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Course:

BA Games Design

Module:

User Experience Design

Chosen Site:

UNIQLO; A popular clothing brand with in-person stores and an eCommerce website accessible on Desktop and mobile devices.

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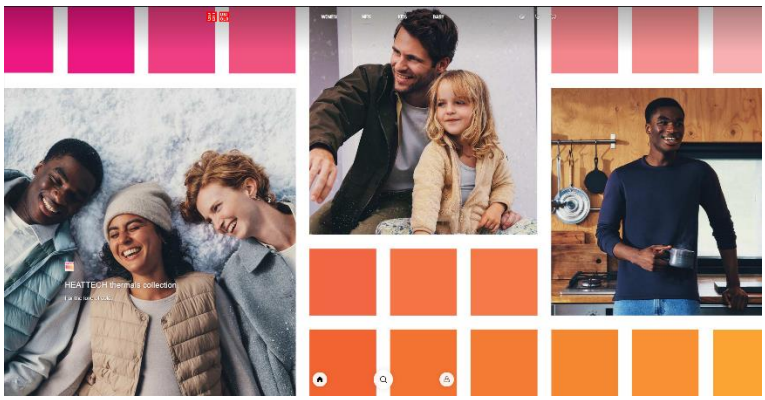
Initial Review

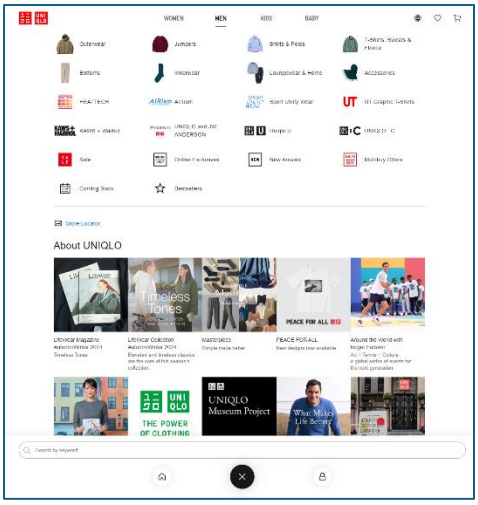
Upon viewing the landing page of 'UNIQLO.com'[1], the user is immediately bombarded with a slideshow of promotional material showcasing certain fashion pieces that are tailored towards the latest trend, collection and gender of choice. While this could be convenient for general browsing, this does obstruct the flow of a user that would be looking for a specific item on the store page.



Landing page of Uniqlo.com
(Image taken from [1])

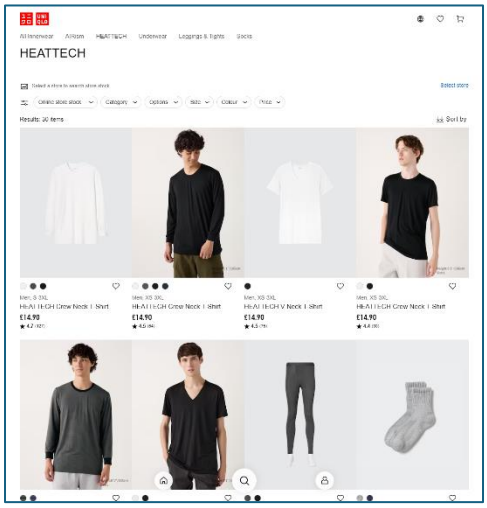
Trying to move towards the main store page that list all the items that are available from UNIQLO [1] also feels convoluted as the buttons on the top of the landing page do not redirect the user towards that specific page, rather it just switches the slide show to that of what option you had selected (Women, Men, Kids and Baby).

If the user wanted to move from that page, they would have to press the question mark button at the very bottom of the page which is not intuitive for the user if it was their first time viewing the page.



Main Page of Uniqlo.com (Image taken from [1])

The main page of UNIQLO [1] is laid out better than the landing page as it shows the user all the options for different types of clothing as well as what special collections are currently on sale. It also has a small button to help users locate stores that may be open near their location with a section underneath covering promotional and brand-related information.



Example of a selection of clothes of Uniqlo.com (Image taken from [1])

Once the user has gotten past the past few screens, the pages that are dedicated towards showcasing specific clothes are laid out in a more concise and intuitive way. The clothes are displayed either on their own or on models with large pictures. The page also allows users to filter through a few select options to help with their search.

