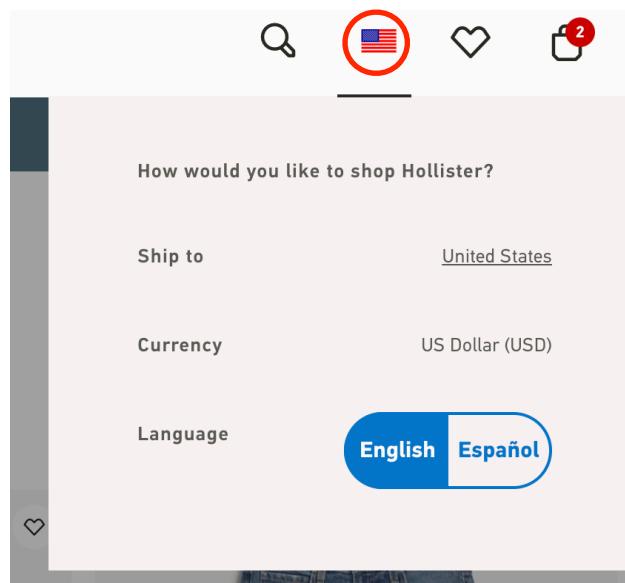


Fig 1.5 Flag Button

The heart button will lead to the “MY LIST” page which shows the products that the user saved and recently viewed as shown in Fig 1.6.

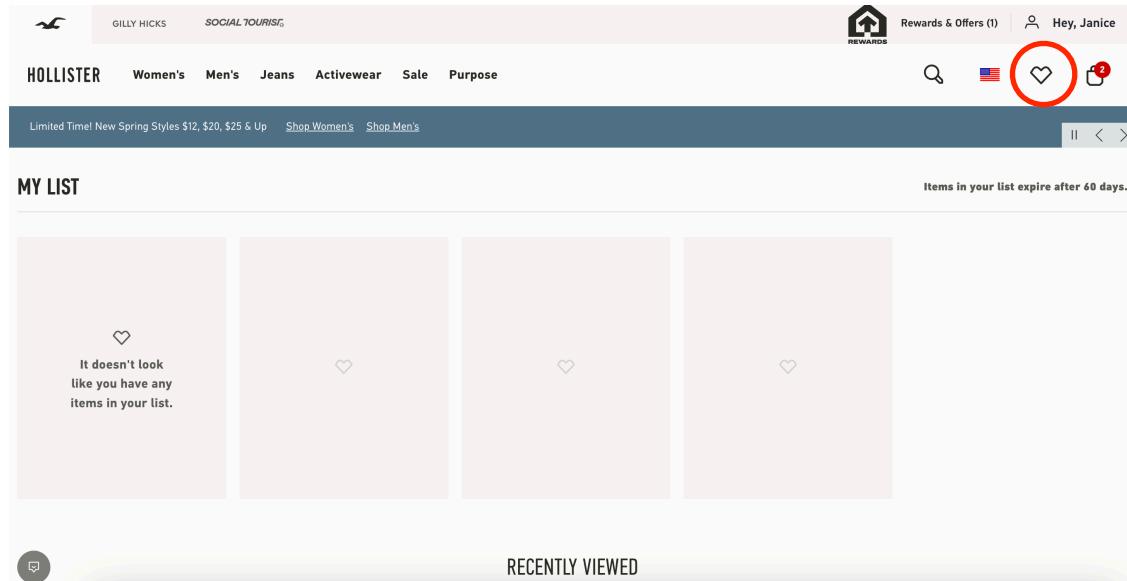


Fig 1.6 Heart Button

Lastly, the shopping bag button will lead to the checkout page showing items that the user has added to the shopping bag as shown in Fig 1.7.

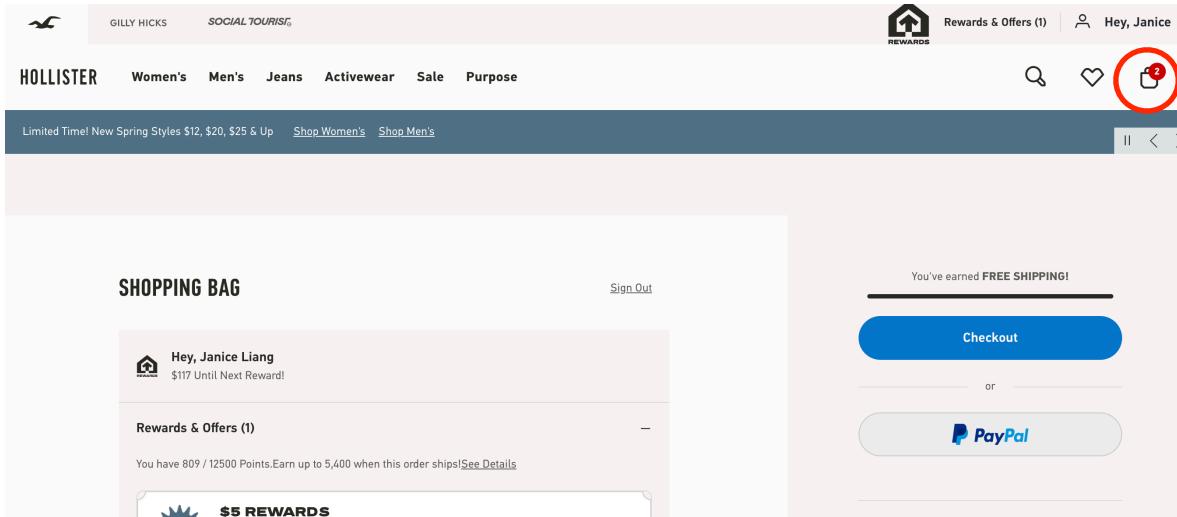


Fig 1.7 Shopping Bag Button

Clicking on this area will show information as seen in the screenshot, including account settings, rewards & offers, purchase history, find my store, and customer service as seen on Fig 1.8.

