

Ecommerce and website marketing essays examples

[Business](#), [Customers](#)



1. 0 Introduction

Websites are arrangements of interrelated web pages parented by a single web address or better known as a domain name hosted by a server. Initially websites were typically navigated for information only. The Internet evolved to incorporate unlimited functions such as electronic email communications, architectural designs and business transactions. Nowadays most, if not all, websites are designed to be a two-way method of communication between the sender and the receiver. The purpose of this report is to evaluate three (3) different kinds of websites and distinguishing their main functions: information, interactive, and trans-active. Considering how virtually most established and popular websites have subscriptions and newsletter options, they share all elements of the aforementioned main functions, some more than others. An example of shared functions is an e-commerce website where consumers may purchase products online with several methods of payment and simultaneously can retrieve information on products prior to purchase (Think Newsletter, 2014). Additionally the same websites have blogs where customers share information based on their experiences with products they purchased to provide insight for other customers. This is also an example of an interactive site.

The three websites to be evaluated will be separately categorized with descriptions of their main functions followed briefly by their secondary functions so as not to omit too many details about these websites. The websites to be evaluated and reviewed are:

- National Geographic Kids (NGK)
- John Chow (JC)

- Ask the Builder (ATB)

Each website has been carefully selected and are sure to be complete and active. Therefore they are provided a fair rating because they are presented in their own unique displays that appeal to different target audiences. Depending on the website and the target audience, most readers expect regular updates and fresh content, especially if they are subscribers to periodically released newsletters.

The websites described in this review are highly acclaimed websites catering to specific target audiences with specific goals in mind. Each of these websites is relatively unique in their own rites and the products and services they offer. To avoid receiving spam and ensure a real person is subscribing, more websites are including a captcha requirement before any subscription can be verified and completed (Walsh, 2013). The websites reviewed include the necessary step for captcha especially due to high volumes of traffic arriving. Receiving excessive spam may reduce the credibility of the website or overload it with unwanted traffic causing the servers to crash. Previously these websites described below lacked the captcha step, and johnchow.com (details explained below) once experienced a momentary crash. Luckily the damage was minimal but the prompt to install a captcha tool was essential. This is mandatory for business websites where they can be targets for hackers attempting to crash the system with spam emails. When captcha was introduced to these sites, it was met with critical reaction because of the extra steps required to opt into a subscription (Engber, 2014). On the other hand, users preferred to enter captchas because that also indicated that these websites are custom-created by real people in spite of physically

disabled people planning to petition against captcha.

With many users wanting to easily gain access to websites and fresh content, many website designers now provide subscriptions. Many subscription options include big business sites, news and journals websites, game websites (for comments and hints), social media, and preferred customer sales websites (Crompton, 2014). The following websites to be reviewed have portions of the aforementioned tools to make website navigation user-friendly.

2. 0 Informational Site - National Geographic Kids (NGK)

Web Address URL: kids.nationalgeographic.com

National Geographic Kids is a fun-paced educational website for kids that features games, videos, and information on the latest news on one of the most highly accredited diverse geography, wildlife and cultural programs. This presentation of National Geographic appears more illustrious and colourful than its parent website which is geared toward an adult audience. Like most informational websites, NGK has the option to subscribe for further site exploration and being informed by email notification on the latest news posted. The navigation of NGK is basically dependable on clicks only to delve deeper into the information stream. Only a few limited bricks with exception of the middleperson delivery of magazines are included with the provision of selling subscriptions of National Geographic (Greenfield, 2014). Otherwise most of NGK constitutes clicking navigation.

The advantage gained by deviating from the brick concept is the convenience for parents to help teach their children about popular learning topics from National Geographic as a whole. The brick and click aspect also

provide safety and security by using a dependable system online if they need to order products (Buckley, 2014). Many online magazines offer much of free information instead of being online-only retailers. NGK normally maintains the its first page for children. But to view more information on separate online issues, a paid subscription must be completed to be sent a monthly issue. A parent supervising their children must complete the subscription because of legal and age issues. The subscription opt-in appears on the top right corner and continues across the top of the page as a superimposed flash or splash banner appearing on every page. This opt-in generally appears in the same location in larger dimensions to be discernible for subscribers.

