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LCLM4002 digital task 3

Website Chosen
The Cooking Academy

Hyperlink to website
<https://www.thecookingacademy.co.uk>

Section 1 - Usability

Question 1a - How quickly and easily does the website load?

Upon desktop broadband connections, The Cooking Academy website loads almost within the first 3 seconds, launching into a clean homepage with horizontal navigation links to corporate event services, private classes and the online shop. Mobile loading is slightly slower due to the high resolution graphic contents. While the layout appears intuitive, there is no in-site search which can be a little annoying if a user wants to immediately check information of a specific class. In overall, a pleasant user experience can found on the website albeit some technical optimisation can be improved on to ensure sufficient user experience on slow mobile connection.

Question 1b - Does the website contain many sub-pages? How does a prospective customer navigate these?

Answer- There are a few sub pages available all clubbed up as corporate cookery, private classes, Nutritional wellness and the shop. They appear under a horizontal menu option which has drop down menu option showing all sub menus. Moreover there are prominent find out more buttons to guide the customers to various services offered. Although there is no bread crumb trail or site map so customers navigating on the site could loose there way on the site as browsing various options they will get lost on the web site. The navigation should have more hierarchy it. This could cause some problems to corporate client who are looking at various options especially corporate team building options.

Question 1c - Is there an opportunity for a customer to make a booking from the webpage?

There is not an integrated online booking arrangement for customers on the website instead they are advised to either phone the academy on 01923 778880 or they may complete an online enquiry form through e-mail. Such a personal approach could indeed suit the demand for the

corporate events, however the individual customers are nowadays accustomed with booking anything through a digital click than through a human response. Non availability of real time calendar booking facility and getting automated confirmation of customer booking would indeed prove a major stumbling effect towards the usability in today's day and age.

Question 1d - What improvements could be made to the usability of the website?

Integrating a booking system, with a lives calendar availability, allowing students to instantly book and pay, searching and breadcrumb navigation would all improve wayfinding on the website and image compression would load the site on smartphones faster. Krug (2014) says that websites need to use the smallest number of clicks possible. He would approve of taking away unnecessary thinking steps for customers wishing to book. This would improve conversion rates for the company. These changes will aid customer satisfaction, as the steps between booking intentions and actual action taken will be reduced or eliminated for customers.

Section 2 - Pleasure / Customer Experience

Question 2a - How pleasing does the appearance of this page look? Is there any different in the appearance of this page on Mobile and on computer respectively?

The website has a clean white background, vibrant pictures of food and green colour (green represents freshness and all things natural!). Looks appealing. Visually, the layout on desktop is modern and balanced nicely by all the features - aesthetic. But you do not scroll far down on a desktop compared on mobile, it gets bogged down with all the reviews and logos leaving too much 'white space' that could instead be balanced. The font is small for a mobile and the desktop experience certainly is not as good as being seen on the computer.

2b How does the website use images, videos and colour?

The imagery used on the website is of high quality and makes the mouth-water due to the close up mouth-watering dishes presented to you. It also shows a snippet into their cooking environments, showing their high standard's of cookery. Furthermore, the colours used are fresh greens and whites, further reflecting health and vitality. Overall, though images are strong there is little evidence of video content. Including a video testimonial or a quick sneak peak at live classes in action would give prospective customers a better idea what to expect before contacting.

Question 2c - Has the website made use of an online chat tool on the website? How effective is this to enquire about the product or service?

NO. An online chat tool or a live chat widget is yet to be incorporated into the website. Queries and enquiries from potential customers are limited only phonecalls, emails and contact forms, these three methods, which could lead to delayed response to answer queries and enquiries about availability of places in classes to customers. The use of real-time communication tools can improve service quality in online environment (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019),). Having live chat will be benefit to enhance customer experience, attract enquiries and capture browsing users but yet implemented.

Question 2e " Social Media Links - How Effective Are They?

The social posts links to Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter are present in the website footer. They are accessible and links to the active social accounts wherein the company continuously share posts on recipes and class updates. However, it displays on the footer instead of the header so users sometimes do not notice them when browsing the website. If they appear earlier on the webpage or embedded to the homepage, it strengthen customers trust toward the Academy to connect them to the brands.

