



PECOS4SMEs

D2.5 Top e-Commerce Website Features

Version 1.0 – 26/07/2013

Project	PECOS4SMEs		
Author(s)	OAKE	CCS, EBN	
Reviewer(s)		FC	

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

This document reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



OAKE, CCS, EBN, FCOAKE, CCS, EBN, FC	Deliverable: D.2.5
PECOS4SMEs	Version: 1.0
D2.5 Top e-Commerce Website Features	Issue Date: 26/07/2013

Circulation List

Person Name	Organization Name
Gianluca Coppola	Eurocrea Merchant
Christos Anthis	CrystalClearSoft
Onno Hansen	OHENNENNOH BV
Kenny Payne	OAKE Associates
Robert Sanders	European Business & Innovation Centre Network (EBN)
Małgorzata Mikłosz	DANMAR COMPUTERS
Dimitris Diamantis	FAVINOM Consultancies

Revision History

Version	Date	Author	Description	Action	Pages
0.1	30/04/2013	OAKE, CCS, EBN	Creation of the document	C	14
1.0	26/07/2013	FC	Update of the document	U	14

(*) Action: C = Creation, I = Insert, U = Update, R = Replace, D = Delete

Referenced Documents

ID	Reference	Title
1	507562-LLP-2012-GR-Leonardo-LMP	PECOS4SMEs Proposal
2	507562-LLP-2012-GR-Leonardo-LMP	Evaluation Comments

Applicable Documents

ID	Reference	Title
1	FAVINOM Consultancies QMS	Quality Management Procedures

OAKE, CCS, EBN, FCOAKE, CCS, EBN, FC	Deliverable: D.2.5
PECOS4SMEs	Version: 1.0
D2.5 Top e-Commerce Website Features	Issue Date: 26/07/2013

Executive Summary

This document forms the D2.5 Top e-Commerce Website Features for the Implementation of the PECOS4SMEs Project (henceforth, "Project").

Southern Europe SMEs lack the needed knowledge to take advantage of the e-Commerce potential resulting in Southern Europe lagging within the e-Business area. PECOS4SMEs will develop a training programme concentrated on the provision of suitable knowledge and tools, which the SMEs can use to increase cross border e-Commerce revenue. This includes changing sales and marketing strategies and new types of organisation and knowledge about e-Commerce technologies in a future world dominated by pervasive Internet.

The promotion of useful e-Commerce strategies for SMEs includes transfer of knowledge and practices from top performing countries in e-Commerce to lagers thus bridging the cross border sales gap between Northern and Southern Europe and helping the economic recovery of the hard hit South. As a consequence of the introduction of new technologies and concepts facilitating cross border e-Commerce, (e.g. effective link building, search engine user attitudes etc.), SMEs will make their businesses more profitable and improve their ICT and methodological competence for interactive and collaborative learning.

The project is co-funded by the Education and Culture DG under the Lifelong Learning Programme, Leonardo Multilateral projects.

The present document contains information regarding the features a website must have in order to be considered consumer friendly and potentially attract foreign customers, goal that is well aligned with the main objective of this project.

OAKE, CCS, EBN, FCOAKE, CCS, EBN, FC	Deliverable: D.2.5
PECOS4SMEs	Version: 1.0
D2.5 Top e-Commerce Website Features	Issue Date: 26/07/2013

Document Glossary

Term	Description
SME	Small and Medium Sized Enterprise

OAKE, CCS, EBN, FCOAKE, CCS, EBN, FC	Deliverable: D.2.5
PECOS4SMEs	Version: 1.0
D2.5 Top e-Commerce Website Features	Issue Date: 26/07/2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	7
1.1. PURPOSE OF THE D2.5 TOP E-COMMERCE WEBSITE FEATURES	7
1.2. SCOPE OF THE PROJECT	7
1.3. PROJECT OBJECTIVES	7
2. TOP E-COMMERCE WEBSITE FEATURES	8
2.1. E-COMMERCE CATALOGUE & PRODUCTS FEATURES	8
2.1.1. 1. Quality of Image	8
Alternate Views	8
2.1.2. Zoom Feature	9
2.1.3. Clear Logo	9
2.2. GENERAL CONTENT MANAGEMENT CAPABILITIES	9
2.2.1. Brand Products	9
2.2.2. Search box	10
2.2.3. Checkout	10
2.2.4. Promotional Quotes	10
2.3. SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION FEATURES	10
2.3.1. Latest News and Most Popular Products	10
2.3.2. Social Media Links	10
2.4. ADMINISTRATION FEATURES	10
2.4.1. Consumer Reviews	10
2.4.2. Product Comparisons	11
2.4.3. Phone Numbers And Online Chats	11
2.4.4. Product Demos	11
2.4.5. 'Email a Friend' Button	12
2.4.6. Show Products on Human Models	12
2.4.7. Share Buttons	12
2.4.8. Store Finder	12
2.5. SECURITY & ENCRYPTION	13
2.5.1. Trustmarks	13
2.6. E-COMMERCE PAYMENT GATEWAYS	13
2.6.1. Shopping Cart, Login Box and Search Box	13
2.6.2. Deals, Freebies and Free Shipping	13
2.6.3. Payment Systems Icons	14