NGKs navigation to its front from the point of searching is relatively travelling at top speed in regards to opening the front page. However, scrolling up and down the front page is often difficult or slower. But the speed may also depend on what browser and computer NGK is being searched. The navigation speed between pages is fairly satisfactory and the loading time is very minimal. When children find webpages taking too long, they often get impatient. NGK being a branch of National Geographic apparently reveals the funds into the performance of the site is one of the top priorities (Dutton, 2013). The reason is it is an online information and magazine source with monthly subscriptions. When customers pay for an online service, they expect prompt navigation and easier page loading. Evidently NGK employs a team of web developers to monitor its progress and continued functionality and their responsibility is to ensure navigation timing is prompt.

Navigating through NGK is relatively simple without any pop-up ads with the

exception of the flash subscription page appearing across the top. The NGK icon appears at the top left of the page rendering navigation back to the home page to prevent constant backward clicking to eventually reach the home page. It does not have any notable anchors, but has several clickable links denoted by pictures relevant to the topic of the page destined to upload when clicked. The titles associated with the pictures often have larger fonts to make them easier to read instead of straining readers' eyes. Perhaps the web developers only placed the link to the NGK main page in one position only because the target audience for this website is children. Hence it is difficult to determine how many pages point to the main page.

My first impression of this site was a sense of basic reading and understanding of factual information instead of paging through an actual magazine to search for information. The pages are filled with separate information boxes each distinguished by light and contrasting colors upon white space avoiding any overlap. Each page may be cluttered occasionally. Regardless most boxes are diverse color borders. Some boxes are merely straight lined or pencil-ruler streaks to mark their distinction with neighbouring boxes. An interesting feature about the information boxes is the interior illustrations. Some are real world photographs of mostly outdoor screenshots while others are refined cartoonish sketches. The initial appearance can be perceived to represent a fun learning Internet environment. Most children do not enjoy reading printed material unless persuaded by adults. Nowadays with children demographics adapting to social media technology formidably, they can easily adapt to NGK because their first instinct in picking up reading material is to view pictorial

representations of literature if they are to enjoy reading and learning. Hence the web developers of NGK are portraying the correct message to children willing to learn when they perceive it as fun.

3. 0 Interactive Site – John Chow

Web address URL: www.johnchow.com

John Chow (JC) is mainly a complementary and interactive blog with articles informing readers how to make money online with variables tools including selling via websites, interlinking, online advertising, banner placement, and affiliate marketing (Adegbulu, 2014). Among many of products offered, JC offers a free e-book you can read at your leisure. The bulk of his front page is tailored with several blog articles featuring various recommended packages to purchase to help start-up or magnify an online business or tips to help improve an existing business. Additionally he offers affiliate sponsors to advertise on his site for a monthly fee and displays his monthly ranking systems to show his target audience his claims are genuine and authentic. JC is personally named after the website founder and Internet mastermind John Chow. JC is strictly using the clicks marketing strategy as the majority of his products or promoted products are software and online-based tools. Most products are interactive as they require downloading onto personal or business websites. JC can also be accessed and interacted with mobile services. If you frequently follow JC's blogs, you will notice John posts many of his blogs from his mobile phone especially when he is on vacation. JC has no use for bricks because all products he promotes and endorses are designed for online use only. He also offers the latest advice on how advance websites can receive money by pay-per-click actions or pay= per-thousand-clicks

(Johnston, 2013).

JC places much emphasis on improving the website, virtually every aspect including page navigation. When first uploading the JC site, a feature known as a light-box appears superimposed upon the screen. The light-box is a faint reduced-sized box that gives you the option of subscribing to the JC site to receive notifications of newly posted articles in the blog section of the site as well as the option of downloading a free e-book itemizing the general tools used and shared by JC to help readers follow his example in monetizing websites and blogs (Beebom, 2014). He frequently promotes via his blogs new well-reviewed and well-received online products that help monetize websites. The steps as far as navigating throughout the website is one of the quickest sites because JC has advanced and upgraded servers managed by his web developer who constantly monitors web traffic to ensure all traffic is sent to appropriate locations so as not to slow progress on navigation.

