

# **Starbucks.com**

usability inspection report (demo)

prepared on:

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by:

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## Table of Contents

Introduction and problem ratings legend.....	this page
Executive Summary .....	3
Findings and recommendations:	
Strategy .....	4
Information architecture, design, and content.....	10
Technology .....	30
Appendices:	
A: Business and site environment.....	34
B: Brief user analysis and methodology summary.....	35

## Introduction

The purpose of this inspection is to give you an idea of how easy to use your site is for your customers, find potential usability problems and suggest solutions. I always work under assumption that you have given starbucks.com your best, and it really shows: I wasn't able to uncover a single high-impact problem.

Each problem I did find, however, has been rated on a three-point scale along two dimensions: how much **impact** it is likely to have on the user experience and how **difficult** it will be to correct it.

The **impact** rating is based on answers to questions like how often does the problem occur, how easy is it to overcome, will it bother the users once they know about it, and how will it affect their impression of your company.

The **difficulty** rating takes into account the technical, financial, and organizational feasibility of the proposed solution. Since I was not in touch with starbucks.com for this demo inspection, I had to make a few assumptions. They are listed at the very end of this report in the appendices.

### Problem ratings legend

Impact:	<b>3</b> – high
	<b>2</b> – medium
	<b>1</b> – low
Difficulty:	<b>3</b> – high
	<b>2</b> – medium
	<b>1</b> – low

To determine problem correction priority, subtract the difficulty rating from the impact rating:

If Impact – Difficulty  $>$  0, then fixing is high priority

If Impact – Difficulty = 0, then fixing is medium priority

If Impact – Difficulty  $<$  0, then fixing is low priority

# Executive Summary.

Overall, the site is designed and executed very well. I was able to successfully accomplish all of the test tasks. However, the focus of this inspection is to uncover potential problems. Based on my findings, no major issues that would warrant a complete re-design exist. There are, however, several low- and medium-impact issues.

## What areas of the site were evaluated:

- The home page;
- Purchase path for new customers: product catalog, shopping cart, sign-in and checkout;
- Our stores section: store locator tool;
- Starbucks card section: content design and information architecture;
- Customer service section: content design and information architecture.

## Major findings:

- the newsletter subscription area on the home page lacks the necessary information for customers to make an informed decision to sign up. There is potential here to significantly increase the signup rate.
- the search tool does not cover the customer service section and is incapable of handling spelling errors;

- the coffee list—the most important part of the site—is hidden behind a company-centric label: “menu board”;
- shipping and return information is not easily accessible from the pages where the purchasing decision is made;
- customers who check out without creating an account are not given the option of saving their information at the end of the checkout;
- some important tools and error messages are hidden below the fold at the screen resolution of 800x600;
- many buttons and links are poorly labeled: it is unclear what’s on the other side;
- instructions in the checkout and elsewhere on the site are too verbose and create visual clutter. The last page of the checkout is an example of this. In the “store locator” tool the instructions actually get in the way more than they help;
- the customer service section suffers from poor labels and ambiguous topic groupings;

Addressing these issues will remove any friction that the customers may experience in finding products, getting help, and completing the purchase. Most of them can be corrected by starbucks.com’s existing web site staff.

# Strategy.

## Finding products.

From the home page to the product detail page.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>2</b>	The item listed under “today’s buy” on the “shop online” > “coffee” page is the same every day. Take advantage of this section to showcase/suggest different coffees to returning customers.	Make sure that a different coffee appears in this section every day, or change the label to “Featured buy.” You can even suggest products to customers based on what they have ordered in the past (Difficulty: <b>3+</b> ).

## Buying products.

**From the product detail page to the end of checkout.** This part of the purchase process is very good overall. The fact that customers can check out without having to create an account is

great, as is the option not to save credit card information with the rest of the account information for account “holders.” However, several issues still exist.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>2</b>	<b>Some coffees are missing information in the “best brewing method” on their product detail page.</b> Not having this information means there is a small percentage of people who will not buy this coffee because it lacks this information.	Make sure every coffee has all of the information it is supposed to have on its detail page.

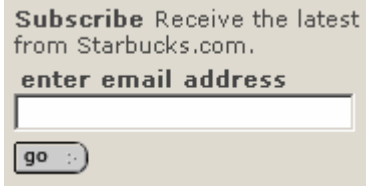
Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>Shipping charges are difficult to find.</b> The customer must navigate into the customer service section, open the correct dropdown, select the shipping and returns option, then scroll down to find the correct table, and finally look up the shipping charge based on the order total (provided the customer still remembers what it is at this point).	Make it easier to see the total shipping charge by including a prominent link to shipping on the product detail and shopping cart pages;  Make sure shipping information can found by using the search tool.
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>3</b>	<b>Shipping charges are revealed too far along into the buying process.</b> The shipping charges are currently shown at the very end of the checkout. It is better to reveal shipping charge before asking for personal information. In fact, some customers may not be willing to begin checking out until they find out the total cost of their order.	Show the total shipping charge in the shopping cart for “signed-in” users. Offer an option to calculate shipping in the shopping cart for users who have not signed in.
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>Return policy is difficult to find.</b> In addition to shipping costs, the customers will want to see the return policy. Just like shipping, this information is buried deep in the customer service section. In fact, this information is even more difficult to find than shipping because it is at the very bottom of the long “shipping & returns” page.	Make it easier to see the return policy by offering a link to it from the product detail and shopping cart pages. Put it one a separate page. This is especially important to “click and brick” stores like yours because you can advertise easy returns to local stores more effectively.  Make sure return policy can found by using the search tool (Difficulty: <b>3</b> ).

