Strategic Usability and Response in Ecommerce Marketing: A Framework and Investigation

Paul Richardson
Niagara University

Peggy Choong
Niagara University

In the literature usability is presented as an objective standard to which firms aspire to assist in the consumer decision-making process. In this paper, we introduce the concept of strategic usability, which we define as the variation of usability components to influence mindset formation and response that are most desired by the firm. We further illustrate how laws of UX design identified in the literature can impact usability components in different ways to influence response. A strategic usability framework is then presented and examined using preliminary data collected from Amazon.com. Results suggest that firms can indeed implement strategic usability to heighten motivation and response to the offers most desired by the firm and minimize response and interactions towards those less desired. However, such a strategy can pose risks for the firm. Implications for consumer welfare and accessibility are discussed.

Keywords: usability, ecommerce, UX design, content marketing, Amazon

INTRODUCTION

The digital marketing environment is currently undergoing a sea change. As privacy concerns and legislation have taken center stage, industry giants have adapted. For example, Google is retiring its decades-old data analytics platform to embrace a post-cookie world (Goldman, 2022). Apple has initiated a new app tracking transparency (ATT) initiative that allows iOS users to opt out of advertising (Konstantinovic, 2022). Facebook has rebranded itself as Meta to launch new business models centered on development of the metaverse and AI (Dotan and Seetharamna, 2023).

As ad targeting becomes increasingly difficult and less effective, greater advertising budgets have shifted to Amazon.com and other retailer ecommerce channels. In fact, the "duopoly" of Google and Meta in digital ad spend has been broken and now comprises less than 50% of the digital ad market. Amazon.com has soared to capture $35 billion of digital ad spend and now ranks third behind Meta. Furthermore, Amazon's share is growing while that of Google and Meta is decreasing (Lebow, 2023).

Amazon and other online retailers also benefit from the rapid growth of ecommerce in the economy (Feger, 2023). Ecommerce search now plays a central role in the consumer journey. Consumers tend to use Google to learn more about the product generally but turn to Amazon or other dominant retailer networks to search at the point of purchase (Mitchell-Wolf, 2022). Given these trends, digital marketers must become experts in not only advertising and media but also ecommerce strategy.

In this paper we propose a framework that digital marketers can use to position ecommerce as a central part of digital marketing strategy. We introduce the concept of *strategic usability* and show how interface design elements can influence mindset formation and resulting response. We further illustrate how common laws of UX design can impact usability components in different ways. In so doing, we advance the literature by showing how usability is not only an external benchmark but also a key strategic tool for digital marketers. A preliminary test of the framework using data collected from Amazon.com reveals that strategic usability can indeed drive response, but it is not without risk for the firm. We begin with a review of the literature concerning online consumer behavior and response.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital marketing is a broad field that can be approached from a number of perspectives such as (1) consumer-firm interactions, (2) firm-consumer interactions, (3) consumer-consumer interactions, and (4) firm-firm interactions. The first perspective examines issues related to network navigation, technology-enabled search, and decision-making. The second perspective examines issues related to product customization, price personalization, online advertising, and customer acquisition. The third perspective relates to issues such as social networks, user-generated content, and online reviews. Finally, the fourth perspective relates to competition, auctions, and relationships (Yadov and Pavlou, 2014). In proposing our framework, we are primarily concerned with research related to consumer-firm and firm-consumer interactions.

Consumer-Firm Interactions

Since the development of the World Wide Web (web), marketers have theorized that online consumer behavior will show unique characteristics because such behavior is mediated by a digital interface. Two dominant streams of research in this area have emerged. The first stream has investigated the degree to which consumers are inclined to adopt web and mobile technologies. Representative of this stream of research are the Technology Adoption Model (TAM) and usability perspectives. The second stream has investigated the nature of consumer behavior and interactions online. Representative of this second stream of research are the flow and mindset perspectives. Each of these perspectives is briefly discussed.

TAM and Usability

Pioneered by Davis 1989), the Technology Adoption Model (TAM) posits that the adoption of a technology is based on reasonable consideration of adoption costs and benefits. Specifically, Davis proposed that the two primary drivers of adoption are beliefs with respect to ease of use and usefulness. In short, for a technology like the web to be widely adopted, consumers must find it not only easy to use but also useful in satisfying needs.