Evidently JC is a sole proprietor company where John can manage his website from almost any location. Whenever something within the site is amiss, John immediately repairs the problem or informs his web developer to bring it back on track.

JC appears to be a professionally designed website with strategically placed sections for specific features. These features do not necessarily remain the same. For example the blog article section is located on the left side margin and change frequently with the posting of a new article. On the right online advertising servers are placed for a monthly fee for using his advertising space. This column also has social media icons (i. e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) for his readers to follow him and learn through other channels about what

was recently posted on his site. In the very center is the opt-in box if the light-box does not appear upon opening up the main page. The navigation to the main page is made simple by clicking on the website icon the top left of any page that brings the reader directly to the main page.

The web color scheme is mostly white space with blue fonts marking the blog article titles and a blue menu bar across the top also consisting of the JC web icon. The only distinguished colors are colors not entered by John himself or his web developer. These extra colors actually belong to other advertisers or John's affiliate and fellow marketers sharing his space on the website.

JC is sparsely displayed with anchors. Instead of underlined words implied in the articles, as was the way JC used to illustrate, the anchors are now highlighted in a light indigo or aqua color. The color represents an anchor leading to another site or article briefly described by the highlighted words. The action occurring following the clicks depends on the highlighted words. Some clicks take the readers to another page directly on the JC site, while others make navigate to another website altogether, but the content is relevant to the anchor.

Another reason why JC is interactive is because each blog article is associated with a comment section for any reader to leave comments regarding the content in the article. The comment box provides communication between John Chow and his readers or among readers themselves. Hence this site can also be a forum where readers exchange ideas and experiences with online products. It is not necessary to actually subscribe to enter comments, but JC highly recommends it because readers

receive notifications through email, otherwise useful information will be missed.

JC has an " About Us" page that reveals the story behind John Chow's credentials, qualifications, and his brief life story. On the same page, he provided video testimonials by fellow established bloggers, affiliates and recordings from local news programs. He also posted clips of his works and accomplishments on acclaimed magazines printed by his ethnic community and public news sources such as The Province.

My personal ranking for this site is 9.5 out of 10 because JC is very well organized (I never give a perfect score because no website is perfect).

Considering the viable rankings listed on JC, this implies the target audience is being fully informed of all relevant information regarding website monetization. The number of subscribers, and followers through social media do paint a true picture that John Chow and his accomplished work is authentic. His message is for all his readers and followers to pursue their dreams if they wish to provide a better life for themselves. JC is a very sophisticated site that it is difficult to suggest what features should change or should be added.

4.0 Trans-Active Site - Ask The Builder

Web address URL: www.askthebuilder.com

Ask The Builder (ATB) is an online trans-active site that offers home improvement information, construction products and services, newsletters, advice, and information to improve your home. In fact ATB consists of virtually several Internet tools from information sources to purchasing tools from an online store. Tim Carter, the founder of ATB is a highly acclaimed

and experienced builder himself, explaining why he is proficient in his presentation on this website. The ATB website heavily follows both the click and brick concept because of the variety of interactive and trans-active tools included (Mahar, Wright, Bretthauer, Hill, 2014). A free e-book and newsletter opt-in light-box from the start-up page appears upon loading the main page. Users have the choice of whether they want to subscribe. Additionally in case users frequently navigate throughout ATB, the opt-in box appears as a reduced-scaled icon on the right column of the page to remind readers and purchasers of the advantage of signing up for weekly newsletters and the valuable information in the e-book.

Site navigation to the first page is possible from almost anywhere within the website. Navigation to the first page can be accessed either from entering the website URL address or directly from a weekly email with the latest newsletter. However ATB's icon located on the top left corner of the page does not necessarily return the user back to the home page. It is labelled as the " Ask The Builder Store" where the loaded page is actually an online store with featured products. While this may be a useful tool for customers seeking quality products, the home page shall be more prominent. Instead to access the home page is accessed from the left side of the top tool bar of ATB. Otherwise the speed and time to access the front page is fairly satisfactory. Tim has all the experience as a builder to ensure all items customers are looking for are available.

