

Coldwater Creek

ColdwaterCreek.com

Heuristic User Experience Evaluation

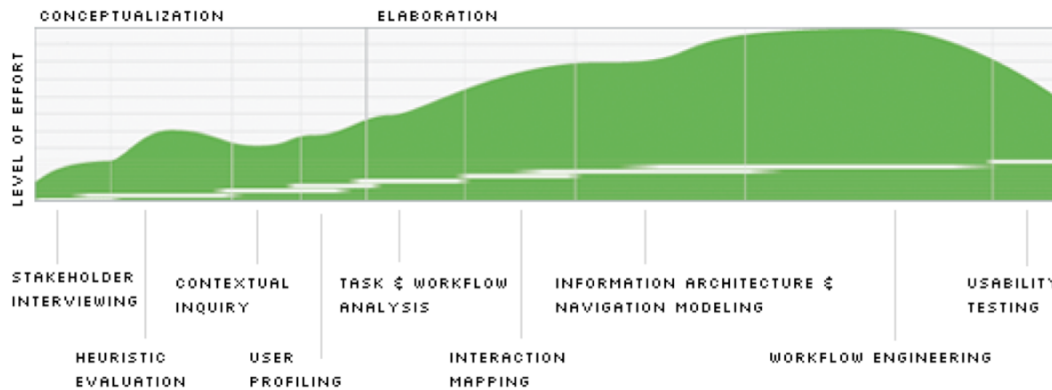
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Introduction

As a part of the conceptualization phase of this initial user experience effort, our preliminary findings outlined below are the result of a heuristic evaluation, which was performed on Coldwater Creek's website (www.coldwatercreek.com).



The following information comprises part of the work done in the “Conceptualization” stage shown above in the Studio UX process graph. The primary goal of this initial stage is to discover and document major user experience issues or inconsistencies that could be revised in order to improve usability and build a better overall customer experience. The research and findings completed in this phase work into the next stage, “Elaboration”, by providing the Coldwater Creek and Studio UX teams with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions as they design and develop the next version of the website.

This document will walk through Studio UX’s heuristic findings regarding Coldwater Creek’s website.

Evaluation Key

A heuristic evaluation is a systematic inspection of a user interface design for usability, as measured against recognized usability principles (or “heuristics”). The goal of a heuristic evaluation is to find usability problems in the design so they can be addressed as part of the iterative design process.

The evaluation covers seven primary topics including situational awareness, mental model support, user goal support, consistency, error forgiveness and recovery, accessibility (when appropriate) and help. The evaluation key used is a simple 4-point scale outlined below.

4	3	2	1	N/A	details	description
✓					Excellent	Fully meets or exceeds UX standard
	✓				Good	Adequately meets UX standard
		✓			Marginal	Minimally meets UX standard
			✓		Unsatisfactory	Does not meet UX standard or altogether absent
				✓		Not applicable to website

The next six pages contain the heuristic evaluation for the Coldwater Creek website. The evaluation is divided into seven categories: Situational Awareness, Support Mental Modes, Support User Goals, User Experience Consistency, Error Forgiveness and Recovery, Accessibility, and Help Documentation. Each category consists of a number of related tasks, and each task is evaluated using the same 4-point scale shown above. An overall score appears after each category.

A final appendix contains detailed comments on tasks that scored a **2 (Marginal)** or a **1 (Unsatisfactory)**.

1. Situational Awareness

Task	4	3	2	1	N/A	Situational Awareness
1.1				✓		Application windows have appropriate title bars
1.2				✓		Screens begin with a title or header that describes screen contents
1.3				✓		Clear indication is given to the user at all times regarding their location within the application
1.4		✓				Cues are present to guide users through their workflow
1.5		✓				If multiple steps are required of the user, they are kept informed of where they are in the process
1.6		✓				When there are observable delays in performance, the user is kept informed of progress
1.7		✓				Interface action consequences are clear (links, downloads, redirection, etc)
See "Appendix: Comments" for details on Situational Awareness section.						
Overall Score					2.1 (out of 4)	

2. Support Mental Models

Task	4	3	2	1	N/A	Support Mental Models
2.1			✓			Appropriate user experience metaphor has been used
2.2			✓			Menu choices are ordered in the most likely way to be logical and coherent to the user
2.3		✓				Application aesthetics are appropriate and in context for the user
2.4		✓				On data entry screens, tasks are described in terms familiar to the user
2.5			✓			Interactions are consistent & expected with targeted users
See "Appendix: Comments" for details on Support Mental Models section.						
Overall Score					2.4	

3. Support User Goals

Task	4	3	2	1	N/A	Support User Goals
3.1			✓			The navigation scheme actively supports the user's goals
3.2				✓		The layout of information on individual screens support the user's goals
3.3		✓				Interactions support user's goals - there are no unnecessary or missing steps
3.4		✓				Adequate explanation is given for tasks that require it
3.5		✓				All information a user needs is available at each stage of a given workflow
3.6		✓				All necessary functionality is present without leaving the primary user interface
3.7		✓				User is presented with an appropriate number of choices at each juncture, no dead-ends
3.8			✓			There is a clear hierarchy in the primary calls to action
3.9			✓			Goals are hierarchically supported when necessary (primary, secondary goals)
3.10		✓				Application performance is appropriate for the user workflow/task(s)
See "Appendix: Comments" for details on Support User Goals section.						
Overall Score					2.5	

4. User Experience Consistency

Task	4	3	2	1	N/A	User Experience Consistency
4.1				✓		The interface has a consistent look and feel
4.2		✓				Visual indication is present on menus or dialog boxes for choices that are selectable
4.3		✓				There is clear indication of which items are selected
4.4		✓				There are visual indications for all action states (ie: active, non active, visited, etc)
4.5		✓				Naming of elements is consistent across the interface
4.6				✓		Placement of interface elements is consistent across the interface
4.7		✓				Prompts are written in the affirmative, and use the active voice
4.8		✓				Content is written with a consistent and appropriate voice
4.9				✓		Content is grouped into logical zones with distinguishing headings
4.10		✓				Instructional copy is present, written consistently and appears in the same format across the interface
4.11		✓				It is visually clear what information can and cannot be edited within forms
4.12		✓				Data fields indicate the number of spaces available in a field as appropriate
4.13				✓		Data fields that are optional are clearly labeled as such
4.14				✓		Interface localization can be easily supported if/when necessary. If currently supported, localized interface functions properly
See "Appendix: Comments" for details on User Experience Consistency section.						
Overall Score					2.3	

5. Error Forgiveness and Recovery

Task	4	3	2	1	N/A	Error Forgiveness and Recovery
5.1					✓	Users are prompted to confirm commands that can result in a loss of important data
5.2					✓	There is an option to cancel before save functions
5.3			✓			If sequential steps in the user interface are present, there is a way to edit each of the steps before finalizing submission
5.4		✓				Data entry tasks are appropriately divided into separate pages minimizing cognitive load
5.5				✓		Error messages are used, and appear at appropriate times
5.6		✓				Error messages appear in the same format across the interface, and are written with a consistent voice
5.7		✓				Error messages provide explanations that are understandable to the user
5.8				✓		Error messages indicate what action the user needs to take to correct the error
5.9			✓			Error messages indicate the severity of the problem
5.10				✓		When possible, error messages highlight the area of the page that needs attention
See "Appendix: Comments" for details on Error Forgiveness and Recovery section.						
Overall Score					2.0	