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>2</b>	<b>An item's stock status is not available.</b> Setting expectations about when an item will ship is essential for good customer experience. Imagine the customer's disappointment when, after ordering a last minute gift for a friend she gets an email saying that the item she ordered is out of stock. This makes the per incident impact of this issue high, but since few products will ever be out of stock, the overall impact is medium.	Consider showing stock status in terms of when the item will ship ("ships in 24-48 hours", etc.) on the product detail pages, the shopping cart, and the order summary in the checkout. Unfortunately, linking fulfillment to the web site is a potentially costly fix. So instead, consider manually marking the items that are out of stock (i.e. "ships in 1-2 weeks").
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>The email sign-ups during registration and checkout are not opt-in.</b> Doing this will undermine customers' trust in you: some will think that you're trying to "trick" them into letting you spam them with offers they don't want.	Make all email notification sign-ups opt-in by clearing the checkboxes by default. While this will reduce the number of email addresses you collect, it will increase their "quality": the people who opt in will be much more responsive to your offers.
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	It is unclear whether the Starbucks card can be used in conjunction with a credit card.	The suggested payment information page design in the design section addresses this problem.

## Registration and account management.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>The benefits of creating an account are not made clear on the sign-in page</b> —the place where this decision is most likely to take place for the first time. While many customers will be aware of the benefits in general terms, most will view this step as an (optional) obstacle. Spelling out the benefits is essential to getting them to create an account.	Put a clearly-labeled link next to the “create a Starbucks account” button to the page that explains the benefits of creating an account. For example, “member benefits” or “account benefits.”  An even better approach here is to eliminate the account creation option altogether and <b>make it an optional step at the end of the checkout</b> —the customers will have entered all their information at that point, and will simply secure all that information with a password.
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>2</b>	<b>Customers who check out without creating an account are not given the opportunity to save their address and payment information at the end of the checkout.</b> This means that, should they become regular customers they will have to re-enter all of their information to create an account.	Let customers to save all their information in an account at the last step of the checkout.
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	Customers who have chosen not to create an account receive no clear indication during checkout whether any of their personal information is being saved/captured.	The side benefit of the above recommendation is that it makes it clear that no personal information will be saved unless the customer chooses to do so. If you choose not to allow the customers to save their info at the end of the checkout, consider asking them to become a member so that they will never have to re-enter this information again.

## Miscellaneous.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<p><b>The newsletter subscription area on the home page lacks the necessary information for customers to make an informed decision to sign up.</b> Customers who are protective of their email inboxes will want to be assured that they will not be spammed.</p> 	<p>Give an example of what a subscriber would get by placing a link to a “sample newsletter” next to or below the “go” button. Explain how to unsubscribe and how you will the subscribers’ email address by simply including a link called something like “details.”</p>
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<p><b>The usefulness of “Coffee taste matcher” is doubtful.</b> In general, some customers are distrustful of winnowing tools that ask them several general questions and then display the items that match. For example, customers who use these types of tools often wonder whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the list they got is missing some of the items they might also be interested in;</li><li>• why some items that don’t interest them are shown.</li></ul>	<p>While I do not recommend removing the tool, you should either test to see whether customers use it successfully: end up buying one of the recommended products.</p> <p>In fact, peets.com used to have a similar tool, but replaced it with a metadata-driven winnowing tool called Honeycomb. Peets.com’s new tool is fundamentally different in that it uses the characteristics of coffees rather than the preferences of the coffee-drinkers.</p>




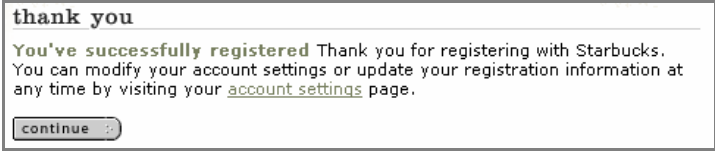
Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>There are several problems with the way the Coffee Taste Matcher form is presented:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• it is long, partly because the text in the options is verbose. This is likely to make the customer wonder whether the effort of filling it out is worth the time;</li><li>• for many people more than one answer will be “correct” for each question. Question #1 is an example. Don’t make the customer agonize over the choices.</li><li>• the last question does not have anything to do with coffee and wanders into the much-speculative “I am the kind of person who...” territory.</li></ul>	Eliminate questions that may have more than one answer for a given person—this is not an SAT test.  Eliminate the last question, or replace it with a more straightforward one.

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# Information architecture, design, and content.

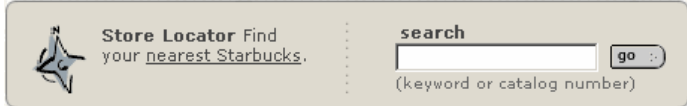
## Site-wide.