The majority of products are construction and carpentry tools each with thorough reviews from Tim Carter himself. Besides tools he recommends accessory and miscellaneous products including adhesives, paint, and

cement. His brick aspect brought an increase to his customer base. This was not only because customers could order products online, but also purchase quality tools and products difficult to find locally and Tim Carter thoroughly reviewed them. When customers learned Tim was a sincere and renowned builder, they felt comfortable ordering his products, especially with private homeowners because they did not want to risk damaging their homes with faulty tools and applications. Hence ATB's largest target audience are private homeowners who wanted to take on the do-it-yourself (DIY) channel.

Offering physical items online through advisory service brought ATB a formidable advantage and bypassed several traditional retailers that otherwise required lengthy steps through supply chains to provide customers with the tools they need (Whitaker, 2012). Incorporating the click and brick method enabled customers to seek refunds in case they were dissatisfied with their products and reduced wasted shipping costs. However, Tim ensured customer satisfaction provided they followed his advice to the letter as customers continued to review products online before making any choices.

ATB's overall layout is an intricate and interesting arrangement on an online retail store. However, as what is expected for websites, it lacks the "About Me" link. However, a short navigation will almost automatically inform the reader who Tim the builder really is and what he is all about because it is self-explanatory. In fact it is quite as extensive as Home Depot's websites with the same type of sales theme. Many online giants have teams of web developers that monitor the servers because of heavy traffic arriving from all directions. ATB also has multiple servers because its presence is almost as

prominent as Home Depot but founded and administered by one person, although Tim has his own team of web developers partnered with online entities including Google. The purpose of hiring a team is ATB has more than advice and sales items. Other products and services include DIY project guides and videos, completed project plans, consulting instructions, new home hiring guides checklists, and instructional DVDs. Much of the related services are located in a column on the left side of the website which remains constant throughout navigation providing easy access in case customers require those services.

ATB deserves a ranking of 9.5 out of 10 because of its compilation of several products and services available with impressive organization (Scott, 2003). Since ATB is a sophisticated website offering multiple products and services as many online home improvement giants, many anchors are included. The color scheme is plain with very few color variations. But the website is evenly laid out with general categories where customers mostly frequent, featured products which are the latest remarkable products on the market, and a list of current top sellers. Tim frequently sends newsletter emails that include the most recent updates and limited offers. However, they are usually located at the bottom of the webpage where they may not be noticed. But at the very least, they are noticeable during the announcement of the latest newsletter. To a new subscriber, the navigation button to the home page shall always be near one of the top corners that take users directly to the home page in case they get lost during navigation.

5.0 Conclusion

In the pioneer days of the World Wide Web, most websites were established

for easy-to-access information only providing users to gain information without having to commute to a local store outlet. Nowadays most websites incorporate all three aforementioned aspects of website communication (information, interactive, and trans-active) to some degree, and some aspects more than others. Competition between online and online businesses will continue as long as new upcoming business are established because some customers prefer to deal directly with people instead of an automated system (Baker, 2013). But having an online presence reduces if not eliminates the waiting period for the latest information or digital product ordered. A paid subscription nowadays is quick and easy even for youngsters (Stern, 2012).

Usually a website is identified by its primary function although most websites do offer unlimited information that online consumers and users are seeking. Although the terms informational, interactive, and trans-active are frequently used terms to identify and describe website activity, new terms have been adopted for more advanced websites. Other terms used are static, dynamic, and multimedia/interactive to further define websites. These terms may also describe the aforementioned sites reviewed because they each serve with unique functions and purposes with some overlapping functions.

The similarities among these websites is they individually serve the public while focusing on specific target audiences: one for children fun learning, one for advice on making money online, and one for advice on home improvement and purchasing carpentry tools. For the most part, they provide free opt-in subscriptions for periodic updates and the latest material. Previously subscribed users may only acquire additional information and a

payment option is necessary. For example, NGK offers additional magazine information only through a paid subscription to read almost unlimited material through a full and detailed online magazine. In a sense, they are designed to provide social networking because of their online presence. However JC and ATB have free opt-ins accompanied by free e-books to help get readers started. The major differences are they target specific audiences for different needs used for learning, online business, and home improvements respectively. Regardless of how these websites are categorized, they each share the same theme in attracting specific audiences.

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