OAKE, CCS, EBN, FCOAKE, CCS, EBN, FC	Deliverable: D.2.5
PECOS4SMEs	Version: 1.0
D2.5 Top e-Commerce Website Features	Issue Date: 26/07/2013

BIBLIOGRAPHY14

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Apple example of good use of the quality of image..... 8
Figure 2: Example of the multiple views of the product 9

OAKE, CCS, EBN, FCOAKE, CCS, EBN, FC	Deliverable: D.2.5
PECOS4SMEs	Version: 1.0
D2.5 Top e-Commerce Website Features	Issue Date: 26/07/2013

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the D2.5 Top e-Commerce Website Features

The purposes of the current D2.5 Top e-Commerce Website Features are the following:

- This document to act as an important dissemination tool in terms of motivating SMEs to increase their efforts for engaging foreign consumers.

1.2. Scope of the project

PECOS4SMEs will develop an innovative training system bringing new types of organisation and knowledge about e-Commerce technologies and trends and concentrated on transforming Internet trends into applicable tools for SMEs to change sales and marketing strategies. The approach to training SMEs is based on their situation (sector, financial capability, educational background, geographical location, existing infrastructure, etc.). After completion of the training, SMEs are expected to be able to engage foreign consumers by successfully implementing e-Commerce strategies designed specifically for them.

1.3. Project Objectives

The specific purpose of the proposed project is the development of e-Commerce oriented material delivered through a training system targeting solely SMEs and the deriving needs (e.g. websites friendlier to the foreign consumer, order tracking process, clear dispatch and return policies, etc.) with respect to effective use of the Internet as a sales channel. This includes changing sales and marketing strategies and new types of organisation and knowledge about e-Commerce technologies in a future world dominated by pervasive Internet.

PECOS4SMEs, in particular, aims to support European SMEs to:

- ❖ Raise awareness and interest about cross border e-Commerce.
- ❖ Learn more about the risks associated with online payments.
- ❖ Learn more about the uses of the Internet as a revenue channel.
- ❖ Analyse the knowledge development in the SME and see the strategic perspectives of this knowledge in the context of the business strategy.
- ❖ Integrate e-Commerce in business planning and innovation strategies.
- ❖ Get the strategies written down, so they are not just ideas, but an active choice, which can be communicated and understood by SMEs.
- ❖ Get the strategies incorporated in practical procedures that can be constantly updated.
- ❖ Be aware of the European cross-border trade legislation and provisions of consumer rights.

An additional goal is to make it easier and less costly for businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to do business abroad and to enable consumers to reap the full benefit of the Single Market. This goal is aligned with the Europe 2020 strategy – launched on 3 March 2010 (IP/10/225) and with which the Commission is currently tackling bottlenecks in the Single Market to drive economic recovery.

OAKE, CCS, EBN, FCOAKE, CCS, EBN, FC	Deliverable: D.2.5
PECOS4SMEs	Version: 1.0
D2.5 Top e-Commerce Website Features	Issue Date: 26/07/2013

2. Top e-Commerce Website features

2.1. E-Commerce Catalogue & Products Features

2.1.1. 1. Quality of Image

When you go shopping at an actual store, you may talk to someone about the product in person – although ecommerce sites often have more accurate and in-depth descriptions of a product than someone who works at the store – but the visual process of shopping is the most crucial. For the web, it's really the same and just as important. Image quality is king when it comes to ecommerce. Invest in quality images of your own products. Don't use the same images as other retailers.



Figure 1: Apple example of good use of the quality of image

Apple uses careful product photography to present its products, including the iPhone in this image.

