



Syntagm Ltd  
Design for Usability



# User Experience Benchmarking UK Mobile Phone e-Commerce 2009 Summary Report



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## Introduction

### The benefits of benchmarking

Benchmarking allows an organisation to compare the performance of its e-commerce solutions with:

- Best practice and established principles
- Other organisations
- Its own solutions, over time

*Benchmarking allows organizations to gauge performance against a theoretical ideal and relative to their peers.*

The advantages that benchmarking offers over more conventional usability or user experience evaluations, is that each category receives a numerical score in addition to screenshots and written observations. The numerical scores make it possible to see clearly where strengths and weaknesses lie. Improved scores can be used as targets for future development.

While there is not a direct relationship between benchmarking scores and increased sales, we would expect that significant improvements in user experience – especially during the selection and checkout processes – would result in higher conversion ratios, reduced shopping basket abandonment rates and higher sales.

### About the benchmarking process

*Our user experience benchmarking for e-commerce includes 67 measures split between 13 groups.*

Benchmarking is based on a set of criteria that is applied consistently across a number of evaluations. Our user-experience benchmarking splits these criteria into two groups: design and usability. These encompass 67 separate measures. The design group focuses on the presentation of information, navigation and features. Usability examines how easy or difficult it is for users to achieve certain goals.

The individual measures in each group are described in the body of the report. However, this summary report does not provide site-specific scores for all measures. (See Site-Specific Reports, below, on how to obtain more detailed breakdowns.)

#### **Design (Presentation Based)**

- Content
- Visual Design
- Navigation
- Engagement
- Accessibility
- Trust
- Persuasion
- Shopping Basket
- Search

#### **Usability (Task Based)**

- Selection
- Checkout
- Account Management
- Online Support



## Site-Specific Reports

*Site-specific reports are available – additional sites can be benchmarked on request.*

Detailed site-specific reports are available. These provide raw (percentage) and comparative scores across all 67 metrics and commentary on specific areas of strength and weakness. Site-specific reports are not limited to just the sites listed in this summary – we can benchmark other sites as required. Contact us for further details (see the final page of the report).

## About Syntagm

We are a small consultancy, established in 1985, specializing in design for usability (user-centred design and user experience) and people development. We have worked with a wide range of clients across Europe and North America, many of whom are listed below.

## Clients

*Syntagm has worked with more than 100 organisations in over a dozen countries.*

**Design for Usability Talks, Courses and Workshops:** Alliance and Leicester, British Telecom, CADUI 2008 (Spain), CHI Conferences (USA), European Patent Office, Glaxo Smith Klyne, HCI Conferences (UK), Hewlett Packard, HM Revenue and Customs, Lockheed Martin ACC (USA), Marks and Spencers, Microsoft, Namahn (Belgium), National Archive (UK), Nations Bank (USA), Nominet, OOPSLA Conference (USA), Orange, Oxford University Press, Quba New Media, Royal Bank of Scotland, Scottish UPA, Sony Computer Entertainment Europe, Tessella Support Services, The IR Group, The Usability Lab, UK Patent Office, UK UPA, User Vision, Yell Group.

**User-Centred Design, Usability and User Experience:** 2d3, 3M, Alliance and Leicester, ASDA, AstraZeneca, Aviva, Axa, B & Q, Bank of England, Barclays Bank, BBC, BDO Stoy Hayward, British Energy, British Red Cross, BT, BUPA, Cadbury Schweppes, CIPD, Corus, Credit Suisse, DEFRA, DSTL, DTI, Depart of Work and Pensions, Environment Agency, ExxonMobil, GE Insurance Solutions, Hammonds, Highways Agency, HM Revenue and Customs, Inland Revenue, Invesco, Jato Dynamics, Jewsons, Kelloggs, Legal and General, Lloyd's Register, Maersk, MOD, Nationwide, Nielsen Norman Group, Network Rail, Nokia, Norwich Union, npower, O2, Office of National Statistics (UK), Open University, Orange, Ordnance Survey, Oxford Metrics Group, Prudential, Rational Software, Reuters, Rolls-Royce, Royal Mail, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Executive, Scottish Widows, Shell, Standard Life, Symantec, Swiss Re, Tate & Lyle, The Usability Company, Transport for London, Unilever, Vodafone, Workshare.

**People Development:** Blackwell Publishing Ltd, Buckinghamshire County Council, East Berkshire Community Health NHS Trust, Elsevier Ltd, Environment Agency, Harcourt Education Ltd, KCI Medical, Library Association, Macmillan Education Ltd, National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux, Open University CDT Department, Oxford, Swindon and Gloucester Co-operative Society Ltd, Oxford Psychologists Press, Oxford Radcliffe NHS Trust, Oxford University Press, Perkin Elmer, Publishing Training Centre, Salisbury Healthcare NHS Trust, Shropshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, SSAFA Forces Help, Sweet & Maxwell Group, Thames Valley Police, University of Oxford



Learning Institute, Vale of White Horse District Council, Vodafone Group Services.

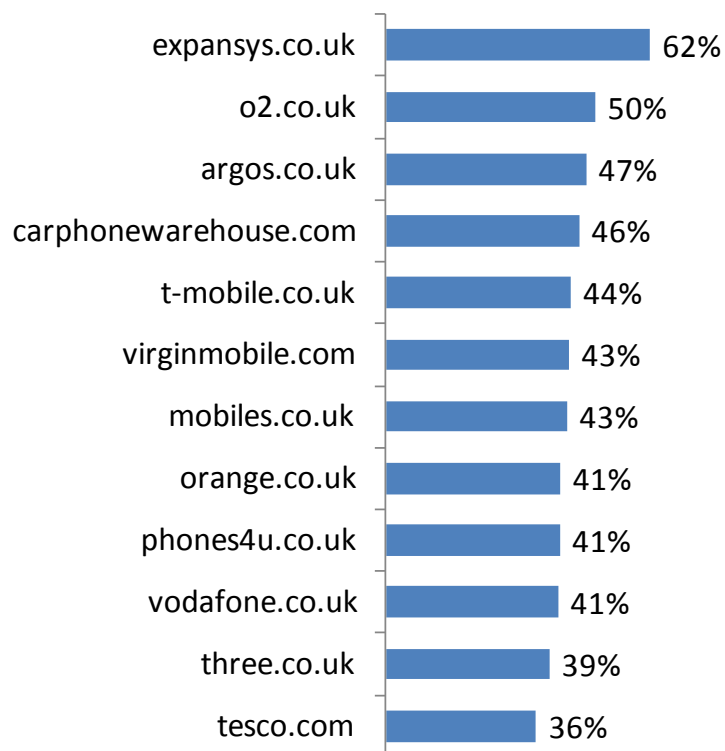
## Disclaimer

We acknowledge that some of the words and images used in this report are registered trademarks. They remain the property of their respective owners and are used here only for descriptive purposes.

Syntagm and its staff have no financial interests in any of the organisations benchmarked.



## Overall User Experience



*While Expansys is not a mainstream mobile phone site, the user experience it offers puts many of its competitors to shame.*

## Overall User Experience Results

### BACKGROUND

The benchmarking described in this summary report took place in late May and early June 2009. It focused on mobile-phone e-commerce sites in the UK:

- Argos
- Carphone Warehouse
- Expansys
- Mobiles.co.uk
- O2
- Orange
- Phones4u
- Tesco
- T-Mobile
- Three
- Virgin Mobile
- Vodafone

As this is not an exhaustive list, other sites can be added on request (contact us for details).



## RESULTS

The overall results of our user experiencing benchmarking are disappointing for this market sector. Only one site, Expansys, scored above 50%, implying that most sites could do much better in terms of user experience. Issues that are described in the pages that follow include

- a general lack of effort to promote **trust**,
- little or poorly-realized **persuasion** (up-selling and cross-selling),
- very limited **account-management** facilities,
- virtually no **online support** for dealing with problems

(The words **in bold** are metric groups in the body of the report).

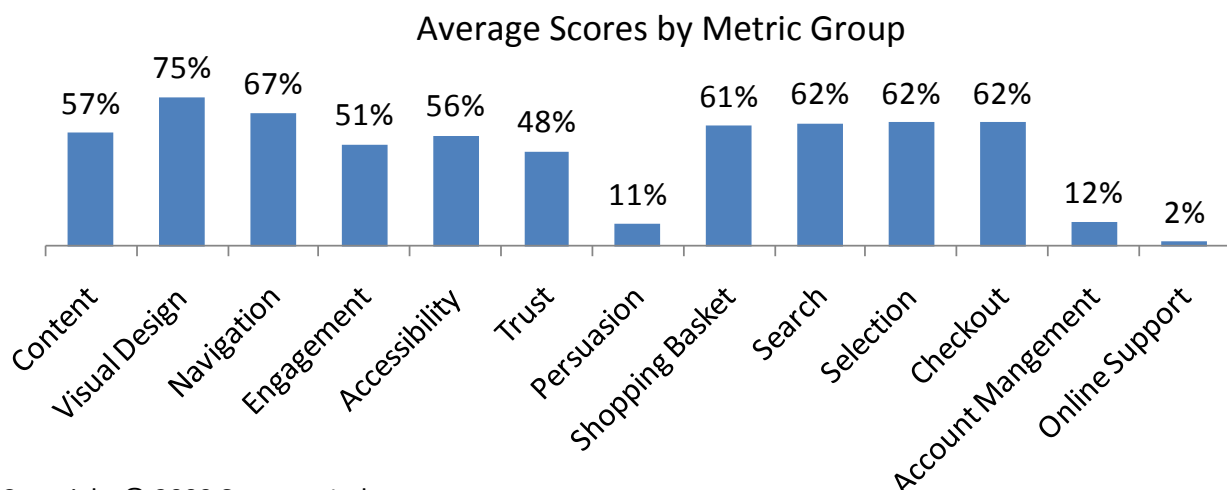
However, the overall picture masks a number of excellent results in specific areas:

- Expansys achieved the highest score in eight of the 13 benchmarking groups (including some tied scores)
- T-Mobile and O2 were highest in two each
- Argos, phones4u, T-Mobile and Virgin Mobile were each the highest score in one of the benchmarking groups

At the other extreme, Argos and Tesco both raised considerable user-experience challenges in the way that they split Pay as You Go (PAYG) and Pay Monthly (PM) phones between separate sites. While there are considerable technical challenges to surmount in terms of offering contracts in what are otherwise goods-oriented sites, a more unified approach is essential from a user and customer-experience perspective.

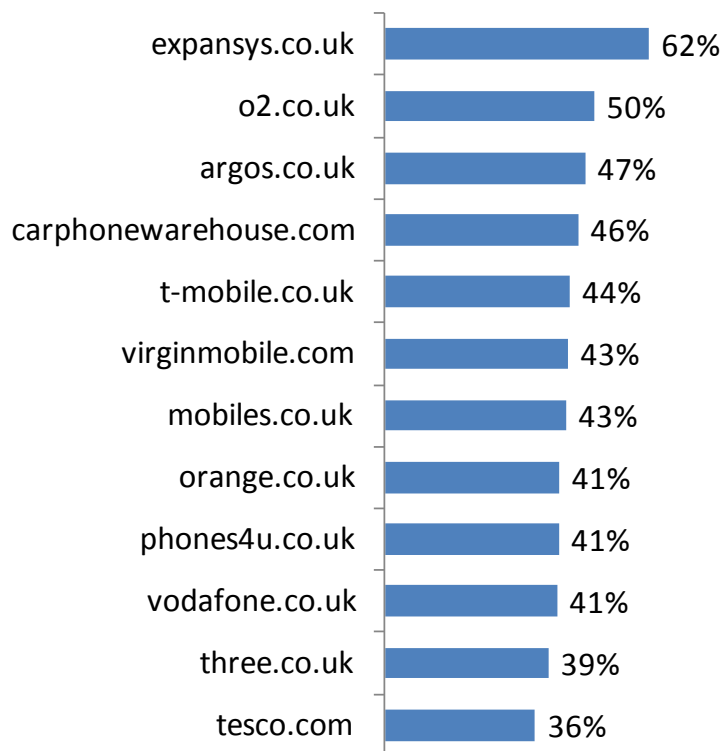
## CALCULATIONS

The user experience results are obtained by taking the average of the overall design and usability scores, giving each equal importance.