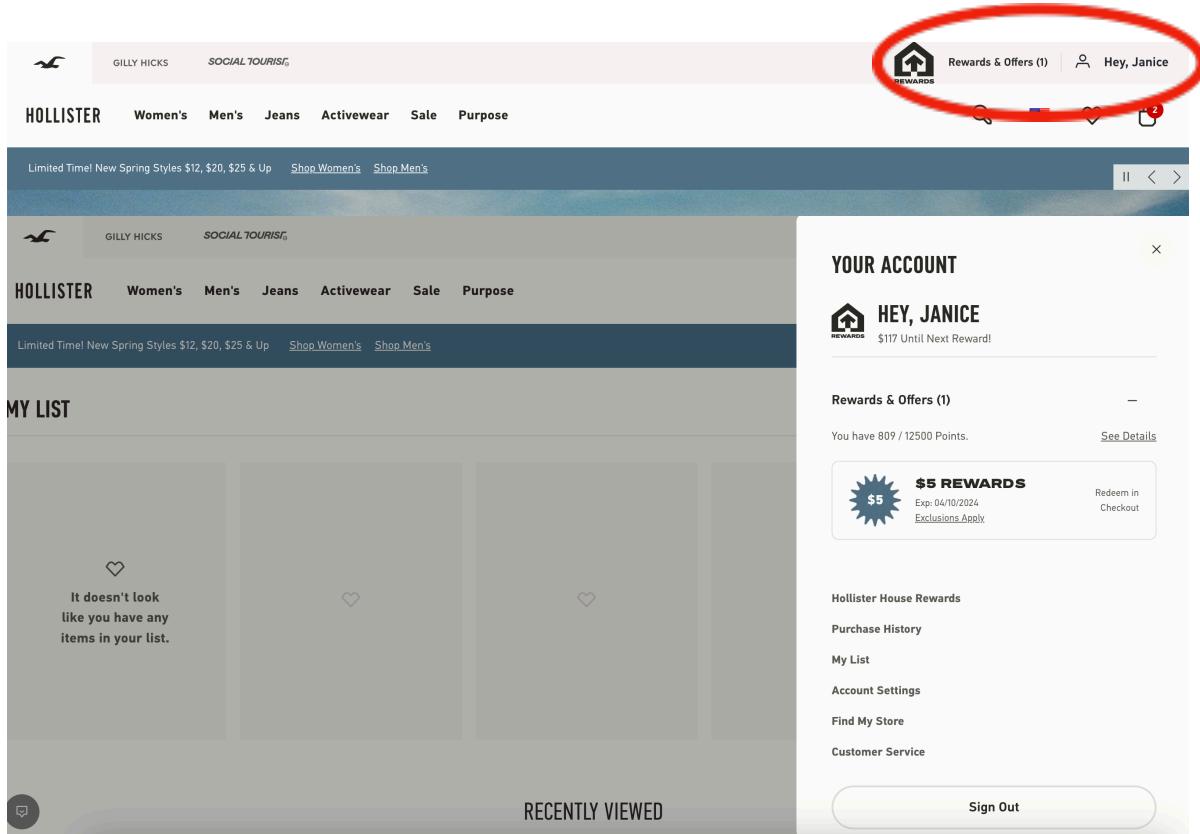


Fig 1.8 Account Button

Finally, there are more options for users to explore at the bottom of the webpage as shown in Fig 1.9.

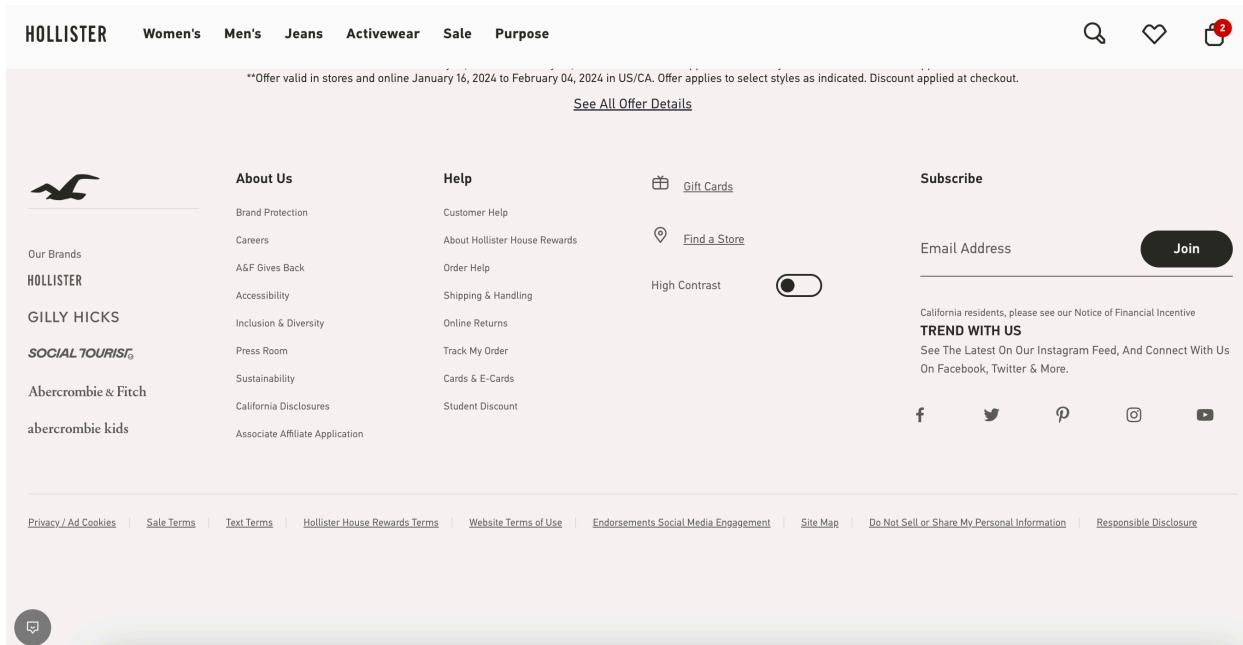


Fig 1.9 Page Bottom

Visual Design

Grid and Alignment

The website employs a structured layout with five columns separated by equally wide gutters, ensuring a clean and organized presentation of products. Each product is housed within its own column, avoiding any overlap across columns, which maintains a tidy alignment. The grid system is flexible, adjusting column widths and restarting with new dimensions after each section to accommodate various clothing categories. White space is strategically used to delineate products, enhancing user interaction by facilitating easier selection of desired items.