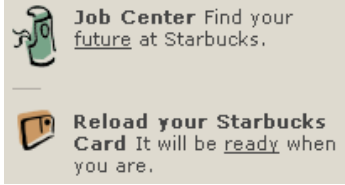
Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<p><b>There is quite a bit of unnecessary written content in the instructions for various tools and interactive elements.</b> Here are a couple of examples.</p> <p>The sentence “Already have a Starbucks Card?” is unnecessary in this passage: “Check your balance Already have a Starbucks Card? Enter your card number and PIN to check your balance.” The context of the message makes it clear.</p> <p>The following sentence in the last step of the checkout is unnecessary: “When you have verified all of the information on this page, please click the ‘complete order’ button,” especially since it is placed next to “Your order will NOT be processed until you have clicked “complete order.”</p>	<p>Look over every piece of instructional text and remove passages that are not essential.</p> <p>Few users ever read instructions. Unnecessary instructions clutter up the page and take attention away from more important passages like the following one on the last page of the checkout: “Please note: If you have Automatic Reload enabled for your Starbucks Card, de-selecting this check box will disable that program.”</p> <p>Remember that people can’t ignore content until the read it.</p>
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<p><b>Company-centered language is sometimes used.</b> For example, there is a link to “Customer Service” in the utilities and an option called “Retail Stores” in the “store type” dropdown.</p>	<p>Make sure the site speaks the customer’s language. For example, consider using “Help” instead of “customer service,” and “All Stores” instead of “retail stores.”</p>

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<p><b>Inconsistent use of buttons vs. links.</b> By convention a link references something, while a button initiates an action. Buttons should be reserved for actions, while links for navigating.</p> <p>Because this is how most sites handle actions and navigation, users have come to expect more “damage” from clicking a button as opposed to clicking a link. As a result, they will think twice before clicking even an apparently harmless button.</p>	<p>Be consistent: use buttons for actions and links for navigation. For example, in the following example I would eliminate the “go” button and make the heading “Coffee Taste Matcher” serve double duty by making it a link.</p>  <p>On the other hand, the “<a href="#">clear cart</a>” link in the shopping cart should be a <b>button</b>, if used at all.</p>
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<p><b>The destination of some links and buttons is not clear from their labels and context.</b> Here’s an example of this from the create account success screen:</p>  <p>In this case, the “Continue” button takes the user back to the section from which the account creation process was initiated. However, there is nothing on the success screen to let the user know that this is in fact the case! “Continue” can mean anything.</p>	<p>Make sure that it is clear from the labels and context of links/buttons where clicking them will take the user.</p>

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>Link names often don't match the destination page title.</b> While a low-impact issue in most cases, it is a good idea to have the link name match the destination page title. This lets the user predict the contents of page at the other end of the link in case the link's context does not make this clear.	Go through the site and make sure the link names match (or are close enough to) the titles of the pages to which they link.
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>Visited and unvisited links look the same.</b> What increases the impact of this issue is that many links don't match the titles of their target pages. As a result a user doesn't know whether she has already been on the page where the link goes.	Make visited and unvisited links look different from each other. Since different link colors are used in different sections of the site, the best approach here is to simply lighten/desaturate the standard link color to make the visited link color.

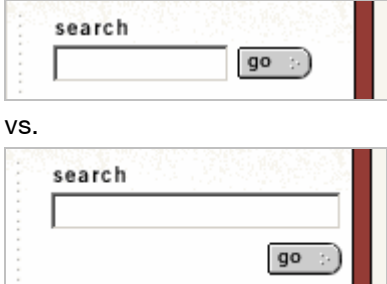
## Home page.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>The animation in the three home page features is distracting</b> —it makes it more difficult to concentrate on other page content. In general, autochanging content, while suitable for passive media like TV or billboards, has no place on the web.	Do not animate the three features. The change-on-hover effect is sufficient here.
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>Search and store locator are very important tools, but appear too low on the home page.</b>	Place search and store locator into their own box above the three home features: 
		This would place the search box in a location consistent with where it is on all of the other pages.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	The link names “future” and “ready” are meaningless out of context and do not match the target page titles.  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Either</i> link the bold text;</li> <li>• <i>Or</i> rewrite the sentence to contain the title of the destination page. Make this a link name. For example: “Find your future at Starbucks <a href="#">Job Center</a>”</li> </ul>

## Search.

Search engine results are presented well: the search query, the number of matches, and brief descriptions are all there.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>Search box that appears on most pages, while not too small, could be wider.</b>	Use more of the available space to enlarge the search box:  

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<p><b>Search scope unclear—is it only products or the entire site?</b> Here are a few searches I tried and the results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• job center: no results;</li> <li>• shipping: no results;</li> <li>• soy: no results;</li> <li>• ice cream: no results.</li> <li>• wireless: 1 keyword match;</li> <li>• frappuccino: 1 product match for “Bottled Frappuccino”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Either</i> indicate the scope of the search tool in its title. For example, “Search for products:”.</li> <li>• <i>Or</i> make it search the entire site. While this is more difficult to implement technically, it will accommodate customers who search for non-product terms like “shipping” or “returns” (Difficulty here: <b>3</b>)</li> </ul>
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<p><b>A dedicated search page is unnecessary</b>, because the search box appears on every page of the site and the search page only has a single search box. It’s better to have a search box than a search page anyway.</p>	<p>Eliminate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the search page;</li> <li>• the link to the search page from the home page.</li> </ul>