## Overall Design



*Expansys was the best performer in several design areas: visual design, engagement, persuasion, shopping basket and search.*

## Overall Design Results

The design benchmarking groups are primarily concerned with how information and navigation are presented (rather than the user journey, for example).

It consists of nine groups:

- Content
- Visual design
- Navigation
- Engagement
- Accessibility
- Trust
- Persuasion
- Shopping basket
- Search

The overall design score is obtained by taking an unweighted average across the nine groups.

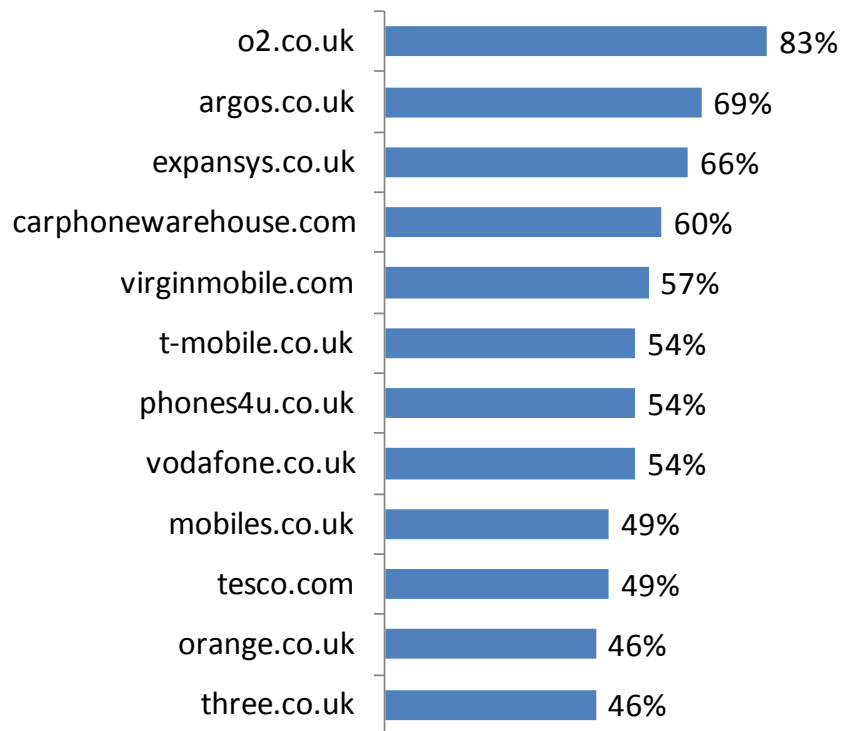


# Design Benchmark

## Content

O<sub>2</sub>

*Many sites performed poorly in providing effective product information. The content average was only 57% with O2 scoring the top mark of 83%.*



## Content Design Results

Good quality content, well-structured and well-presented, is essential for confident purchasing decisions on e-commerce web sites. Yet, of the 12 sites evaluated, only O2 had a respectable content score (83%) with most competitors achieving 60% or lower.

The content metric consists of seven components:

- Structure
- Detail
- Meaning
- Price
- Availability
- Delivery
- Consistency

For online reading (which is *skimming* in practice), text must have a good visual **structure** – not just paragraphs of prose. Product descriptions need to provide both adequate **detail** and also **meaning** – jargon and abbreviations need to be explained.

In our evaluation, it was surprising to see that no sites received top marks for detail. For example, most sites did not include screen size information. Only Expansys provided screen dimensions both in



physical size (usually inches) and pixels. However, it did not do this for all phones.

*T-Mobile shows the phone price clearly but fails to mention VAT. Delivery is free, but as this information is present in a banner ad, it may well be missed.*

**Sony Ericsson T303 Daisy Edition**

was £44.00 **now £35.22**

- Stand out from the crowd with the Sony Ericsson T303 with exclusive daisy design & free daisy charm
- Answer your calls to the sound of your favourite tunes with MP3 ringtones
- Java games to keep you entertained
- 1.3 megapixel digital camera with zoom for quick and easy photos

[More pictures](#)

★★★★★ 6.7/10  
[Read independent reviews](#)

[Select phone](#)

**FREE** next day delivery for online orders

**Your basket**  
Your basket is empty

**Pay once**  
for a year of unlimited\* email and internet

Many sites also received a low score for lacking meaningful content. Unexplained abbreviations were commonplace. While some sites included a 'jargon-buster' these were often incomplete and difficult to find. O2 was the only site to receive the top score for being informative.

## Glossary

*O2 provided an extensive glossary that was linked from every product description. Many key concepts were also described in situ.*

Click on a letter

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	0..9

**Price, availability and delivery** all have important contributions to make to a confident purchasing decision. But again we were disappointed with what we saw on mobile phone e-commerce sites in practice. Only one site (T-Mobile) achieved the maximum score for delivery. For price and availability no maximum score was awarded.

To achieve top marks for price, a product page must state – in close proximity to the price – that it includes VAT and delivery. If delivery is not included, top marks can also be achieved by stating the delivery charge near the price. Some sites did include this information on the same page, but often it would be necessary for a user to scroll or visually search the page to establish these necessary facts. Consequently, it is not surprising to see high shopping basket abandonment rates when, in many cases, the only foolproof way of



getting all price details is to start the checkout process. If users do not then like the total price they see, the trolley will be abandoned.

## Tesco Mobile Nokia 1208 mobile phone Black includes £10 Free top-up

Catalogue number: 203-7219

**Make a call or send a text by midnight 21st June 2009 and the £10 free Tesco mobile top-up will be automatically added to the handset within 48 hours.**

*Tesco was not alone in failing to mention delivery. (There was a link well out of sight in the page footer.)*



Enlarge

**£17.97**

17 Clubcard points

(Bonus points available)

**Read independent reviews**  powered by reevoo

**Add to basket** 

Double Clubcard points on all Direct orders

*Consistency improves user experience by making it easier to make sense of the various elements on each page.*

Finally, in the content metrics group, **consistency** was the high point for many sites. (Note that consistency of content, visual design and navigation are all measured separately under their respective headings.) This high performance results from a fairly uniform presentation of information across all products. However, there were a few notable exceptions: T-Mobile and a few other sites singled out some phones for less-than-informative treatment as shown below.

*Very few phone details were available on T-Mobile's What's Hot page. There were no links to more information, just a Buy Now button below the fold.*

The screenshot shows the T-Mobile website's 'What's Hot' section. The header includes the T-Mobile logo, 'Life's for Sharing', and navigation links like 'Login' and 'Register'. Below the header is a search bar and a navigation menu with 'Home', 'Shop', 'Our services', 'Mobile downloads', 'Help & support', and 'My T-Mobile'. The 'Shop' menu is expanded, showing options like 'Pay monthly deals', 'Pay as you go deals', 'Mobile phones', 'Pay monthly', 'Pay as you go', 'Hot mobile phones', 'BlackBerry® smartphones', 'Android™', 'Upgrading your phone', 'Insurance', 'Price plans', 'Mobile Broadband', 'Mobile Email', 'Accessories', and 'Where to buy'. The 'What's Hot' section features a carousel of phones, with the Nokia 5800 XpressMusic highlighted. The phone is described as 'Nokia's first touchscreen phone' and includes features like 'Built-in MP3 player', 'High speed internet', '8GB memory card', and '3.2" touch screen'. A 'Best value plan' is offered, including the phone, unlimited internet, 700 minutes, and 400 unlimited texts. A 'What's in the box?' section is also visible.

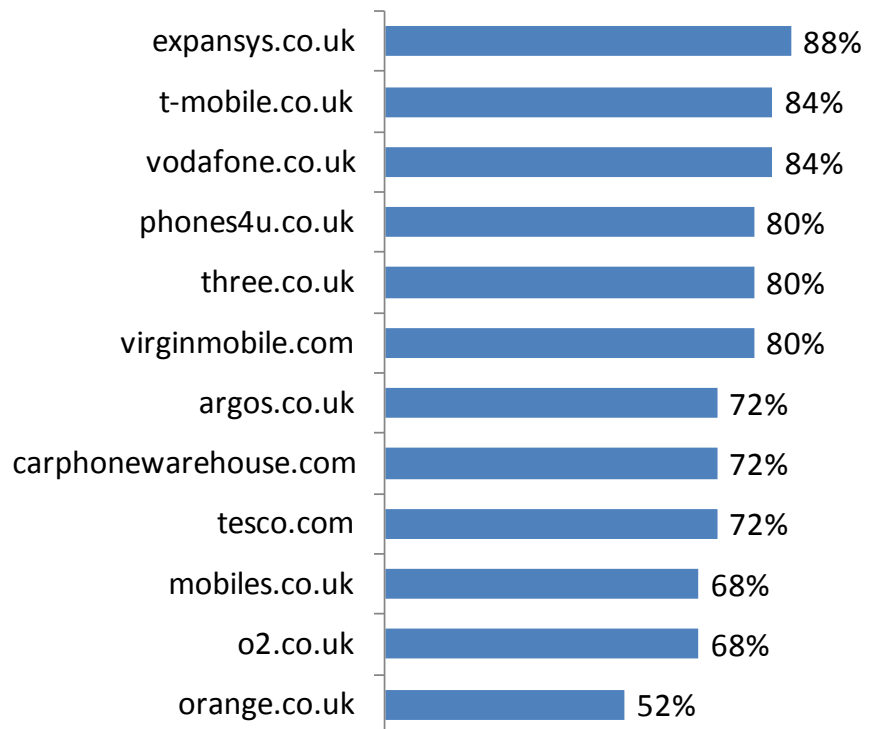


# Design Benchmark

## Visual Design



*Visual design scores were higher than content (above) for most sites. Orange received low scores for most visual design measures, with consistency as the only high point. In contrast, many sites scored 80% or above.*



## Visual Design Results

Visual design should not only be attractive, it needs also to be functional. Poor use of screen space, product images that fail to show adequate detail, distracting animations and poor use of colour can all conspire to frustrate potential customers.

Our visual design group is made up of five measures:

- Layout
- Legibility
- Colour
- Graphics, images and animations
- Consistency

No sites received the top score for **layout** as poor use of screen space – resulting in unnecessary scrolling – was a common problem. It is not that users cannot or will not scroll; it is that they must realize scrolling is necessary and then take the necessary actions. A page that requires scrolling just to reach the last few lines, or the important Buy Now button – while still displaying large amounts of white space – is frustrating.



(Note that in our evaluations we use a standard screen size of 1024 x 768 pixels.)

*On many of its product pages, the Orange site made poor use of space at the top of pages, requiring users to scroll to see the last few lines of content.*

## Sony Ericsson W995 in black

Wave goodbye to boredom! Play and organise your fun stuff the easy way with MediaGo™. And view the latest YouTube™ videos in perfect resolution.



pay monthly\*

**coming soon**

pay as you go

- Walkman music player
- FM Radio RDS
- 8.1 megapixel camera
- talk 9.0 hrs
- standby 15.0 days
- weight: 113.0g

► **more features & specifications**

*Small fonts, light text colours and shading conspired to reduce legibility on the Orange site (and many others).*

The prices shown here are a guide based on an average plan costing £35 a month. The price of your phone or device may change according to the plan you

*On the Phones4U site red text was limited to large headings only. All smaller text was black on white. Both approaches aided legibility.*



**HTC Magic  
(NEW)**



- FREE HTC Magic
- £10 OFF your monthly bill direct from Vodafone
- 600 minutes
- Unlimited texts
- 18 month contract
- FREE Delivery

**Official  
Retailer**

**More Info**








**Legibility** was also an issue for many sites, although one site – phones4u.co.uk (see below) – did achieve a maximum score. Typical problems with legibility are the use of small fonts, light colours for text and background tints. Most of these are illustrated in the Orange screen shot, above.