As shown in Fig 2.1, the five columns are separated by equally wide gutters. The product titles below are horizontally aligned.

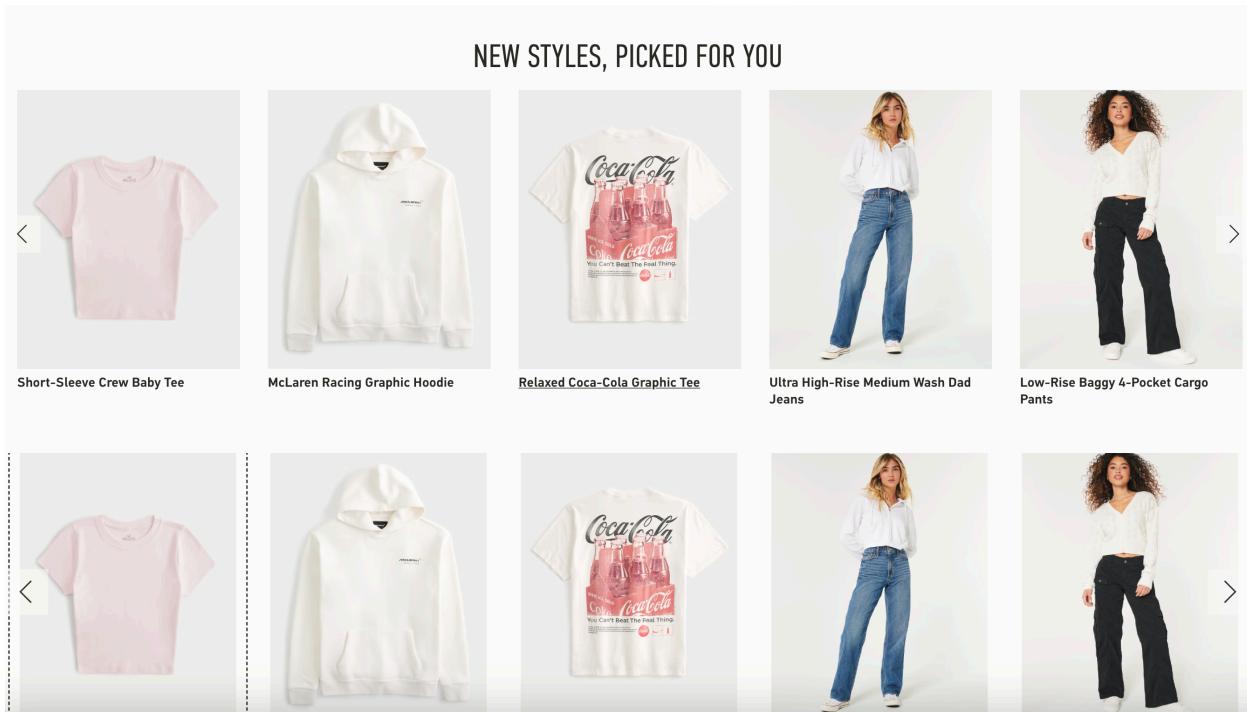


Fig 2.1 Gutters

The column widths vary across the page, but no elements ever cut across more than one column. The alignment is always tidy. The grid breaks after every section and starts a new grid with a different column width. Each column is used to show one product. Different sections show different categories of clothes. One example of white space is marked by the red rectangle in the screenshot. It's used to separate every product because each product picture leads to its own product page, so the white space makes sure the user clicks on the right product they want, also for clearer visual demonstration.

Typeface and Emphasis



Fig 2.2 Typeface 1

The website almost entirely uses san-serif fonts to deliver a more young and simple vibe. The only serif font I found is shown in Fig 2.2, for style diversity. Here, font size is used effectively. The biggest font is for the title, second biggest is sub-title, and the smallest font is for the detailed description. They complement each other.

As shown in Fig 2.3, The product name and the clearance price have high font weight, to emphasize importance and draw attention. Three colors are used here. The color use is consistent for all products, that the navy blue price is always the lowest, sometimes being “house rewards price”. Familiar users will know to look for the navy price for the lowest price they can get.



LACE-DETAILED MAXI SKIRT

\$49.95 **\$18.99** Clearance

\$15.19 Price After 20% Off

Pay in 4 interest-free payments on orders between

\$30 - \$1,500 with **Klarna** ? or **PayPal** ?

