Usability Test: Aritzia and Zara

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Usability Test: Aritzia and Zara

The rapid expansion of e-commerce has made website usability a critical factor in business success. This project evaluated the usability of two popular fashion retail websites, Aritzia and Zara, to understand how effectively they meet user needs. Usability testing was conducted with six participants from diverse demographic backgrounds to assess their experiences while completing predefined tasks on both websites. The findings aimed to identify pain points, compare usability metrics, and develop actionable recommendations to enhance the user experience. This report presents a comprehensive analysis of the findings and their implications for improving website usability.

Executive Summary: Project Goals

The primary objective of this project was to assess the usability of the Aritzia and Zara websites through real-world usability testing. By observing participants as they performed three specific tasks on each website, the study aimed to evaluate:

- How easily participants could learn to use the websites.
- The perceived utility of the websites in helping participants achieve their goals.
- Participants' perceptions of the products and services offered.
- Their overall impressions of the usability of each website.
- The degree to which participants intended to revisit or use the websites again.

These goals informed the research design, which included structured scenarios and post-task feedback. By addressing these areas, the study offers insights into the strengths and weaknesses of each website, with recommendations to improve user satisfaction and engagement.

Description of the Methods

Participants: Six participants were selected to represent a range of demographics:

- Gender: 66% female, 33% male.
- Age: 22 to 47 years old (average age 32).
- Internet Usage: 100% used high-speed internet, with 67% accessing it daily.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Participants

Participant Characteristics		
Number of Participants		6
Age	Average Age	32
	Youngest	22
	Oldest	47
Gender	Male	33%
	Female	66%
	Other	0%
Own a Computer	Yes	100%
	No	0%
* Learned to use a computer	Family Member	50%
	Friend	17%
	Training Class/School	17%
	Self-taught	50%
* Learned to use the Internet	Family Member	33%
	Friend	17%
	Training Class/School	33%
	Self-taught	67%
* Connect to Internet	At Home	100%
	At School	33%
	At the Library	17%
	Other	17%
* Type of Internet connection used	Dial-up	0%
	High-speed	100%
	Don't know	0%

* may add up to more than 100% because multiple entries are allowed

Figure 1: Descriptive Statistics of Participants

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Participants (con't)

Participant Characteristics		
Number of Participants		6
The Internet is used…	Daily	67%
	Weekly	33%
	Monthly	0%
	Other	0%
Has been a user of the Internet	< 1 yr	0%
	1 -2 years	0%
	2 - 3 years	0%
	> 3 years	100%
The number of times during the past year that a purchase was made using the Internet	None	0%
	1 - 2	17%
	3 - 4	17%
	5 - 6	17%
	7 - 8	17%
	9 - 10	17%
	> 10	17%
The number of times during the past year that a similar product was purchased from an online store	None	17%
	1 - 2	33%
	3 - 4	0%
	5 - 6	17%
	7 - 8	17%
	9 - 10	0%
	> 10	17%

Figure 2: Descriptive Statistics of Participants (con't)

Testing Procedure: Participants completed three tasks on each website:

1. Finding a going-out top.
2. Finding a going-out dress.
3. Finding black jeans.

Tasks were timed, and participants were observed to document navigation paths, completion rates, and errors. After completing the tasks, participants filled out a post-task questionnaire evaluating their experience.

Data Collection:

- Metrics included ease of learning, utility, impressions of usability, product offerings, and intention to use.
- Quantitative data (task completion times and scores) and qualitative observations (navigation behaviors and comments) were analyzed.

Environment: Tests were conducted in controlled settings to minimize distractions and ensure consistency. Data was supplied by each participant after completion of all tasks and questionnaires. Communication through MMS and email were used. Participants used personal computers to simulate real-world conditions.