**Colour** needs to be used effectively. Apart from the legibility issues mentioned above, colour should be used in a meaningful way to assist users. Common applications are in identifying headings, links or important features such as the Buy or Checkout button.

### Sony Ericsson W980i on O2 Pay As You Go


*Some text on the Carphone Warehouse site was too pale for good legibility. The important Order Now button was the same colour as many other page elements.*





Deal summary					
Phone		Colour	Stock	Price	Action
	Sony Ericsson W980i	Black	Out of stock	£129.95	
		Black	In stock	£129.95	
Tariff		Offer	Extras		
O <sub>2</sub>	O2 Pay As You Go		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Favourite place</li> <li>• FREE Content on Mondays</li> </ul>		
Voucher				Price	
	£10 Air Time Voucher			£10	
Accessory				Price	Action
NOT FOUND	NOT FOUND			FREE	

[see all available deals for this phone](#)

**ORDER NOW**  
[Compare](#)

*Vodafone used green only for the selection and checkout process – an effective application of colour.*

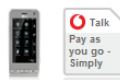


1. Review basket
2. Your details
3. Payment
4. Review and confirm

### Review and confirm

Place order

Item	Monthly cost	One-off cost
<b>Package 1</b>		
	Your phone LG Viewty Lite	– £100
	Your plan Pay as you go - Simply	– –
<b>Your extra services</b>		
You've not added any extras		
<b>Totals : £0</b>		<b>£100</b>

Your details
Change your details

Graphics, images and animations also serve multiple purposes. They aid visual engagement, but perhaps more importantly in an e-commerce application, they let users see what they are going to buy. For this purpose, the images need to provide enough detail while animations should not distract or annoy users in the purchasing process.

In our benchmarking, quite a few mobile phone sites did not offer images with adequate detail, or provided detailed images only for a



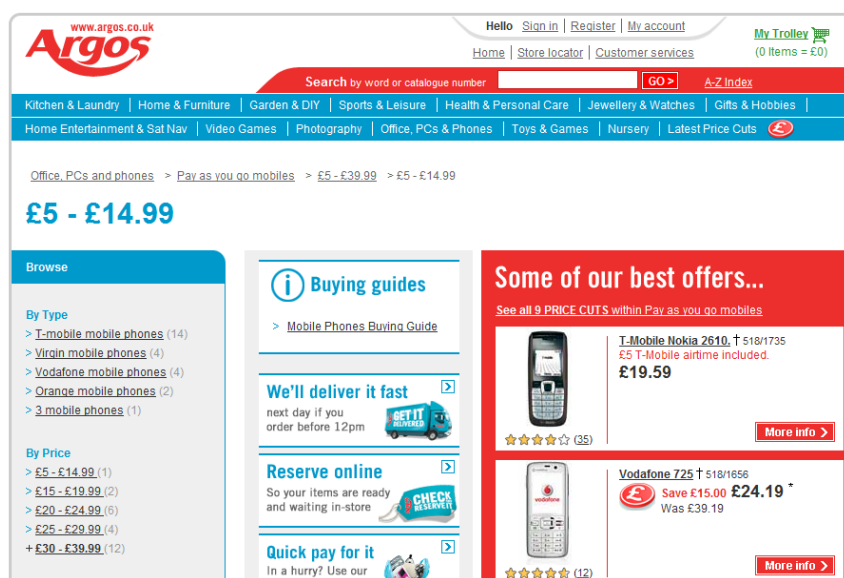
few (rather than most) products. It may be that some users have already decided what product they wish to purchase, but for those who have not, inadequate images may well force them to use another site.

*Although the Orange site provided selectable views for some phones, none were large enough to see detail.*



As with Content, **consistency** was also the highest scoring measure in the visual design group. The most notable exception was Argos where pay monthly phones were presented on a different site from pay as you go. Although product pages were visually similar, intermediate pages were noticeably different, as shown below.

*Argos Pay As You Go.*





Argos Pay Monthly.

**Argos Mobile** Sales Hotline: 0800 096 4490 Go to Argos.co.uk

Search Argos Mobile  GO > Site Map

Pay Monthly Mobiles | Mobile Broadband | [Trolley](#)

### Pay Monthly Mobiles

**Shop by phone**

- > BlackBerry
- > Huawei
- > LG
- > Nokia
- > Samsung
- > Sony Ericsson

**Shop by network**

- > 3
- > Orange
- > T-Mobile
- > Vodafone

**Shop by monthly cost**

- > from £10 to £20
- > from £20 to £30
- > from £30 to £40

**Shop by FREE gift**

- > Tom Tom Sat Nav
- > 19 Inch LCD TV
- > Nintendo DS Lite Black
- > Nintendo DS Lite Pink
- > 26 Inch LCD TV

### Pay monthly mobiles

**FREE\* LATEST CYBERSHOT CAMERA PHONE**

**PLUS! Navman S30 Sat Nav Unit**

**500 Minutes** to any mobiles  
**Unlimited calls** to landlines  
**100 texts** every month, only £30 per month

\* Handset and Sat Nav Unit are free subject to a new connection to an 18 month connection on Orange Racoon 30 tariff. Offer valid until 31/05/09

### Pay monthly mobile best deals...

Nokia 6300 Black	Nokia 6500 Silver Slide
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 MP Camera</li><li>• Internet Browsing</li><li>• 128Mb Memory Card</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3MP Autofocus Camera</li><li>• Internet Browsing</li><li>• Expandable Memory</li></ul>
<b>300 minutes</b> <b>300 texts</b> <b>£25</b> per month <b>18 months contract</b>	<b>Up to 300 minutes</b> <b>Up to 300 texts</b> <b>£15</b> per month

**300 MINS OR TEXTS PER MONTH**

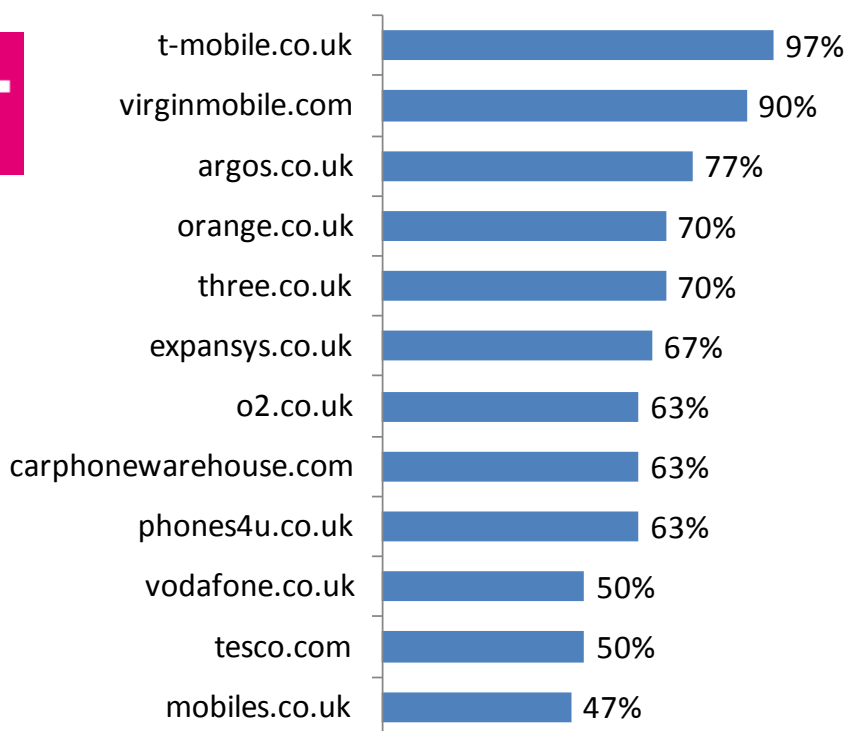


# Design Benchmark

## Navigation



*T-Mobile would have received a perfect score for navigation had their site not interfered with the browser back button (it discarded some browser history).*



## Navigation Results

Clear navigation and good navigational feedback are essential to the success of most web sites, with the possible exception of those having advanced search facilities (such as Amazon). In the Navigation group, we consider the following measures:

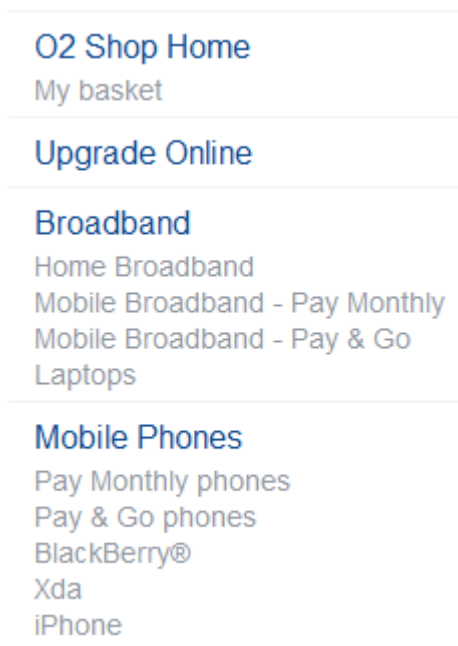
- Terminology
- Menus
- Page titles
- Navigational feedback
- Back button
- Consistency

**Terminology** should meet users' expectations and be self-explanatory. This was a particular weak point for Expansys, whose site used a number of unexplained abbreviations and jargon in menus: QWERTY, GPS, 8MP, Android and MWC among others.

O2 were in a similar position by referring to XDA without explanation. 'O2 Smartphones' might have been a more meaningful term.



*O2 expected all of its visitors to understand what BlackBerry, Xda and iPhone meant, without providing a category (such as email/internet phones).*



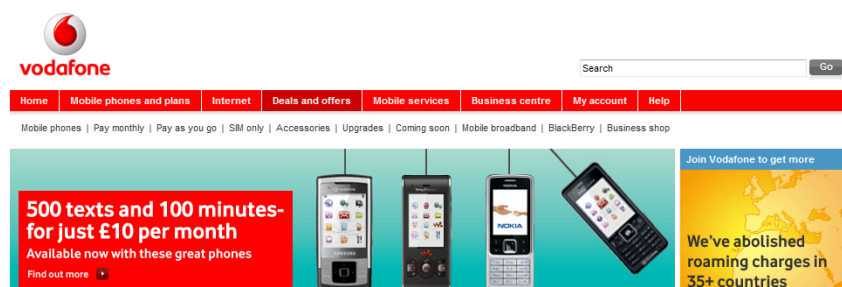
*Tesco mobile users needed to move the mouse at right angles to select second-row items.*



In this design, moving the mouse in a straight line from Our Tariffs to Free Sims in the second row will cause the top menu to change to My Tesco Mobile as the mouse passes over it. Users must learn to move the mouse straight down and to the left.

**Page titles** are important for giving users confidence and supporting the 'scent of information' – providing clues that users are getting closer to their goal. Argos and T-Mobile used clear titles at the top of all pages and these always reflected the link text used to reach them. The Vodafone site had the least consistent use of page titles. Product pages had titles, but various other pages omitted them altogether, as shown below.

*The only clue that this was the Deals and Offer page on the Vodafone site was the darker red shading in the menu bar.*





For similar reasons, **navigational feedback** is also important. However, in this case, letting users know where they are in the site is of secondary significance to allowing them to easily navigate to related content. This requirement comes about because many pages are reached through a search facility (either site-specific or web-wide). Using a breadcrumb navigation line (or similar) addresses both of these issues. Only the T-Mobile site received top marks for their clear and consistent approach using menu highlights. O2 and Vodafone provided very little or no navigational feedback.