6. Accessibility

Task	4	3	2	1	N/A	Accessibility
6.1				✓		User interface functions correctly on all browsers and/or platforms on which it is likely used
6.2		✓				User interface displays and functions correctly at all screen sizes/resolutions on which it is likely used
6.3					✓	Localization has been performed for all likely/intended audiences
6.4				✓		The text is easily readable by intended audiences
6.5			✓			Download and performance are acceptable for intended audience
6.6		✓				Horizontal scrolling is avoided
6.7			✓			Pop-up usage has been kept to a minimum
6.8		✓				Appropriate pop-up dialogs and functionality avoid pop-up blockers
6.9				✓		The user interface provides support for users with disabilities if necessary
6.10				✓		All images have appropriate Alt tags
6.11				✓		All links have appropriate Title tags.
See "Appendix: Comments" for details on Accessibility section.						
Overall Score					1.8	

7. Help Documentation

Task	4	3	2	1	N/A	Help Documentation
7.1				✓		Help function easily found at all times in the interface
7.2				✓		Help function does not remove user from the task or workflow at hand and/or it is easy to resume using the interface after referring to help content
7.3				✓		Specific help topic information is easily found within help
7.4		✓				Help content covers all tasks, functionality and content that requires it
7.5		✓				Help content is accurate, complete, and understandable
7.6		✓				Instructions follow the sequence of user actions
See "Appendix: Comments" for details on Help Documentation section.						
Overall Score					2.0	

Appendix: Comments

The following comments on Situational Awareness, Support Mental Models, Support User Goals, User Experience Consistency, Error Forgiveness and Recovery, Accessibility, and Help Documentation appear below for all tasks that scored a **2 (Marginal)** or a **1 (Unsatisfactory)**. Tasks below correspond to the same task number in the heuristic evaluation.

1. Situational Awareness

Task 1.1: Application windows have appropriate title bars

The Coldwater Creek website displays detailed title bar information on the Home page (see Fig. 1.1a), the My Account page after logging in (see Fig. 1.1b), and the product detail pages (see Fig. 1.1c). All other pages of the site display only “Coldwater Creek” in the title bar (see Fig. 1.1d).

Having page-specific titles helps visitors on the site know where they are. These types of titles can also help people who use search engines, such as Google and Yahoo, to more quickly find specific content within the Coldwater Creek website after searching Google, Yahoo, and other search engines that index Coldwater Creek’s website.



Fig. 1.1a



Fig. 1.1b



Fig. 1.1c



Fig. 1.1d

Task 1.2: Screens begin with a title or header that describes screen contents

The page headers on the Coldwater Creek website are extremely inconsistent from page to page. (Note: The page header should match the navigation link.) The header displays correctly on the My Account page; however, this is the exception.

On the Customer Service page (see Fig. 1.2a), the “apparent” page title does not visually appear to be the title. The page title on the Jewelry pages of the Jewelry & Accessories section of the site (see Fig. 1.2b) appears as “Accessories”, instead of “Jewelry”. On the product pages for the Misses, Petites, and Women’s sections, the page title appears as “Apparel” (see Fig. 1.2c). Page titles should mirror the names in the navigation. On the Outlet pages (see Fig. 1.2d), the “pseudo” page title visually looks and acts like a bread crumb trail.

Best practices call for page titles to

- Appear on all pages
- Remain consistent visually from page to page
- Match the navigation names
- Accurately reflect the content that appears below the title

> [Home](#) > Customer Service

Customer Service

100% Guarantee

If a Coldwater Creek purchase ever fails to meet your expectations for any reason, return it for an exchange or a full and prompt refund of the merchandise purchase price. There's no time limit to our guarantee, so there's absolutely no risk.

Contact Us

e-mail, Instant Help, phone, address, fax, and TDD

Site Help

FAQs, browser requirements, Instant Help, product search, and catalog quick order

Shopping Our Site

sales tax, payment, credits and more

Shipping & Returns

shipping, returns, exchanges and outside the U.S.

Fig. 1.2a



Fig. 1.2b

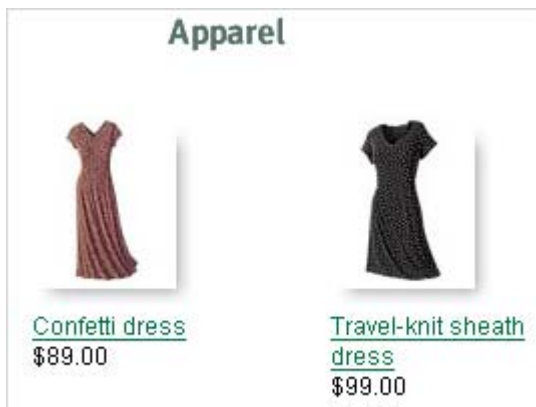


Fig. 1.2c

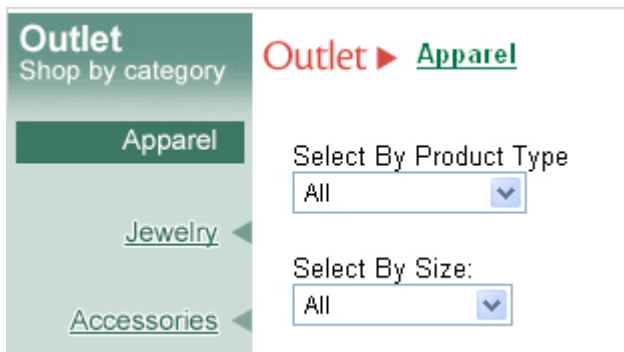


Fig. 1.2d

Task 1.3: Clear indication is given to the user at all times regarding their location within the application

In addition to page headers, bread crumb trails are commonly used to help site visitors know where they are on the site. A well designed system of bread crumb trails visually shows the relative location of each page of the site.

Most pages of the Coldwater Creek website do not have a bread crumb trail (see Fig. 1.3a) or display an incorrect trail (see Fig. 1.3b). The final text link in the trail, "Current Online Catalogs", is not necessary.

A sitemap also helps visitors to a website visually see the site's organization (or hierarchy). The Coldwater Creek sitemap (see Fig. 1.3c) fails to deliver a clear site hierarchy; the sitemap also does not match the navigation schema for the site.