Alternate Views

As important as it is to have quality images on your product pages, it is also important to display the product in as many angles and details as possible. Remember, the sale is in the details. People want to see exactly what they are getting. Having alternate views will likely decrease your return rate as you're showing customers exactly what they are getting. If you

OAKE, CCS, EBN, FCOAKE, CCS, EBN, FC	Deliverable: D.2.5
PECOS4SMEs	Version: 1.0
D2.5 Top e-Commerce Website Features	Issue Date: 26/07/2013

are selling expensive goods, alternate views are a must. Remember that online shoppers are concerned about product authenticity — alternate views can help. ¹

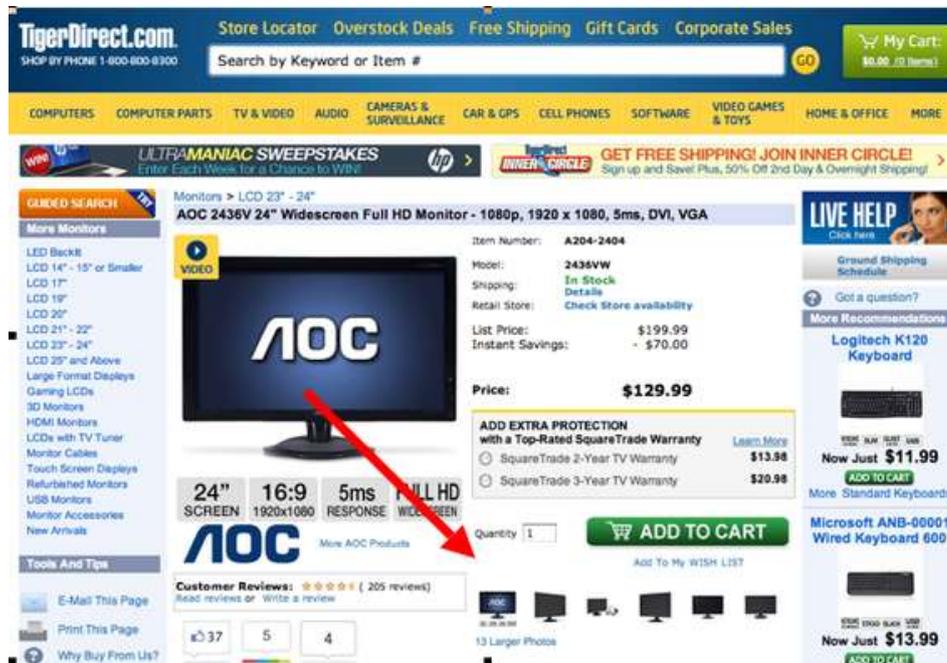


Figure 2: Example of the multiple views of the product

On the lower right of this product detail page, TigerDirect.com provides multiple views of this computer monitor. TigerDirect is a terrific website to analyze when it comes to product pages.

2.1.2. Zoom Feature

Related to alternative image views, the "zoom" feature on product images has become increasingly popular. This helps consumers get a better view of the product.

2.1.3. Clear Logo

A clear and remarkable logo is a business card for both startup shops and branded stores. When it comes to online shopping, a recognizable logo is a reassuring symbol and an element of trust of the company or organization. The more popular brands can afford to create an online store with a fashionable home page displaying minimum features. A well-known logo or a mascot, a beautiful image or video and the 'Buy' button will suffice for such designs.

2.2. General Content Management Capabilities

2.2.1. Brand Products

It's not always possible to predict what the next customer will be looking for, but it doesn't mean that you should place all your products directly on the home page. What you can do is have the most eye-catching and interesting offers readily accessible. This trick makes a huge difference for retailers who have a huge product catalogue.

¹ Palatnik P., 10 Most Important Features of Ecommerce Product Pages, Source: www.practicalecommerce.com

OAKE, CCS, EBN, FCOAKE, CCS, EBN, FC	Deliverable: D.2.5
PECOS4SMEs	Version: 1.0
D2.5 Top e-Commerce Website Features	Issue Date: 26/07/2013

If you have branded goods on sale, then display them upfront. It's a great attention-grabber especially with first-time visitors who don't know what exactly they are looking for. Moreover, there are many large retailers which provide an opportunity to 'shop by brands'.

2.2.2. Search box

Most users don't bother to browse your website to find what they are looking for. They use the search box instead. A search box on the homepage (especially when it includes the autocomplete function) increases the conversion rate substantially.

2.2.3. Checkout

Most online stores assume the best way to streamline purchases is to reduce the number of steps in a checkout, hence the popularity of "one-step" checkouts. But a one-step checkout is no different from a five-step checkout if it demands the same input from customers, just condensed onto one page. The only real difference is that customers have to squint more.

