



Design Report

Sharon Huntley Land

Design Process

In designing an eCommerce site, one has to primarily think about bringing customers in to shop. First and foremost, a designer needs to think about and focus on who their customers are, and what are their needs and wants. The eCommerce site I decided to create is one that sells wedding rings to couples primarily in the 30+ age range, and who have been married previously. I was hoping to fill a niche market that I discovered when shopping for rings myself. I noticed that there were a lot of popular sites devoted to higher priced rings that were more ornate and flashy, but there wasn't a lot out there for older couples who were looking for more understated, lower priced rings. In the course of a long marriage, where both individuals are wearing their rings everyday, one understands the need for jewelry that reflects one's personal style, but is not too flashy or too expensive to be worn everyday.

In my research, I discovered that couples looking to wed who are older, often have pretty firm ideas of what they are looking for. Some of the time these couples have more money to work with and want to splurge,¹ but since the market is already saturated with companies selling on the higher end, I chose to focus on customers who are looking for something more understated.² In both cases, the couple is shopping together, and often jointly paying for their rings as well.³ Therefore, focusing on both parties was of utmost importance. The site needed to appeal to all couples, regardless of age, gender, etc., so all couples feel welcomed and included.

Because of these factors, I chose to design the site in a minimalist style that was simple, elegant, and timeless. I wanted the jewelry to take center stage. I wanted all shoppers to feel welcomed, so on the homepage, I chose to include pictures of all types of couples in love. They were shown in a cascading downward, to mimic falling in love. Also, the opacity of the pictures gets incrementally increased as the pictures fall demonstrating how love gets stronger and grows in intensity with time.

Colors and fonts were also chosen with the target customer base in mind. A couple bold tones were picked to represent the richness and passion of love. These were offset by some neutrals and a dusty rose. The dusty rose was chosen to appeal to those with a more feminine side, and the neutrals for those who are not.

The fonts of American Typewriter and Optima were chosen to communicate a warm, inclusive feel. American Typewriter brings up feelings of nostalgia to times past. Optima has clean lines and a modern feel. Both, side by side, give the site a nod to modernity, without forgetting the past.

1 "The Second Time Around, Marriage with Jewels" by Barbara O'Dair (NY Times)

2 "Engagement Ring Etiquette for a Second Marriage" - blog.brilliance.com

3 "Second Marriage Engagement Ring Etiquette" - estatediamondjewelry.com



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Logo Creation

The logo for the eCommerce site ANew was also created with the same design principles in mind: simple, elegant, and timeless. The name of the company, ANew, was chosen as it reflected finding love again, but in a brand new way. Both individuals coming into the couple have gone through a transformation by themselves. And they bring with it the desire for **A NEW** fresh start in life and love.



The final logo design (pictured above) shows the same consideration given to the design of the Homepage. The first two letters (A and N) represent the two individuals who have come together as a couple. They are shown in the American Typewriter font, echoing the font used in all headers and navigation. The second two letters (E and W) are shown in the Optima font, and progressively get smaller but less opaque. This downward sizing represents the couple falling in love, but as they fall, they too change and their feeling get stronger over time.

Lastly, there is the heart. The heart is shown in two halves, signifying the coming together of two individuals. Where the two intersect is the relationship that has blossomed. Both individuals in the couple still keep a sense of who they are individually, but now they are joined in love. The opacity getting darker where the two halves of the heart overlap is meant to reflect this.

UX Evaluation Process

After the style was set, the wireframe created, and a prototype of the site was made, the challenge was to find out if the site did indeed appeal to the customer base, and if a user's experience of the site was a pleasant one. A usability test was performed. In this test, 10 participants were asked to perform a mock jewelry purchase of two rings on the website prototype built through Axure. A Homepage, one of the Jewelry pages, 2 Product pages, several versions of a Shopping Cart page, and Checkout process pages were created to allow the user to get a true feel of a jewelry purchasing experience on the site.

Participants were emailed a list of instructions to complete the mock jewelry purchase on the prototype, and were then asked to fill out a Questionnaire comprised of 13 multiple choice questions, and 2 opinion questions. They were instructed to email the questionnaire back to the tester when done.