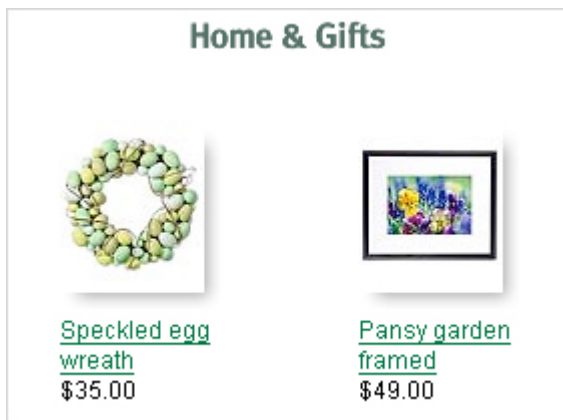


Fig. 1.3a



Fig. 1.3b

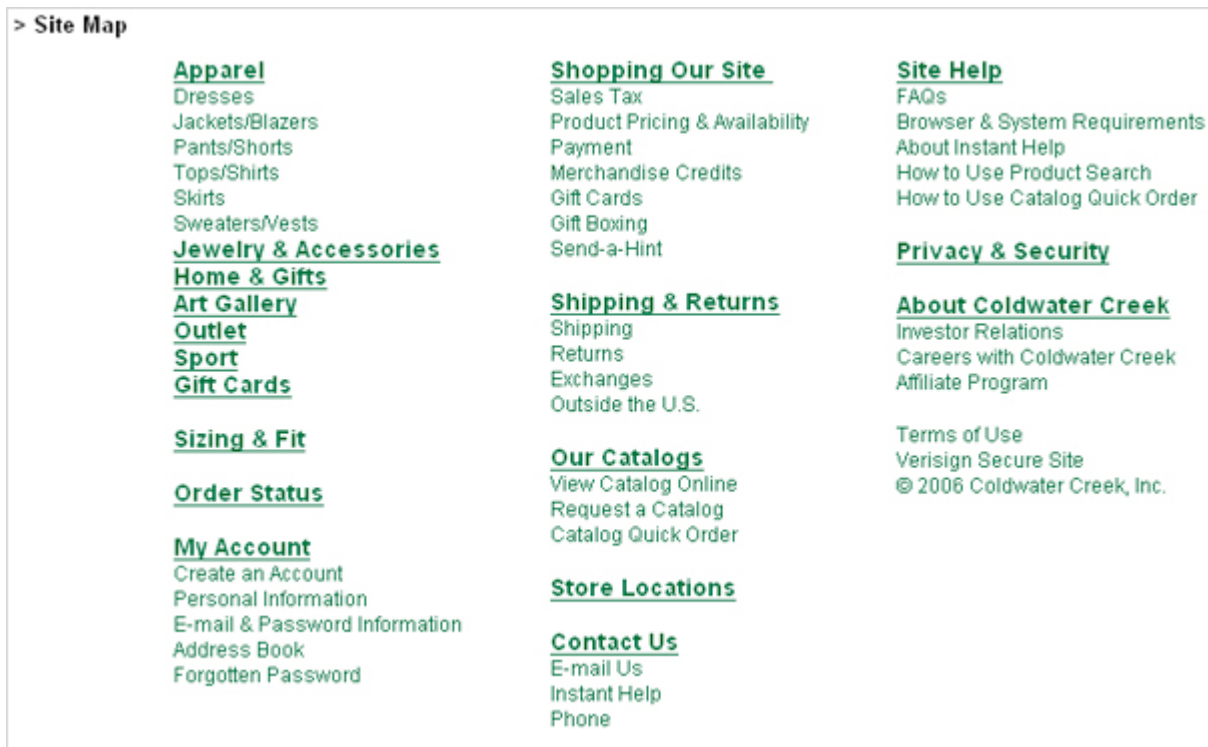


Fig. 1.3c

2. Support Mental Models

Task 2.1: Appropriate user experience metaphor has been used

One metaphor on the Coldwater Creek website does not follow best practices: “Send a hint” (See Fig. 2.1a). The standard labeling is “Send to a friend”, which can be seen on most competitors’ sites, including Nordstrom’s website (see Fig. 1.2b).

A second site design that is not commonly seen is on Your Shopping Cart page. The common practice, such as on the Nordstrom website (see Fig. 2.1c) is to group and display the Keep Shopping and Checkout buttons together and display the Update Cart button at the bottom of the page or within the item in the shopping cart. Grouping all three buttons together and repeating these buttons at the top and bottom of the page, as seen on the Coldwater Creek website (see Fig. 2.1d), do not follow best practices.

Send a hint

Fig. 2.1a

SEND TO A FRIEND

Fig. 2.1b

[Return to Shopping](#) | [Go to Checkout](#)

	Qty.	Total	Remove
mary jane her -10 business y only be shipped ng. t available for this	<input type="text" value="1"/>	\$275.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Remove
<hr/>			
	Merchandise	\$275.00	
	Standard Shipping	\$5.00	
2.50		<hr/>	
	Order Subtotal	\$280.00	
changed quantities or selected ms to remove click this button		Update Shopping Bag	

Fig. 2.1c

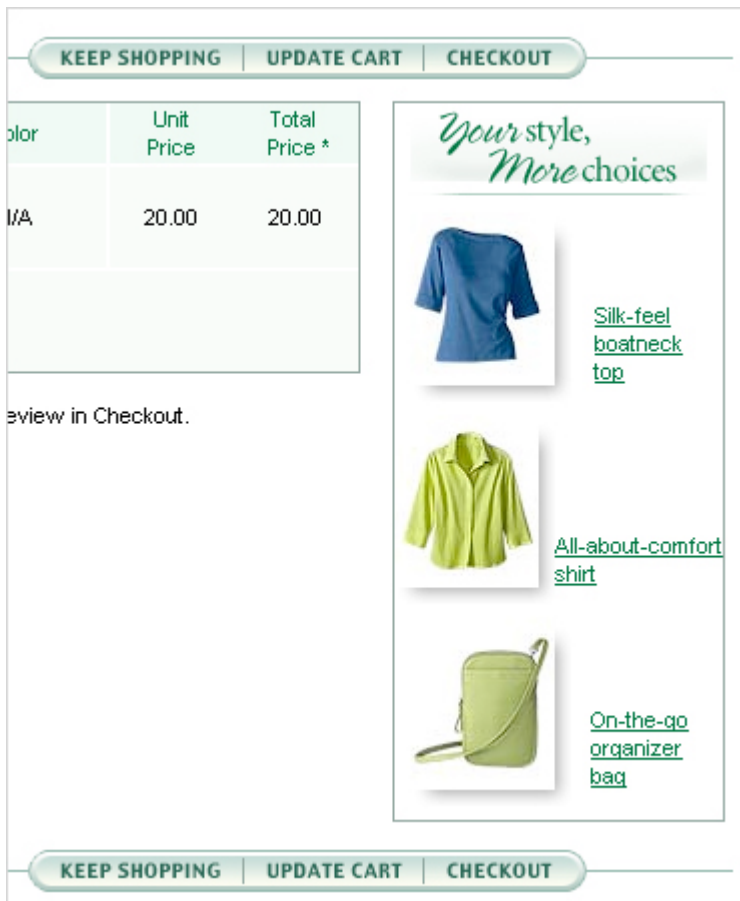


Fig. 2.1d

Task 2.2: Menu choices are ordered in the most likely way to be logical and coherent to the user

The main navigation on the Coldwater Creek website (see Fig. 2.2a) is not consistent with its competitors, including Ann Taylor (see Fig. 2.2b) and Chico's (see Fig. 2.2c).

The menu item "Jewelry & Accessories" is confusing because here you will also find shoes in the submenu. Separating "Jewelry & Accessories" into two separate menu items or creating a separate "Shoes" menu item would eliminate the confusion.

Using "Outlet" (see Fig. 2.2a), instead of "Sale", in the main navigation does not correlate to the implicit high quality of Coldwater Creek and the company's products.



Fig. 2.2a

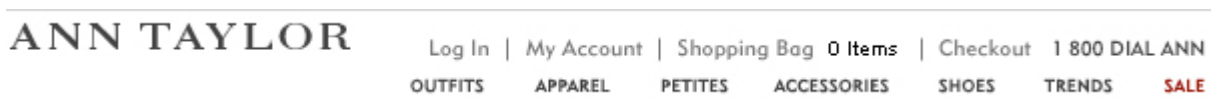


Fig. 2.2b



Fig. 2.2c

Task 2.5: Interactions are consistent & expected with targeted users

While most interactions on Coldwater Creek's website are consistent and expected, one major problem was identified in the online store. When a visitor has added an item to her shopping cart and wants to continue shopping, she clicks the Keep Shopping button and is returned to the previous page (to the item she just added to her shopping cart).