### Shop online – coffee home (<http://www.starbucks.com/shop/category.asp?category%5Fname=Coffee>)

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<p><b>The coffee list—a very important part of the store—is hidden behind an unclear, industry-centric label: “menu board.”</b> An online customer may not make an immediate mental connection between the label’s offline namesake and the coffee list.</p>	<p>Give the coffee list link a clearer label. For example, “coffee list” or “complete list” or “all coffees”.</p>

## Shop online – machine matcher (.../shop/mmatcher.asp?category%5Fname=Machine+Matcher)

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>It is not clear that coffee machines cannot be purchased online.</b> It took me about 30 seconds of trying to click on things in the comparison table to finally see the “shopping for a machine” paragraph on the right.	Clearly and prominently state at the top of the coffee machine chart page that coffee machines are not available to purchase online and/or that they are available for purchase at the customer’s local Starbucks store.

## The product list page - coffee menu board.

Great to see all the coffees together on a single page.

Research, including my own, shows that customers often want to see the complete selection. And the fact that the coffees are meaningfully organized makes it even better. There’s enough

information about each coffee to make for an “informed” click, reducing pogo-sticking that often plagues product lists where not enough of the essential information about the coffee is provided (i.e. gevalia.com). Kudos, starbucks.com!

## Product detail pages.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>2</b>	The “Selection:” dropdown has a few cosmetic issues worth mentioning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The label—“Selection:”—is ambiguous: industry-standard name for this is “Select a grind:” or, better yet, simply “Grind:”</li><li>• Because there are only two options in the dropdown a radio input type would work better here;</li></ul>	Rename the “Selection:” dropdown to say “Grind:” Unfortunately, the same product template is used for Starbucks card, so a workaround will be required for the instances when the card is being displayed.  Use “radio” input type instead of a select dropdown. This would place all options in plain sight and make the prices more visible. The added benefit is that when only one grind is available, the user does not have to click the dropdown to find that out.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>The “Added to cart” message is not prominent enough.</b> The first time I added an item to the cart, I didn’t notice it right away. The problem is worse with people on dialup connections, because the page reload lag is likely to result in a displaced locus of attention: they will no longer be concentrating on the “add to cart” button and can be looking at a totally different part of the screen when this page loads.	Make the “Added to cart” message more prominent. For example, place the message on a contrasting background and/or make it different in color from any of the other objects on the same page.

## Gift-giving.

Smooth sailing here. The gift-giving capability is well-designed and implemented both at the point when the items are added to

the shopping cart and when gift options are selected during the checkout.



## The Shopping Cart.

Good that I can change two of the most important parameters for each coffee—grind and quantity—right there in the cart. Good to have subtotals for items shipped to me vs. the gift

recipient(s). The label of the “Recalculate” button is better than the more generic “Update Cart,” because the language here is more concrete; it actually encourages the user who changed the quantities to click the button to see the total.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	The label of the “Recalculate” button is inappropriate and unclear when the button is used to remove an item from the cart. This is not a TV remote: there is no need for a single button to support two different tasks.	Either create a button called “Delete checked items” and place it below the “remove” checkbox(es) OR see the next recommendation.




Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>2</b>	<p><b>Removing an item requires placing a check mark next to the item and clicking a “Recalculate” button.</b></p> <p>The process of deleting a single item—the most likely scenario—is more complicated than it could be had a simple “remove” button been placed next to each item in the cart.</p>	<p>Use a dedicated “remove” button instead of a checkbox for removing items. (Possible hack for this: change the quantity to “0” in JavaScript when the “remove” button is clicked and then simply submit the form). This will make deleting single items quicker and will relieve the “Recalculate” button from serving double duty.</p>
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<p><b>The checkout button is not easy to find.</b> The “clear cart” link is where I would expect the checkout button to be located. The most prominent button in the cart—“Continue Shopping”—is not the most wanted action in the cart.</p>	<p>Make the checkout more prominent than all of the other buttons on the page. Because going to the checkout is logically equivalent to moving forward, consider placing the checkout button on the right, where the clear cart link is now.</p>
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<p><b>The “clear cart” link is unnecessary and should be removed.</b> How often would someone want to discard all of their selections and start over? (Besides someone doing a usability review...).</p>	<p>Remove the “clear cart” link. This frees up the spot for the “Checkout” button.</p>
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<p><b>The destination of the “continue shopping” button is unclear.</b></p>	<p>Including a destination next to the button. For example:</p> 
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<p><b>“Continue shopping” is a button, but should be a link.</b> Strictly-speaking links should not contain verbs, but the convention of having a link called “continue shopping” makes it OK in this case.</p>	<p>Since clicking this button does not initiate an action in the user’s mind, consider using a link instead:</p>  <p>This would also make the continue shopping link less prominent than the checkout button.</p>

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>The link in this passage is not linked directly to credit card security page:</b> To learn more about security on Starbucks.com, please read our <a href="#">FAQ</a> . Customers who click the link (FAQ, in this case), will be looking for security information. Don't make them hunt around for it!	The solution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rephrase the entire blurb to say: "Learn more about <a href="#">security</a> at Starbucks.com."</li><li>• Link <a href="#">security</a> directly to the security information page in the help section.</li></ul>