UX Principles

In this section I will elaborate on seven UX Design principles, these principles are: *User-centricity, Consistency, Hierarchy, Context, User Control, Accessibility and lastly Usability.[2]*

1) **User-Centricity**

User-centricity revolves around the idea of creating products and services that are catered towards solving problems that the user might have. This means putting a users' needs first and taking note of said users' preferences, needs and wants to cater a site to them. This helps to make sure a designer is not biased towards a user's needs and solves the issue of creating a product or site that would be considered unnecessary [3].

The idea of user-centricity is adjacent to the process of UX Design, where gathering user research and conducting user-centered testing helps to gauge how well a site or product will fulfill the user's needs.

2) **Consistency**

The principle of consistency is the idea of creating a range of products, applications or a layout of a site that has the same design choices and principles used throughout. This can be broken down in a few sections [4]:

- **Visual consistency**
  The choice of fonts, colour palettes and layout should be kept the same throughout the product being designed.

- **Functional consistency**
  Any action that the user makes should be similar if not the same, as well as any of the controls be the same throughout different sections of the site if applicable.

- **Internal consistency**
  The product (or products) should behave and look the same across different platforms.

- **External consistency**
  If this product were to be part of a brand family, it should have the same themes and design when compared to its other counterparts.

3) **Hierarchy**

Hierarchy refers to the way information is structured (Information Architecture) on a site as well as a visual hierarchy with the way individual screens work together. This helps to draw attention to specific information and can be used to direct users to information or pages that they would find to be the most useful.

- **Information architecture**
  This is in reference to the overall structure and organisation of the site and how a user would navigate throughout it. Certain design choices can be made to highlight specific information and information groups to help the user navigate the site easier.

- **Visual hierarchy**
  Visual hierarchy is similar to the aforementioned information architecture, with the idea of using fonts and different colour palates to highlight certain visual elements or information on a site.

4) User Control

User control is centered around the idea of giving the user the right amount of control when using a product; minimising the number of steps certain functions takes to stop users becoming frustrated or giving the user more options are certain points to allow them to fine tune their experience.

A common example of this is giving users an easy 'undo' function, allowing them to easily go backwards through a site if they were to do something by mistake.

In addition, having clearly labelled 'routes' through a product can help with overall site navigation and user control.

5) **Usability**

Usability is simply a measure of how easy the designed product is to use; this can be broken into five components:

- **Learnability**
  This is a measure of how easy it is for a user to use the product for the first time; this is where having a consistent and user-centered design will help users learn how to navigate the product easily.

- **Efficiency**
  This is whether the design of the product allows users to fulfill their needs in a quick and efficient manner, with the least amount of backtrack or steps.

- **Memorability**
  A product that is designed with memorability in mind will be easy for users to re-familiarise themselves with upon revisiting after a while of not using it.

- **Errors**
  In this case, this is a measure of the severity of the errors that could occur when a user interacts with the product and how a user could possibly recover from said errors.

- **Satisfaction**
  This is how satisfactory the product is towards the user and whether it fulfils their needs with as few issues as possible.

Usability should be placed over aesthetics when designing a product as it is what the user will normally gravitate towards in terms of the user-experience centered design; using user research, feedback and other forms of data help to create a user-experience that is friendly, efficient and highly user-focused.

UX Analysis and how it can be improved

This section will dissect 'Uniqlo.com' and contrast how well the site follows the UX Design Principles discussed previously.

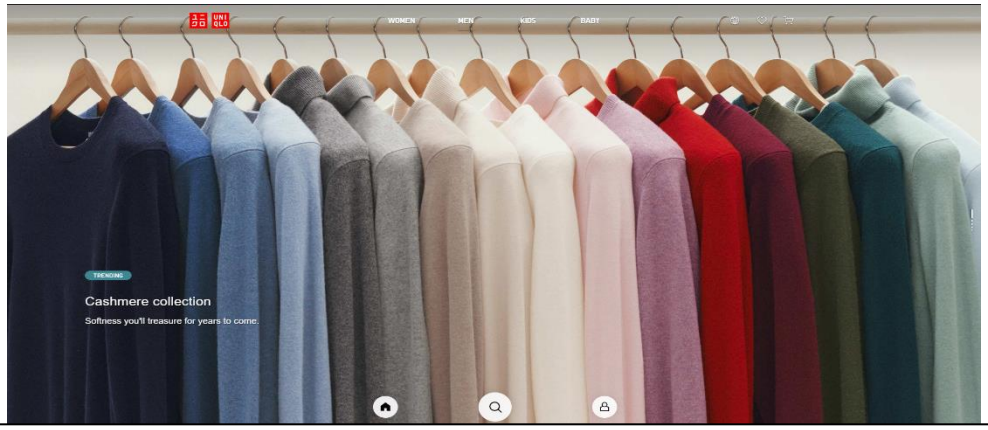
1) Is UNIQLO's website design user-centric?