The preferred site behavior would have the visitor go to the main page for the product category she was shopping, or return to the site's Home page. Taking the customer to the page that displays an item most recently added to her shopping cart does not create a good user experience. This site behavior does not inspire increased online purchases and does not motivate visitors to return to the site.

3. Support User Goals

Task 3.1: The navigation scheme actively supports the user's goals

Having the "Jewelry & Accessories" menu item aggregates two totally disparate product categories, which is evident when displaying the submenu (see Fig. 3.1a). In addition, adding "Sport" and "The Spa" submenu items to the menu (and repeating both in Misses, Petites, and Women's) does not support the customer's goals and suggests a last-minute addition that did not take into consideration the needs of site visitors.

A second major concern centers on the site's bottom navigation (see Fig. 3.1b). Competitors' websites, including Ann Taylor, Talbot's, and Chico's, contain only one row of bottom navigation links. Coldwater Creek should rethink the site's bottom navigation and eliminate redundant links. (The "Customer Service" and "100% Satisfaction Guarantee" links go to the same page. Also, a "Customer Service" link appears in the top utility navigation on every page of the site.)

Another navigation problem concerns the main pages for Jewelry & Accessories, Home & Gifts, and Outlet sections. The sitemap has a link to the main page for each of these sections. However, you cannot access these main pages using the main navigation.

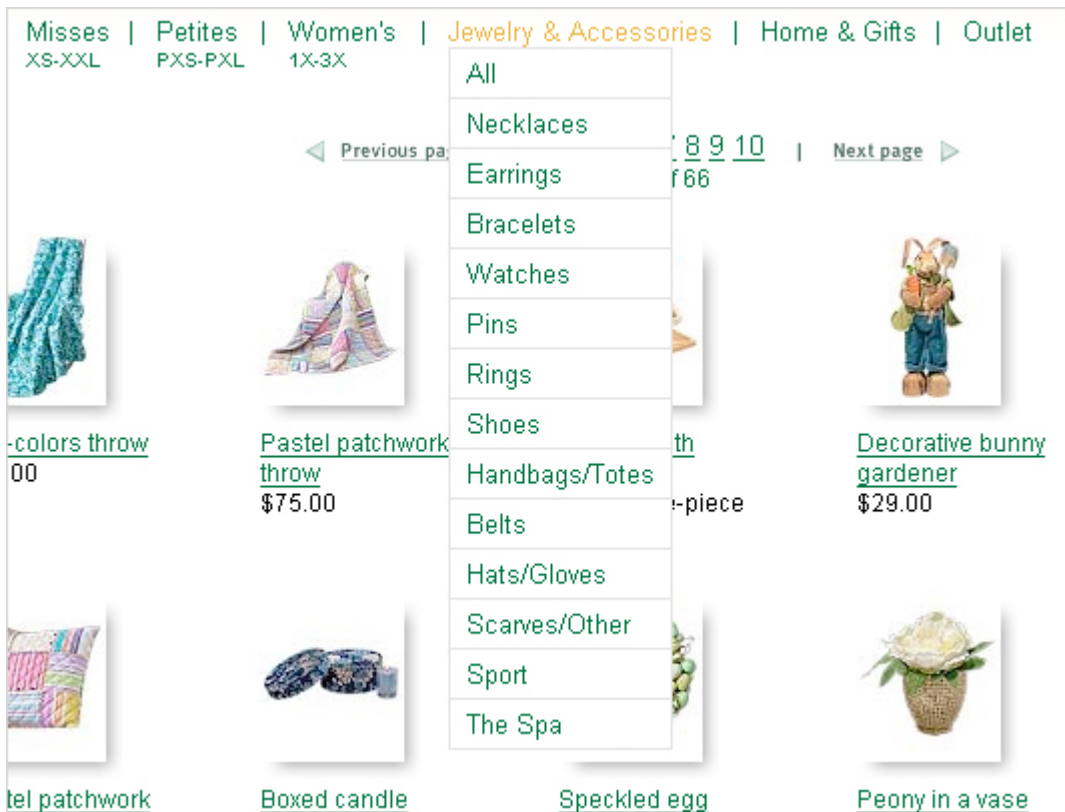


Fig. 3.1a

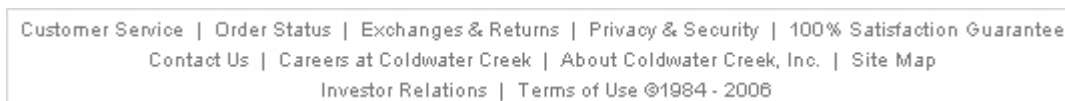


Fig. 3.1b

Task 3.2: The layout of information on individual screens support the user's goals

The "Exchanges & Returns" link takes visitors to a page that focuses on shipping (see Fig. 3.2). Site visitors would not expect to find shipping information when they click the "Exchanges & Returns" link. This mislabeled link does not support the user's goals on the site, and may prevent online orders because shipping information isn't prominent on the site and is an important consideration when purchasing online.

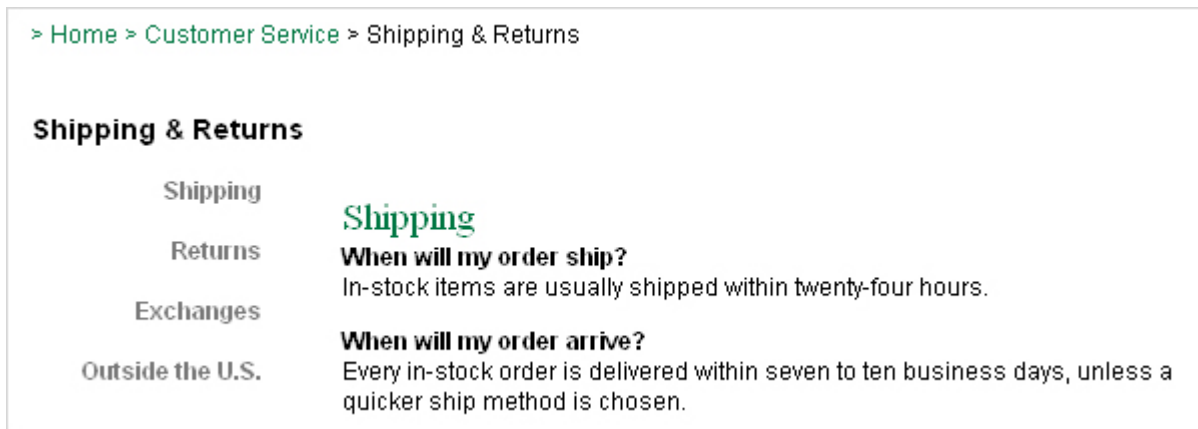


Fig. 3.2

Task 3.8: There is a clear hierarchy in the primary calls to action

After a customer has added an item to her shopping cart, there are two primary calls to action: continue shopping or proceed to checkout. By placing a highly prominent link to Gift Cards on Your Shopping Cart (see Fig. 3.8), Coldwater Creek runs the risk of losing online orders. When the customer clicks the Gift Card button, she leaves the online store and stops the process of completing the online order.

While gift cards can be purchased on the site, most customers go to the site knowing what they want to purchase. They typically would go to the site to purchase merchandise or purchase a gift card. They most likely would not consider adding a gift card to their shopping cart after adding merchandise to their cart. Having the Gift Card button may cloud the customer's decision to purchase already selected merchandise.