★★★★★ 4.7 (48)

Color: Black

11 people are currently viewing

Fig 2.3 Typeface 2

Overall Critique and Improvement

horizontally aligned. Main

Left-aligned. Sub-category has lower font weight

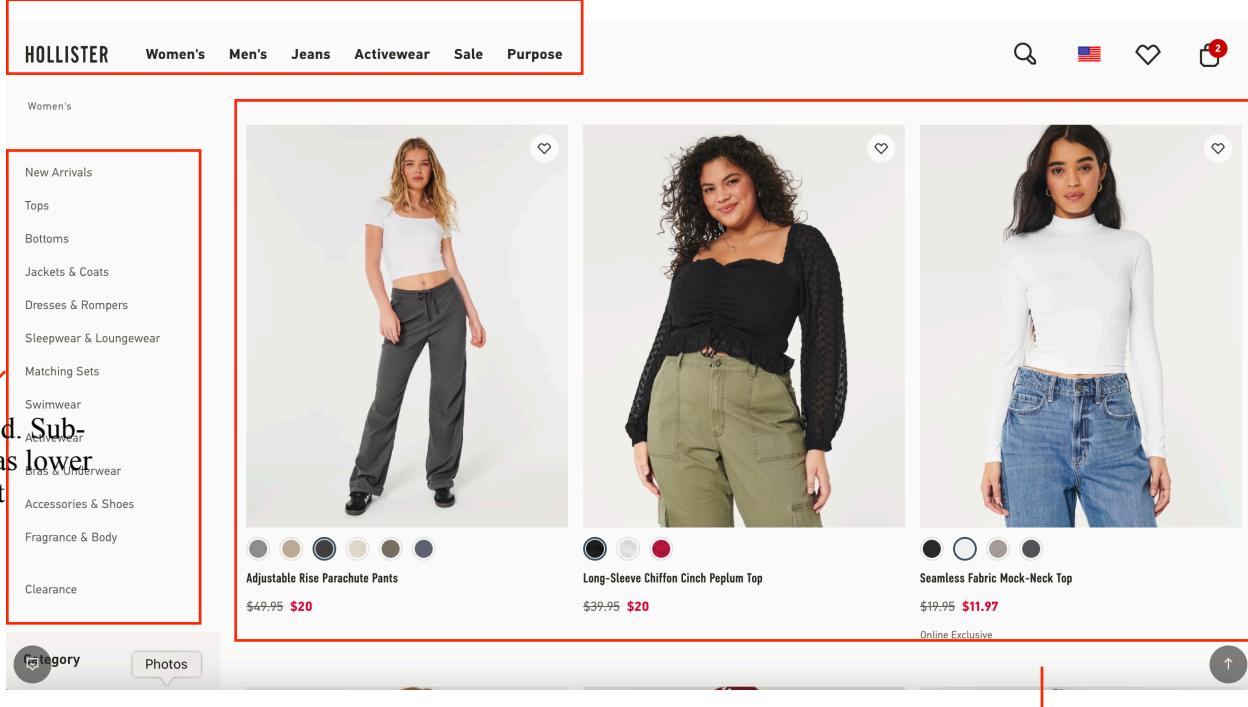


Fig 2.4 Alignment

Neat grid with gutters

Overall, the design of the website is clean, practical and pleasing to the eye. The alignment of the product page is neat, as marked on Fig 2.4. The product pictures are big so that only one row shows at a time, which lets users see the products very well. But at the same time, fewer products are shown at one time. Not every user has the patient to keep scrolling to see more products.

The typeface is used effectively, with important words always being bigger and bolder. The entire site uses serif and high x-height fonts for style and unity.

The color scale is impeccable. It is very simple and standard. There is no redundant color block nor does it draw attention away from the products. It allows the products to bring color to the page which makes the products stand out. Every product picture has the same beige background, which is soft and can show the product clearly. The color scale works very well by being minimal and it creates the feeling of luxury and a high-end shopping experience.

In summary, the website's visual design is commendably clean and user-friendly, marked by thoughtful grid alignment, strategic use of typefaces, and a restrained color palette. These elements together foster a luxurious and high-end shopping experience. However, there's room

for improvement in product display density and potential enhancements in the visual emphasis of main categories. By addressing these areas, the website can balance its aesthetic appeal with practical considerations for a diverse user base, potentially increasing user engagement and satisfaction.

Interaction Types and Modalities

The Hollister. CO website implements multiple interaction types and modalities. The interaction types used are instructional and conversing. The interaction modality used is WIMP, and in the mobile app, touch.

Interaction Types

The primary interaction the website implements is instructional which is functioning throughout the entire website. Fig 3.1 shows the landing page of the website. On the navigation bar, once the user hovers above their desired category (“Women’s” in this example), the corresponding menu will drop down, then the user can click on one of the options to go to that corresponding page.