2.2.4. Promotional Quotes

On several places of your website use quotes that will encourage users to buy. These quotes may refer to product scarcity, limited time offers, guarantees etc. This technique always drives sales; your conversion rate can sky rocket up to 50%.

2.3. Search Engine Optimization Features

2.3.1. Latest News and Most Popular Products

When there are news, a sales period or upcoming events that buyers should know about the product, the home page is the best place to house them. Do not make it too hard for buyers to find exclusive deals and hot prices. Moreover, recurring customers will more likely look through several 'new' items on sale rather than spend half an hour browsing through the full inventory for something new and trendy.

2.3.2. Social Media Links

It's said that almost 20% of online purchases are accomplished after surfing through social media sites. People are inclined to take in public opinion. Social media websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, are the best, if not fastest, source to get the info you need on just about everything.

Moreover, social media accounts bring excellent opportunities for self-promotion: online communities can help to identify the most active and influential customers, or find new ones who are not familiar with the web store yet. For online shops, it's a good channel to keep customers abreast of the latest news, or special deals which are oriented towards Facebook or Twitter followers only.

2.4. Administration Features

2.4.1. Consumer Reviews

Shoppers care what others have to say. If your product pages have consumer reviews, you're helping shoppers make a final decision. Not all products have positive reviews. In fact, many

OAKE, CCS, EBN, FCOAKE, CCS, EBN, FC	Deliverable: D.2.5
PECOS4SMEs	Version: 1.0
D2.5 Top e-Commerce Website Features	Issue Date: 26/07/2013

have both positive and negative reviews, which, makes the shopping experience that much more authentic and real for the shopper. There are many great review platforms to choose from, if your cart doesn't provide one.

2.4.2. Product Comparisons

Product comparisons can improve a shopping experience — and increase sales. Consumers typically shop for similar features. A product comparison feature on product pages can help them view features side-by-side, instead of flipping through many pages. Many shopping carts are starting to incorporate this feature into their platforms.

2.4.3. Phone Numbers And Online Chats

With online shopping, buyers interact with sellers via computer networks making transactions that are no longer geographically bound. When there is a problem however, customers would more likely prefer to have someone they can talk with. This is the core of the need for a store support team; 24/7 hotlines and live chats are highly appreciated forms of value-added customer service.

Live chat is very important to an ecommerce site. This feature should be site wide, but especially on every product page. Live help can help close the sale. Customer questions can be answered immediately. There are many live help platforms in the marketplace to choose from.

If online purchases can be done all day and all night long, there is a need to provide 24-hours customer services to solve the majority of pre-sale and after-sale questions. Moreover, people can go online from their working places or from home, so a purchase — and any accompanying enquiry — may come at any time of the day.

2.4.4. Product Demos

Product demos are increasingly popular. They inform the consumer and can really help decrease return rates. Employees of Office Depot recently displayed that company's product demonstration feature at an Internet Retailer conference, stating it sharply increased sales. Also, TigerDirect.com uses product demos to show, explain and educate consumers about that specific product.

OAKE, CCS, EBN, FCOAKE, CCS, EBN, FC	Deliverable: D.2.5
PECOS4SMEs	Version: 1.0
D2.5 Top e-Commerce Website Features	Issue Date: 26/07/2013



TigerDirect offers pop-up product demonstration videos.

2.4.5. 'Email a Friend' Button

It wasn't until the holiday 2011 season that I actually analysed the live Google Analytics — recently launched a few months back — on an ecommerce site. I looked where shoppers were going to get a better feel of user navigation. I couldn't believe the amount of people that hit the 'email a friend' button, a great feature to have in all your product pages. It helps spread the word in a quick and efficient way.

2.4.6. Show Products on Human Models

For sunglasses, t-shirts or anything that fits on a human, it can really help consumers to see it on someone. Showing products on models is very effective. It lets the online shopper have a much better understanding of the product.

2.4.7. Share Buttons

Social buttons are a great marketing tool for your product pages. These buttons allow users to post and share your product with their network of friends and family through Facebook, Twitter and countless social networks. I recommend using individual social buttons — such as the Facebook Like or Share button, the Tweet button, or Google +1 button — instead of an aggregate one. Individual social buttons are easier for shoppers to use, rather than clicking on an aggregate button and then choosing a specific site.

2.4.8. Store Finder

A store finder tab is a must-have option for web stores that have several local or national retailers. Many conservative customers who prefer to check out the actual store itself may visit the website but only to find the nearest shop location or branch.

