Chapter 18
UX and E–Commerce:
Comparing the Best Practices in Europe, Asia, North America, South America, and Africa

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ABSTRACT

E-commerce is expected to see considerable growth in the next years anywhere all over the world. A trend that has been accelerated by the COVID-19. To succeed in this increasingly global and increasingly competitive landscape, e-commerce companies need to attract more and more traffic, the condition for getting clients. The questions "How important is UX for increasing the e-commerce sales?" and "Do geography and culture impact the UX performance?" are therefore essential. This chapter on the one hand analyzes the specific e-commerce UX elements and dimensions, and on the other hand compares strengths and weaknesses in Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America to find UX international best practices. Keywords: Ecommerce, Online Sales, Cross-Border, International, Marketplaces, Geo-Cultural Adaptation, Ux Elements, Ux Dimensions, Worldwide, Global

INTRODUCTION

With the development of high-speed Web, mobile Internet, dematerialized payments, multichannel functions, advanced delivery and logistics solutions, e-commerce is expected to see tremendous growth in the next years in any sector worldwide. In May 2019 eMarketer estimated that global e-commerce will approach 5 trillion USD by 2021, which represents a growth rate of approximately 40% from 2019. But the health crisis triggered by the COVID-19 worldwide had an unpredicted impact on the global economy. During the lockdown, businesses had to shut down their mortar shops for several weeks and people had to replace them with online shopping. Then, after the lockdown, the social distancing measures turned physical shopping into a not-as-agreeable-as-before experience. As a result of that, the global

e-commerce is expected to see a much faster growth, as April 2020 statistics already reported a jump of 209% compared to the same period in 2019 (ACI Worldwide Research, May 2020).

In this new increasingly global and increasingly competitive landscape, it will be critical for e-commerce providers to focus their investments on attracting more traffic on their website and on improving the Click-Through-Rate (CTR) of it. The CTR measuring the transformation rate of the traffic into customers, it is one of the most important Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for online sales.

But before making investing decisions, some considerations must be gauged. Among all, two issues are analyzed in this chapter:

1. Among all the factors that impact the e-commerce sales performance, is the User Experience (referred to as UX in the rest of this chapter) the most important one?
2. How geography and culture impact e-commerce UX and how should they be managed to maximize the international online sales performance?

This chapter aims to help exporting companies and decision makers in their UX strategy to improve the cross-border performance of their e-commerce websites. It also offers support to further discussions about UX best practices for cross-border e-commerce based on the analysis of same global and local cases.

BACKGROUND: AN EXPLANATION OF UX - USER EXPERIENCE

The word UX, which stands for User Experience, was coined by Don Norman in the 90s while he was Vice President of the Advanced Technology Group at Apple (Donald Norman, 1988 and Merholz, Peter, 2007). As he explained, he "wanted to cover all aspects of the person's experience with the system including industrial design, graphics, the interface, the physical interaction, and the manual." Since then the term has spread widely, blending with other words and generating some confusion among non-web experts.

J. J. Garrett contributed to the UX definition by explaining through a diagram that UX is composed by many layers (Jesse James Garret, 2000):

- **Language:** English, French, Portuguese, etc.
- **Visual Design, i.e. the graphic interface:** esthetics, pictures, colors, symbolisms, etc.
- **Motion & Audio Design:** music, voice, videos, animations, etc.
- **Content Requirements:** for an e-commerce they concern the brand style and tone delivered throughout the website.
- **Information Design, i.e. how contents are presented for user's comprehension:** for an e-commerce it can concern for example the way product descriptions, USP and benefits are presented.
- **Interface Design, i.e. the elements that facilitate users' interaction with the website's:** for example, how users fill out their personal information at the checkout, or how they search for a product.
- **Interaction Design, i.e. how tasks are delivered to the users interacting with the website:** for an e-commerce it can be an alert for the expiring cart, or the confirmation screen after the payment.
- **Navigation Design, i.e. the elements to facilitate users' move through the pages of the website:** for example, how users select a product to view, or choose a size to add to their cart.

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