



For study participants,

The 25 women recruited for this study were "time-pressed" at the time of the study, meaning they balanced a combination of responsibilities—wife, mother, employee, caregiver. Most played the primary role in managing their household and were the main shopper. The study focused on how these women use the Internet to care for their home and family.

The Amazon website uses one page template to sell all products, from cereal to books to gadgets. However, study participants bring different attitudes and behaviors to their shopping experiences. Amazon could better serve these users by matching its user interface to their behaviors.

When shopping online, one size website doesn't fit all

encompasses

The **three modes** can be defined by time

of online

Amazon.com's **interactions** should make tactics easier

"The more time I have to spend searching on a website for something I want, the more likely I am to go somewhere else and not come back." —Lauren

How other businesses address some of these tactics

Comparison: **Google, Progressive**

The search engine's product application, formerly called Froogle, shows several businesses that sell the item, the seller's ratings, whether tax and shipping will be charged and the total price. The insurance company tells potential customers how much it and its competitors would charge, even if it isn't the lowest. This builds credibility.

Filtering: **Facebook, iTunes**

Finding friends online isn't all that different from finding music or other products. Both applications make recommendations, just as Amazon does, but both allow users to indicate that they're not interested in a suggestion. Don't know a friend suggestion? Then say so and never see the person again. Don't like a band? Same option.

User interface: **Hotels.com**

When participants make purchases, they indicated various user interface elements are helpful at varied times. The hotel reservation site places its types together on tabs within each hotel's page. For the customer who cares about photos, they're easy to find. Need a map? Room description? Easy too. The elements aren't strung together on one view.

1 When short on time, many participants enter mission-oriented mode to make familiar and recurring purchases

With a list in hand, participants get in and get their purchases done

Several participants describe shopping events in which they go online for specific items and find value in simple transactions. For instance, Mary went to the Land's End website for children's clothes: "I know what pants I wanted and the size. There was free shipping. The transaction took about 3 minutes. Fast and easy." These situations don't involve research about products or price comparisons. This shopping strategy works well for commodity items like groceries and household supplies, products mostly purchased in stores. At the grocery store, Barb "had a plan of action before I entered Jewel. I had my recipe on hand with a list of ingredients of what I needed to buy, ... I spent more than I wanted to but I needed those ingredients and Jewel is a lot closer than our local Walmart and Target."

To minimize risky purchases, many participants rely on brands they know

Shopping risks dissatisfaction with the value received for the money spent. Brand loyalty helps many participants feel assurance about the quality they'll receive. Karen Z. wanted a cover for a new iPod Touch: "Amazon had a cover made by the company who made the previous covers I had bought for traditional iPods that I had been very happy with. I checked the price and it was good." In the same purchase, she bought a baby gift to qualify for free shipping. "I shopped a number of different sleepers and picked the one with the options that I liked best, with good reviews, that was in a color that was nice and on sale. I like what I purchased, though [I] am not sure of the sleeper until it arrives." Her varied reactions reveal how brand familiarity compensates for not seeing or touching items bought online.

When time is of the utmost, even typically frugal participants sacrifice on price

Life circumstances sometimes forced them to prioritize time over price. When Debra, a young mother, needed groceries, she "decided to stop at Jewel Osco (not because of the prices, there are cheaper places to shop) because I pass this store on the way home. ... This makes it so I can spend less time driving and shopping and more time with my family this evening." Such moments are ineliminable: Deborah's son got sick, so she went to a nearby Walgreens. "Convenience was the key," she said. "I didn't want to leave my son alone for too long, so I hit two local stores and bought what I needed regardless of the price." Some participants described situations of paying full price or spending beyond their budgets to finish their task in the moment. Barb "wanted to send a floral arrangement to my mom, since she helped me while my husband was in the hospital with the flu. ... I spent more than I really wanted to, but I wanted to thank my mom for all she does for our family, so I really did not give it much more thought."

Tactics used when on a mission

- search a single site for a single product
- filter options (e.g. for best price or delivery time)

2 When participants take time to research and compare products, some express satisfaction in informed decisions

Participants link choosing the best style and finding sales with successful shopping

Many participants look for assurance they get the best value in knowing good alternatives are known and considered. When Deborah needed a birthday gift for a friend, she visited four boutiques in her town. In summation, she expressed satisfaction because she "looked at all my options—all 4 stores in town. Had a great selection to choose from, able to try everything on, [and] feel the material and determine how well it was made. Comfortable knowing I made a thought out decision and didn't have to spend much money."