TAM is the foundation of a number of studies that has measured consumer perceptions of the web. In these studies, survey items and constructs have been adapted to measure perceived ease of web use and perceived web usefulness on relevant items such as search, transactions, learning, and communication (Page-Thomas, 2006). TAM is also the foundation for website quality metrics (WebQual), which have been developed and validated over multiple studies. For example, in WebQual studies, web usefulness has been measured with survey items related to quality of information, accuracy of information, trust, and response time. Web ease of use has been measured with survey items related to ease of understanding and intuitive operations. WebQual also incorporates other constructs related to entertainment and relationships, which are also posited to be important components of website quality (Loiacono *et al.*, 2007). The WebQual method has also been applied to mobile devices (Choong *et al.*, 2021).

Usability is also a dominant perspective in evaluating consumer-firm interactions via digital interactions. Early definitions of usability stressed ease of use and task performance (Shackel, 1986). As with TAM, scholars have extended the usability construct. For example, Nielsen delineated other dimensions including easy to learn, efficient to use, easy to remember, low error rate, and user satisfaction (Nielsen, 1993). Scholars have incorporated multiple measurement items to measure usability dimensions

as well (Abran *et al*., 2003). Usability is now an ISO standard. For example, ISO 9241-11 defines usability as "the extent to which a product can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction in a specified context of use (ISO 9241, 2023)."

Flow and Mindset Perspectives

The flow perspective of online consumer behavior was developed by Hoffman and Novak (1996). According to this model, flow is a state that consumers experience as they visit websites and click links. When positive, flow can be an immersive and an intrinsically enjoyable experience. Positive flow can result in increased learning, higher perceived control, and a greater tendency to use the web for exploratory behavior.

Flow depends upon content, control, and process characteristics. Content characteristics refer to interactivity and vividness, which reflect the richness and interactive possibilities inherent in the web design. Control characteristics refer to the extent to which navigation skills and challenges are in alignment—the website must not be overwhelming but designed with the abilities of the visitor in mind. Finally, process characteristics refer to whether behavior is goal directed or experiential in nature (Hoffman and Novak, 1996).

Goal-directed behavior is characterized by extrinsic motivation, situational involvement, utilitarian benefits, and directed search and choice. Experiential behavior, on the other hand, is characterized by intrinsic motivation, ritualistic orientation, hedonic benefits, nondirected search, and navigational choice. The degree to which behavior is goal directed or experiential determines the nature of involvement in online behavior (Hoffman and Novak, 1996). From a managerial perspective, this implies that consumers are online either to accomplish a task efficiently and effectively or to engage in experiential enjoyment.

The flow model of online behavior has been tested and extended in many studies with very good support (Hoffman and Novak, 2009). The key finding that flow behavior is mediated by web and consumer characteristics is important for study of consumer behavior on the web and other digital interfaces such as mobile and virtual worlds.

Motivation as determinant of online behavior was also proposed by Dholakia and Bagozzi (2001). These researchers argue that visitors to websites have different mindsets, or cognitive orientations. Mindsets can be goal oriented or experiential. A goal-oriented mindset is characterized by the desire to accomplish specific objectives, whereas an experiential mindset is characterized by the desire for enjoyment of the activity itself.

There are two kinds of goal-oriented mindsets: deliberative and implemental. A deliberative mindset is a high-involvement, cognitive orientation toward decision-making characterized by a focus on problem identification and information search. An implemental mindset is an action-focused, cognitive orientation that is dominant after a decision has been made, which serves to initiate and manage actions for successful task completion (Dholakia and Bagozzi, 2001).

There are likewise two kinds of experiential mindsets: exploratory and hedonic. An exploratory mindset is one characterized by the need to encounter new experiences and satisfy curiosity. A hedonic mindset is one for which sensory gratification of the experience is dominant (Dholakia and Bagozzi, 2001).

Consumer mindset determines what websites are visited, what information is sought, and how much time is spent collecting or analyzing information. Prior to initiating a session, mindset is determined by the desired goals to be obtained, knowledge, emotion, and experience with websites under consideration (Dholakia and Bagozzi, 2001).