## Sign-in screen.

The sign in screen looks similar to sign-in screens elsewhere on the web. The customers are used to a sign-in like this one and are not likely to have problems finding their way. The fact that

they can check out without having to create an account is also welcome.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>The checkout path for returning customers is too prominent.</b> This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the headings for the two sections—"Returning Customers" and "New Customers"—are not visible enough. Research (including my own) shows that new customers will sometimes start filling out the returning customer form—when it has the most visibility—without paying attention to the instructions.	Make sure that the checkout path for new, unregistered customers is more prominent than the one for registered customers. Make the "Returning Customers" and "New Customers" headings more prominent. Here's one possibility: 

This example assumes that the account creation option is removed from this screen and placed at the end of the checkout.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>The destination of the “cancel” button is unclear from its context and label.</b> In fact, the “cancel” button is unnecessary for single-step processes like signing in.	Because the “Cancel” button just takes the user back to the shopping cart, a clearer label like “Back to Shopping Cart” would work better here. I would remove the “Cancel” <b>button</b> altogether, replacing it with a back to cart <b>link</b> placed outside of the returning customers box.

## Checkout – Billing address.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>The blurb at the top of this page is too verbose:</b> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 5px;"> <p>We are committed to the privacy of our online customers. Please read our <a href="#">Privacy Statement</a> for more information about how your information will be used as you make use of our online offerings.</p> </div>	The following version saves an entire line of text: “We are committed to your privacy. Please read about how your information will be used in our <a href="#">Privacy Statement</a> .”
Impact: <b>2*</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b> *the impact rating is higher due to the problem’s pervasiveness	<b>The awkward, inconsistent placement of form field labels makes filling out the forms more difficult</b> than it has to be. The labels that are placed to the right of the fields require twice as many eye movements to complete an entry. Why make the user work harder, especially during the checkout?	Place field labels consistently above or in front of the form fields.  This applies to all of the checkout forms that have this issue.
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>The zip code field is too wide.</b> Form fields should be sized in proportion to the length of their intended inputs.	Make the zip code field wide enough to accept a 9-digit zip code, but not wider. It is currently 22 digits wide.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>The “cancel” button is too prominent and placed to the right of continue, making it easy to hit it by mistake.</b> It is also unclear what is on the other side of the “cancel” button: where the customer will be taken after clicking it.	My recommendation here is three-fold: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make it less visually prominent than continue;</li> <li>• Place it to the left of the “Continue” button.</li> <li>• Indicate, using small text, where clicking the button will take the user. For example, “cancel” and return to “shop online”.</li> </ul>

## Checkout – Shipping address.

The fact that the shipping address for ship to yourself was prepopulated with the billing address is great—really shows you care.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
	All of billing address findings apply here.	See corresponding recommendations for the billing address.

## Checkout - Payment information.

There are two major ways to approach this step in the checkout process:

- either make this the last step of the checkout by displaying the contents of the order, the payment info fields and a place order button;
- or make this a second to last step, by showing just the payment info fields and a continue button. This approach places a read-only order summary view and a place order button for the last step (the way amazon.com does it).

I prefer the latter because separating the order summary and the payment fields avoids having to create a long and sometimes confusing page (among other things). Unfortunately, doing this here is not feasible: the credit card is verified in real time when the order is placed. All that can be done here is to

eliminate clutter by stripping the page down to its bare essentials and grouping the payment fields better. The before and after images on the next page illustrate the suggested changes.

The only item missing in the suggested redesign picture is the “What prompted you to shop starbucks.com today?” dropdown. I suggest removing it, because this far into the checkout customers just want to pay for the purchase and leave. Don’t make them answer questions that they don’t think are necessary to process their order.

The overall problem rating for redesigning the payment information page: Impact: **2**, Difficulty: **1**

### The current "Payment info" page:

cart	billing address	shipping address	shipping method	gift message	payment
------	-----------------	------------------	-----------------	--------------	---------

**review your order information**

Please confirm your order. If all the information on this page is correct, enter your payment information and click the "complete order" button at the bottom of the page. Your order will NOT be processed until you have clicked "complete order."

ship to: yourself	item	qty	price
John Doe 123 Anystreet Anytown, CA 90210 US	Arabian Mocha Java, Universal grind, 1 lb.	1	\$12.50
	Conservation Colombia, Whole Bean, 1 lb.	1	\$11.95
subtotal:			\$24.45
estimated tax:			\$1.96
shipping: (Standard)			\$5.85
cart total:			\$32.26

ship to: Tom	item	qty	price
Tom Lastname 123 Address Boston, MA 02114 US	Sumatra, Universal grind, 1 lb.	2	\$10.50
subtotal:			\$21.00
estimated tax:			\$1.05
shipping: (Standard)			\$5.85
cart total:			\$27.90


  

order subtotal:	\$45.45
estimated tax:	\$3.01
shipping:	\$11.70
<b>order total:</b>	<b>\$60.16</b>

**enter payment information**

Please add your payment information to the fields below You may use a credit card to pay for your order.