Although T-Mobile did not use breadcrumb navigation lines, menu highlights were just as effective.

The screenshot shows the T-Mobile website with a pink header. The navigation menu includes: Home, Shop (highlighted), Our services, Mobile downloads, Help & support, and My T-Mobile. Below the menu, there are links for 'Pay monthly deals', 'Pay as you go deals', 'Mobile phones' (highlighted), 'Pay monthly', 'Pay as you go', 'Hot mobile phones', 'BlackBerry® smartphones', 'Android™', 'Upgrading your phone', 'Insurance', 'Price plans', and 'Mobile Broadband'. The main content area features the 'T-Mobile Vairy Touch' product page, which includes an image of the phone, a price comparison (was £40.92, now £44.03), and a list of features: 'Huge screen with cool stylist pen for creating text messages', 'Send your photos to your friends via Bluetooth', 'Play your favourite tracks on the MP3 player', 'Snap away with the 1.3 megapixel camera', and 'The T-Mobile Vairy Touch is an easy-to-use, superb value touchscreen mobile'. A 'Select phone' button is also visible.

Phones4u did use a breadcrumb navigation line but it was hard to read because of the small font.

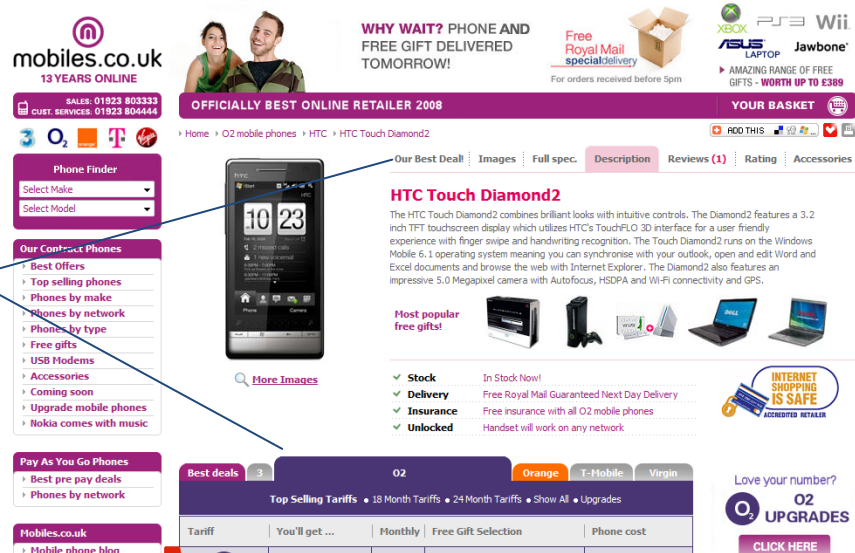
The screenshot shows the Phones4u website with a red header. The navigation menu includes: Home, Phones, Mobile Broadband, Free Gifts, Amazing Deals, Accessories4U, Games4U, and Help & Services. Below the menu, there is a 'SALES hotline 0800 072 5855' and a search bar. The breadcrumb navigation line reads: 'You are in: Home > Pay Monthly > HTC > HTC Pay Monthly Mobile Phones > HTC Magic'. The main content area features the 'HTC Magic' product page, which includes an image of the phone, a 'Most Popular' badge, and a table of offers.

Tariff	Minutes	Texts	Promotional Offer	Price	Line Rental	Select
Vodafone - Anytime Text £40 Value Tariff - 18 month	600	3000	£10 OFF your bill every month! plus Unlimited Internet	FREE	£30.00	<a href="#">Buy Now</a>
Vodafone - Anytime Text 40 Mobile Internet - 18 month	600	3000	6 months half price line rental* *£120 by redemption	FREE	£40.00	<a href="#">Buy Now</a>

The correct operation of the browser **back button** is essential to a good user experience. In simple sites using primarily static HTML pages, the back button should work as expected with little or no interference on the part of developers. However, the situation is not as straightforward for dynamic web pages (using Ajax, for example). So while several sites (O2, Virgin, Orange and Three) achieved top marks for this metric, the remainder did have some back button issues. The most notable is the kind of inconsistent back-button behaviour shown in this example from mobiles.co.uk:



On mobiles.co.uk product pages, the tabs at the top of the page did not affect the back button, but the bottom tabs did.



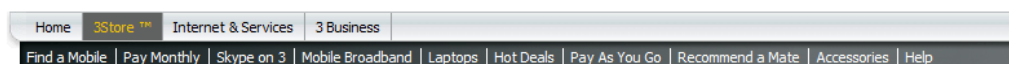
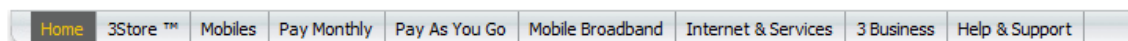
The confusing lack of **consistency** is unfortunate since, of the three groups in which consistency is scored, navigational consistency is of the greatest concern (the other two areas are content and visual design). Users can quickly feel lost and frustrated when clicking on links or the browser back button does not do what they expect. This was a particular problem area for Tesco since they not only split their pay-as-you-go and pay-monthly phones across two sites, but did so in a surprising and inconsistent way, with phone details on one site and contract details on the other. This led to a multitude of open browser windows and occasional mysterious error messages, since the two sites were not entirely synchronized.

Clicking on the Nokia 2630 in the Tesco Mobiles web site caused this error message to appear in a new page in Tesco Direct.

### Sorry, we were unable to match your catalogue number in our product database

Tip: Please check that the number has been entered correctly, including the '-' and search again. If this doesn't help, please try searching for the name of the product that you were looking for, or try browsing the Tesco direct site.

While no other site had such a severe navigational consistency problem, the majority had considerable room for improvement. Three, for example, changed its top navigation bar substantially between the home page and the store itself.



This is extremely unusual behaviour for most web sites, where the top level menus normally remain constant throughout.

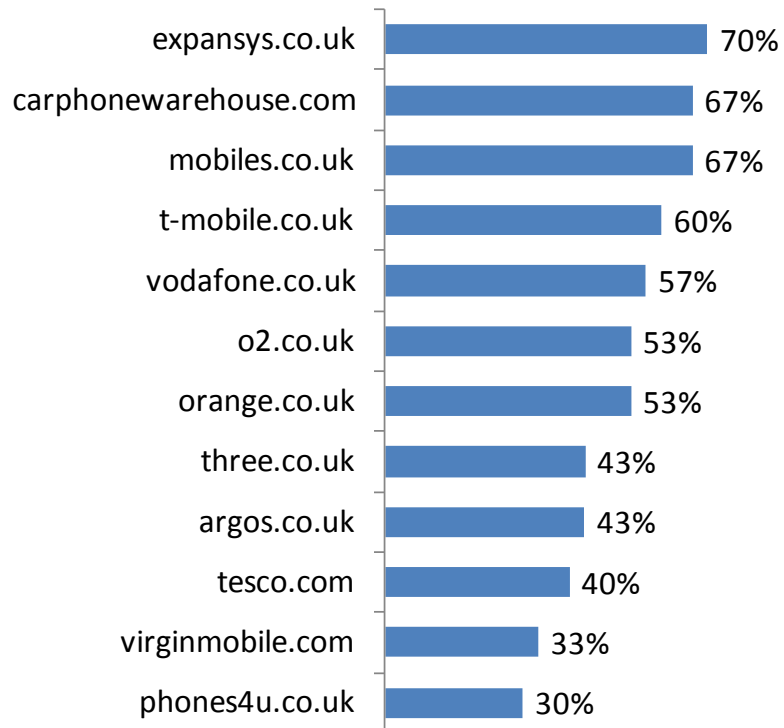


# Design Benchmark

## Engagement



*Engagement – how 'addictive' a site is for its users – was poor for many sites. Again Expansys, a relative outsider, achieved the best score with Carphone Warehouse and mobiles.co.uk (a Carphone subsidiary) close behind.*



## Engagement Results

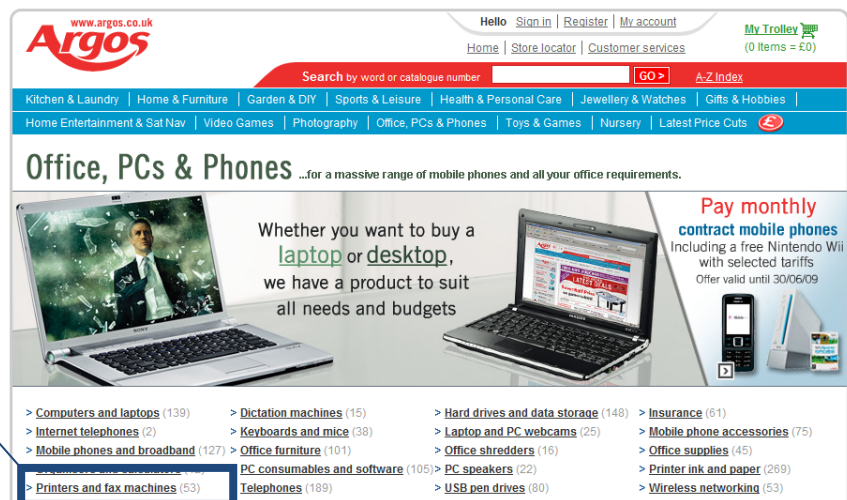
E-commerce sites started as a form of 'electronic mail order' with a simple on-screen catalogue and checkout process. Now, with increasingly sophisticated products and a potentially very broad audience, most e-commerce sectors need to be more effective at engaging users. In the engagement benchmark we consider:

- Rewarding to use
- Interactive features
- Empowering features
- On-page interaction
- Sense of community
- Breadth of content

E-commerce sites need to be more **rewarding to use** than a paper catalogue. In theory this should not be difficult, but in practice, rewarding user experiences are not as common as they could be. No site received top marks in any of the engagement measures and two sites, already mentioned for their problematic navigation – Tesco and Argos – received the lowest scores for being rewarding to use.



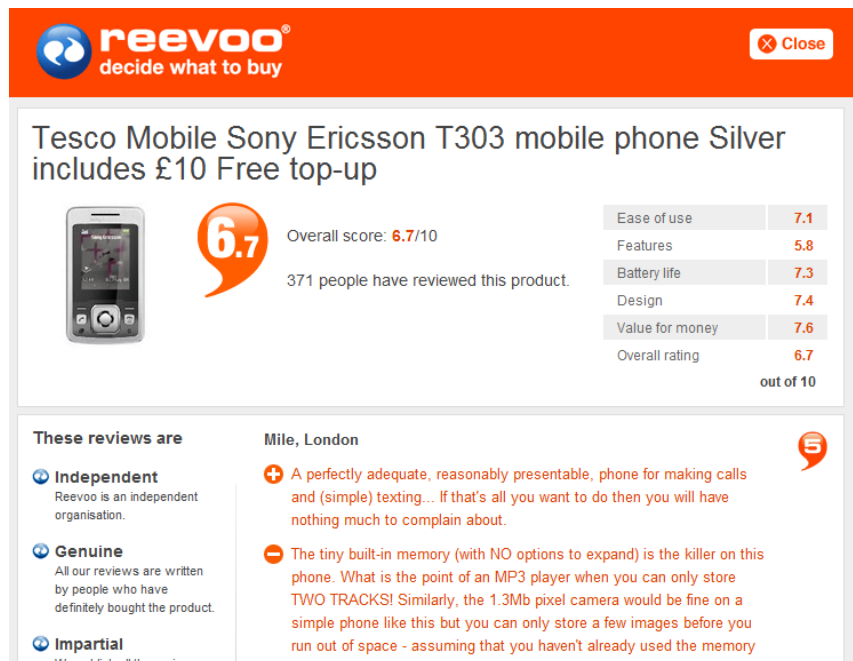
Just finding the mobile phone section of the Argos site was hard work. Users had to click on 'Office, PCs & Phone' on the home page, then find 'Mobile phones and broadband' within 25 content-area links.