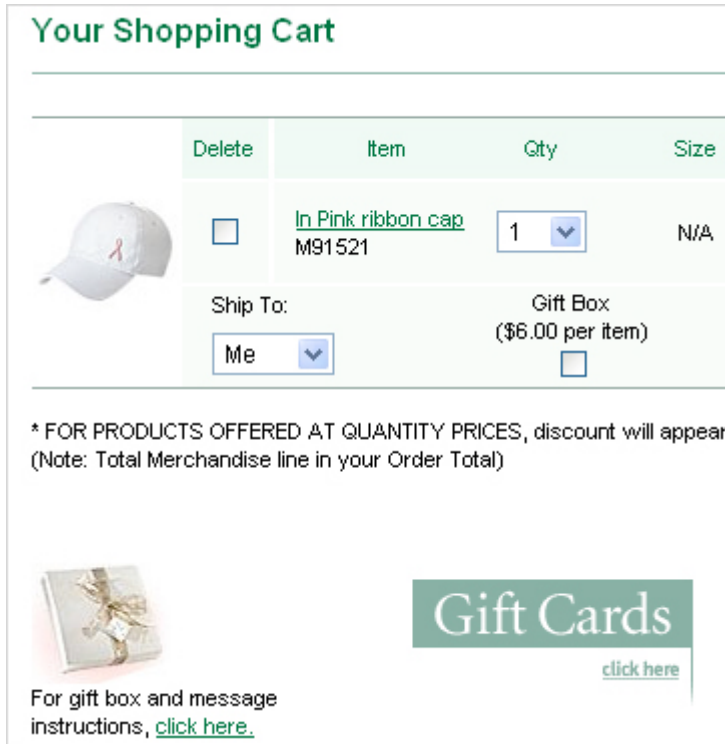


Fig. 3.8

Task 3.9: Goals are hierarchically supported when necessary (primary, secondary goals)

The product detail pages on the Coldwater Creek website contain View Cart and Checkout buttons (see Fig. 3.9). Both buttons are not necessary and are unexpected on these pages because the customer has yet to add the item to her shopping cart. Having a View Cart button assumes that the customer already has something in her shopping cart and also takes her away from the process of adding the new item to her shopping cart.

Placing a Checkout button on product detail pages may dissuade the customer not to add the new item to her shopping cart and to proceed instead to checkout. This possible action runs counter with the company's goal of increased online sales.



Fig. 3.9

4. User Experience Consistency

Task 4.1: The interface has a consistent look and feel

The user interface (UI) for the Coldwater Creek website varies widely. The Careers on Coldwater Creek page (see Fig. 4.1a) differs from the About Coldwater Creek page (see Fig. 4.1b), the Online Catalog page (see Fig. 4.1c), and all product pages (see Fig. 1.2c).

A consistent UI is best practices and needs to be adopted for Coldwater Creek's next website.

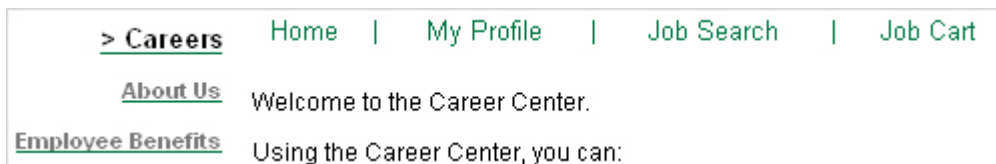


Fig. 4.1a



Fig. 4.1b

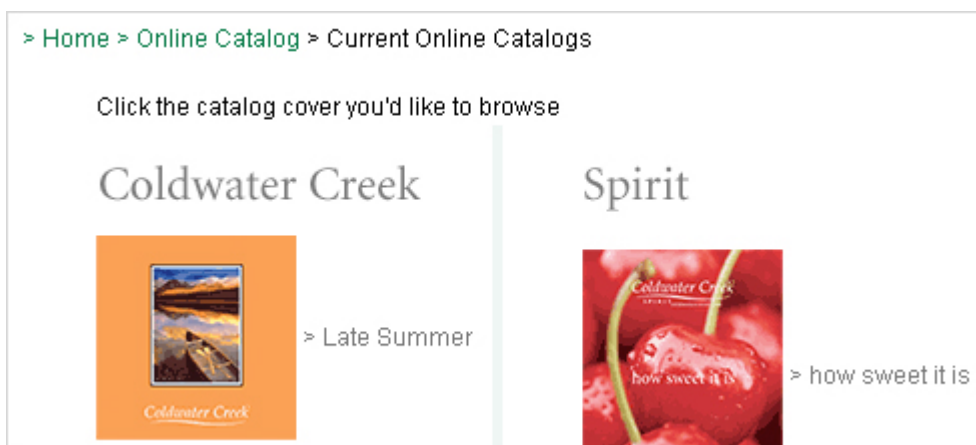


Fig. 4.1c

Task 4.6: Placement of interface elements is consistent across the interface

On the Request a Catalog page, the Go button needs to appear below the last two options in the form (Northcountry and Spirit). By placing the Go button above these options, visitors may receive the default catalog (Northcountry), when in fact they wanted the Spirit catalog (which does not foster a good user experience).

Request a Catalog

Each of our exciting catalogs has its own special merchandise. To receive a copy, fill in your information below, select the catalog you would like, and click GO!

* Required Information

First name * Last name *

Company name Phone

Care of E-mail address

Ex: name@domain.com

Mailing address *

City *

State *

Zip Code * Country **USA**

GO!

Northcountry 
Our most popular catalog with a wide selection of woman's apparel, jewelry, accessories and gifts.

Spirit 
Our specialty catalog for women features sophisticated ensembles, dresses and accessories.

Fig. 4.6

Task 4.9: Content is grouped into logical zones with distinguishing headings

The menu items in the About Coldwater Creek section of the site (see Fig. 4.9) are not logically ordered. The "About Us" link appears on the far right side of the menu. Because this page is the main page for this section, the menu item should appear first on the left side of the menu.



Fig. 4.9

Task 4.13: Data fields that are optional are clearly labeled as such

All fields on the My Account page (see Fig. 4.13) are required fields. However, none of these fields are designated as required fields. New visitors to the site may wrongfully assume that these fields are optional.

My Account

Already Registered?

E-mail Address:
Ex: name@domain.com

Password:
4-12 characters

CONTINUE

Forgot your password?
We'll send it now by e-mail. Just enter your e-mail address in the field above then [click here](#).

Create your account.

E-mail Address:
Ex: name@domain.com

Password:
4-12 characters

Confirm Password:

CONTINUE

Why should I create an account?

- ◆ Simplified checkout
- ◆ Save information for future visits
- ◆ Personalized address book
- ◆ View details of your past orders

Fig. 4.13

Task 4.14: Interface localization can be easily supported if/when necessary. If currently supported, localized interface functions properly

Because many of the navigation links on the Coldwater Creek website are images (see Fig. 4.14a and Fig. 4.14b), these graphical elements cannot be easily localized. Also, the online catalogs on the site were produced using Adobe Flash. The SWF files on these pages are not easily localized.

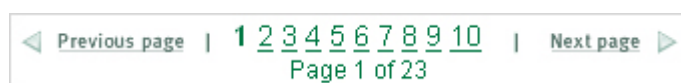


Fig. 4.14a



Fig. 4.14b

5. Error Forgiveness and Recovery

Task 5.3: If sequential steps in the user interface are present, there is a way to edit each of the steps before finalizing submission

On the checkout pages on the Coldwater Creek website, the only way to edit the Billing and Shipping pages on the Payment page is by repeatedly clicking the Back button at the bottom of the page. The labeling at the top of the checkout page (see Fig. 5.3) uses a bread crumb trail metaphor to describe the checkout flow. However, the text labels are not links (which they should be) for customers to quickly navigate to the desired checkout page.