Description of the Results/Findings

The usability test revealed significant differences between Aritzia and Zara across five key metrics: ease of learning, utility, impressions of usability, products and services, and behavioral intention to use. Aritzia consistently outperformed Zara in all categories, with participants praising its intuitive navigation and streamlined design. Zara, while visually appealing, struggled with usability challenges, such as cluttered menus and less intuitive categorization. The metrics highlight Aritzia's strengths in creating a positive user experience and Zara's need for improvement in simplifying its interface and navigation structure. Below, each metric is analyzed in detail to explain the participant responses and statistical findings.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of All Responses to Both Websites

Variable	Range		Mean	Standard Deviation
	Min	Max		
Behavioral Intention to Use the Websites	2	7	3.83	1.40
Perceived Ease of Learning the Websites	2	7	4.28	1.28
Perceived Utility of the Websites	2	7	4.19	1.25
Products and Services Offered by the Websites	2	6	4.19	1.09
Impression of the Usability of the Websites	2	7	4.17	1.16

Figure 3: Descriptive Statistics of All Responses to Both Websites

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for - Aritzia

Variable	Range		Mean	Standard Deviation
	Min	Max		
Behavioral Intention to Use the Website	2	7	4.33	1.75
Perceived Ease of Learning the Website	2	7	4.83	1.37
Perceived Utility of the Website	2	7	4.71	1.33
Products and Services Offered by the Website	2	6	4.50	1.25
Impression of the Usability of the Website	3	7	4.64	1.20

Figure 4: Descriptive Statistics for - Aritzia

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for - Zara

Variable	Range		Mean	Standard Deviation
	Min	Max		
Behavioral Intention to Use the Website	2	4	3.33	0.82
Perceived Ease of Learning the Website	2	5	3.73	0.91
Perceived Utility of the Website	2	5	3.67	0.92
Products and Services Offered by the Website	2	5	3.67	0.83
Impression of the Usability of the Website	2	5	3.69	0.92

Figure 5: Descriptive Statistics for - Zara

Ease of Learning[1]

Aritzia scored an average of 4.83 (SD = 1.37), significantly higher than Zara's 3.73 (SD = 0.91). Participants consistently described Aritzia as easy to navigate, with clear labels and intuitive menus guiding them effectively to their desired products. In contrast, Zara's lower score reflected challenges participants faced in navigating complex menus and unclear category titles, leading to longer task completion times and occasional frustration. These findings emphasize the importance of straightforward navigation in reducing cognitive load for users.

Utility[1]

Aritzia achieved a mean score of 4.71 (SD = 1.33), while Zara lagged behind at 3.67 (SD = 0.92). Participants found Aritzia more useful for achieving shopping goals, as its layout and filtering options facilitated quick access to relevant products. Zara's perceived utility was hindered by difficulties in locating items, with participants noting that unclear subcategories and limited filtering options made product discovery less efficient.

Products and Services[1]

Participants rated Aritzia's products and services at 4.50 (SD = 1.25), compared to Zara's 3.67 (SD = 0.83). Aritzia's product organization and ease of exploration stood out, enabling participants to browse seamlessly through categories. Conversely, Zara's lower score indicated frustration with inconsistent product placement and the lack of a refined filtering system, which made it harder to browse specific product lines.

Impressions of Usability[1]

The mean impression of usability for Aritzia was 4.64 (SD = 1.20), significantly higher than Zara's 3.69 (SD = 0.92). Aritzia's clean design and intuitive interface fostered a positive overall impression. Zara, while visually engaging, left participants feeling overwhelmed due to its complexity, detracting from their overall experience and resulting in a lower usability rating.

Behavioral Intention of Use[1]

Participants reported a stronger intention to revisit Aritzia (mean 4.33, SD = 1.75) compared to Zara (mean 3.33, SD = 0.82). Aritzia's simplicity and efficiency encouraged participants to consider using it again for future shopping needs. Zara's lower score reflected hesitations due to its usability challenges, with participants expressing a preference for websites that are easier to navigate and more intuitive.