Overall, the literature on customer-firm interactions is robust and well developed. In addition to well tested models of online consumer behavior, quality metrics with respect to websites and apps have been validated. We turn now to a discussion of research on firm-customer interactions.

Firm-Customer Interactions

The key premise of research related to firm-customer interactions is that firms should attempt to understand consumer behavior online and proactively act upon this knowledge to achieve company goals. Hence, this is a broad area of study. There are three streams of research in this area.

The first stream of research focuses on understanding how marketing mix elements can be adapted and honed to meet consumers' needs online through insights and analytics. This stream of research focuses on the web as a whole and seeks to provide insights concerning optimization of the marketing mix online. For example, researchers have analyzed how firms can increase online trust, use browsing patterns to increase purchase, employ recommendation systems to facilitate choice, or successfully implement personalization and customization programs (Yadov and Pavlou, 2014).

The second stream of research is concerned with content marketing tactics online. This stream of research uses the individual website as the focus of analysis and employs experimental design whereby communication elements are systematically varied to measure results. For example, researchers have tested how varying personal assistants or appeals impact response.

The third stream of research focuses on user experience (UX) and interface design, which is a component of UX. This literature tends to be either theoretical in identifying UX dimensions or more pragmatic in addressing how consumers react to website stimuli.

The latter two streams of research concerning content marketing and UX design are most relevant to our discussion. Therefore, we briefly elaborate on these two streams of research.

Website Content Marketing

Hauser and his colleagues (2009) introduced and tested the effectiveness of *website morphing* in driving response on the BT website. Website morphing is the process whereby the look and feel of a website is automatically changed according to the cognitive style of the visitor. A cognitive style reflects the visitor's preferred method of gathering, processing, and evaluating information. Cognitive style can be inferred by analyzing visitor clickstream or by having the visitor complete a survey to assess cognitive style. Identification of cognitive style results in better understanding of the degree to which text, graphs, audio, or personal assistants are preferred; this identification can also reveal relative product expertise and the degree and type of information or support that is required to facilitate response.

Once cognitive style is identified, the website design and content are then morphed or tailored to match the identified style of the visitor. For example, different kinds of virtual assistants may be shown; graphics and links are manipulated to be most relevant; information presentation format is adapted; and prices and offers are aligned to best match the cognitive style of the visitor to maximize response. Overall, Hausmann and his colleagues found that purchase intentions increased by over 20% through website morphing in their experimental study.

In a related study, Richardson (2006) tested the degree to which strategically placed hyperlinks calling for action on various webpages (e.g., click here, learn more, next steps, submit now) resulted in more visitors following a direct path and increased response. Richardson found that such strategically placed calls to action heighted adherence to a shorter, direct path and resulted in a higher response rate relative to the condition under which such calls to action were absent. Taken together these studies show that design elements can indeed influence navigation patterns and increase response, especially when these elements are aligned with the cognitive style or motivation of the visitor.

User Experience

User Experience (UX) can be viewed as directly related to usability through satisfaction, which is a component of usability. There are different dimensions of UX identified in the literature. For example, Zarour and Albarbi (2017) delineate among three dimensions of UX: brand experience (BX), technology experience (TX), and needs experience (NX). There are also a variety of UX aspects that are associated with these dimensions such as aesthetics, usefulness, responsiveness, functionality, playfulness, trust, fun, emotion, privacy, and attractiveness. These dimensions and their associated aspects determine customer value.

Other researchers stress that usability and UX should incorporate other dimensions such as accessibility, which is usability of the product to people with the widest range of capabilities. These scholars propose that usability, UX, and accessibility together represent an integrative model that they call interactive experience or "IX" (Sauer *et al.,* 2020). A valuable outcome of the IX framework is that different

accessibility segments (e.g., young users, elderly users, special needs users) may all enjoy high usability (i.e., high efficiency, effectiveness, and satisfaction) while experiencing a unique UX design.

UX design is broadly concerned with the psychology of human-computer interactions. UX design should be aligned with consumers' need for engagement, motivation, wellbeing, agency, competency, and relatedness. UX design should be consistent with required tasks, behaviors, and life goals of the user (Peters *et al*., 2018).