Checkout: Billing & Shipping > Order Review > Payment > Order Confirmation

My Billing Information

Fields marked in **bold** with * are required

First Name: * JOHN Mt:

Last Name: * INGE

Company Name:

Address: * 3420 18TH AVENUE SOUTH

Apt., floor or suite:

City: * SEATTLE

State: * WA

Country: * United States

Zip/Postal Code: * 98144

Daytime Phone: 206 851 3820

E-mail Address: john.inge@studioux.com
[Click here](#) to make changes to your e-mail address that is shown above.

My billing address and shipping address are the same.

Offer Code

Only one offer per order, please. Offer codes cannot be applied to the purchase of a gift card.

Privacy Guarantee
 At Coldwater Creek, earning and keeping your trust is the standard for everything we do. Because of this commitment, we never sell, rent or trade e-mail addresses with any other company.

Fig. 5.3

Task 5.5: Error messages are used, and appear at appropriate times

On the Contact Us page, site visitors can submit the form without completing any of the fields in the form, including the e-mail data field (which should be a required field). Information on the Contact Us page tells visitors that Coldwater Creek will answer all questions quickly. That's impossible without an email address.

Task 5.8: Error messages indicate what action the user needs to take to correct the error

All fields on the My Account page are required fields. However, when you fail to enter any data in the fields, the error message does not prompt you to complete both fields (see Fig. 5.8). Error messages for all required fields should display on the page, and each error message should appear next to the related form field.

The screenshot shows a 'My Account' page with two main sections:

- Already Registered?:** Contains an 'E-mail Address' field with an example 'name@domain.com', a 'Password' field with a '4-12 characters' requirement, a 'CONTINUE' button, and a link for 'Forgot your password?'.
- Create your account.:** Contains an 'E-mail Address' field with an example 'name@domain.com', a 'Password' field with a '4-12 characters' requirement, a 'Confirm Password' field, a 'CONTINUE' button, and a list of reasons to create an account.

An error message is displayed in a yellow box: 'Please enter a valid email address in the format shown in the example above.'

Fig. 5.8

Task 5.9: Error messages indicate the severity of the problem

Because the data fields on the My Account page do not note the required fields, the error messages on this page should state that these fields are required fields. Currently, the error messages do not state the severity of the problem.

Task 5.10: When possible, error messages highlight the area of the page that needs attention

Error messages on the Payment page do not correlate to the related data field. All error messages are grouped together at the bottom right corner of the page (see Fig. 5.10). Best practices call for each error message to display below the related form field.

Payment	
Credit Card Information	Billing Address
<p>Please enter your credit card information below. Fields marked in bold with * are required.</p> <p>Type of Credit Card: * <input type="text" value="Select"/></p> <p>Name on Credit Card: * <input type="text" value="JOHN INGE"/></p> <p>Credit Card Number: * <input type="text"/></p> <p>Expiration: * <input type="text" value="Month"/> <input type="text" value="Year"/></p> <p>Store my Credit Card information for later use at Coldwater Creek. <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>JOHN INGE 3420 18TH AVENUE SOUTH SEATTLE, WA 98144 United States</p> <p>Edit Billing Address</p> <div style="background-color: yellow; padding: 5px;"> <p>Please correct the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Type of Credit Card is required ◆ Credit Card Number is required ◆ Please select an Expiration Month ◆ Please select an Expiration Year </div>

Fig. 5.10

6. Accessibility

Task 6.1: User interface functions correctly on all browsers and/or platforms on which it is likely used

One major problem on the Coldwater Creek website involves the Instant Help chat window that opens in a new frame at the bottom of the browser, using JavaScript (see Fig. 6.1). While the Instant Help chat window does work correctly with Internet Explorer, the chat window does not open using the Mozilla Firefox browser. No changes to the Firefox browser's settings would enable the browser to open the chat window.

According to Wired's Monkey Bites (http://wiredblogs.tripod.com/monkeybites/index.blog?entry_id=1380291), Mozilla Firefox browser usage is up to 9.6%. Therefore, almost 10% of Coldwater Creek's online customers cannot access the site's primary tool for online help.



Fig. 6.1

Task 6.4: The text is easily readable by intended audiences

Website visitors with visual disabilities change the text size in their browser to improve text readability. However, visitors to the Coldwater Creek website cannot change the text size in their browser due to the site's style sheet.

The style sheet used on the Coldwater Creek website (cwc_110404.css) uses a point size (pt) unit for all font properties in the style sheet. Using this type of unit fixes the size of the text on the site to the specified point size at all screen resolutions.

Had the style sheet used “em” or “%” unit for font size, the text size would not have been a fixed point size. The site could accommodate customers who want to change the text size in their browser.

Task 6.5: Download and performance are acceptable for intended audience

The online catalogs on the Coldwater Creek website (see Fig. 6.5) are produced using Adobe Flash. Flash is highly popular and commonly used by many websites. However, viewing pages with Flash SWF files requires downloading and installing the Flash player.

Not all Coldwater Creek customers will have the Flash player installed on their computer and must take the time to download and install the player before viewing the online catalogs. In addition, customers with dial-up connections will experience performance issues when viewing pages containing Flash SWF files.

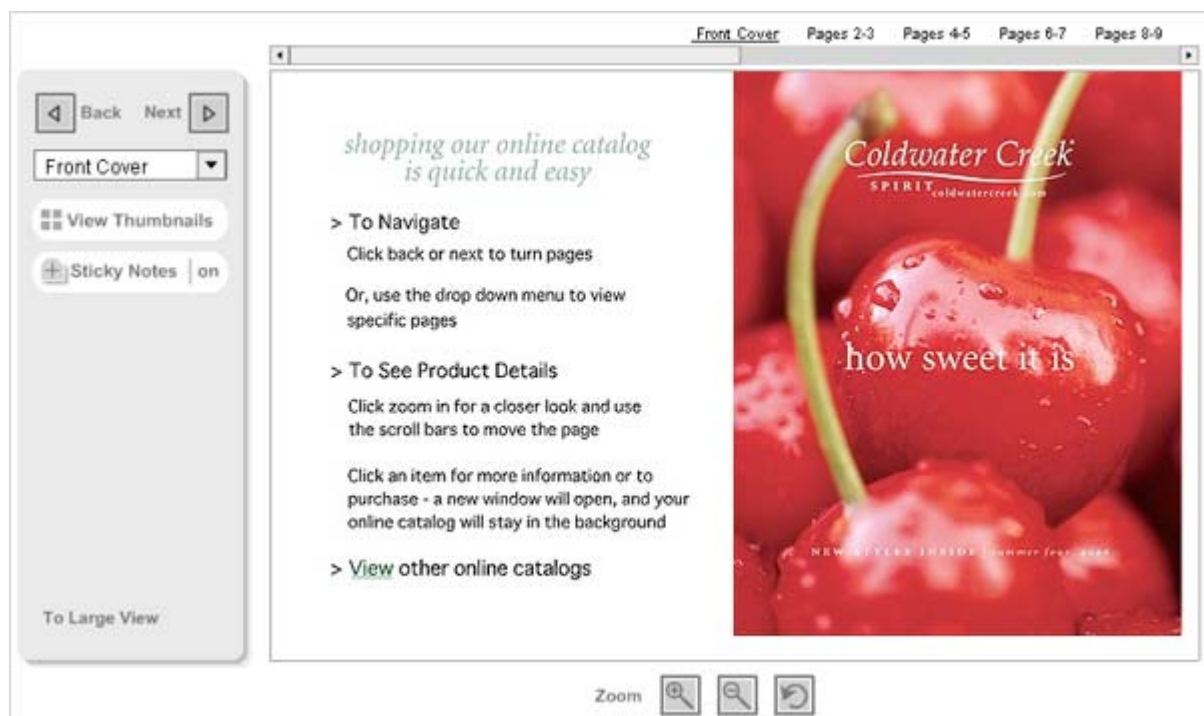


Fig. 6.5

Task 6.7: Pop-up usage has been kept to a minimum

Coldwater Creek liberally uses pop-up windows on its website. The site uses a pop-up window to display a detailed view for each product (see Fig. 6.7).

