

# INTERNET RETAILING



SELLING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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**JOHN LEWIS:**  
Cross-channel ambitions

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# SAINSBURY'S REVIEW

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

## RETAIL STRATEGY

**Emma Robertson, Senior Multi-channel Consultant, Transform**

In the last 12 months Sainsbury's has made significant inroads into becoming a multi-channel retailer, launching a comprehensive non-food proposition supported by a multi-channel logistics operation.

The core proposition remains the grocery offer, which has continued to develop and improve in line with the market. The fact that they fulfil from the local store allows them to offer 1 hour delivery slots pre-booked in advance, a service which although now standard for grocery is still logistically complex and impressive. The site itself offers the customer a strong combination of online grocery shopping with value added advice led content. Although this content can be weak in places, it is always appropriate to the product set and provides a strong tie in to the wider marketing campaign, which includes television advertising and forays into social media - Facebook page with 47,000 fans and Twitter with 8,000 followers.

In terms of the non-food offering, the product range is comprehensive and puts Sainsbury's in competition with general retailers. Sainsbury's has made inroads into making its online direct operation multi-channel, with order points in-store allowing customers to order products for home delivery, and a limited "click & collect" offer squaring the circle. The iForce-run fulfilment operation out of Corby reflects this ambition, managing deliveries to home and to store, as well as managing cross-channel returns and disposals.

The challenge, which ultimately becomes a customer disappointment, is that the grocery and non-food operations are not tied up, creating separate baskets and transactions within the same user experience. The joined up visual design ultimately masks a disparate fulfilment operation.

From a multi-channel perspective, the opportunities presented to Sainsbury's in the grocery and non-food market must be balanced by the ease with which aggregators and price comparison sites can undo the offer and reduce it down to product and price. This is where the strength of the combined offer will come into its own, and the value added content will deliver for the company as well as the customer.

## USABILITY

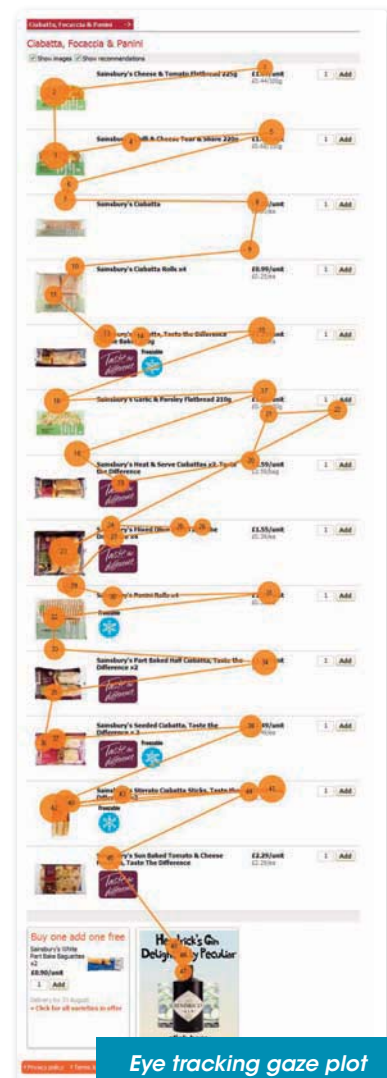
**Stephen Denning, Senior User Experience Consultant, User Vision**

Sainsbury's reported 20% growth in their online grocery sales for the first quarter of 2010, with around 120,000 weekly online orders during this period. This came off the back of a major website redesign in 2009, aimed at simplifying and enhancing the user experience. But has the grocery giant succeeded in providing its customers with straightforward online grocery shopping?

Registering for Sainsbury's online is a relatively painless process, with minimal information required up front. This more 'passive' registration enables customer to get shopping more quickly, which in turn helps to reduce the rates of abandoned registrations.

The groceries homepage presents you with six calls-to-action in the immediate area, on top of the two-tier main-menu. This can create confusion as to the best place to start: Book a delivery slot? Start browsing the shelves? Look at the various special offers? The "book delivery" option is also confused by the sub-title "to see our latest product offers", which seems to have little to do with booking a delivery slot. A clear and unambiguous call-to-action would be of great benefit to customers, particularly first-time buyers who may need more direction.