Findings

The response from participants in the usability study was overall favorable and positive. It was apparent that their experiences were on par with other eCommerce jewelry sites. However, only a few participants felt that the site was better than average. Participants noted a few errors that needed fixing, but did not report any errors in the checkout process. A couple did note that the design was “simple” and, designers should “pep it up,” however, the majority of the participants noted the color scheme as standing out, and touted the site as “straightforward”, “easy,” and “intuitive.”

Because of this, slight changes were made in order to help the ANew site stand out more. The errors that participants noted were fixed along with some design changes and additions to really step up the website prototype’s aesthetic to the next level, and fill additional user needs as well.

Design Changes

Homepage

On the website prototype Homepage, a search text field was added to the header (as well as on all other pages) to address additional usability needs. The main design of the page was also changed. The opacity of the pictures of couples was increased gradually as the pictures descend down the page. This was done to mimic the logo design as well as show how love grows and strengthens over time.

An additional picture of hands with wedding rings on them was also added to clue users into what the site is actually selling.

Category (Jewelry)Page

The Category page was beefed up with better pictures of the jewelry. Having the jewelry sit atop stone gives the user a sense of having it be more rugged and wear well over time. Additional images of the rings on actual hands were also switched out as being the image displayed when the user hovers over the initial image of the ring. This gives users an idea of what the ring will look like on their hand - giving them a more realistic sense of the product.

Product Pages

The product images on the Product pages were enhanced by adding 4 more images of each product. The images were added in a carousel with arrows to allow the user to scroll through each picture one by one. Additionally, opaque thumbnails of each of the images were added below the larger image. Upon hover, the image comes into clarity, and it is displayed above in the larger square. Clicking on the thumbnails will also change the larger image above to the image selected.

This will allow the user to see more views of the products, on hands, and up close.

Once the user has added the item to the cart, the pop-up window verbiage of "Checkout" was changed to "Shopping Cart." A participant in the usability study noted the word "Checkout" was used too frequently.

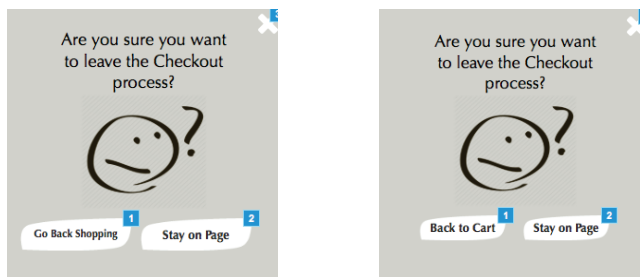
Basket/Cart Pages

The Basket/Cart pages were given additional functionality added by way of having the cost of the items subtotaled, tax amount listed, and a full purchase total listed. This allows users to see how much they will be spending if they decide to make a purchase. Additionally, the cost/checkout box background color was changed to the navy/dark purple color of the color scheme. This was done to bring the user's attention to this area because it is a darker color. Also, the text on the user's total cost amount was made a larger font size to help it stand out.

Just as in the pop-up on the product pages, "Checkout" was changed to "Proceed to Checkout." This change of phrasing tells the user where they will be going and what they will be doing if this option is selected.

Checkout Pages

The Shipping/Payment page of the checkout process was enhanced by adding a pop-up window if the user attempts to leave the page. Active links in the header and footer were equipped with a pop-up window asking if the user does indeed want to leave the checkout process:



The Review Order page of the checkout process was also added to functionally by bringing over the subtotal, tax, and total purchase amounts from the Basket/Cart page. This allows the user to see their total purchase amount again before being asked to complete the purchase. The pop-up window from the Shipping/Payment page was also added to make sure the user doesn't accidentally leave the checkout process. Again, "Checkout" was changed to "Place Order."

On the Order Confirmation page, the main section was given the lighter grayscale background color present in the color scheme. This allows the pictures of the user's purchases to stand out more. Additionally, an extra picture of the rings together on a hand was added to give the user a sense of what they will look like together on their hand.

Summary

Implementing these changes was done in an effort to bring users a better experience. The additions of more pictures of the rings, and the purchase totaling gives users a better sense of what an actual functioning website will be like. The slight tweaks were done in an effort to "pep it up" as one of the participants in the usability study noted.

Each iteration and step towards the final prototype brought forth positive changes and additions, and ended up creating a project that is even better than I initially envisioned.