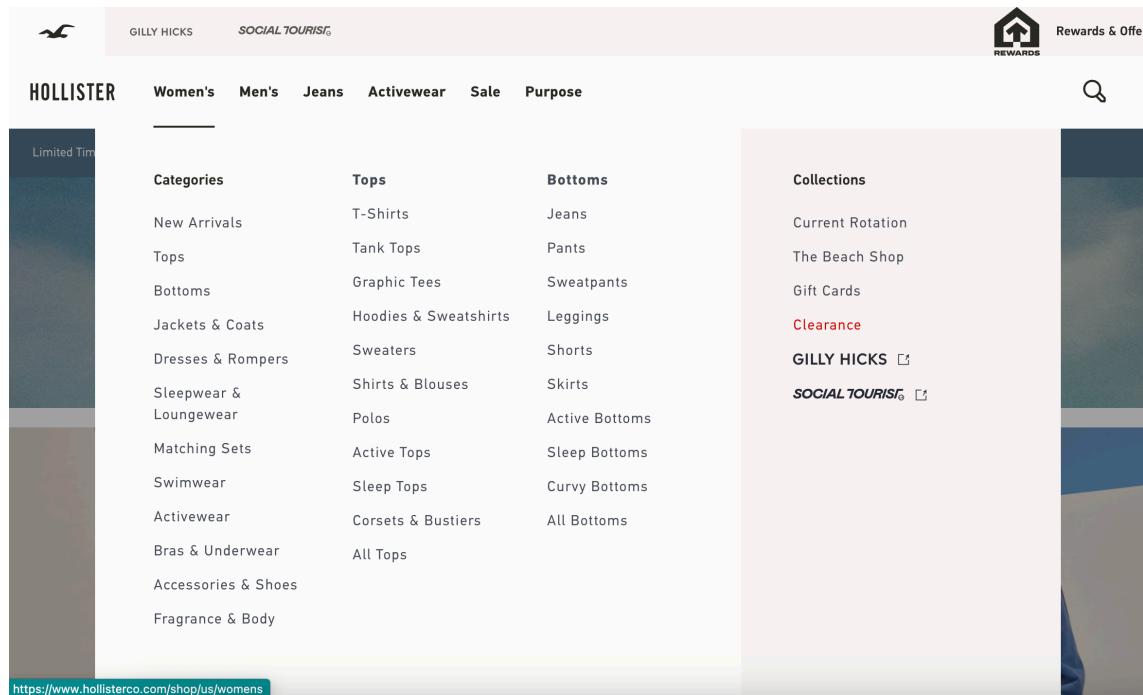


Fig 3.1 interaction type 1

On the next page (Fig 3.2), there are more sub-categories on the left navigation bar, and filters at the bottom. Clicking the plus sign will expand the filter for users to choose from.

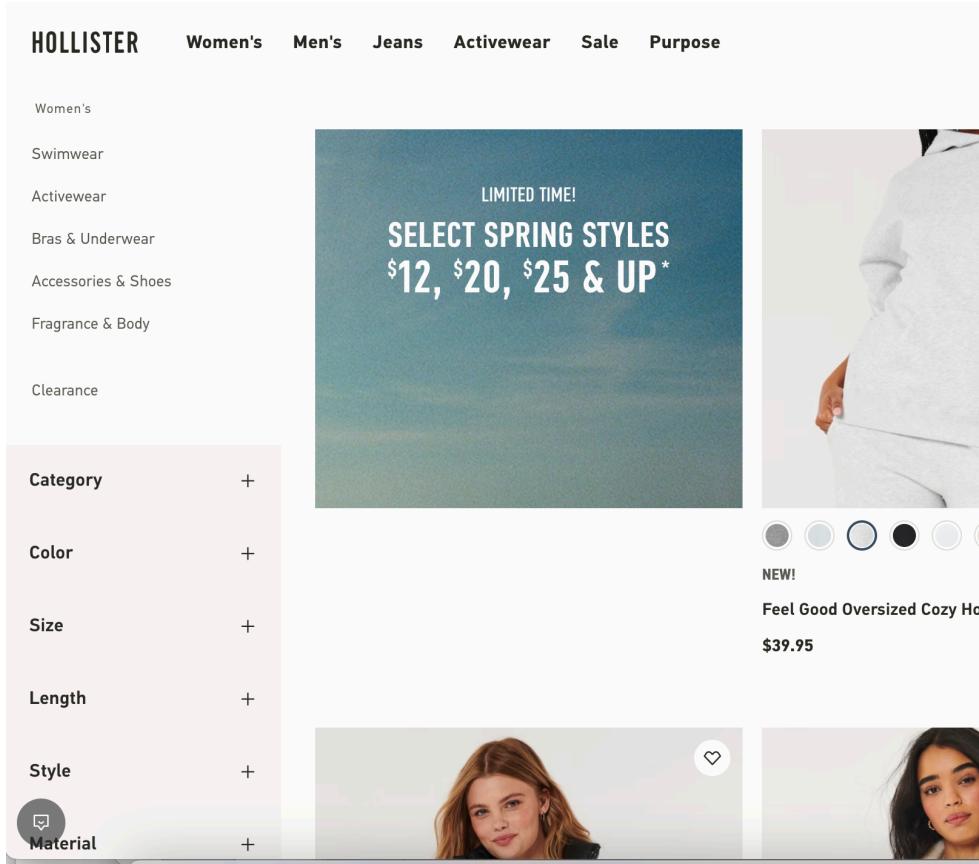


Fig 3.2 interaction type 2

The conversing interaction type is implemented for users to interact with customer service on the website. Click on the account icon on the top right corner of any page and select “customer service”, then it will lead to the page shown in Fig 3.3, also clicking the little “chat” icon on every bottom left page will do the same. Now select “chat with us”, and a chat box will pop up. The user uses the instructing modality to access the conversing modality. Users can type in their questions and the system will respond via text. If a human representative is needed, the user will be connected to one to answer their questions.