**Interactive features** were also disappointing, especially given the highly connected social networking world that many younger users are accustomed to. While several sites had interactive search facilities and several (O2 for example) used interactive 3D viewers for some phones, only two sites (Three and T-Mobile) allowed potential customers to chat online to a sales advisor. Unfortunately, in the case of T-Mobile, it was not a facility that users could control – the invitation to chat popped up unexpectedly but could not be requested.

For **empowering features**, we were hoping to see online reviews, self-service and the kind of control over purchasing and support that users will have seen at highly engaging sites such as Amazon. Again, this was wishful thinking. While several sites subscribed to third-party product reviews (typically 'reevoo') these were often slow to load and not well organised (they were in no apparent order, for example).

Many UK mobile phone sites relied on 'reevoo'. However, these reviews were often slow to load and were not effectively presented.





*Expansys was one of the few sites to present its own customer comments. While not perfect, it was a noticeable improvement over reevoo (above).*

**On-page interaction** typically allows users to see more information or different views of a product, without navigating to a new page. This kind of interaction used to require Flash Player plug-ins or similar, but is now becoming more popular through the growth of technologies such as Dynamic HTML and Ajax. Again, no site scored top marks for this metric, but O2 and Vodafone both provided useful popup windows when users moused-over product listings.

*O2 and Vodafone both provided dynamic popups when users moved the mouse over a product image (O2 site shown here).*



Echoing the popularity of social networking is the **sense of community** fostered by an e-commerce site. Again, Amazon is perhaps the leader in this area but it seems a lost opportunity that most UK mobile phone sites have no significant social networking features. In our survey, only Expansys had attempted to build a sense of community within its pages, while most competitors provided a 'read only' experience with third-party reviews (it was not possible to leave reviews, comments or questions).

## MWg Zinc II

Version: English, QWERTY, GPS

Mfr Part #: MWG\_ZINC\_II, eXpansys Code: 161302



Handset Only Price: **£199.99** (173.90 exc.)

Discounts available for orders of 5 units or more - call 0161 868 0868

Business Customers: For information on bulk order discounts and company accounts - please email Jane on [info@expansys.com](mailto:info@expansys.com)

With Contract From **Free** on **T**

Availability: **100+ In Stock Now**

If you order this product before 4:30pm today, UK customers could expect delivery tomorrow morning.

[Add to Basket](#) or [PayPal express](#)

[Details](#)

[Videos & Comments](#)

[Accessories](#)

[Network Contracts From Free](#)

[Support Forum](#)

Forum Threads: 198

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#)

[Post New Thread / Question](#)

*As well as the Videos & Comments page shown above, Expansys integrated a support forum within each product page.*

Thread	Posts	Views	Created	Last Post
<a href="#">Sticky: Zinc II Hangs on Startup</a> steveb9	2	2,059	16:36 24 Oct 08	17:24 24 Oct 08 <a href="#">PeteGraham</a>
<a href="#">Damage Screen</a> grandlabb	2	8	13:58 15 Jun 09	14:37 15 Jun 09 <a href="#">PeteGraham</a>
<a href="#">WIFI PROBLEMS! HELP!</a> Skyler01	1	6	04:02 15 Jun 09	04:02 15 Jun 09 <a href="#">Skyler01</a>
<a href="#">MWG Zinc II Stuck on Green WM Start upsreen - Any hope?</a> ABARKIE	3	23	19:02 13 Jun 09	15:32 14 Jun 09 <a href="#">ABARKIE</a>

**Breadth of content:** Many e-commerce sites confine themselves to providing bare product details – leaving users to research and understand terminology, features and key purchasing decisions themselves. Only mobiles.co.uk went significantly further in providing a history of mobile phones in the UK, a comprehensive glossary and a news blog. (Virgin and Tesco had the lowest scores in this area.)

### Mobile Phone History

#### Motorola invent cellular technology



In the world we live in today it is safe to say that we cannot imagine what we would do without our mobile phones and in fact can't even comprehend what we did before the invention of the mobile phone. Before 6 March, 1983, the thought of being able to communicate anytime, anyplace, anywhere wasn't even in most people's minds when Motorola made an amazing breakthrough with the launch of the **DynaTAC 8000X**.

Motorola had been at the forefront of portable communications for years prior to the release of the DynaTAC. In 1930 they produced the first commercially successful car radio, which they developed into the two-way radios which became standard for the allies during the Second World War. They then went on to develop such things as pagers, car radio telephones and radio transponders which today we take for granted as fairly small pieces of technology whereas in those times such things were revolutionary. As a result of their forward thinking, it was Motorola's technology that allowed the rest of the world to hear Neil Armstrong's famous words from the Moon in 1969. However, in 1968 the next breakthrough had already been made. Based on 'cells' that would enable the same radio frequencies to be reused simultaneously in other areas, Motorola started to look into the possibility of mobile cellular phones.

#### Birth of the Mobile 'Brick'

Between 1968 and the release of the DynaTac in 1983, \$100 million was invested in the research and development of cellular technology. The DynaTAC 8000X weighed 785g (28 ounces) and sized up at a huge 300x44x89mm (13x1.75x3.5"). It could only manage one hour of talk time and eight hours of standby time, which meant that if you wanted it on 24 hours a day you would have to charge up three sets of batteries every day! There was a 150mm (6") aerial protruding from the top of it and the DynaTAC could only hold a mere 30 numbers in its very limited memory.

*mobiles.co.uk had good breadth of content by providing a UK history of mobile phones, a comprehensive glossary and a blog.*

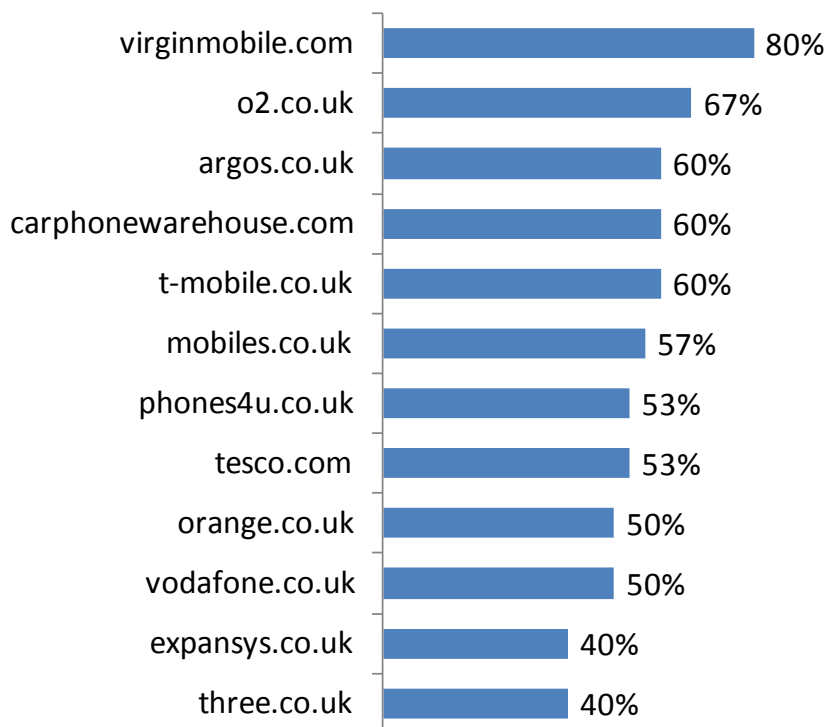


# Design Benchmark

## Accessibility



*Virgin Mobile scored highest in accessibility, but with some room for improvement. The Expansys and Three sites had the lowest scores and would be likely to cause problems for some disabled users.*



## Accessibility Results

In the UK (and most of Europe) it is unlawful to discriminate against disabled people in the provision of goods and services. While web site accessibility is a complex area, there are several key issues which serve as a useful indicator of compliance:

- Appropriate descriptive text
- Content structured for assistive technology
- Menus suitable for assistive technology
- Links suitable for assistive technology
- Effective access keys/access links
- Appropriate use of animation

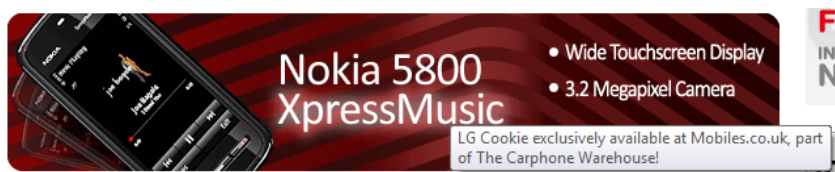
In most cases, these issues address how usable a site is by someone relying on assistive technology such as screen reading software, screen magnifiers, speech recognition software and similar.

**Appropriate descriptive text** is required for all *meaningful* non-text content – typically images, animations and audio/video clips. The word ‘meaningful’ is key – it is just as unhelpful to provide descriptive text for all decorative images and spacers as it is to omit it on significant non-text content. Equally important is describing the *meaning* that an image (or other non-text content) conveys rather than its appearance. This is especially true when an image is being used as a link. The



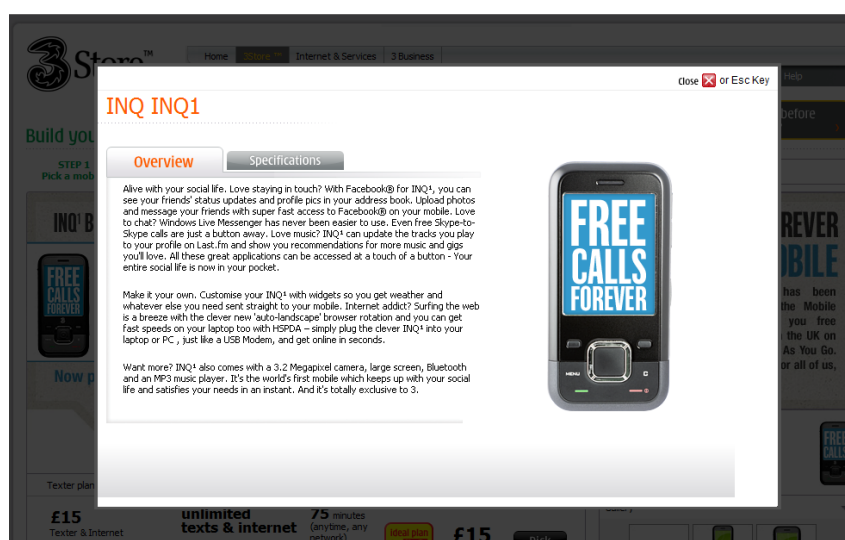
descriptive text should indicate what the link leads to rather than its content.

*mobiles.co.uk was one of the few sites to provide descriptive text for animations. Unfortunately, in this case it was out of date.*



**Content structured for assistive technology:** Content often relies on visual scanning to allow users to find the information they require. If users are relying on assistive technology because of visual impairments, scanning becomes very difficult. Under these circumstances, it is desirable that content is well-structured and that it is easy to jump to the required section.