The interface is how UX design is expressed to and experienced by the consumer. Interface design systems provide rules, best practices, and foundations for size, shape, motion, elevation, and color. Interface design typologies may also advocate for the use of consistent design components for universal approaches to navigation and interactions. For example, the Material Design framework sponsored by Google is one such interface design system.

Interface design also draws on the psychology that underlies how consumers process stimuli. Based on this psychology, there are specific laws of UX that designers may incorporate in interface design. Some of the more common UX laws identified by Yablonski (2020) are:

1. Jakob's Law: the tendency of users to develop expectations of design conventions based on their cumulative experience with other websites (Nielsen, 2000).
2. von Restorff Effect: contrasting rather than similar elements draw our attention (von Restorff, 1933).
3. Fitt's Law: the time that it takes for a user to engage with an object is relative to its size and distance (Fitt, 1954).
4. Hicks' Law: Increasing the number of choices available, logarithmically increases decision time (Hicks, 1952).
5. Peak-End Rule: An experience is judged by how it is felt at its peak and end (Kahneman *el al.*, 1993).
6. Aesthetic-Usability Effect: There is a positive relationship between interface aesthetics and perceived usability (Kurosu and Kashimura, 1995).

STRATEGIC USABILITY FRAMEWORK

The proposed strategic usability framework is shown in figure 1. We define strategic usability as the variation of usability components to influence mindset formation and clickstream to facilitate desired actions, such as the purchase of products most desired by the firm. Usability components are positively or negatively influenced by manipulating interface design elements. Positive usability encourages an implemental mindset and a direct path to purchase of the offer most desired by the firm, which we call the primary offer. Negative usability requires the adoption of an exploratory mindset and more interactions for consideration of secondary offers.
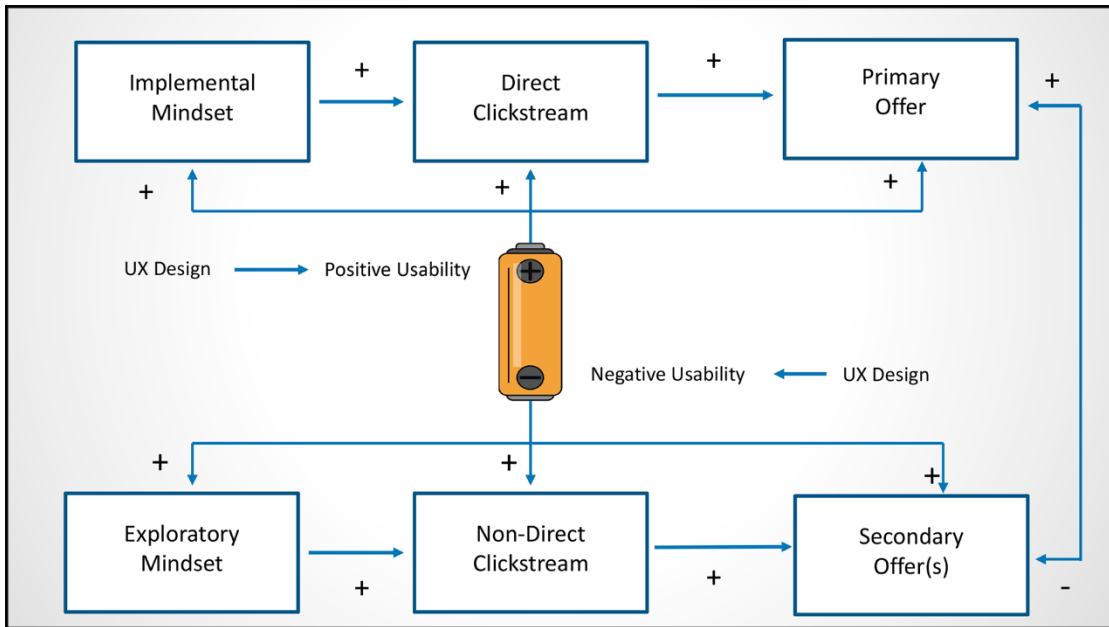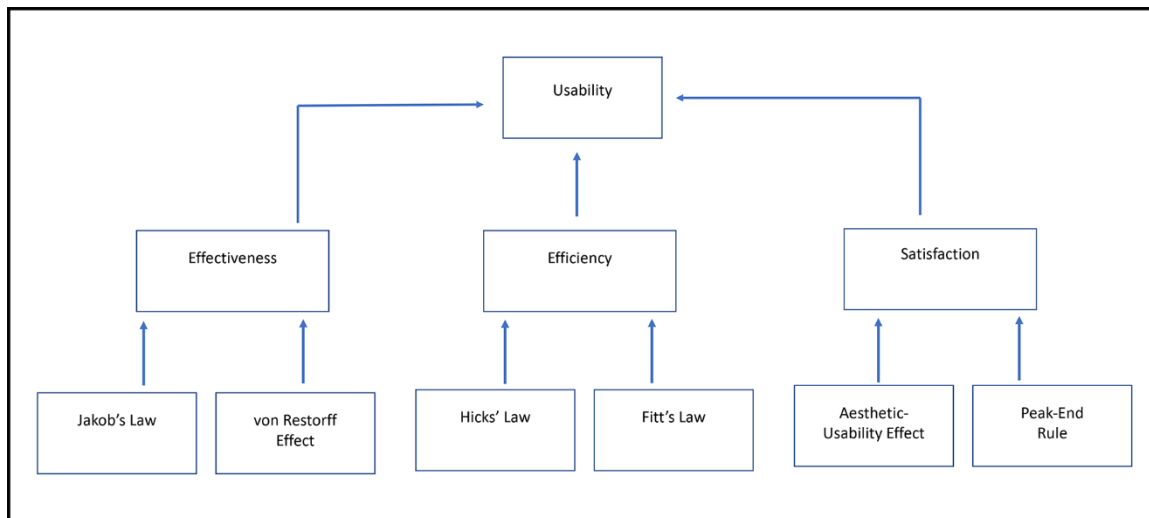
FIGURE 1
STRATEGIC USABILITY FRAMEWORK