Credit card information If you are paying with a credit card, please enter the appropriate information below.

choose a card type 

Select One

name  (as it appears on the card)

cvn  (what's this?)

card number  (no dashes or spaces)

expiration date  /

cvn  (what's this?)

— OR —

**Starbucks card**

Please enter the number and PIN below. One Starbucks Card per order. Canadian Starbucks Cards cannot be used at this time.

Starbucks Card number  [Check your Starbucks Card balance](#)

Starbucks Card PIN  [What's this?](#)

What prompted you to shop Starbucks.com today?  
Choose one

When you have verified all of the information on this page, please click the "complete order" button. Your order will NOT be processed until you click this button.

Clicking "complete order" will begin the credit card authorization process. **Click only ONCE: multiple clicks may cause additional charges to your credit card.** Please be patient while your credit card authorization goes through.

### Suggested redesign:

cart	billing address	shipping address	shipping method	gift message	payment
------	-----------------	------------------	-----------------	--------------	---------

**review your order**

ship to: yourself	item	qty	price
John Doe 123 Anystreet Anytown, CA 90210 US	Arabian Mocha Java, Universal grind, 1 lb.	1	\$12.50
	Conservation Colombia, Whole Bean, 1 lb.	1	\$11.95
subtotal:			\$24.45
estimated tax:			\$1.96
shipping: (Standard)			\$5.85
cart total:			\$32.26

ship to: Tom	item	qty	price
Tom Lastname 123 Address Boston, MA 02114 US	Sumatra, Universal grind, 1 lb.	2	\$10.50
subtotal:			\$21.00
estimated tax:			\$1.05
shipping: (Standard)			\$5.85
cart total:			\$27.90


  

order subtotal:	\$45.45
estimated tax:	\$3.01
shipping:	\$11.70
<b>order total:</b>	<b>\$60.16</b>

**enter payment information**

**Credit card**

name  (as it appears on the card)

card type  

card number  (no dashes or spaces)

expiration date  /

cvn  (what's this?)

— OR —

**Starbucks card**

Please enter the number and PIN below. One Starbucks Card per order. Canadian Starbucks Cards cannot be used at this time.


Starbucks Card number  [Check your Starbucks Card balance](#)

Starbucks Card PIN  [What's this?](#)

Your order will NOT be processed until you have clicked "complete order."

Clicking "complete order" will begin the credit card authorization process. **Click only ONCE: multiple clicks may cause additional charges to your credit card.** Please be patient while your credit card authorization goes through.

## Registration and account management.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	On the “Create New Account” screen the correct password length is not indicated on the form itself, but only in the error message: 	Include password length range as a hint next to the password field.

## Starbucks card.


On Starbucks card home (...starbucks.com/card/default.asp) it's a very good idea to group all of the tasks related to buying/managing the card in a single boxed-in area.

However, the logical organization that is implied visually here is not carried out physically: links that look like they “live” here

take the user to a totally different section of the site. Most of the issues in this section have to do with a disconnect between the organization that is suggested visually and the organization that exists physically. That is, pages that seem to be a part of one section of the site “live” elsewhere.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>3</b>	Card-related tasks are broken up between two top-level sections: shop online and Starbucks card. For example, the “buy a card” link in the “starbucks card” section goes to “shop online”; and reload card link in “shop online” sends the user back to “starbucks card.”	While this should not confuse too many goal-oriented users, I recommend that all Starbucks card-related tasks be kept in one section of the site. This will ensure that the user does not get confused by getting unexpectedly “teleported” to a whole different section of the site.



Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<p>The secondary navigation options on this page are missing some of the tools found in the “Tools” box on the same page:</p>  <p>The lists of links in these two areas are similar enough that the customers will likely wonder why they aren't identical.</p>	<p>Make sure that all of the card tools “echo” in the secondary navigation for the “starbucks card” section.</p>

## Shop online – Starbucks card – buy card (purchasecard.asp?category%5Fname=Starbucks+Card)

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<p><b>The tools to select and buy the card are at the bottom of the page.</b> This page is dominated by promotional content and links to several of the Starbucks card tools. All this content pushes the most important area of this page—the featured card and the complete list of the available cards—way below the fold.</p>	<p>Redesign the page so that the cards and the means to buy them are easily visible without scrolling. Implementing this recommendation along with moving the pages that support the purchase of the card to the “Starbucks card” section will eliminate the need to list links to card tools on this page.</p>

## Our stores.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
<p>Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b></p>	<p>In the secondary nav, <b>the difference between “local scoop” and “what’s happening” is unclear:</b></p> <div data-bbox="493 365 709 532" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>This is exacerbated by the fact that on the same page there is a “What’s happening” link in the local scoop section:</p> <div data-bbox="493 657 835 787" data-label="Image"> </div>	<p>Give these two sections clearer labels, making the difference between these sections clear. For example, “local events” and “what’s new.”</p> <p>New users use labels to form a mental model of the site’s organization (to predict what will happen if they click it without actually having to invest the time and energy of finding this out empirically). Go through the site to make sure the link’s destination is clear from the its label, there are no two links that are too close to each other in meaning, and that link labels are consistently applied.</p>
<p>Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b></p>	<p><b>Missing punctuation makes some passages difficult to read.</b> For example, someone who’s not familiar with Starbucks coffee names may read the following two captions as single sentences:</p> <div data-bbox="493 987 814 1307" data-label="Image"> </div>	<p>Use periods to set sentences apart.</p>