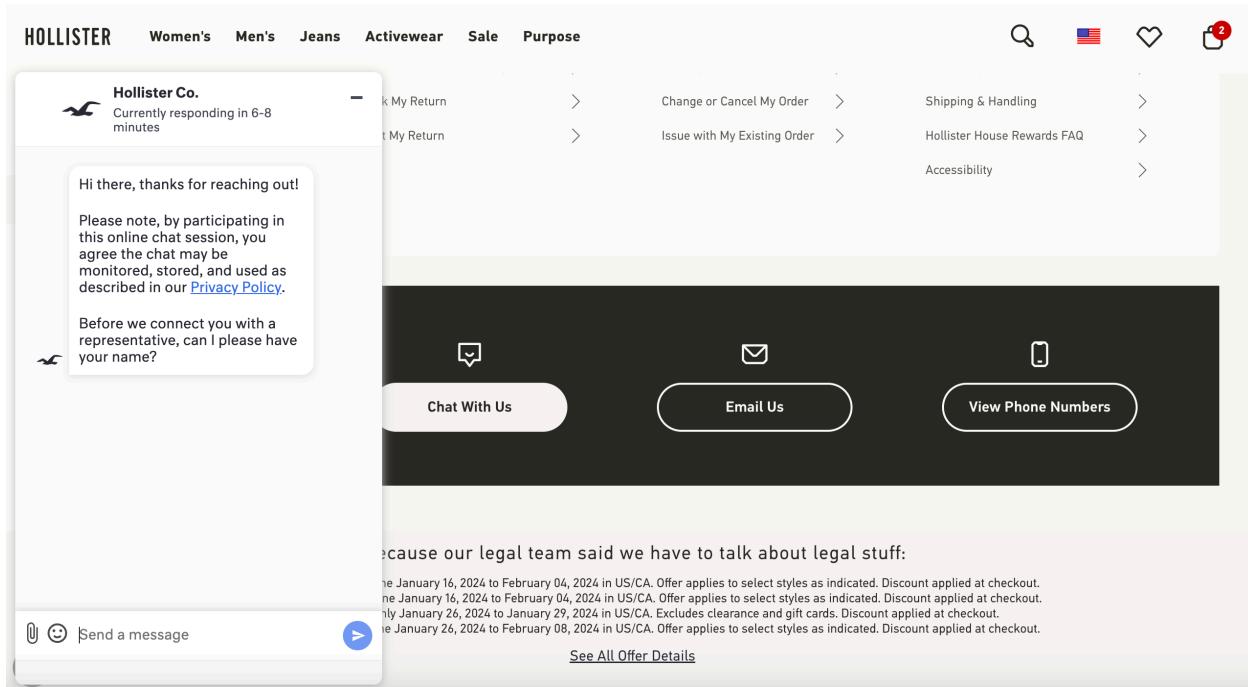


Fig 3.3 interaction type 3

Modalities

The website primarily uses the WIMP modality. It consists of a product page window that can be scrolled. There are icons to indicate different functionalities like searching, viewing shopping bag, changing language, and seeing saved items. The user clicks the icon and the system listens to the command and brings them to a new webpage. The main menu is where the users can preview and select what category of product they are shopping for. The user's mouse controls the cursor when accessing the website from a computer. However, there is no speech-input function, which could be convenient when the user can't type. The website could be more vibrant by introducing multimedia modality, such as adding videos to the product image when the user hovers the cursor on the image. That way the product can be seen closer to real-life and the user experience will be more fun.

When the user accesses the mobile app or website on their phone, as seen on Fig 3.4, touch is the primary interaction modality. The users touch the interface to navigate the app/website. The menu options are selected by tapping the “shop” icon on the app. When using the website on a mobile device, the website loads very slowly, which is a major downside since speed is a top factor for a good website.

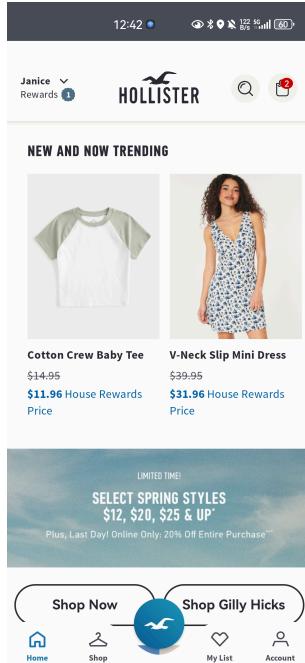


Fig 3.4 Modality

In summary, Hollister Co.'s digital platforms offer a user-friendly experience through carefully designed instructional and conversational interactions, supported by WIMP and touch modalities. While these elements facilitate effective navigation and support, the introduction of additional modalities like speech input and multimedia content, along with optimizations for mobile browsing speed, could further enrich the user's engagement and satisfaction with the brand's online presence.

Affordances, Signifiers, and Gulfs

The website's interface is designed with user interaction at the forefront, employing a variety of affordances and signifiers to guide users through tasks such as searching, choosing product options, and navigating language settings. The use of clear visual cues, such as changing button colors upon selection and dropdown arrows for additional options, helps bridge the gulf of execution by making it clear what actions can be taken. Similarly, the gulf of evaluation is effectively addressed by providing immediate visual feedback, like the change in appearance of selected items and the display of search results, ensuring users understand the outcomes of their interactions. However, while these design elements facilitate a straightforward and intuitive user experience, there is an opportunity to enhance the interface further. For example, allowing users to preview product colors by simply hovering over the color options could streamline the browsing process, making it more efficient and engaging. This adjustment would minimize the

need for clicks and reduce the effort required to view multiple product variations, potentially improving the overall user experience.