Figure 2 illustrates how common UX design laws are associated with and can therefore be used to impact usability components.

FIGURE 2
UX LAWS AND IMPACT ON USABILITY COMPONENTS

The contribution of this framework is twofold: first, it shows that mindset and flow can be proactively influenced by the marketer through an embrace of strategic usability; second, it shows that interface design tactics can be deployed to influence usability components in different ways. This latter contribution is not well addressed in the literature and therefore deserves some elaboration.

We propose that Jakob's Law and the von Restorff Effect primarily influence the effectiveness component of usability. Undue cognitive effort should not be required to understand how the interface and

navigation options fit with desired goals of the visitor. According to Jakob's Law, a website should be designed consistent with other competitive websites since consumers gain most of their experience and therefore expectations from visiting other websites. Therefore, it is recommended that websites use design principles consistent with those that attract the most consumers.

According to the von Restorff Effect, when objects are similar, the object that is most different will stand out. The von Restorff Effect explains consumers' selective avoidance and disregard of stimuli such as *banner blindness*, which is the tendency to unconsciously ignore elements perceived to be advertisements (Benway, 1998). The von Restorff Effect also explains how making objects larger, a different shape, or color can increase engagement and consumer response, which is a common tactic for landing pages. Taken together Jakob's Law and the von Restorff Effect stress benchmarking website design against the most trafficked industry leaders and ensuring that the most desired actions stand out to facilitate interaction and response.

We further propose that Hicks' Law and Fitt's Law influence the efficiency component of usability since they are concerned with the time it takes for task completion. Consistent with Hick's Law, choices should be few in number and focused for fast task completion. Pursuant to Fitt's Law, desired actions should be encapsulated in larger objects that are centrally placed and can be easily selected or clicked. These laws likewise warn that increasing choices, decreasing object size, and increasing object distance from the central plane of vision will decrease interactivity and response.

Finally, we suggest that the Peak-End Rule and Aesthetic-Usability Effect are primarily associated with the satisfaction component of usability. A checkout or task completion process that is reinforced with confirmation and praise serves to heighten satisfaction, which is consistent with the Peak-End Rule. For this reason ecommerce websites typically express confirmation and assurance at the end of the checkout process.