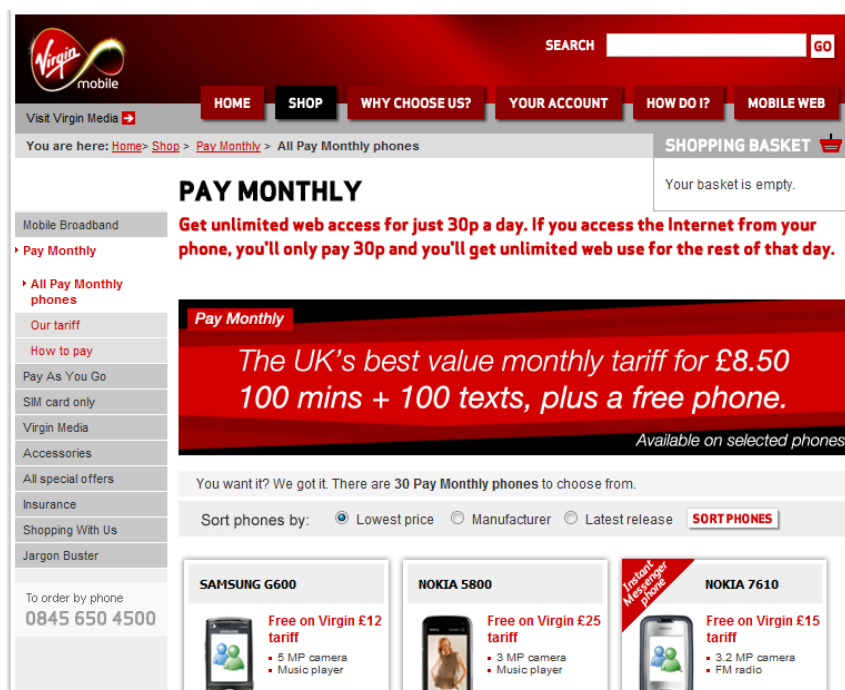
*The use of dynamic popups and very wordy text on the Three site may have made it too challenging for disabled users.*



Of similar importance to content is the **structure of menus**. If large menus rely too heavily on visual scanning, they will thwart all but the most determined users with visual impairments (and many unimpaired users as well). Menus need to be of a reasonable size and, ideally, organized so that users of assistive technology do not have to work too hard to skip global menus on each page to get to local menus and content. Virgin and T-Mobile did this very well (see example below), while it was a weak area for Expansys, mobiles.co.uk and Orange.



*Virgin mobile had only a handful of menu links per page, making navigation with assistive technology fairly easy.*



**Links suitable for assistive technology:** Some assistive technology – many screen readers, for example – can list all of the links on a page. Consequently, links must be self-explanatory even out of context. So while ‘read more’ would be a suitable link if the one immediately preceding it were ‘Best pay as you go deals’, it would be completely meaningless without it. This means that links themselves must be used to provide context or that they must be fully self-descriptive (that is, not requiring a context). Happily, this was one of the high points of all of the benchmarking measures - most sites did this extremely well.

*On this phones4u page, ‘More Info’ only makes sense in a list of links because ‘Nokia N97 White – Pre-Order’ is also a link.*

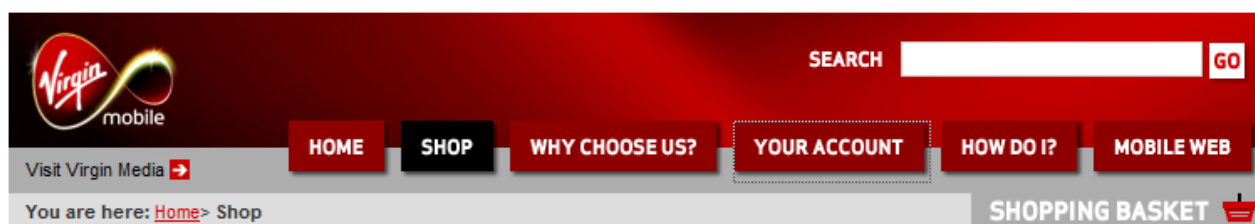


**Effective access keys/access links:** Access keys are similar to the shortcut keys used in desktop applications. They typically allow users of assistive technology (such as screen readers) to skip over material



that is repeated on each page – global navigation, for example. Unfortunately, there are no consistent definitions of what access keys should do. So while Alt+S in Internet Explorer might skip the top navigation on some sites, it may have a different use (or no use at all) on others. In a similar vein, some sites use ‘hidden’ links (not visually displayed but available to assistive technology) that perform the same purpose.

In our benchmarking, we found that very few sites made use of either access keys or hidden access links. Consequently, no site received the top mark for this metric. Virgin mobile, however, did make some use of access keys and O2 provided two hidden links on its home page. Carphone Warehouse, Expansys, mobiles.co.uk, phones4u, Three and Vodafone received no score at all.



*Virgin mobile used ‘s’ as an access key for Shop and ‘a’ for Your Account. However, other keys were less memorable (‘4’ for Search)*

**Appropriate use of animation:** Animation can present both usability and accessibility issues for a wide range of users. For animation to be used appropriately, it must:

- Include text descriptions
- Provide user control
- Avoid flashing

The only site that avoided all of these issues did so by not including any animations (Virgin mobile). No sites that did use animations provided adequate control (this is needed to allow users to pause the animation if using a screen magnifier or similar).

*This animated graphic on the Carphone Warehouse home page cycled through various offers every four seconds. No control was provided, so if a user missed an offer, they would have to wait for it to come around again.*



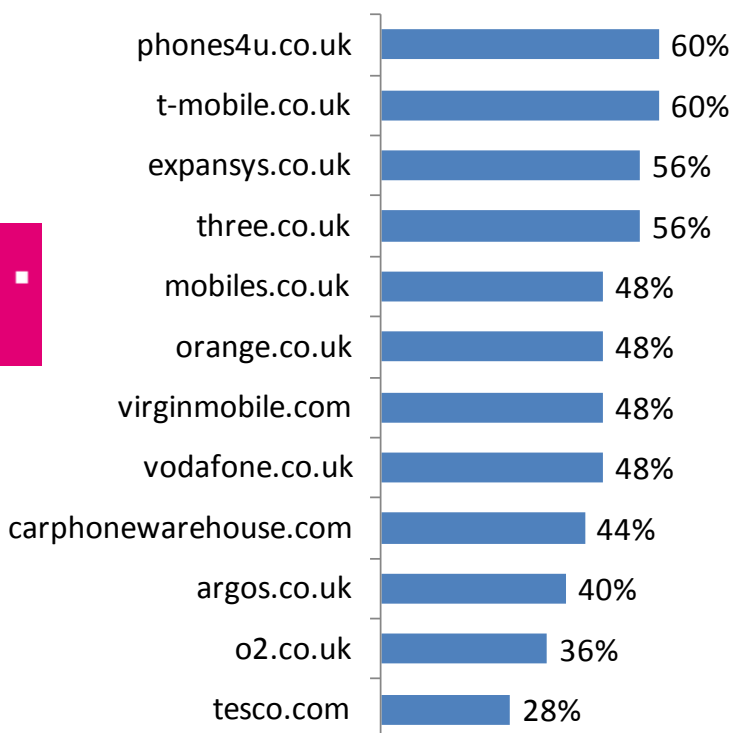


# Design Benchmark

## Trust



*Phones4u did well to reassure customers by providing easy-to-find information about themselves and details of their checkout security. T-Mobile provided online assistance – omitted from most other sites.*



## Trust Results

With current levels of spam, phishing attacks and credit card fraud, consumers have every right to be suspicious of e-commerce sites. Yet, very few sites in our benchmark provided adequate levels of reassurance.

The five components that make up our trust metric are:

- Credibility
- Confidence in design
- Customer-focused policies
- Security
- Online assistance

**Credibility** is based on easy access to an organisation's credentials, particularly information required by the UK's E-Commerce Act: name of the service provider (and trading name if different), geographic address, registered address (if different), registration number, place of registration, trade body membership and VAT number. Although all organisations supplied some of this information, it was often difficult to locate (naturally, this will not be very reassuring to potential customers). Three and Tesco Mobile shared the bottom of the results



table while Expansys, mobiles.co.uk and phones4u tied for a perfect score.

### Where's the backup?

*mobiles.co.uk provided full details required by the e-commerce act within 2 clicks of the home page.*

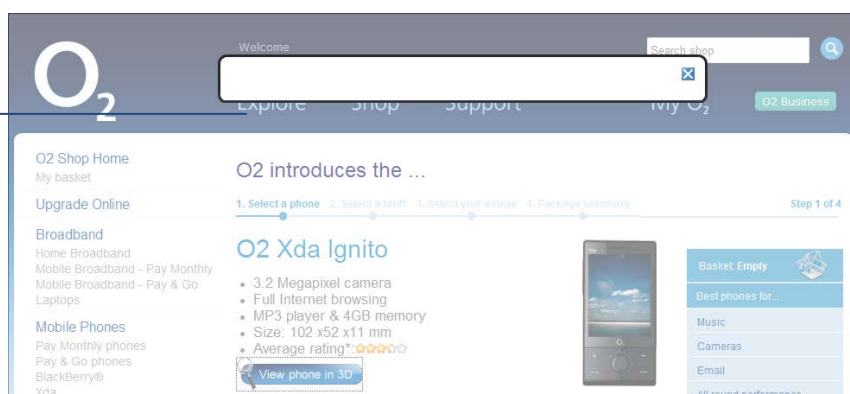
Mobiles.co.uk Limited  
6 Greenhill Crescent  
Watford Business Park  
Watford  
WD18 8RF

Mobiles.co.uk is a Limited Company registered in England  
Registered number: **06320783**  
Registered office: **1 Portal Way, London, W3 6RS**  
VAT number: **927 2265 20**  
General email contact address: [sales@mobiles.co.uk](mailto:sales@mobiles.co.uk)  
Main telephone number: **01923 801111**

Registered with the Office of the Data Protection Registrar  
Registration number: **Z9979554**  
[Click here to email the Data Protection Officer](#)

Our second measure in this group is **confidence in design**. Users will not feel encouraged to make purchases (or browse a site) if it has broken links, missing images or other failed functionality. Surprisingly, no site received top marks in this area – possibly because testing was conducted with Internet Explorer 8. Two sites had significant problems: O2 and Tesco Mobile. O2's 3D phone viewer did not work at all with IE8. Tesco Mobile, as mentioned in the Navigation group, suffered from severe problems in being split between two separate sites, with error messages appearing because they were not entirely in synchronisation.

*Trying to use the 3D View feature on the O2 site produced an empty panel in IE8.*




The **Customer-focused policies** measure considers terms and conditions, returns information, delivery instructions and similar information describing the relationship between the customer and the organisation. Language, tone of voice and readability of the information presented are taken into account. The measure also includes any policies which affect the purchasing process (such as automatically adding insurance).



No extreme scores were awarded, but several sites did relatively poorly because of policies that were likely to disenfranchise customers. Mobiles.co.uk added insurance and technical support to the shopping basket with no facility for removing them. Customers purchasing a phone would have to ring two separate national-rate numbers to cancel them sometime in the first month following purchase:

*mobiles.co.uk added insurance and technical support whether or not customers wanted them.*

**Your shopping basket currently contains:**



**£30.00** **AUTOMATIC CASHBACK**  
NO CLAIM NEEDED!

**O<sub>2</sub>**

- + Silver Sony Ericsson W995 on O2 - FREE!
- + O2 600
- + **£10 Discount** (24 Months)
- + With 600 mins & Unlimited texts per month
- + Your monthly line rental will be £25.00
- + Gadget Phone Support - first month FREE, cancel at any time, £2.99/month.
- + PhoneCare Insurance - first month FREE, cancel at any time, £7.99/month.

Remove

Three was the only site benchmarked that made an administration charge (£1.95) for a credit check on a credit card for a monthly contract. However, Three were not alone in having extremely lengthy terms and conditions:

## 3 services

*The terms and conditions for Three's services ran to 33 screens (at 1024 x 768 pixels). There were also many other T&C's to choose from.*

### Terms for 3 Services - key points

Here's some more legal stuff for you to look through. Basically, if you would like us to provide you our 3 Services, you must agree and comply with our Terms for 3 Services. The following list sets out some key points which we think will be important to you. However, you really should read the full set of Terms for 3 Services which we've provided in the rest of this section.