Affordances and Signifiers

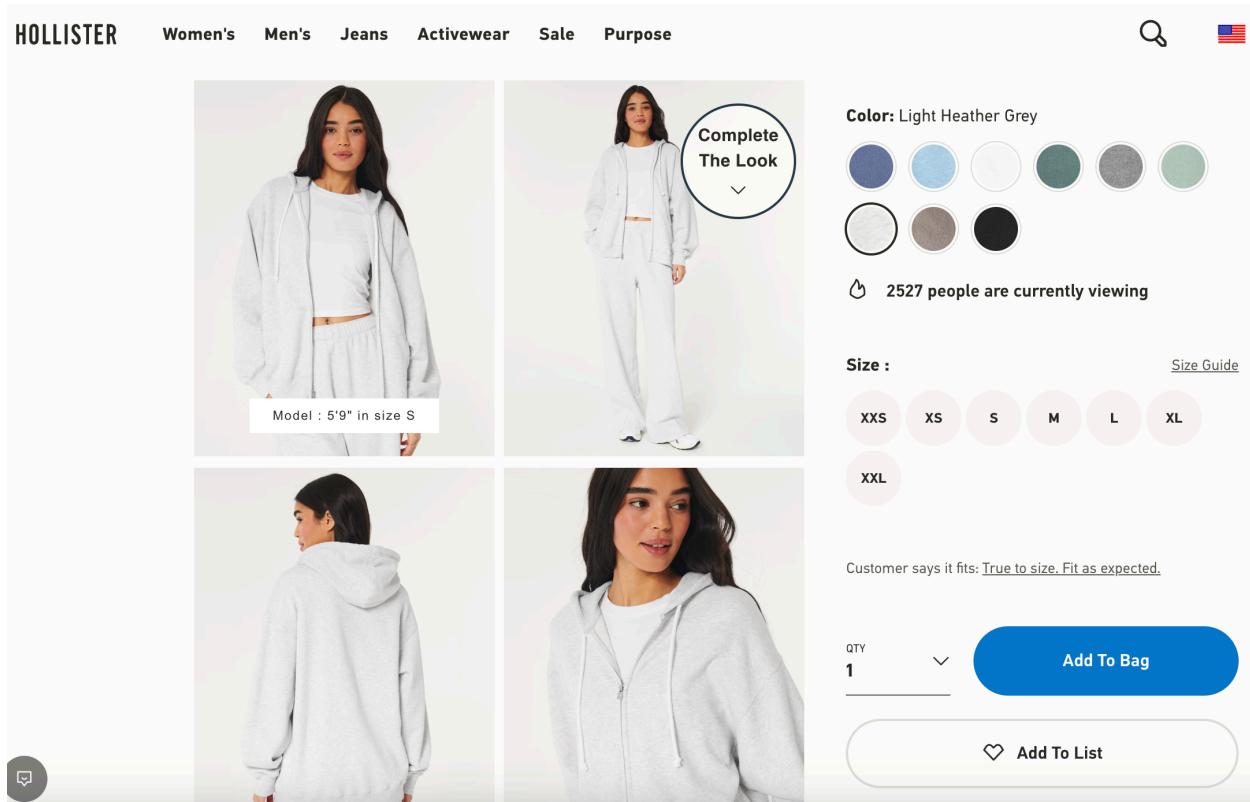


Fig 4.1 Product page

Object	Affordance	Signifier
Search bar	The bar affords to search. It affords typing text.	<p>The affordance of typing is signified by the outline of the box and how the cursor changes when hovering and the instruction “Please fill out this field” when hovering.</p> <p>The affordance of searching is signified by the word “search” and the magnifying glass icon</p>

	The toggle affords to be clicked and toggled between languages	The affordance of clicking is signified by the cursor changing when hovering. The affordance of toggling is signified by the shape of the toggle and the options written on it
	the arrow affords to be clicked and drop down a menu of quantity to choose from	the affordance of clicking and dropping down a menu is signified by the arrow The affordance of choosing quantity is signified by the word “QTY” and the numbers
	the size buttons afford to be clicked and choose	The affordance of clicking and choosing is signified by the background color of a button changing when hovering over that button The affordance of picking a size is signified by the word “Size” and the size options written on the buttons
	the color buttons afford to be clicked and choose	The affordance of clicking and choosing is signified by the button’s outline changing color when hovering over that button The affordance of picking a color is signified by the word “Color” and the buttons of different colors
	The button affords to be clicked and add the current product to bag	The affordance of clicking is signified by the button’s shape The affordance of adding to bag is signified by the word “Add To Bag”

Table 4.1 Affordances and Signifiers

Gulf of Execution and Evaluation

Task	Gulf of Execution	Gulf of Evaluation
------	-------------------	--------------------

choosing color and size and adding to bag	The user knows to select color and size because if they don't, when they click "Add To Bag", they won't be able to complete this task and a red line of warning will show up. It's easy for the user to know how to complete the task because of the clear instructions.	after they choose a color or a size, the button will change its look that's different than all the other unchosen buttons, so the user knows that they already chose that option The affordance of searching is signified by the word "search" and the magnifying glass icon
search bar	The user knows to type by the signifier "search", the magnifying glass icon, the outline of the textbox, how the cursor changes when hovering and the instruction "Please fill out this field" when hovering. It's easy to determine how to do this task because of these multiple signifiers.	After the user types a keyword and press "Enter", the page will redirect to a page showing search result, there, user can browse the products whose names contain that keyword.
Toggle between languages	The user knows to click by the cursor changing when hovering and the shape of the toggle	After the user toggles, the two options will swap color, which dark blue is now the chosen option and white is the unchosen.

Table 4.2 Gulf of Execution and Evaluation

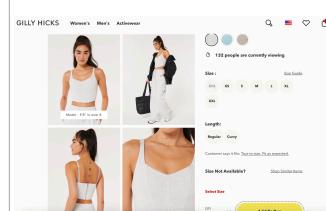
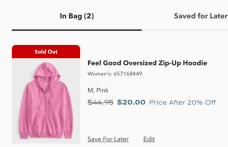
Critique and Recommendations for Improvement

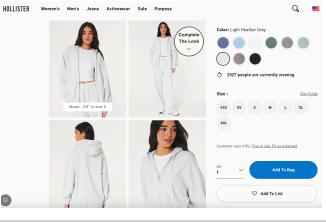
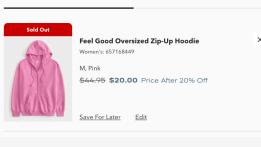
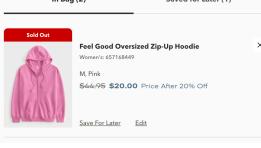
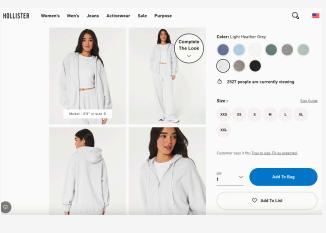
Overall, the affordances, signifiers, and the gulfs of execution and evaluation are successfully used on this website. The images used to represent metaphors are very clear, simple, and user-friendly. Executions are easy to determined and smooth to implement.

One issue that could be improved is, on the product page, in order to see the product of a different color, users have to click on the color button. This could be improved by showing picture of a different product color just by hovering over a different color button. This will make the browsing experience easier and smoother to see all the different color options without changing the current color option.