In essence, UNIQLO's website design is user centric as it does solve the issue of customers of the brand not being able to visit real stores to browse by having an online ecommerce platform for them to use. UNIQLO does provide a similar experience to browsing one of their in-person stores well as it does showcase every item available to purchase. It also gives the user delivery and collection options, as well as refunds to ensure that they have a good purchasing experience.

This is a strong point of the website overall, but it starts to falter once User-control and Usability are considered amongst other things. Small issues that a user might experience can start to make the UX design of the site less user-centered and more focused around pushing certain product lines.

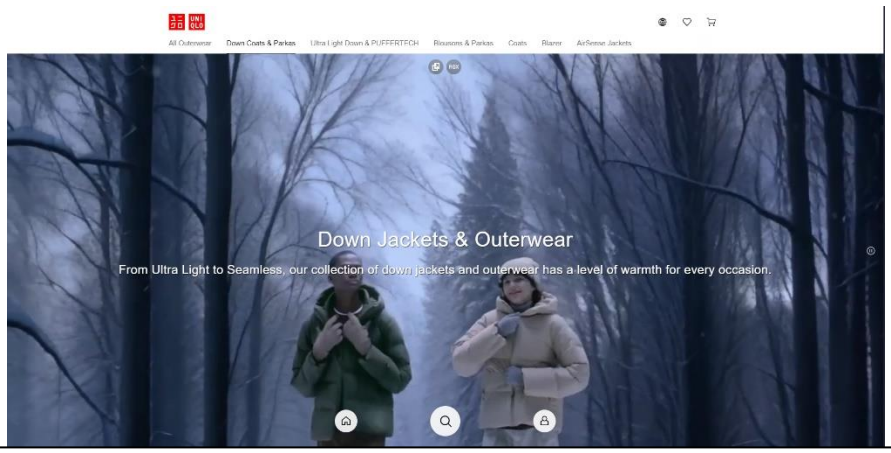
2) Is the website's layout and functionality consistent throughout?

UNIQLO's site is visually consistent with its use of fonts and colour schemes, however in terms of its functionality it is almost split into two different sections; on one hand the landing page functions in a way that it acts as a showcase of a collection across different genders and ages (Women, Men, Kids and Baby). This where applicable will change the pictures and wording used to display the collection to be more fitting of the gender and age that the user is browsing for.

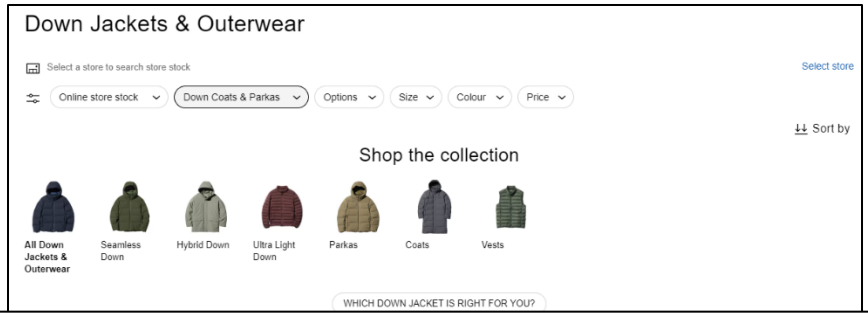


The landing page of UNIQLO. This page functions as a slideshow, showcasing the brand's new collections and other special editions of clothes, with the user able to change their preferences at the top and continue to the rest of the site below. (Image taken from [1].

On the other hand, this functions differently to how the rest of the site is, where entering a specific page, in this case men's clothing, it will function more like a traditional eCommerce site with a myriad of options and filters for the user to use to narrow down their search and so forth. The control scheme has changed in this case with the site now focused on that specific sub-section of the brand's products.