### Terms for 3 Services - some key points for both Pay As You Go and Pay Monthly Customers

- Terms for 3 Services only covers the terms on which you may use our Services. They don't cover your purchase of your Handset.
- Additional terms can also be seen in the Price Guide as well as within our Services on the Handset and in other documents about our Services (eg User Guide and List of Services).
- We'll provide our Services within 3's network area but it's always possible that the quality or coverage may be affected at times.
- You must not use our Services for any illegal or improper purposes. Anyone under 18 isn't permitted to access our Age Restricted Services.
- We've limited our liability to you as set out in Section 12 of the Terms for 3 Services.
- You agree that we can process "Your Information" which we collect or which you submit to us during any sales or registration process, for a number of purposes, including to open and manage an account for 3 Services, to deliver products and services ordered by you, for credit checking (if a Pay Monthly Customer) and fraud prevention, and for product analysis and direct marketing (subject to your preferences) as set out in our 'Privacy Notice' in Section 13 of the Terms for 3 Services. Please read Section 13 carefully.

### Terms for 3 Services - some key points for Pay Monthly Customers only

- If you don't pay your account on time or we reasonably believe that you haven't complied with certain terms of your agreement,



**Security** is a measure of how much reassurance is provided to users during the checkout process. Top marks are awarded to clear information, in prominent view, that the checkout is secure –with confirmation provided by third parties such as VeriSign or Comodo and trade associations such as the IMRG. This was a low-scoring area for many sites. Argos was unusual in providing no reassurance on checkout pages themselves, but instead just a ‘Secure online shopping’ link arranged with 18 others at the very bottom of the page (at least two screens below the ‘Continue’ button on some pages:

Website Info	Customer services	Argos Services	About Argos	Argos partners
<a href="#">Site map</a>	<a href="#">Order tracking</a>	<a href="#">Argos Credit &amp; Insurance</a>	<a href="#">About Us</a>	<a href="#">Affiliate programme</a>
<a href="#">Secure online shopping</a>	<a href="#">Contact us</a>	<a href="#">Argos Business Solutions</a>	<a href="#">Argoscareers.com</a>	<a href="#">Argos gift card</a>
<a href="#">Terms &amp; conditions</a>	<a href="#">Check &amp; Reserve</a>	<a href="#">Product insurance</a>	<a href="#">Argos.ie</a>	<a href="#">Argos Spares</a>
<a href="#">Privacy policy</a>	<a href="#">Delivery info</a>	<a href="#">Gift list service</a>		
	<a href="#">Free returns</a>			

*Argos provided only a link to security information at the very bottom of the checkout pages.*

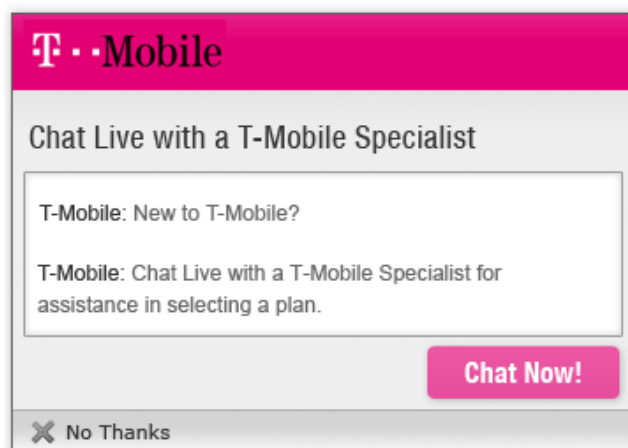
Some sites did display IMRG and certificate provider logos, but lost the opportunity of reassuring customers by failing to link them to useful information. Clicking on Orange’s IMRG logo, produced a certificate error (which is possibly worse than having no logo at all) and the VeriSign logo was not linked to the VeriSign site:

*On the Orange checkout page, clicking on the ‘Internet shopping is safe’ logo produced a certificate error. The VeriSign logo was not linked to the VeriSign site.*



**Online assistance** is helpful to customers when they cannot find what they are looking for or have questions. It is not always convenient to use a telephone and queue for customer service, yet only two UK mobile phone sites provided online assistance; T-Mobile and Three. (Both provided live chat facilities although a ‘call me’ service would also have been acceptable.) Unfortunately, the T-Mobile chat had the potential to be annoying rather than helpful since it popped up at seemingly random points and could not be requested by users:

*T-Mobile had one of the few live chat facilities but it appeared randomly and could not be requested by users. This could make it more annoying than helpful.*



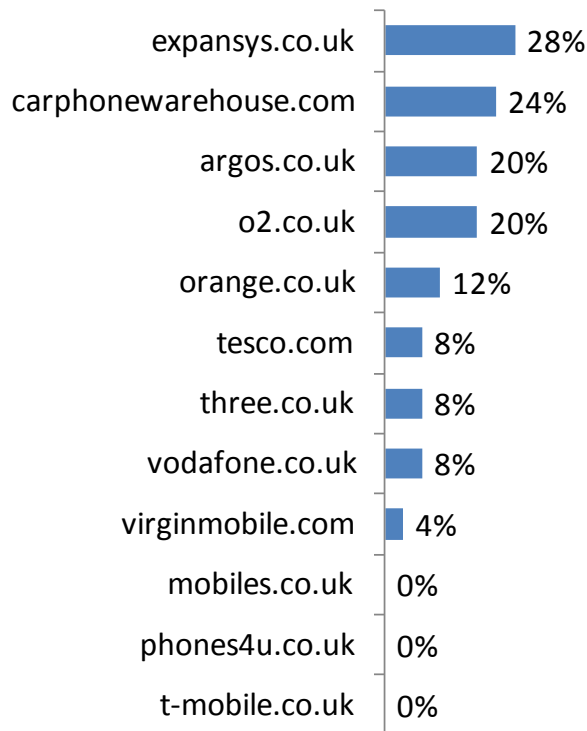


# Design Benchmark

## Persuasion



*This was a very low-scoring group across all of the sites benchmarked. Very few sites attempted to persuade users by offering related products, service or accessories. Many that did focused only on insurance – a practice that has received widespread negative publicity in other market segments.*



## Persuasion Results

Although persuasive computing has its own very specific meaning for 'persuasion', we are using it here in a more general sense: persuading customers to spend more. For this to be effective, it must be done appropriately – suggested products or accessories should be relevant to the currently-selected item or based on product pages that customers have viewed. Amazon is best known for this and while it may not be effective for many other sites to devote so much effort to persuasion, it was very disappointing to see how little of this was being done on the sites we benchmarked.

The measures making up this group are:

- Personalized recommendations
- Recently viewed
- Pre-basket persuasion
- Post-basket persuasion
- Checkout persuasion

**Personalized recommendations** are normally made on the home page, based on previous visits to the site (or past purchases). No sites in our benchmark did this. Given the amount of 'site hopping' that some users will perform when selecting a product, this is potentially an



important lost opportunity. In fact, most sites also did not attempt to show users the products they most **recently viewed**. This would also be helpful in return visits (or in a single session if different products are being considered). Expansys, O2 and Carphone Warehouse did show recently viewed products, although none did this on the home page.

*Carphone Warehouse was one of the few sites to include a 'recently viewed' list. Unfortunately, it was at the bottom of the second screen in a very pale colour.*



Pre-basket persuasion is a term we have used to describe the offer of products or accessories during product selection. Again, Amazon does this very well in most cases, as illustrated below.

### Frequently Bought Together

Customers buy this item with [SanDisk Extreme III SDHC 4GB Card](#)



+



**Price For Both: £515.28**

[Add both to Basket](#)

[Show availability and shipping details](#)

*An example of 'pre-basket persuasion' from Amazon.co.uk. Very few sites in the benchmark did this at all and none as effectively as this example.*

### What Do Customers Ultimately Buy After Viewing This Item?



**61% buy the item featured on this page:**

Canon EOS 450D Digital SLR Camera Kit (incl EF-S 18-55mm IS f/3.5) £499.00



**19% buy**

[SanDisk Extreme III SDHC 4GB Card](#) ★★★★★ (107) £16.28



**7% buy**

[SanDisk 8GB SDHC Secure Digital Card](#) ★★★★★ (140) £10.49



**6% buy**

[Integral Single Slot SD / SDHC Card Reader](#) ★★★★★ (184) £0.23


**Post-basket persuasion** is similar to the pre-basket variety, except that it occurs once an item has been added to the shopping basket. A very real concern here is that users should not be made to feel overwhelmed by choice or be subject to 'hard selling' – otherwise they may simply leave the site.

Most of the benchmarked sites attempted post-basket persuasion but it was generally limited to contract add-ons or insurance. The few sites that did offer accessories usually presented a seemingly random




assortment (compared with Amazon's 'hard' statistics on what customers actually purchased).

*Some sites (such as Expansys, shown here) did offer accessories during checkout, but the selection appeared incoherent.*


Item	Quantity	Availability	Price	Total
 <b>HTC Touch Pro2</b> <small>version: UK, English, QWERTY, Wi-Fi, GPS</small>	1	In Stock	499.99 inc. VAT	499.99 inc. VAT

[<< Continue Shopping](#)
[Edit Basket](#)
[Proceed To Checkout >>](#)

**Contracts and Data Plans**

 **T-Mobile** available **Free**

**Featured Accessories**


**3 Pay As You Go Sim Card + £30 Starter Top-Up**  
£20.00 inc. VAT

**Bundle Savings**

**HTC Touch Pro2 Value Pack (UK, English, QWERTY, Wi-Fi, GPS)**  
£554.99 inc. VAT

Finally, **checkout persuasion** takes place during the checkout process itself. Again, it is important not to frustrate or confuse customers, but many would welcome a display of relevant accessories or contract options. Argos was the only site to use checkout persuasion, in this case by making an offer of a credit arrangement for payment:

*Argos was the only site to use checkout persuasion. In this case it took the form of a credit plan as an alternative payment method.*

Cardholder's name:\*

Card type:\* - Please select card type -

**Argos Card payment credit plan:** [Choose credit plan >](#)

Card number:\*

Expiry date(mm/yyyy):\*  /

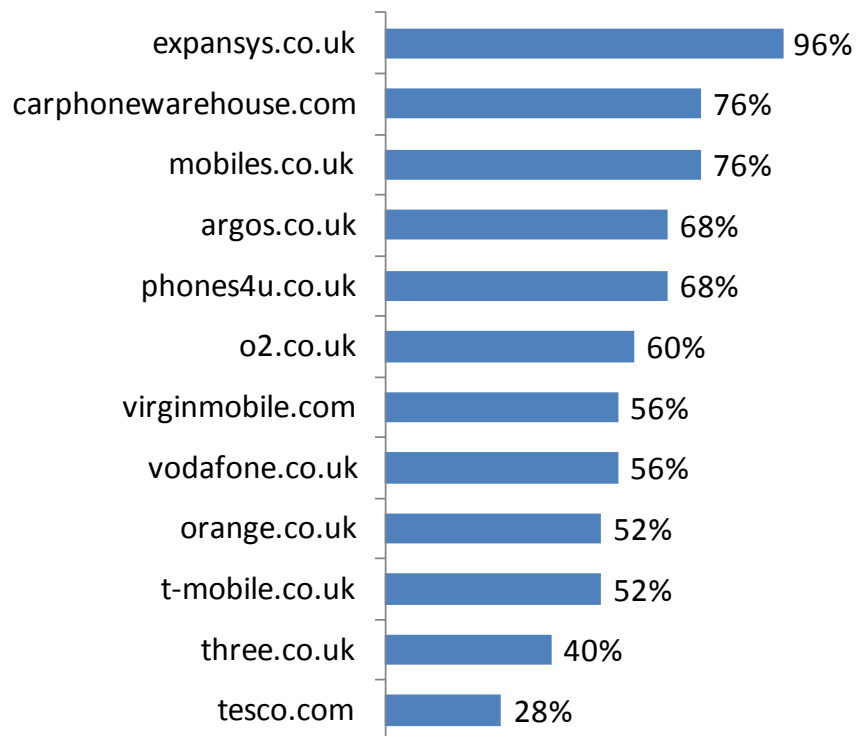


# Design Benchmark

## Shopping Basket



*This metrics group deals specifically with the concept of the shopping basket, the information it contains and how easy it is to access. Scores ranged dramatically from a 28% for Tesco to a near-perfect 96% for Expansys.*



## Shopping Basket Results

The shopping basket is central to most e-commerce sites, but it can be surprisingly difficult to access on some sites. It is often poorly designed for providing customers with the information they need to complete a purchase. (Poor shopping basket design can have a big impact on successful completion of a transaction.)