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<p><b>Bold-text paragraph headings are inconsistently applied.</b> Compare the following screenshots:</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; gap: 20px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; width: 150px;"> <p><b>Learn more about the subtleties</b> and complexities of coffee's nature. We walk you through the different flavor descriptions of Starbucks® coffee and what they mean.</p> </div> <p>vs.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; width: 100px;"> <p><b>Espresso marks</b> Starbucks retail specialty drinks all begin with <u>Espresso Roast</u>.</p> </div> </div>	<p>Apply bolding consistently and use punctuation to let the reader know where one sentence ends and the other begins.</p> <p>Because this issue is not limited to this section, I recommend that you go through the entire site and review/correct this.</p>
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<p><b>The “sign in” link disappears from the utilities list in the upper right-hand corner on the “our stores” main page:</b></p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; gap: 20px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; width: 300px;"> <p>your account   customer service   checkout  </p> </div> <p>vs.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; width: 300px;"> <p>your account   customer service   checkout   sign in</p> </div> </div>	<p>For the sake of consistency, make sure that the “sign-in” link appears everywhere the other three utility links are.</p>

## Our stores – the store locator tool.

While it is nice to have this tool in an easily accessible location right on the stores home page, the tool’s instructions actually

get in the way of the customer’s ability to use this tool successfully.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<p><b>The introductory/instructional blurb hurts more than it helps.</b> The intro blurb says: “Enter the street address and city. Alternately, you may search by city, state, postal code, or country.” It is not clear whether these are two different methods of searching and whether the second method of searching can be accomplished on the same form.</p>	<p>Remove both of these introductory blurbs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Enter the street address and city. Alternately, you may search by city, state, postal code, or country.”</li> <li>• “Looking for airport stores or stores that serve lunch? Find this and more by selecting the store type.”</li> </ul> <p>It is clear enough how to use the tool from its appearance.</p>

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>It is not clear which fields are required and which are optional.</b> In fact, only city is really required.	Mark “City” as a required field explicitly: City (required). This will make it easy for the user to deduce that all the other fields are optional. They will be able to narrow their search down as much as they want by choosing which fields to fill in.
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>The option to see all stores is not clearly labeled.</b> “Retail stores” is not clear enough. A customer who just want to get a cup of Starbucks coffee will not care about store features like lunch or wireless internet access.	In the “Store Type” dropdown provide a clearly-labeled option to see all stores. For example: “All Stores.” Make this option the first one in the dropdown so that it is selected by default.
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>3</b>	<b>The options in the “Store Type:” dropdown are not mutually exclusive.</b> Why can’t an airport store also have a wireless hot spot? What if I am looking for a store that serves lunch AND accepts Starbucks card?	Do not use a dropdown for store type—consider using a set of checkboxes instead. This approach will give the users maximum flexibility in selecting the store features they want to search for.
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	Error messages in the store locator tool are completely below the fold at 800x600.	Make sure all error messages, not just on this page, are above the fold at the screen resolution of 800x600.

## Customer Service.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>Company topics like jobs and investor relations are placed in customer service.</b> Most visitors will look for this information in the “about us” section.	Move the topics found in the “Questions about our Company:” dropdown into the “About Us” section.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>“Your account” link appears in this section.</b> “Your account” is not a part of “customer service” section. Since this link is right next to the “customer service” link in the upper right hand corner, I see no reason to duplicate it here.	Remove “your account” link from the secondary nav in this section.
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>Help topics are hidden behind ambiguously-labeled dropdowns.</b> For example, if I have a question about a product I saw on starbucks.com do I look in “Questions about Starbucks.com” or “Questions about Stores & Products”?	Use several lists of links instead of dropdowns. Make sure the links are grouped logically and have clear headings—headings that let the customers quickly zero in on the kind of information they are looking for. Refer to amazon.com’s help section to see this in action.
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>Some of the items in the customer service dropdowns have ambiguous labels</b> —labels that don’t make it sufficiently clear what kind of information the destination page contains.	Organize customer service information in a way that eliminates ambiguously-named catch-all categories like “Ordering product online” or “Most common inquiries.”
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>Autosubmitting dropdowns are used as a gateway to all customer service content.</b> Dropdowns can be difficult to manipulate for people with motor disabilities. The fact that the dropdowns on this page automatically submit as soon as a selection is made make selection mistakes more aggravating.	Use plain links instead of dropdowns.

## Technology.

No **major** technical issues were found. In fact, some nice touches can be considered to be above par even for an excellent site. For example, (a) checkboxes remember whether or not

they were checked when a form comes back with an error; and (b) the customer's name and address is duplicated from billing address into the shipping address fields during checkout.

### Site-wide.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>Text is non-resizable in Internet Explorer.</b> It is a good idea to make body text and headings user-resizable, so that users can increase the text for easier reading.	Specify font size using relative units like "em," or "%." Percent is better since the text resizes in smaller increments, preventing text set to "smallest" from becoming unreadable.
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>Starbucks logo: only the graphic, but not the words "starbucks.com" link to the home page.</b> The words "starbucks.com" are visually a part of the logo and should share its link to home.	Link the words "starbucks.com" in the logo to the home page.