Heuristic analysis using Nielsen's Heuristics

The website's design and interaction analysis highlights both positive and negative aspects of the user experience in accordance with established usability heuristics. Positive observations include clear visibility of system status, a match between the system and the real world, consistency and standards, an aesthetic and minimalist design, error recognition with prompts for correction, and helpful documentation via a predictive search feature. However, areas for improvement were identified, particularly in user control and freedom, error prevention, and recognition rather than recall. The lack of an undo button for deleted items from the shopping bag and the absence of a warning before deletion have been noted as significant issues. To enhance user experience, it is recommended that the website incorporate confirmation dialogues before item deletion, introduce temporary undo options post-deletion, and provide a "Recently Deleted" section for easy recovery of items. These enhancements would not only reduce the severity of errors but also foster a more forgiving and user-centric navigation environment.

Issue/observation (Pos or Neg)	Heuristic	Image	Severity (1 -5 point scale, where 5 is severe/catastrophic)
after the user choose a color, the button will button will be have a black outline that's different than all the other unchosen buttons, so the user knows that they already chose that option	Visibility of system status		N/A
Everything is presented in a human-understandable way and information is shown in a logical order	Match between system and the real world		N/A
when the user deletes an item from the shopping bag, there is no undo button	User control and freedom		2

<p>Every product has the same interface to choose size and color and to add to bag</p>	<p>Consistency and standards</p>		<p>N/A</p>
<p>Before deleting a product from the shopping bag, there is no warning. This could be an issue because the user took effort to choose the options and add the product to bag. If they accidentally deleted it, it's hard for them to find it again</p>	<p>Error prevention</p>		<p>5</p>
<p>There is no “recently deleted” items inventory for users to retrieve a deleted item from bag. This is an issue because users might delete a product by accident, especially when there is no warning when doing so.</p>	<p>Recognition rather than recall</p>		<p>5</p>
<p>There is no accelerators for experienced users to perform quicker actions, but it is not a big issue because the interactions are simple and straightforward in the first place.</p>	<p>Flexibility and efficiency of use</p>		<p>1</p>

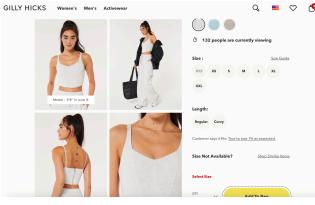
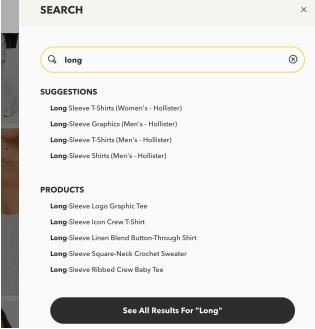
The website is designed in a minimal and aesthetic way. Every piece of information shown is concise and useful	Aesthetic and minimalist design		N/A
When the user tries to add a product to bag without choosing the required options, an error message will pop up and direct the user what to do	Recognize, Diagnose, and Recover from Errors		N/A
When the user type a word in the search bar, there will be a drop down menu suggesting relevant results, this helps lower the interaction cost and helps the user find their desired product more easily	Help and documentation		N/A

Table 5.1 Heuristic Evaluation

Analysis and Recommendation

I made 6 positive and 4 negative observations. The website did well on Visibility of system status, Match between system and the real world, Consistency and standards, Aesthetic and minimalist design, Recognize, Diagnose, and Recover from Errors, and Help and documentation, while having issues on User control and freedom (Severity score: 2), Error prevention (Severity score: 5), Recognition rather than recall (Severity score: 5), Flexibility and efficiency of use (Severity score: 1). Every action has a reaction shown on the website that lets the user know the system status. All pictures and texts are understandable to human. The website has a consistent layout that makes browsing and interacting with it easy. Whenever the system requires more actions from the user, the website will prompt the warning and instructions. The search function is helpful by dropping down relevant results once the user types something. The biggest heuristics issues happen in the shopping bag page, where there is no warning when the user tries to delete an item, or undo button or anywhere to recover it after deleting. The website can improve on this

by adding a pop-up message when the user deletes an item, asking if they are certain about it. Also, after the user deletes an item, there can be an undo button that shows for five seconds in the corner of the page, for easy recovery in case the user regrets. Furthermore, there could be a "Recently Deleted" page for user to go to whenever they want to find a recently deleted item. That way, users can recognize instead of recall by choosing from a list rather than going through the entire process of finding the product and choosing the product parameters all over again.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Hollister Co. website presents a user-friendly interface that largely adheres to established usability heuristics, facilitating a seamless online shopping experience. The site's visual design is clean and aesthetically pleasing, with a consistent and intuitive navigation system that aligns with users' expectations from the real world. The grid and alignment provide a structured presentation of products, while the typeface and color use effectively highlight important information and contribute to a luxurious and high-end shopping atmosphere.

However, the heuristic evaluation identified several areas for improvement to enhance user control, error prevention, and efficiency. Notably, the absence of an undo feature for deleted items and a lack of warning prompts before the deletion were marked as significant usability concerns. These issues, if addressed, could drastically reduce user frustration and the potential loss of interest or sales.

The recommendation includes the introduction of confirmation dialogues before deletion, temporary undo features, and a "Recently Deleted" section to allow users to easily retrieve mistakenly removed items. Additionally, the suggestion to enable color previews on hover could streamline the browsing process and improve the overall shopping experience. Implementing these changes would not only ameliorate the noted deficiencies but also strengthen the site's user-centric design approach.

Moreover, incorporating multimedia elements and optimizing the mobile experience could further enrich user engagement. Introducing video previews of products and improving loading times on mobile devices would address current limitations in the interaction modalities.

By integrating these recommendations, Hollister Co. can significantly improve usability, cater to a broader user base, and ensure a more efficient and enjoyable online shopping experience. These enhancements are essential for maintaining a competitive edge in the dynamic and rapidly evolving digital retail landscape.

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