There are over 3,530 products on the site (Misses has more than 670 products, Petites has more than 360, Women's more than 530, Jewelry & Accessories more than 490, Home & Gifts more than 650, and Outlet more than 830). Each product uses a pop-up window to display a detailed view of the product.

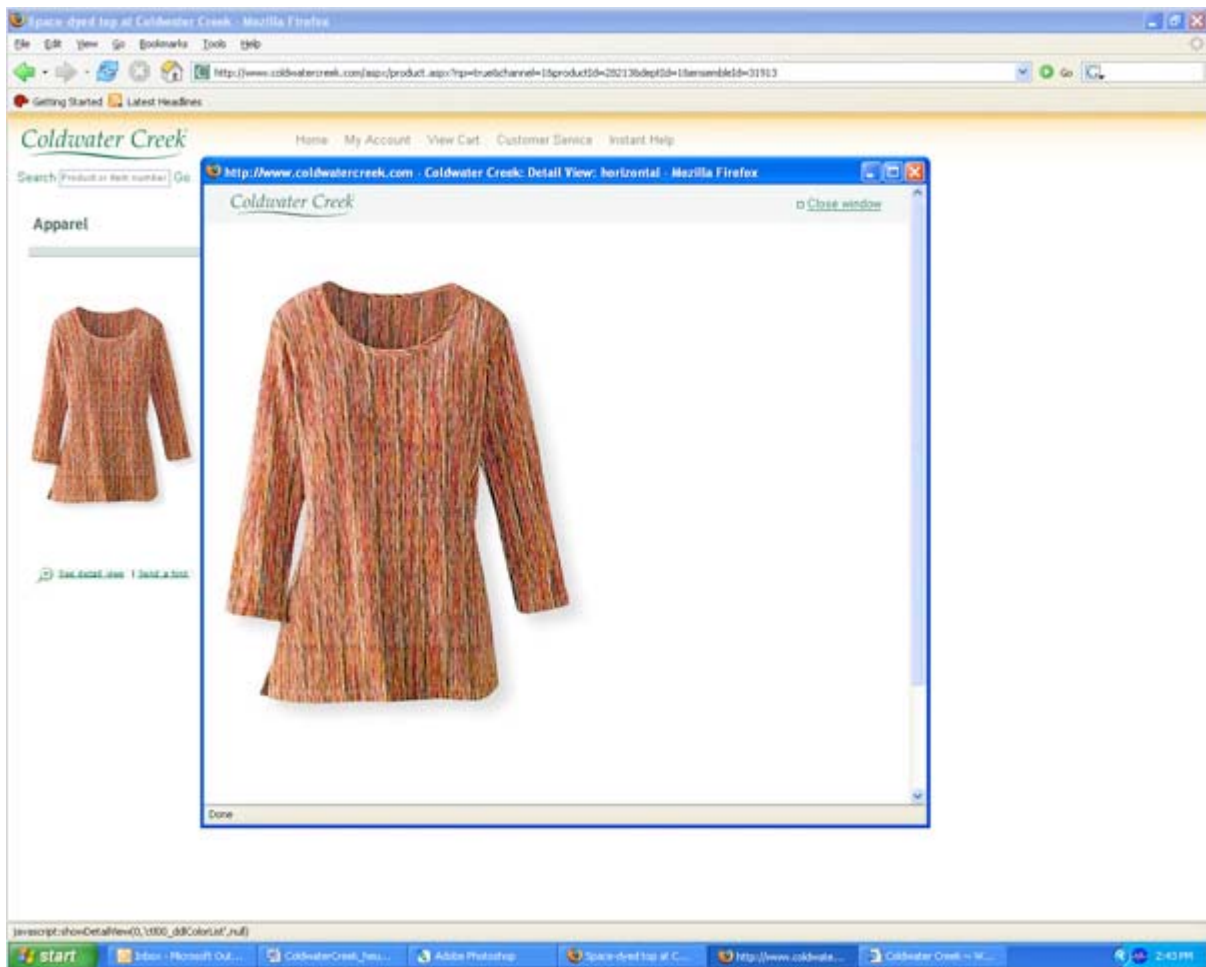


Fig. 6.7

Task 6.9: The user interface provides support for users with disabilities if necessary

According to the W3C, “Web accessibility means that people with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the Web...including older people with changing abilities due to aging.”

The following Coldwater Creek customers with these types of disabilities require Web accessibility considerations (listed in parentheses).

- Repetitive stress injury (keyboard equivalents for mouse-driven commands and access keys)
- Blindness (appropriate markup of tables, alternative text, abbreviations, and acronyms; Braille display)
- Dyslexia (use of supplemental graphics, freezing animated graphics, and multiple search options)
- Elderly (magnification, ability to stop scrolling text, and avoid pop-up windows)
- Cognitive disability (clear and simple language, consistent design and navigation options, and multiple search options)

The current Coldwater Creek website has not adequately addressed Web accessibility for customers with disabilities. The next version of the website needs to may use that Web accessibility is taken into consideration.

Task 6.10: All images have appropriate Alt tags

The source code on several pages of the Coldwater Creek website was carefully reviewed. While the image of the Coldwater Creek logo has a well written Alt tag, many of the images on the reviewed pages (including the large image on the product detail pages) do not contain Alt tags. Many of the images contain blank tags (alt="").

Task 6.11: All links have appropriate Title tags.

The same source code analyzed for image Alt tags revealed that none of the links on any of these pages contained Title tags. Adding title="" to the link would display the name of the link when customers move their mouse over the link.

7. Help Documentation

Task 7.1: Help function easily found at all times in the interface

The Coldwater Creek website prominently displays the "Instant Help" link at the top of the page. However, you will not find any searchable online help here. You chat with a Coldwater Creek customer service representative if you have any questions or problems. This type of help may be intimidating to many customers, who may elect not to use this tool.

A Site Help section of the site exists (see Fig. 7.1a); however, you access this section by clicking "Customer Service" and then "Site Help" or clicking "Sitemap" and then "Site Help". An additional FAQs page appears in the About Coldwater Creek section of the site (see Fig. 7.1b).

Having the "Site Help" link more prominent on the site (replacing "Instant Help" possibly) and integrating the FAQs into one page (with help opening in a new browser window) will result in a much better user experience for customers.