A sub-section of the site that showcases Down Jackets and Outerwear. The previous preference options have been replaced with options to view other lines of outerwear. Functionally this is fine but, in a principle touched upon later this could prove to frustrating to users upon using the site for the first time. (Image taken from [1])



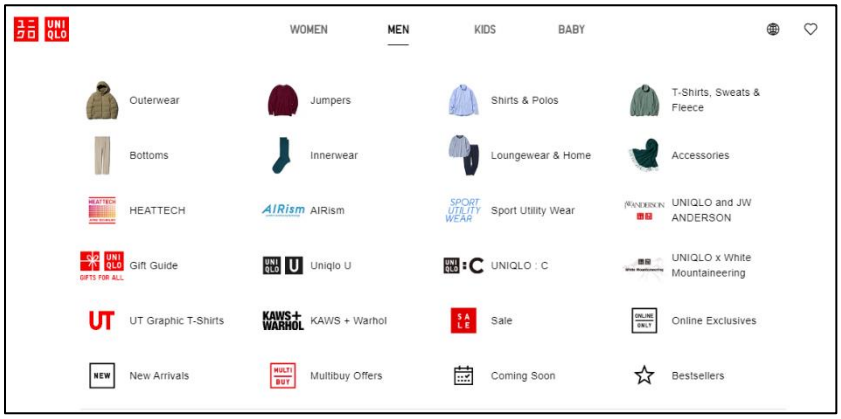
This screenshot is a showcase of the possible options and filters that a user is presented with on pages such as this one that allows them to tailor their ecommerce experience to their own preferences. (Image taken from [1])

On another note, when viewing the website on a mobile phone using a mobile browser, the website is the same as it is on desktop, showing clear consistency between the two versions of the site.

An improvement would be to make sure that the site is functionally similar throughout the different pages, with there being similar options for preferences being provided on each page.

3) Is the information presented on UNIQLO.com hierarchical?

UNIQLO presents information in a more 'promotional' sense with it highlighting certain pieces and collections that it wants the user to click on rather than categorising all the information into a hierarchical fashion.



In this example, the different clothing types, collaborative collections as well as sales and promotions are all given the same sized font. While this does make it so that the attention of the user is to all the options this also does mean that a user who was going to potentially pick a non-promotional option might now pick another option instead that is more inline with what the brand would hope users would choose. (Image taken from [1])

4) Was user control in mind when the website was designed?

While the site overall gives the right amount of user control to customers, there are ways a user can become lost or unable to easily go backwards through the site.

For example, if a user has accidentally chosen the wrong section of clothing when navigating from the landing page, they would have a hard time coming back to a selection screen to move onto what they wanted to check. If this was the first time for the user, they would naturally expect the same options of Women, Men, Kids and baby to remain on the top of the screen while browsing a section of the site dedicated to one clothing piece, but in reality they would either have to press the small 'Search' Button at the bottom of the screen, or click the logo on the corner of the page to be taken back to the landing page and move through the site from there again.

An improvement to the site that would solve this issue would be to have a consistent set of options located on the screen to allow users to easily move between the sections of the website, removing the instance where a user would be sent to the very beginning of a website to then begin their search again.

5) Is the overall website usable, with the principle of usability in mind?

- <u>Learnability</u>
  The site is rather difficult to navigate on first use as it does not follow trends from other eCommerce sites. This means that the user might become frustrated while using it and choose to leave the site entirely.
- <u>Efficiency</u>
  The website overall does allow the user to efficiently move towards purchasing and browsing clothing items, however the initial steps to getting to where a user would want could be very inefficient and require quite a few steps.
- <u>Memorability</u>
  The site's layout, once gotten to grips with, is memorable; users will not find it too difficult to navigate the site upon returning to it.
- <u>Errors and Satisfaction</u>
  For this section, I have summarised it as I have not encountered any errors to speak of on use of the site; the designers have made sure that users cannot reach parts of the site that cause them to become completely lost and stuck. Lastly, users can complete their purchases in a mostly efficient manner as well as browse the items available from the site, henceforth the site's design does satisfy the user's needs.

Conclusion

In summary, the website of 'UNIQLO.com' mostly conforms to five of the main principles of UX design, where even with the website being difficult to grasp from first use, it does in the end provide a service that users could find to be efficient and satisfactory to their needs.

In terms of UX design, the functionality of a website should be focused on more of the aesthetics. In the current digital age, designers must make sure that the user can easily and efficiently navigate the site.

For example, UNIQLO.com' shows how aesthetics can sometimes hurt the functionality of the site, with its use of slide shows showing off promotional content, to its inconsistencies with button layouts as the user navigates deeper into the website. These design decisions highlight the importance of having consistent functionality throughout a site.

Overall, understanding UX Design and its principles will help to create websites and applications that users will find to be user-friendly, consistent, with proper architecture in terms of its information as well as efficient to use.

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