The Sainsbury's site allows you to shop in a number of ways. You can search for a product by name, type, or browse categories that roughly represent the aisles in a typical store. Although this is reasonably intuitive, the sub-menus (or "shelves") have little visual differentiation from the main menus (or "aisles") and



Eye tracking gaze plot for Sainsbury's  
Source: SimpleUsability

they are all top-aligned, resulting in a rather disjointed and hesitant browsing experience.

At check-out your delivery and billing addresses are taken (with the postcode finder taking most of the strain). Interestingly, the delivery slot is not as prominent a part of the checkout process as I would have expected and the prompt is rather subtle. The delivery slot screen offers clear access to dates/times and unavailable slots are clearly differentiated. However, the repetition of the unnecessary van icon generates clutter that detracts attention from the delivery costs, which are the important pieces of information.

Overall, Sainsbury's offers a relatively intuitive shopping experience. However, a clearer process with improved navigation and labelling would help improve the overall experience.

### EYE TRACKING ANALYSIS

#### **Guy Redwood, Managing Director, SimpleUsability**

We invited a few current online Sainsbury's shoppers to carry out their weekly shop in our eye tracking studio. Shoppers started at one end of the grocery primary navigation shopping first in the Fresh section, moving on to Bakery etc. Although they had logged into their accounts, "none of the participants used the 'My usuals' or 'shopping list' features as they were concerned about missing offers" - isn't this interesting? Customers always amaze!

Once into a product category, images were incredibly important to the shoppers. Participants scanned down the list of photos looking for familiar products, scanning across to the name and price afterwards. Most shoppers had an idea in their head of what something should cost, and hence used price as a sense check to confirm they were buying the right size or correct product.

Users commented that they found grocery shopping on Sainsbury's hard work. The layout of product listing pages forces a very inefficient reading pattern for choosing groceries. Users were forced to zig zag across the page between photo and price. If the layout presented the price closer to the photography users would be able to find their products quicker. If there was a run of same branded product photos, we noticed that users would sometimes skip over them and read the product names, returning to the photos at the next brand change.

Users were familiar with moving through the categories/aisles, some of them inefficiently clicking on the category title in the navigation and then clicking into the section or just relying on the browser back button.

With such a wide range of products, search can be a difficult feature to execute well for online grocery, but Sainsbury's performed well, placing the relevant products at the top of the results for generic terms like 'spaghetti'.

### SITE PERFORMANCE

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

A key weapon to retaining customers in the online world is a flawless web performance. The Gomez benchmark tests the performance of the home pages of the top 30 UK online retailers. Among its peers, Sainsbury's is a consistently top performer in terms of speed, availability and browser fidelity.

On the Internet Backbone (eg from ISPs) Sainsbury's home page showed 100% availability. Technically this is a perfect response and from an availability perspective, things don't get any better than this. The average home page download speed of Sainsbury's home page during this test was 1.8 seconds. Relative to others in the benchmark this is an excellent result (although still slower than rival Tesco at 0.15 seconds).

One particular element that would have adversely impacted the performance of the home page was a link to an image advertising a "School's Out" toy sale. The display of the image was inconsistent and its load time often extended. This would have contributed to the overall average home page download time.

Also of note were the substantially different levels of provision provided by the various ISPs throughout this test. The overall levels of provision varied significantly with fast and consistent service levels from some ISPs, to a poor, inconsistent service from others.

Uniquely, Gomez can track the performance of websites from real end-users' desktops, giving an accurate view of 'real-world' performance. The average home page response time for all the companies in the benchmark via the Last Mile peers was 8 seconds with 96% availability. Sainsbury's web site performed slightly below the download speed average at 8.7 seconds but exceeded the average availability ranking with a score of 98%. Although it was among the top performers, Tesco secured the top spot with an average home page download of just 1.5 seconds and 99% availability.

On the whole, Sainsbury's online grocery site performed well during the past month. As well as rendering successfully on all the major modern browsers, including the iPhone and Blackberry, its performance was among the top scorers in the Gomez benchmark.

### **GOMEZ SCORES SAINSBURY'S 3.5 STARS OUT OF 5 MADE UP OF THE FOLLOWING:**

**Availability on Last Mile Score:** 23 out of 25

**Response Time on Last Mile:** 10 out of 25

**Consistency on Backbone:** 11 out of 15

**Competitiveness on Backbone:** 9 out of 15

**Browser Support:** 20 out of 20

**Total 73 out of 100**