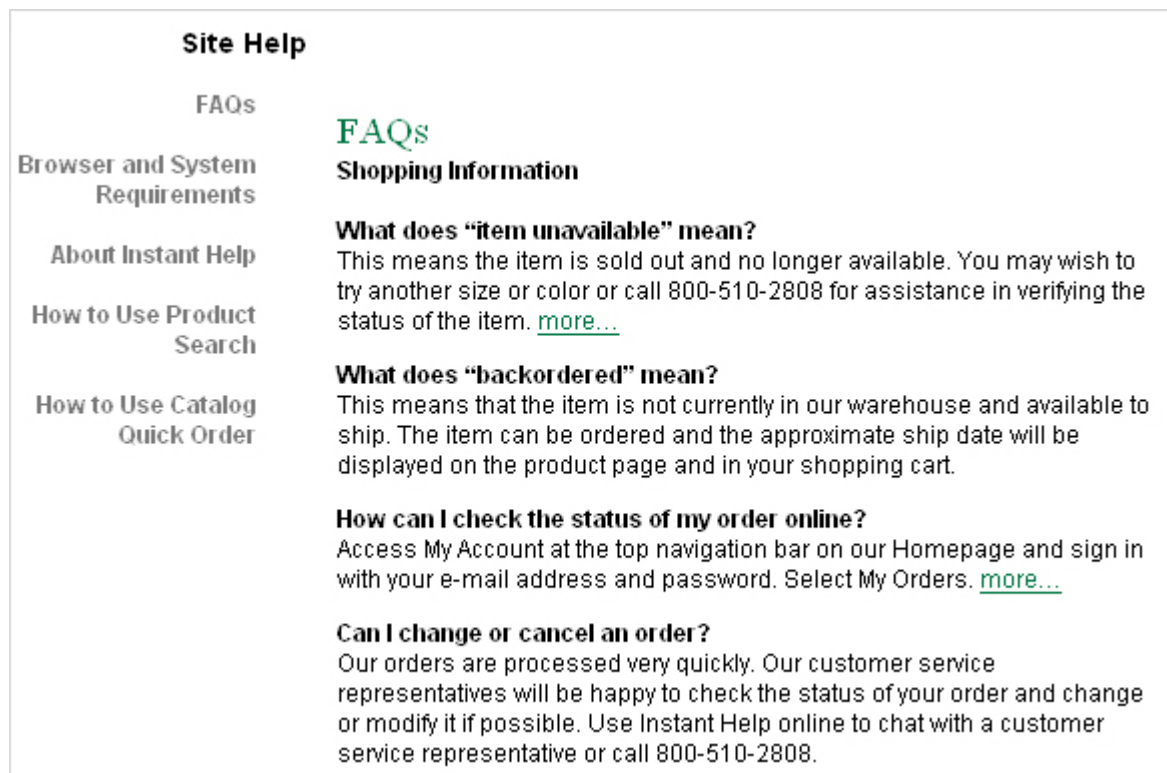


Fig. 7.1a

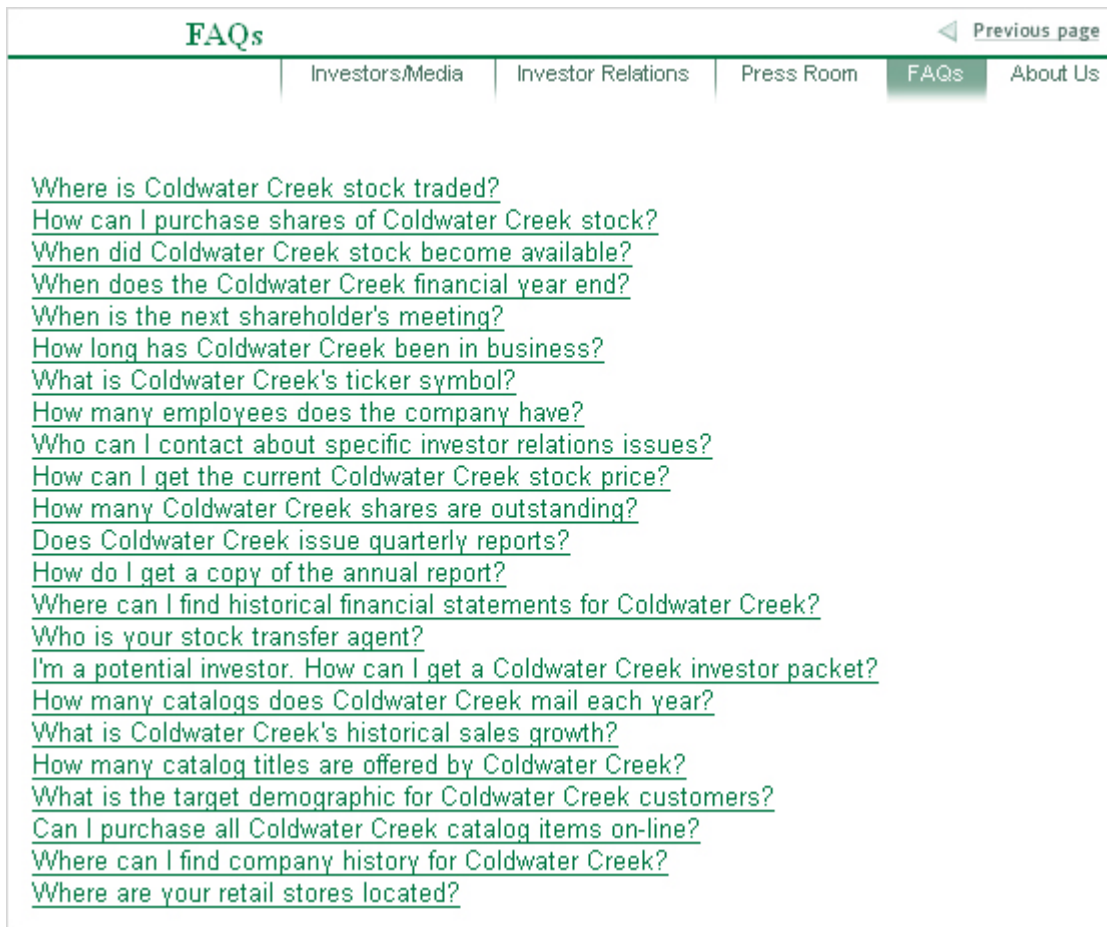


Fig. 7.1b

Task 7.2: Help function does not remove user from the task or workflow at hand and/or it is easy to resume using the interface after referring to help content

The Instant Help chat window does not remove the user from her task or workflow. This method of Help may have a low adoption rate due to the intimidation factor from actually chatting with a real person.

Using either FAQs sections requires leaving the current task or workflow. After finding the FAQs, the customer must

- Click the Back button in her browser twice to return to the task or workflow
OR
- Click the Home page and begin the task again

Task 7.3: Specific help topic information is easily found within help


The Coldwater Creek website does not prominently display FAQs in the main, top utility, or bottom navigation (see Fig. 7.3).

Because there are two FAQs pages that use two different metaphors for presenting the FAQs (see Fig. 7.1a and Fig. 7.1b), customers must learn two different methods for finding help online. Also, these two pages are not closely related to each other on the site. Customers may stop looking for online help after finding the first FAQs page. They may be unaware of the second FAQs page (possibly containing answers to their questions) and may leave the site, not having the best user experience.

Coldwater Creek Home My Account View Cart Customer Service Instant Help

Misses | Petites | Women's | Jewelry & Accessories | Home & Gifts | Outlet
 XS-XXL PXS-PXL 1X-3X


Search Go

Catalog Quick Order
 Online Catalog 
 Catalog Request
 Gift Cards
 Find a Store

Sign up for e-mail updates
Never miss a sale or exclusive offer
 Enter Go


Outlet Shop
300 items
\$19⁹⁹
 or less

200 stores and growing
summer SALE
 new markdowns & reductions
 save up to 70%
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Feminine & Flirty
 Go ahead, choose a dress (or two)
 then head out for summer fun



Shop new
 summer styles,
 from our current ads



Feelin' jazzy?
Shop
 The
 Blues




Fig. 7.3