OAKE, CCS, EBN, FCOAKE, CCS, EBN, FC	Deliverable: D.2.5
PECOS4SMEs	Version: 1.0
D2.5 Top e-Commerce Website Features	Issue Date: 26/07/2013

More likely, one will find this option on the top or bottom right corner of the site. If the store has a wide trade network then it will be good to create a special store location search box for a country, city, zip code or address search. Check out the store finder tabs on these e-Commerce websites.

2.5. Security & Encryption

2.5.1. Trustmarks

Trustmarks are small images or logos that show a security guarantee by an external party indicating that it is safe to shop on the site. Some of these trustmarks come from Network solutions, McAfee, Verisign, BBB, TRUSTe, GeoTrust, etc. Such accreditation certificates give customers a sense of security and gives them confidence in sharing their private information. Visitors would be more inclined to make a purchase if they know that their payment details are safe from prying eyes.

It should also be noted that trustmarks don't matter for big brand stores. They don't need to pass security and privacy tests to confirm their reliability because they already have a good reputation.

Apart from trustmarks, a clear design, convenient menus, detailed product descriptions and user reviews are also important for creating better online reputation. Just note that trust plays an important role in a customer's willingness to part with their money.

2.6. E-Commerce Payment Gateways

2.6.1. Shopping Cart, Login Box and Search Box

The shopping cart, login box and search box features are usually placed together at every e-Commerce site. It's almost impossible to imagine a store without a shopping-cart function included. The most popular shopping cart icon is a simple basket so it makes sense to choose something similar for your site. Many stores also provide their customers with private accounts where it's possible to check all their previous and current orders.

Every customer who signs up can choose a personal login and password for further access. Besides, owners of such accounts can receive special discount offers from the store owners and participate in different promotions or sales.

If you deal with a large online store that has a wide choice of goods then the search box is a must-have. This will also prove popular with customers who demand a specific product that they just need to locate from your online store to make their order.

2.6.2. Deals, Freebies and Free Shipping

People usually decide very quickly whether they like a website or not, that's why you should grab their interest in a matter of seconds upon their entry to the site; otherwise they will just find some other shop with a more attractive home page. And nothing attracts better and faster than shopping deals. Millions of people lose their minds during sales and discounted periods, and buy anything at slashed prices just because it's on sale.

Some are attracted by free shipping, some by the major mark downs — but almost everybody is interested in one kind of promo or another. Thus, discounts and special deals are usually the first things that website visitors look for. Alluring promises and unique prices stimulate visitors to spend. So, it makes sense to position eye-catching banners with discount offers on the upper part of the home page of an online store.

OAKE, CCS, EBN, FCOAKE, CCS, EBN, FC	Deliverable: D.2.5
PECOS4SMEs	Version: 1.0
D2.5 Top e-Commerce Website Features	Issue Date: 26/07/2013

Free shipping is also a crowd favourite. You are now selling to the world, not just to the local market, so you should take the shipping costs into account. To save themselves from unwarranted shipping expenditures, many online stores usually adjust the minimum order price to include shipping costs. As for the customers, buying from big retailers and online brand stores usually result in major if not multiple purchases. Hence, the order price for free shipping is marginal and not a deterrent for these buyers. Moreover, buying things on the Web even without the holiday deals may even be cheaper than in shops and boutiques – that’s why minimum price limitation is acceptable.

2.6.3. *Payment Systems Icons*

E-Commerce websites deal with many customers from all over the world and they each have their own preferred payment system. Moreover, there may be technical limitations to a payment method or option, and that’s why it would be better to clarify payment options in advance. For instance, some e-Commerce websites don’t accept international credit cards. Others require the customer billing address and the delivery address to be in the same country as the official store’s location.

Online stores commonly use credit and debit cards, gift vouchers, cash on delivery, PayPal, etc as their main payment system. You can easily find these payment icons at the footer or on the top right corner of sites. Payment details should be displayed on the home page in plain sight.

Bibliography

- i. Palatnik P., 10 Most Important Features of Ecommerce Product Pages, Source: www.practicalecommerce.com
- ii. Davlin A., 10 Essential Things Your E-Commerce Site Should Have, Source: www.hongkiat.com
- iii. Ismail W., 15 Must Have Features on an E-Commerce Site, Source: www.searchenginejournal.com
- iv. Outer Box, e-Commerce Website Features, Source: www.outerboxdesign.com