Research shows that more aesthetically pleasing, beautiful interfaces are more satisfying from a usability perspective even if they do not offer better performance (Kurosu and Kashimura, 1995). The aesthetic effect is likely to be even more important for websites that stress the fulfillment of value expressive and ritualistic exploratory behavior. In short, more visually pleasing websites are perceived to be better overall, and this finding is consistent with that predicted by the Aesthetic-Usability Effect.

In summary, the framework proposes that UX design tactics can be leveraged to influence usability to motivate behaviors consistent with those desired by the firm. We expect that high usability will heighten an implemental mindset resulting in direct clicks to purchase of the primary offer desired by the firm. Low usability, on the other hand, will necessitate the adoption of a more exploratory mindset and a greater number of clicks for consideration of secondary offers. Primary offers are likely to offer higher margins for the firm. Strategic usability can be implemented to drive selection of such higher-margin brands, while discouraging selection of less profitable offers. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1: Strategic usability will result in greater selection of primary over secondary offers.

METHOD

The proposed framework could be tested either in an experimental setting by varying design elements or by using an existing website for which elements of strategy usability are already well implemented. We chose the latter approach and selected Amazon.com as the focus of our analysis in a preliminary investigation of the proposed framework.

Amazon.com Website

Figure 3 shows the structure of the Amazon.com offer webpage. Observation of this structure provides evidence that Amazon.com is implementing strategic usability in promoting its primary offer.

FIGURE 3
STRUCTURE OF THE AMAZON OFFER WEBPAGE
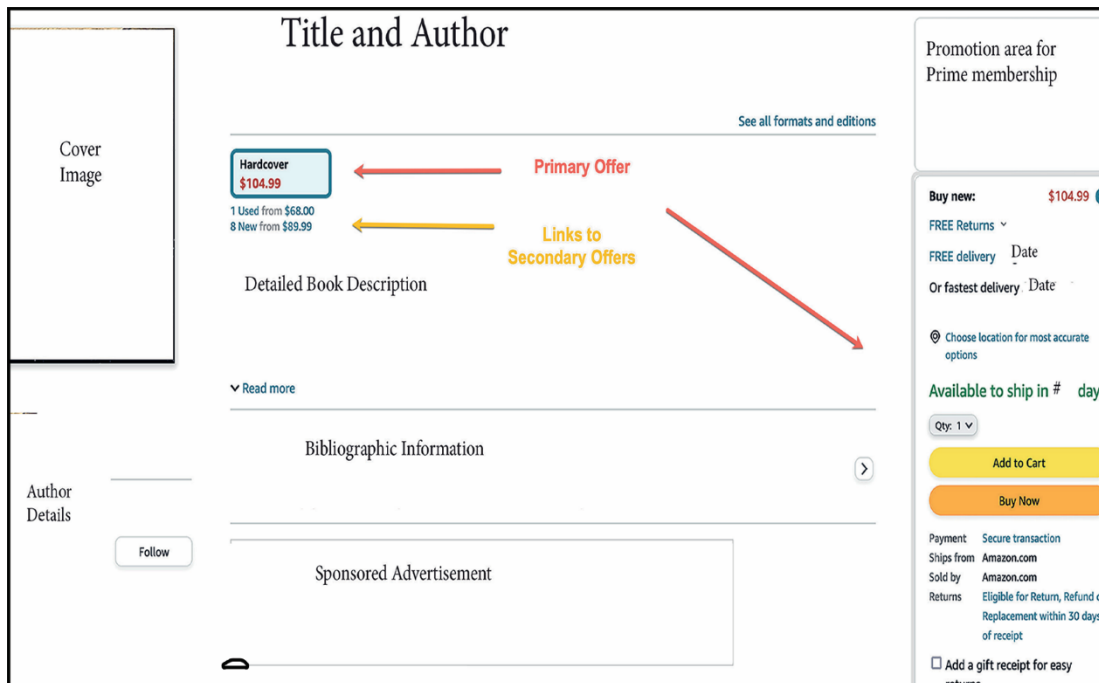
Consistent with Jakob's Law, Amazon uses orange "Buy Now" buttons, which are commonly used in ecommerce shopping carts. (Indeed, one may argue that Amazon pioneered this.) Directly under the product name, the price of the primary offer is highlighted in red within an elevated button with light blue background, striking a powerful contrast relative to the prices of secondary offers, which are less discernible. This design tactic is consistent with the von Restorff Effect in enhancing design effectiveness for the primary offer.

