

INTERNET RETAILING



SELLING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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DROP & COLLECT

Local delivery at the customers' convenience



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Retail REVIEW:
mydeco.com
mydeco.com
Hundreds of home stores. One home

P.20

New DIRECTIVE for
cross-border trade

P.24

Nordic
countries:
opportunity
or THREAT

P.38



MYDECO REVIEW

Internet Retailing asked 4 retail experts to take a look at mydeco.com and give readers insight into the company's retail strategy, site performance, usability and customer experience. We only have room for a synopsis in the magazine – visit InternetRetailing.net for more, in depth coverage and to voice your opinion.

RETAIL STRATEGY

Ray Fowler, Retail Consultant, CVL

Starting my career at Heal's in Tottenham Court Road, once recognised as leaders in design and quality furnishings, I was honoured to be amongst some of the greatest furniture designers and suppliers. With online stores like mydeco emerging, the tables are turning!

Mydeco is taking the sector by storm and although still in its 'beta version' infancy, offers innovative new ways to access good design and a wider range than traditional channels. Never before have so many designers and high end retail ranges been available through one portal.

However, my biggest concern with mydeco's online strategy is around their two purchasing options.

The first option is the link 'Go to shop' leading you to individual stores to complete your purchase and arrange fulfilment. If your mission is to design and source purely from mydeco then it's frustrating to make each purchase separately – and be charged for multiple deliveries. A quick switch off for would-be customers?

The second option 'Buy it here' allows you to build a basket. It's nigh on impossible to find items to add to this basket but when you do at least it aggregates your order with a total value. Problem is you are hit with the aggregated delivery charges for each of the items. In my basket this came to over 7% of the value. I think that's way too steep.

Now I quite understand where mydeco are going, but further thinking is required on how to manage these types of transactions. There is no simple way for the customers to manage the multiple fulfilment, tracking or delivery date selection aside from manually organising each delivery. Even then, they'll be lucky to get individual orders arriving in the same delivery window and I certainly can't take off the number of days to accommodate receiving orders.

I think some strategic innovation is required to address the real logistics challenges around delivery aggregation here. If mydeco can do this with the same creativity and imagination that they've brought to the rest of the site then the possibilities are endless.

USABILITY

Clare Barnett, User Experience Consultant, User Vision

What do you do after you've created Lastminute.com? Well, Brent Hoberman has given us mydeco, the "first stop to design and shop for your home."

With playability features more common in the gaming industry, mydeco provides a 3D room planner to create your own design. There's a moodboard where you collect items to inspire you and import photos of your own living room to see how mydeco might furnish it.

Being picky, there are a few usability issues that need to be ironed out. The navigation is a bit clumsy in places and I relied heavily on my browser's back button as that seemed easier.

The moodboard provides hardly any instructions and users may get confused. The category filtering system took a while to work out as it wasn't clear how to use or reset it and I didn't even notice the colour filtering until a colleague had a go. Finally, the pop up product description is sometimes frustrating as it obscures the filtering elements.

These are not showstoppers, but issues like these can degrade the user experience.

The most engaging part of the website is the social networking community. The joining process is straightforward, and in one day I achieved a status level of 'Design Devotee'.

The growth of the community far exceeds the business model of mydeco. Users create rooms not just for themselves, but for the sheer enjoyment of the process. For mydeco this community buzz and traffic could result in an increase in conversion rates and cross-selling opportunities.

In a time where people cannot afford to move, improving their home is the next best option. Mydeco provides a playground for users to spend hours doing this using just one website. It's preferable to pushing a trolley around a cold warehouse waiting at the kitchen department for a 'kitchen designer'. Now, everyone can be an 'interior designer'.



mydeco.com
Hundreds of home stores. One home.

EYE TRACKING ANALYSIS

**Guy Redwood, Managing Director,
SimpleUsability**

Users who participated in our research for mydeco.com were asked to think about a room that they wanted to revamp where they normally relax. They were then asked to find a lighting item that they would like to buy from the website.

Users were immediately drawn to the large panel in the central section of the homepage. Some used this area as general navigation and missed the primary navigation at the top of the page. The effect of this was that these users missed some of the lighting products that were available to them, because this graphic was targeted to a certain type of product.

There was a mix of how users chose to navigate from the home page. There was a split between users clicking on to the main graphic, the primary navigation and the search box. When conducting a general search from the site search box, one user started typing in the search term 'lights'. A drop down list of search suggestions appear in the search box but they were rather abstract for this particular user who chose 'lights fantastic' and was confused by the wording displayed to him.

Users did not play with the filters on the left hand side of the page. For lighting, users were more interested in the style of the item and were drawn to each product photograph to make their decision. Users looked at the brand names underneath the photographs and spent more time looking at the brands that they failed to recognise.

Once a user had found a product that they wanted to purchase they were re-directed to the retailer's website. This was very slow for some users and they abandoned their journey. Users were shown a re-direction page that contained information regarding why they should shop with mydeco.com. Users stared at one bullet point that said 'shop in your jimjams'. The actual word and the tone of the sentence was so different from what they were expecting to see that it caused users to look at it for longer than they might otherwise have done.

SITE PERFORMANCE

David Flower, Vice President, EMEA, Gomez

Gomez's on demand service tests and monitors the performance of websites from the outside-in. It provides a view of how a website performs from the internet backbone (e.g. ISPs) as well as actual desktop connections, showing the real-life online customer experience, also known as the Last Mile. Gomez carried out a website review of mydeco.com between 7 and 16 April and found, on the whole, its website performed poorly in comparison with data collected from the ongoing Gomez UK retail benchmark.*

When Gomez looked closer at this it found the performance of mydeco's homepage, from the internet backbone, fared badly in comparison with the benchmark, and that it just beat the slowest retailer's site in the list, taking on average 2.722 seconds to load. Compared with the highest performers in the retail benchmark – such as Tesco UK and Ebuyers, who have average page download times of 0.43 and 1.36 seconds respectively – mydeco's performance time is considerably slower.

The mydeco homepage also shows poor internet backbone availability relative to the benchmark. Although it is available 99.5% of the time, its 0.5% of unavailability equates to just under 2 days per year that it's not available to customers, providing them with no access to the site. This puts mydeco toward the bottom half of Gomez's benchmark. The most available sites in the benchmark achieved 100% availability from the internet backbone.

Generally, issues that seem to have impacted availability and performance appear to be related to the site's infrastructure and architecture. Specifically, on 10 April, problems occurred between two third parties: a content delivery network (CDN) provider and Cable and Wireless' (C&W) London backbone node. To resolve these issues mydeco's team should investigate the problem further with their CDN provider, and highlight the issue to C&W (this problem is somewhat out of their control). It should also communicate the findings to its marketing, operational and customer service teams, and aim to resolve the issue swiftly because a poorly performing online property could result in a loss of revenue and brand damage.

*Mydeco's data for the time frame, 7-16 April, is compared with data collected from Gomez's UK retail benchmark, taken from the mid-March to Mid-April time period.