Description of Recommendations

The findings from this usability test highlight the importance of prioritizing user-centered design principles to improve navigation, enhance utility, and create a seamless shopping experience. Both Aritzia and Zara can benefit from iterative testing processes that incorporate user feedback to refine their platforms. Key recommendations focus on simplifying navigation, improving filtering systems, and enhancing accessibility to ensure that users can achieve their goals efficiently. While Aritzia performed well, it still has areas where it can strengthen its user experience. Conversely, Zara's challenges with usability and navigation call for more substantial changes to meet user expectations and reduce friction during interactions.

Recommendations for Zara[1]

Zara should focus on simplifying its navigation structure, as participants frequently reported confusion when using its menus. Implementing a more hierarchical navigation system with clearly labeled categories can guide users intuitively through the site. Additionally, reducing clutter in the navigation bar and avoiding overlapping or redundant subcategories will prevent users from becoming overwhelmed. Zara should also enhance its search and filtering capabilities by providing more detailed product filters, such as by size, color, or occasion. This will make it easier for users to locate specific items without having to browse through irrelevant options.

Another area of improvement for Zara is addressing its inconsistent product placement. Products should follow a logical categorization that mirrors user expectations, such as grouping all similar clothing types under one category. Incorporating user feedback through regular usability testing will ensure that changes align with user needs. Zara should also focus on emotional design by

creating an interface that evokes trust and ease of use, leveraging principles of cognitive load reduction to make the site less daunting for first-time users.

Recommendations for Aritzia[1]

While Aritzia performed strongly in this usability test, it can further enhance its user experience by expanding its filtering options. Participants noted that while the existing filters were helpful, they lacked depth in some areas. Adding more granular filters, such as filtering by price range, material, or style, can help users refine their searches and make faster decisions. This aligns with the principle of progressive disclosure, allowing users to access advanced options only when they need them, without overwhelming the interface.

Another recommendation for Aritzia is to continue improving accessibility. Features such as screen reader compatibility, adjustable text sizes, and color contrast improvements can ensure that the platform is inclusive for a broader audience. Aritzia should also consider adding personalized recommendations based on browsing history or user preferences, leveraging AI to enhance utility while maintaining transparency about data usage. Finally, maintaining its intuitive navigation structure is crucial, as this was a key strength noted by participants. Regular testing should ensure that any future updates do not compromise the platform's simplicity and ease of use.

Conclusion

The usability testing of Aritzia and Zara's websites has revealed critical insights into how design and functionality impact user satisfaction, efficiency, and engagement. Aritzia emerged as the stronger performer across all evaluated metrics, consistently demonstrating the importance of

intuitive navigation, clear product categorization, and efficient task completion. Its design prioritizes user needs, offering a seamless shopping experience that minimizes frustration and encourages repeat usage. However, even Aritzia has opportunities to enhance its platform by deepening its filtering options and ensuring accessibility for a broader audience.

Conversely, Zara's performance highlights the challenges of balancing aesthetic appeal with functionality. While visually engaging, its complex navigation, cluttered menus, and inconsistent product categorization negatively impacted participants' ability to complete tasks and feel confident using the platform. These usability issues underscore the importance of simplifying navigation structures, refining search and filtering systems, and aligning product organization with user expectations.

This study emphasizes that successful e-commerce platforms prioritize user-centered design principles, reducing cognitive load and facilitating intuitive interactions. Both websites can benefit from iterative testing and ongoing refinements informed by user feedback. Aritzia's strengths serve as a benchmark for usability, while Zara's challenges illustrate areas where design can detract from user engagement and satisfaction.

Ultimately, these findings provide a clear roadmap for both websites to improve. Aritzia can capitalize on its strengths while addressing minor gaps to stay ahead of user expectations. Zara, with focused efforts on simplification and usability enhancements, has the potential to transform its platform into one that is as functional as it is visually appealing. By adopting these recommendations, both websites can deliver a superior user experience that drives customer satisfaction, loyalty, and business success in an increasingly competitive digital marketplace.

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