The offer webpage is geared for efficient and rapid purchase of the primary offer. The primary offer is clearly framed as the most important choice overall by virtue of larger text, icons, and calls to action that are carefully arranged in components. These features are consistent with Hicks' Law and Fitt's Law in that they stress efficiency.

The opportunity to "Buy Now" invites immediate gratification of purchase if the primary offer is selected, which is consistent with the Peak-End Rule. The offer page includes images and an attractive layout; these features are consistent with Aesthetic-Usability Effect and suggest skill and competency, which serve to strengthen the credibility of the primary offer. Hence, the satisfaction component of usability is very well met for the primary offer.

With respect to the secondary offer, however, usability is engineered to be poor on effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction components. Prices and links to secondary offers are displayed in small text that are more difficult to discern. Hyperlinks take more effort to click given the small presentation and require greater movement of the mouse to reach. If a link is actually clicked, secondary offers appear in a dropdown list that can be filtered according to price and delivery date. However, the primary offer is always pinned to the top of the list, posing as the best filtered result even if less attractive on price or delivery date. There are no augmented ecommerce features such as "Buy Now" for secondary offers, notwithstanding the fact that they are paired with customer ratings, which can effect community social influence (Alhassan *et al.,* 2023; Majeed *et al.*, 2022; Helal *et al.,* 2018; Sridhar and Srinivasan, 2012). However, the lack of prominence of these social ratings, hidden as they are behind the primary offer page, lessen the potential of social impact.

In short, the Amazon offer webpage displays excellence in the effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction components of usability to instill an implemental mindset for direct purchase of the primary offer. For secondary offers, however, the design provides much lower levels of usability. The visitor must engage in exploratory behavior, which requires greater cognitive effort and time to click through, sort, analyze, and process potential choices. However, from this greater effort, a secondary offer may be selected over the primary offer if deemed better.

Survey

The purpose of the survey was to test the extent to which a primary is selected over a secondary offer when an implemental, goal-directed mindset is activated. To measure this, we posted a survey invitation on the Amazon Mechanical Turk Workers (MTurk) website in spring 2023. The survey invited respondents to actually visit the Amazon.com website and search for a particular book. The scenario was described to respondents as follows:

> Your friend is stationed overseas. He has asked you to buy a required book for his upcoming English class on www.amazon.com.
>
> He needs it to be ready when he returns home in two weeks.
> He hopes you can buy it at a good price and save him some money.
> He will reimburse you right away.
>
> Please search for the following book on www.amazon.com. If you can find the book on www.amazon.com, what price will you pay?

The title, author, ISBN, desired format (hardcover), and condition (new) were then provided to respondents. Respondents were then instructed to proceed to search on amazon.com for the book, enter the price they would pay, and then answer some demographic questions.

During the survey period, the desired book was available in only hardcover and new condition across vendors. Only one secondary vendor offered the book with the fastest shipping, which was within the two-week timeframe. This secondary vendor also offered the book at a forty percent discount relative to that of the primary offer sponsored by Amazon. Therefore, only this secondary vendor met the desired conditions of fast delivery and financial savings, which were superior to those of any other offer. This secondary vendor also enjoyed a perfect "5-star" rating.

Analysis and Results

In order to ensure data quality, only responses that included actual USD prices from the www.amazon.com website for the book in question were used in analysis. This filtering of responses was done to remove data from respondents who may have misunderstood the instructions, searched other websites, or acted opportunistically. The first thirty filtered responses that were received were used in the analysis.

Demographic data revealed well educated and generally affluent respondents. Seventy-four percent of respondents earned at least a bachelor-level degree. Seventy-six percent reported earning at least USD 50K or more annually. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents stated that they were biologically female while forty-three percent indicated they were biologically male at birth.

Analysis of what price would be paid for the book showed that the primary offer was selected by twenty-four (80%) of the respondents; the secondary offer was selected by six (20%) respondents. A chi-square test shows that this difference is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 10.8$ p < .01). Hence, consistent with H1, the primary offer was the dominant choice notwithstanding its higher price and longer delivery time given that a goal-directed mindset was activated and usability components supported purchase of this primary offer.