### Home.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>Anyone who's running a popup killer/ad blocker utility will not see the images for the three home page features and get a JavaScript error.</b> This is because these images are located in a folder with words "promo" in their name. Many ad blockers will not download content with these words in its path.	Eliminate words that ad blockers may find "objectionable" from the path of all images/external files on the site.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>Some popup links are not compatible with popup killers.</b> For example the one on the Starbucks card home (“what’s this” near the PIN field) works fine with popup killers enabled, while the one on the “chill patrol” page does not.	QA the site with an popup killer app running to make sure all popups still work.

## Search.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>3+</b>	<b>The site search engine is not robust.</b> It does not support misspellings, plural/singular, parts of words, etc. For example, the following searches produced no results: “double shot”, “frappucino”, “frapuccino”, “coffees”.	Make sure the search engine can recognize misspellings, plural/singular, parts of words, etc.
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>3</b>	<b>The search tool is limited in scope: it does not cover customer service content.</b>	Let the user search the entire site, including the customer service section.

## Ordering for a friend.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>2</b>	Removing an item for a gift recipient from the shopping cart erases that person’s nickname from the “ship this item to:” dropdown on the product detail page.	Make sure the gift recipient’s name “lives” even if the item intended for that person is deleted from the cart. I can see a situation where I am shopping for a friend and want to remove an item from the cart to buy another one for the same person.


## The Shopping Cart.

It is good that hitting return after changing the quantity updates the cart, and that multiple strategies for removing an item from

the cart are supported (i.e. entering “0” for the quantity as well as checking the remove checkbox removes the item).

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>2</b>	<b>Changing the quantity and clicking “Checkout” without hitting the “Recalculate” button first does not save the new quantity.</b> While this is on par with just about every other site out there, this problem is easy enough to fix.	Update the cart total any time the user clicks on anything in the shopping cart that either reloads the page or takes the user away from it.

## Sign-in.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>1</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	The following error message refers to a “user name” field that does not exist on the form: 	Make sure the error messages are accurate.



## Payment information.

Rating	Finding	Recommendation
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	<b>The credit card number field does not accept spaces.</b> It would be much easier for the user to verify a 16-digit number if it is broken up in four groups of four digits.	Allow spaces to be entered into the card number field. The spaces can be easily removed using JavaScript when the form is submitted.
Impact: <b>2</b> Difficulty: <b>1</b>	Because real-time payment verification can take a long time, there is an increased chance that a user will click the “complete order” button repeatedly.	Consider using JavaScript to disable the submit button as soon as it is pressed.

## Appendix A: Business and site environment.

### Organizational feasibility.

The entire organization is committed to creating the best possible online experience for their customers. The stakeholders feel that they have a fundamentally good site—the site achieves both customer and business objectives—and are not planning a re-design anytime soon. Smaller changes that would not require hiring additional staff are ok. Existing staff can be asked to make changes as a part of their regular duties.

### Technical feasibility.

There's enough technical and design staff on hand to deal with most problems short of a complete site overhaul. Programmers can create new client- and server-side scripts and objects, and the DBAs can update, create and deploy new databases, stored procedures, etc. The eCommerce application allows for addition of third-party objects and databases to be integrated. Designers have access to original site graphics and fonts, and can use them to create new graphical elements.

### Financial feasibility.

There's no money to hire additional resources.

### Major business goals for the web site:

1. Build the starbucks.com brand by creating a great online experience for the visitors and customers.
2. Sell coffee products online;
3. Provide an easy way to locate local starbucks.com stores;
4. Promote grocery store products;
5. Keep the customers apprised of the starbucks.com's happenings;
6. Provide an easy way for people to get in touch with Starbucks and starbucks.com.

## Appendix B: Brief user analysis and methodology summary.

### Customer attributes (online behavior and tech):

- online and offline customer demo- and psychographics are similar;
- reasonably web-savvy: use the web often and have web access from work, home, or both;
- shop online at least occasionally;
- keep up with technology trends enough to have a recent (2 years old or newer) version of the browser and plug-ins;
- some use ad/popup blockers.

### What the customers will expect to be able to do:

- buy Starbucks coffees;
- find local Starbucks stores;
- find out how to apply for a job at Starbucks.

### Special requirements/expectations:

- exceptional level of customer service. The Starbucks brand set a very high standard offline and will be expected to carry it through online.

### Walkthrough tasks used in this inspection:

#### Shopping:

- Find some moderately expensive, smooth, full-bodied coffee for myself;
- Find some mild, medium-bodied coffee for a friend of mine;
- Buy both, sending the one for the friend as a gift. If this is not available, send both to me and include a gift wrap/box for the medium-bodied coffee.

#### Customer service and information finding:

- Can I cancel an order?
- How many Starbucks stores are there in my town?
- Can I return an item to my local Starbucks?
- How can I apply for an entry level hourly position at Starbucks?

### Guidelines used in this inspection:

Nielsen/Norman Group's 207 eCommerce usability guidelines form the basis for the evaluation. A system similar to Maya's importance/difficulty rating system is used to rate the problems.