Saving money on one purchase enables participants to spend more at other times

Some purchases just don't excite shoppers: items that must be bought but aren't a priority. Dawn's daughter needed items for a school program. "A friend told me Michael's had t-shirts on sale (very cheap) so we went there to pick up one for her," she said. "She also needed sunglasses and there was a Big Lots right next to Michael's, so we went there to get them (again cheap). She may never wear these again except for the three shows they are putting on, so the price was my biggest concern." By managing spending while grocery shopping, Deborah can get the items she really wants. "I buy the staples for the week from Jewel, and I go to this specialty market for good deli and prepared food such as that chicken meat, tortilla crusted tilapia. I try to save money on the staples at Jewel with coupons and then spend some extra money on specialty items at the other store."

Participants gather information in bits, sometimes spread over several days

Online shopping lets research happen over time on the participants' schedule. Karen E. needed to purchase clothing for her son and checked the L.L. Bean website. "I didn't find what I was looking for, so I didn't make any purchases today. I'm going to continue to look for new clothes for him throughout the week. ... I'm happy with my decision and plan to look at Baby Gap to see what they have to offer." Some participants also use a hybrid of online and offline shopping to compare. Karen Z. looked online at baby items for a gift. "I checked a few sites for prices, and then while I was running errands, [I] stopped at Buy Buy Baby and checked their prices, which were better or equal on a lot of the items. I purchased them at the store."

Research eases uncertainty and opens some participants to trying new products

While brand familiarity influences most participants, some will try unfamiliar brands or retailers when they can find affirmation of quality. Wanda said she is "very comfortable" with sites like Amazon, because "familiarity with a website is very important especially for higher priced purchases." However, she buys from smaller websites too, but she searches for customer ratings and comments. Lauren said, "I am always open to trying new products and companies but am also very loyal to the companies I know. I look for an actual address for credibility. I also look at reviews and mostly get recommendations from people I know." Similarly, Marian said she has ordered from some "creepy" looking websites but has always had good results. Still, she said "it is nice to note something like a Better Business affiliation and clearly linked "contact us," shipping and return policy information."

Tactics used when researching

- search multiple sites for a single product
- read user and professional reviews
- make notes or save searches
- look for accreditations and contact information

3 When time allows, most participants browse familiar sites, on which they linger to take in positive experiences

Some participants follow favorite brands as a way to treat themselves amid busy lives

To steal a moment for themselves from all the work they do for others, many participants look for new offerings from favorite brands or sites. Karen Z. routinely checks Amazon for books to read on her Kindle. On one day during the study, she found three books for \$1.89 and downloaded them instantly. Another young mother, Karen E. follows one of her favorite brands, L.L. Bean, by checking its daily markdown and making unexpected purchases. "I had no intention of buying a camping mat," she said, "but the price was right, and I can use it for my kids and their sleepovers. ... The mat was half price, and I got free shipping. I got a great deal and am happy with my purchase."

For many participants, calm moments happen during non-traditional hours

Their schedules kept many participants quite busy, and several expressed that shopping gets easier without children in tow. For instance, Heidi described a negative shopping experience when her crying daughter made remembering her shopping list difficult. However, "when I can do this I am more efficient and can get everything I need. Also, it depends on what time of day you go to the grocery store. I know if I go on my day off during working hours that I will have a better experience than when I go after work!" For many mothers, quiet moments occur when their children sleep. "I have just gotten the baby to bed and I finally have to browse for something I want to buy at my leisure," Karen A. said. "I am alone, the house is quiet and I feel that I can take my time and be relaxed." Karen E. described similar circumstances for quiet moments: "Typically my only chance of this is the rare occasion that both of my kids take a nap. I curl up in my bed and get comfortable in my down comforter and medley of pillows at the top of my bed. I've got a cup of tea on my side table, and I'm enjoying watching something on TV while shopping online." For Dawn, an older mother, online shopping means "it doesn't matter that I am in my pajamas, there are other people around or that it may be 11:00 at night. I am able to get it done on my own schedule."

Removing the pressure to buy allows several participants to enjoy shopping

For study participants, the role of employees can make or break sales, and the division settles on "provide help when I want it" but "keep your distance if I don't." Online shopping by its nature keeps customer service at a distance, but participants describe the key issue as "up-sell" pressure. Carrie said online shopping is preferable because "you don't have to be worried about people that work in the store bothering you and trying to sell you more than what you want." Barb expressed similar sentiment. She said, when shopping online, "I am not bothered by others talking or distracting me. I do not hear anyone saying 'may I help you.' If I need help I can access it online by clicking the button 'live chat.'"

Tactics used when browsing

- listen to or watch product previews
- look for color and size variations
- look for photos of product in context of use
- check favorite brands for new items or deals