Section 3 - Value Perceived:

Question 3a "How is the range of services the company provides made intelligible for the market and customer base? "

They inform you on what services they provide through the pages for Corporate Team Building, Private cookery class, Nutrition and Well being and the Spice Shop. They use text to tell you what to expect from their products, but private classed lack detail as to which foods or skill levels the service is for than giving information about related services. Categories and filtering options, could provide the clearest services so the customers can choose which cooking classes would be most useful for them such as the services they provide to corporations verses individual customers.

Question 3b - How are customer reviews made available? Are these up to date?

On the home page, customer testimonials are featured with quotes, names and organisations including large corporations like BMW, Barclays and Concur Technologies along with individuals. These posts look legitimate and professional, however again these are also undated. The well known corporate logos adds credibility but without a dedicated reviews page that would feature dated reviews via independent sites would help a customer to learn how up to date the client happiness is.

Question 3c - How is the service presented as high quality? For what reasons would you use the company' s service or recommend to a friend or family member?

The service appears high-quality through professional food photography, corporate client testimonials and quotes from expert nutritionists. The company's impressive array of satisfied clientele through testimonials highlights their reliable service along with quotes expressing appreciation for the personalisation of and focus given to the learning process; hence, I would recommend it for any of my family or friends who are interested in corporate team-building or weight-loss programmes. Although they may or may not succeed as food critics; nevertheless, the strong quotes from professionals along with many testimonies along with a plethora of available cuisines along with the best experts could result in an interesting journey throughout their weight loss and team building. I consider, this company providing reliable service.

Question 3d - Are prices made clear to customers? If yes, do the prices reflect the quality of service shown? If no, why do you think the company has chosen not to include prices?

Prices are not made clear for the majority of the services on the homepage or main information pages. For the one-to-one class the cost is revealed at £999 but for corporate events and group classes, you need to phone for a price. Perhaps the firm has made the conscious decision to not include pricing with the intention of making the customer call for a consultation whereby a

bespoke package that reflects the customer's budget and requirements can be arranged. Giving some guidelines about prices would add to the company's integrity and allow customers to evaluate the firm as far as affordability is concerned.

Section 4 - Searchability

Question 4a - What three words would you type into Google to find this type of service?

Cookery classes Hertfordshire

Corporate team building cooking UK

private cooking lessons London

4b - If you type these words into google, is the company's website appearing in the top ten websites?

Typing these search terms into google, The Cooking Academy website is not in the top ten websites for any search term consistently. For "cookery classes Hertfordshire", the website appears on google page 1 which is reasonable, however competes with pages such as TripAdvisor. For search terms including its corporate cookery, it ranks well due to the specialist nature of its corporate cookings: corporate team building cooking UK. The website may be able to take steps for more attention including improving its local SEO optimisation and making blog posts that include the keywords too to improve its google ranking.

Section 5: Reflection and Conclusion

Question 5a -Do you think websites still have a use in modern UK business? Explain your answer. In spite of the advent of social networks i.e. Facebook/Twitter and 3rd party marketplaces, for modern businesses based in the UK, websites are more relevant now than ever. Every company needs a home on the web - whether social media provides a stream of traffic they need that traffic to go somewhere and that should be their website - the asset over which their 100% control of design, content and information (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). With so many channels pushing new businesses to customers and so many outlets which a small business might use to tell the story of their company, the website has become more than an online business card it has become the credibility check, the online portfolio and crucially, the point of conversion. Whilst for service-based businesses, such as The Cooking Academy, social media does the job of brand exposure and awareness-spreading for prospective students it is website which still educates about courses, handles booking enquiries and ultimately provides the sense of professionalism required for making the booking. As Sun et al. (2017) explains on the need for evolution websites within the hospitality and tourism sector due to shifting demands for interactivity levels, speed and amount of content of information websites are more relevant for the businesses to sustain their services in line with the changing needs of the consumers.

Question 5b - If you were to make one recommendation about how to improve the website of your chosen company, what would it be? Why have you suggested this improvement?

I would suggest a fully integrated online booking and payment solution with a live calendar. Usability is currently limited due to lack of the possibility to instantly book their place by the

users and reduces friction in conversion funnel thus capturing impulse booking. According to Krug (2014) (2006) every click between user interest and action needs to be justified. Also according to Kim & Fesenmaier (2008) persuasive website design impacts first impressions and customer interaction. Clear pricing and automated confirming e-mails sent to potential customers & mobile friendly-booking system would increase professionalism, customer experience and conversion rate from corporate & individual clients.

Reference List

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