DISCUSSION

Economists have long known that consumers face a tradeoff between finding an item at an acceptable price given desired quality and the search costs involved in finding that item. Consumers tend to search as long as the savings and/or increased quality gained is worth the search cost in terms of time and effort (Stigler, 1961). Diminishing returns from search are experienced rapidly. This reflects what is called the *power law of practice*, which shows that the skill in any task increases rapidly at first, but then even minor improvements are difficult (Johnson *et al*., 2003).

A key implication of the power law of practice is that a navigation design that is easy to learn, allows for efficient task completion, and is satisfying can be a significant asset for the firm. A website that has these positive features can foster *cognitive lock-in*, which reflects consistent revenue streams from repeat buyers who are loyal to the firm because of high usability and website quality (Johnson *et al*., 2003).

This study provides some evidence that Amazon has successfully implemented strategic usability to encourage cognitive lock-in towards its primary offers. In some cases, consumers may not even notice secondary offers—the links and text may be too small or not visible in smaller interfaces. In other cases, secondary offers may be noticed but are not deemed worth the effort in that more steps and greater cognitive effort are required. In addition, for some consumers Amazon's one-click checkout and perceived relational benefits such as Prime membership may be too great for third-party vendors to overcome, even with substantial discounts and savings offered. Buying direct from Amazon can also reduce perceived risk, especially when one is responsible to a third-party as was the case in this study.

Notwithstanding the potential effectiveness of strategic usability, this strategy is not without risk. Consumers who purchased from Amazon assuming that Amazon's sponsored offers were the best might feel exploited if more attractive secondary offers were suddenly discovered. Buyer's remorse and distrust towards Amazon would likely result thereby hurting Amazon's franchise. Indeed, Amazon is facing greater backlash from consumers for pushing its private label over competing brands, shipping delays, and not providing a straightforward comparison of offers (Herrera, 2022).

Accessibility may become a critical issue as well—some consumers have poorer vision and may not be able to see smaller links and text if strategic usability employs this tactic. Secondary offers may be literally out of sight for such consumers. Therefore, principles of accessibility should be carefully considered. Towards this the W3C proposes Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 3, which at the time of this writing are in an exploratory phase but are a significant departure from previous standards. According to their official website:

> The goal of WCAG 3 and supporting documents is to make digital products including web, ePub, PDF, applications, mobile apps, and other emerging technologies more accessible and usable to people with disabilities. It is the intention for WCAG 3 to meet this goal by supporting a wider set of user needs, using new approaches to testing, and allowing more frequent maintenance of guidelines to keep pace with accelerating technology change. The hope is that WCAG 3 will make it significantly easier for both beginners and experts to create accessible digital products that support the needs of people with disabilities (W3C Accessibility Standards, 2023).

By embracing accessibility principles and perspectives, strategic usability can be used to reach company goals while enhancing consumer welfare and satisfaction. This can be done by making a commitment to transparency in interface design. For example, consumers who are in an implemental mindset might be offered the opportunity to toggle an interface switch (such as an on/off radio button) and thereby choose to interact with the firm through an interface that favors a dominant presentation of primary offers, which might come bundled with 1-click checkout, free shipping, and membership services. Such an interface would offer high levels of efficiency, effectiveness, and satisfaction for the goal-directed consumer.

Consumers who are in an exploratory mindset might be offered the opportunity to toggle an interface switch and thereby choose to interact with the firm through an interface that employs a detailed comparison matrix of primary and secondary offers, which can be fairly sorted by price, delivery date, or other relevant attribute. Such an interface would offer high levels of efficiency, effectiveness, and satisfaction for consumers in a more exploratory mindset.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This study suggests that strategic usability can significantly impact response and firm revenue based on a preliminary investigation. Future research should invoke multiple scenarios, such as one for which the respondent felt a greater personal investment in the purchase. If the respondent felt that his or her funds were at stake, selection of the secondary offer might have been more prevalent. Future research might also employ different products and associated prices, which might yield more insights into the impact of strategic usability on choice. Finally, future studies might vary elements using an experimental design and employ multiple data collection methods including observational or free-response methods to better understand the impact of strategic usability on the decision-making process underlying the selection of primary versus secondary offers.

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