

# INTERNET RETAILING



SELLING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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## THE KEY TO RETAIL 2020

Predictions from the Y2K game changers

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# BODEN

## REVIEW

Internet Retailing asked 4 retail experts to take a look at Boden.co.uk and give readers insight into the company's retail strategy, site performance, usability and customer experience.

### RETAIL STRATEGY

**Emma Speight, Senior Multi-channel Consultant, CVL**

The Boden shopping experience is, like the brand, charming. Their brand values permeate everything they do with nice touches on each page of the website like Boden fabric prints as the backdrop wallpaper and the use of a Boden bag for the basket icon.

The web experience is difficult to fault. It combines a mix of standard category navigation with alternate ways of shopping including 'by style' and 'by story'. Boden help customers contextualise products and drive up basket size by putting the products in carefully selected ranges, compiling recommended looks and through excellent web functions including a great outfit finder tool.

However, the best thing from my perspective is the amount of information provided on every product page, overcoming the tangibility barrier for online clothes shopping in an instant. The site provides multiple images for all colour and fabric combinations for every product. This is supported by a comprehensive sizing chart and finished with granular customer reviews which comment on things like quality and fit; all of which combines to give customers confidence in their purchase decision. And, after all, purchasing is what it is all about!

In terms of the catalogue, it maintained the brand standards but I found it a less effective experience than online. I placed a request for a catalogue the same day I purchased a dress (for research purposes!). Whereas the dress arrived the following day, the catalogue was slower arriving a week later. In addition, some of the products fared less well in paper format. It proved difficult to display extravagant fabric pattern options alongside each other in a way that would let the customer make an informed choice. That said, as a stimulant to create interest in products and drive customers online, the catalogue undoubtedly does its job.

Through all touch points Boden is extremely effective at creating aspiration and desirability for their range, delivered through imagery of happy, beautiful people in Boden-world. The only drawback to this approach is that there is less accommodation for casual shoppers who are not already in love with the Boden brand.

### USABILITY

**Clare Barnett, Usability Consultant, User Vision**

Boden is a UK-based mail-order clothing company which advertises its clothes as 'Classic, carefree and simply stunning'.

Their selling point is that they produce well constructed clothes. I was surprised that the pictures used on the homepage are grainy and poor quality, and my immediate worry would be about the quality of the products. First impressions are vital when there is so much competition and Boden really need to sort this out.

Boden have recently added a few new features to their website. When I access a particular piece of clothing, I have further options to 'watch a video', or use the 'outfit maker' tool.

The video allows customers to watch catwalk videos of a selected item. There is a further enhancement that could be incorporated to create a better customer experience here. Rather than being limited to one model, I would prefer to have a choice of models of different sizes and shapes so I can choose one that roughly matches me.

The outfit maker, a tool I haven't seen before, is a really good concept. You can select other items to see how an outfit would potentially look together. Each item is also shown in different colours, styles and prices on the left hand side, making it an easy way to find matching items. It is also a great way of upselling because it encourages users to purchase a complete outfit rather than individual pieces.

Boden also have a review section which allows real customers to judge their items. Reviewers choose what shape their body is, as well as what height and size they are. This is particularly useful information for the more average shaped person.

Overall, the features on Boden's website are great upsellers for clothing. They just need to ensure the message about the quality of their clothes comes over on the homepage which currently it does not due to the pictures used.

### EYE TRACKING ANALYSIS

**Guy Redwood, Managing Director, SimpleUsability**

Users were asked to buy a new summer outfit for themselves and one of their teenage children or a

Eye tracking gaze plot for Boden.co.uk  
Source: SimpleUsability

younger relative. Users were quickly drawn to the main graphic on the homepage. The women looked around the homepage to get started rather than use the primary navigation because it looked to them that the 'Women' tab was already selected.

Users reacted positively to the photography used on the website, and each section or category had a large banner. Users often looked longer and tried to hover the mouse over these products, but could not find out which products were being featured in the photography. Within the 'Occasionwear shop' users became confused because the main graphic looked like it contained navigation items e.g. 'Summer wedding'. The users looked to the left hand navigation, but the titles were not available and the user had to scroll to find this section.

We observed that the women's drop down menu was slightly harder for users to scan due to some of the titles wrapping over onto two lines.

When accessing product information, users saw the 'Outfit maker' icon when their eyes moved downwards from the title to the size selection. This was a help to users who would normally struggle to put an outfit together, and their eyes were drawn to immediately choose a category. Users were really looking for suggested products against the one item that they had chosen at this point, so they often clicked on the 'Outfit ideas' category which didn't give them what they expected. Some users became frustrated when paging through the products within the 'Outfit maker' from the bottom of the page. They had to be careful to select 'Next' because clicking on the arrow icon made all the products disappear.

When looking for items for a teenager, users were unaware that the 'Johnnie B' primary navigation section was relevant to them. It was only when the user hovered over that tab and saw the 'Teen boys' and 'Teen girls' titles that they knew where to go. The navigation item of 'Johnnie B' disappeared if users were within the 'Outfit maker'.

When users had decided on which product they wished to buy they clicked on a size and the green tick appeared. Users then looked up to the shopping bag in the right hand corner of the screen and didn't always realise that they had to click on 'Add to bag' to move forward with their purchase.

**SITE PERFORMANCE**

**David Flower, Vice President, EMEA, Gomez**

Commonly referred to as Middle England's mail order catalogue of choice and with well-known personas such as David Cameron among its fans, Boden appears to be weathering well in the current economic storm. With a recent website re-launch complete, Gomez reviewed the performance of Boden.co.uk from 25 March through 12 April inclusive.

Despite its lively new look and some great features,



the performance of the website during our test period was disappointing. From Gomez's Last Mile community of over 100,000 desktops worldwide, we analysed the performance of Boden.co.uk from real users' computers. The average homepage download time fell just short of 28 seconds. This is really poor. Especially since two seconds is the amount of time an average online shopper expects for a web page to load.

The poor average page download time was made even worse by an availability rating of just 45.41%. This meant that more than half of Boden's customers who tried to access the website during this test were not able to download the entire homepage. When we drilled deeper into the problem we were able to determine that most of the critical issues causing the unavailability of the page related to page timeouts. In other words, the site was so slow to respond that the internet browser stopped bothering to try to load the rest of the page.

The tests run on the internet backbone revealed a middle-of-the-road performance compared to other retailers in the Gomez benchmark. Of the 30 companies included in the test, Boden.co.uk finished mid-table in terms of download speeds and availability – so decidedly average.

From a mobile browser performance, the performance of Boden's website could have been better. The site did not render properly across all mobile devices, most notably the Blackberry Storm. With the numbers of consumers using their mobile to browse and purchase goods increasing, this is an area that Boden should address.

**GOMEZ SCORES THE BODEN SITE  
2 STARS OUT OF 5, MADE UP OF THE FOLLOWING:**

**Availability on Last Mile Score:** 4.36 out of 25

**Response Time on Last Mile:** 10.34 out of 25

**Consistency on Backbone:** 6.21 out of 15

**Competitiveness on Backbone:** 3.62 out of 15

**Browser Support:** 17.5 out of 20

**Total 42 out of 100**