In this group we consider:

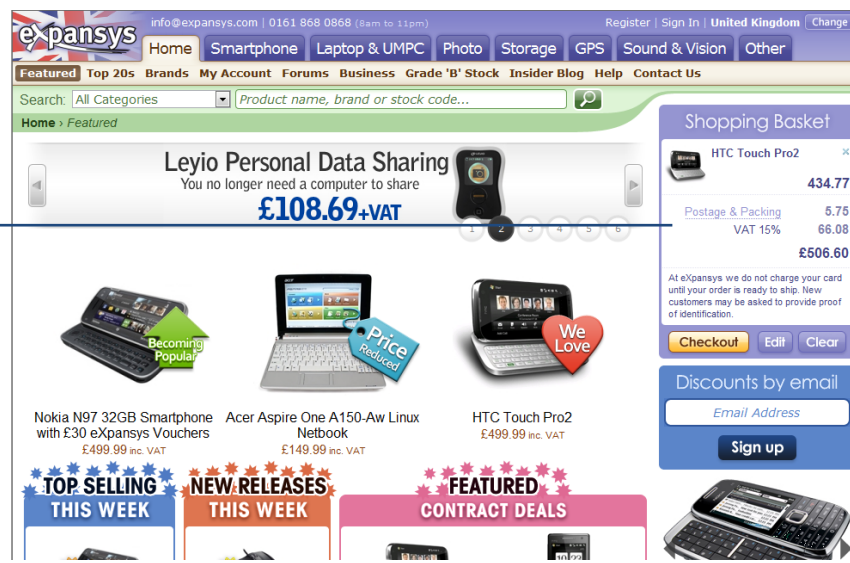
- Availability from every page
- Detail
- Layout
- Product availability
- Delivery

If users add a product to their basket and then navigate to another part of the site (to check on delivery information, for example), they may find it difficult to return to their basket. Ideally, the shopping basket should be **available from every page**. For this metric, we provide the top score for a summary of the basket contents displayed in the same location throughout the site. Lower marks are given for just a link to the shopping basket on some pages.

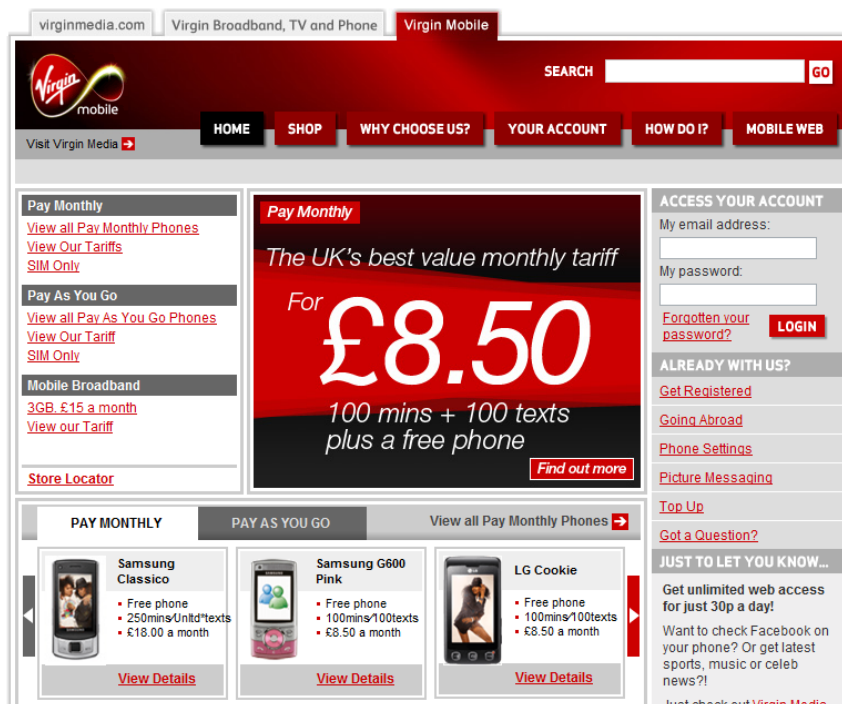


Expansys provides the best example of good shopping basket availability, by displaying a large summary in the same location on all pages:

*A large summary of the shopping basket appeared in the same location on all Expansys pages.*



*Virgin Mobile 'Home' and 'Mobile Web' pages made it hard for users to locate their shopping basket.*



Ideally, users should have already seen the relevant purchasing information they need before adding an item to their shopping basket. However, as the shopping basket is the focal point of the checkout process, it is essential that adequate **detail** is present. To receive top marks, a shopping basket should display clear descriptions of the products, accurate product images and prices (with VAT clearly stated). Many sites did this well, but Three and Tesco Mobile both omitted to mention VAT or delivery.




Both Three and Tesco Mobile (shown here) failed to mention VAT or delivery in the shopping basket.

My Basket

checkout

Please confirm your items and checkout:



Tesco Mobile LG Cookie mobile phone Black

200-2303

Was £99.97 Now £89.97 Save £10.00

This requires an adult to sign upon delivery

£89.97 each

1 item

Remove

Sub total of items: £ 89.97\*

Clubcard points earned 89\*

Total including savings : £ 89.97


checkout

Not only should the required detail be present, but the shopping basket should also have a **layout** that makes information easy to find and does not require excess scrolling. Ideally, for a shopping basket with just one or two items, the layout should require only a single 1024 x 768 pixel screen (although this was rarely the case).

Virgin Mobile received top marks for shopping basket layout, while Tesco Mobile received the lowest score.

## SHOPPING BASKET


Okay, here's what you have chosen so far.

Description	Quantity	Monthly	Today
 <p><b>Sony Ericsson K770i</b> Get a months free text allowance straight away if your first top up is £10 or more.</p>	<input type="text" value="1"/> <a href="#">remove</a>		£79.99
Subtotal (including VAT):			£79.99
Delivery:			£4.88
Order total:			£84.87

CHECKOUT

The Virgin Mobile shopping basket was very compact, with only the 'Continue shopping' link out of sight 'below the fold'.

In contrast, Tesco Mobile made poor use of the available screen space, requiring users to scroll (on a 1024 x 768 pixel screen) for just two shopping basket items.



[View basket / Checkout](#)
[My Account](#)
[Help](#)

Product name or catalogue no Search

Tesco.com

Hi William, welcome back [Logout](#)


[Tesco Direct](#)
[Grocery](#)
[Wine Club](#)
[Entertainment & Books](#)

£135 of money saving eCoupons see all offers >

My Basket

checkout

Please confirm your items and checkout:




SanDisk Micro SDHC 4GB Memory card

204-4394

£11.69 each

1 item

Save for later Remove



Tesco Mobile LG Cookie mobile phone Black

200-2303

Was £99.97 Now £89.97 Save £10.00

This requires an adult to sign upon delivery

£89.97 each

1 item


Save for later Remove



Ideally, **product availability** will be prominently displayed on the product information page and should come as no surprise to a customer. But again, as the shopping basket is the culmination of the shopping process, product availability should be repeated here.

Expansys was the only site to display detailed availability information in the shopping basket. Several other sites (O2, Argos and Carphone Warehouse) included some availability information – typically a confirmation that a product was in stock – but the majority of sites did not mention availability in the shopping basket at all.

### Order Checkout

Item	Quantity	Availability	Price	Total
 <p>SanDisk 4GB Extreme III Secure Digital (SDHC) Card version: 30MB/s</p>	1	Est. 3 Days	30.43 exc.	30.43 exc.

Voucher code:

Delivering To:

**Delivery Method:**

Royal Mail 1st Class Standard Delivery (UK, Order < £40 & <500g) : 1 to 4 working	2.11
<b>VAT @ 15%</b>	4.88
<b>Total</b>	<b>£37.42</b>

*Expansys was the only site to include clear product availability information in the shopping basket. Customers were given control over delivery, as well.*

The Expansys example above also shows how customers can choose delivery options to receive items more quickly (but usually at greater expense). **Delivery** is our last measure in the shopping basket group. The kind of display and customer control used by Expansys receives top marks (as would solutions that offer booking of specific dates). Unfortunately, most other sites lacked similar customer control, although delivery was often free of charge.

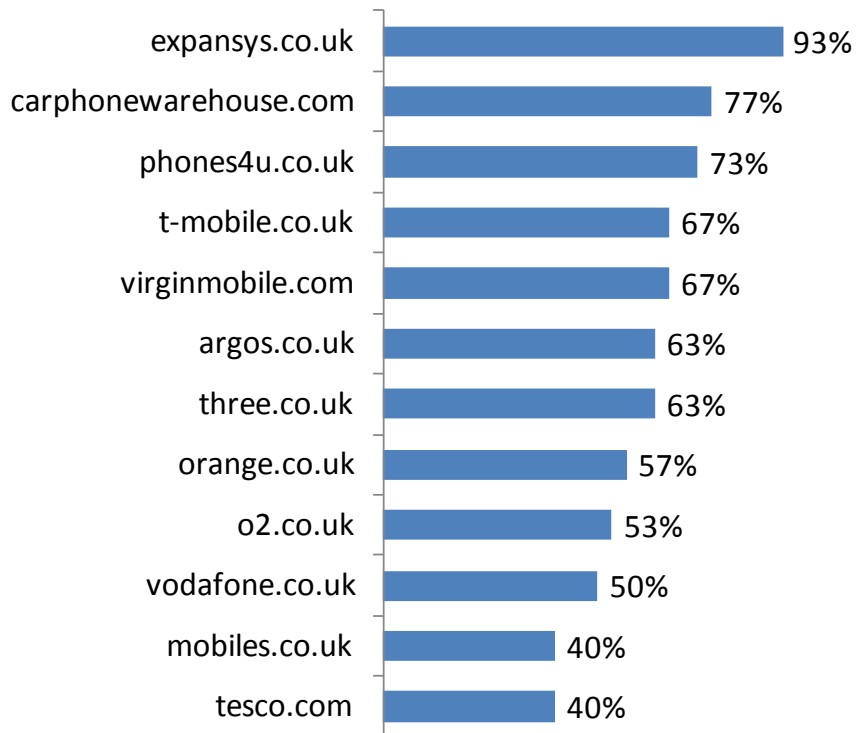


# Design Benchmark

## Search



*To be effective, Search must be easy to find and use. As it is often a last resort, a poor user experience with Search may well mean the loss of potential customers.*



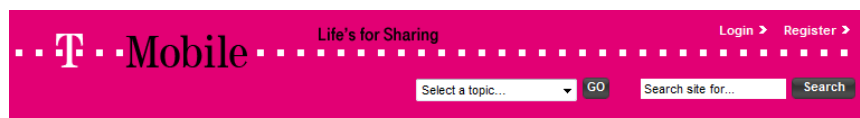
## Search Results

In this section we consider the design of Search – how easy it is to perform a search, revise it and to make informed decisions from the results. The group of measures are:

- Available from every page
- Revise/refine from results page
- Details
- Layout
- Organisation
- Quality

Search is easiest to find and use when it is readily **available from every page**. The majority of sites did this, but several (mobiles.co.uk, Three and Tesco Mobile) made searching a little more challenging for users.

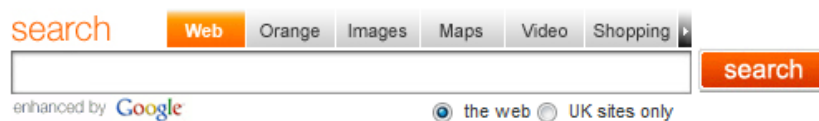
*T-Mobile included a search box at the top of most pages – as did the majority of the sites benchmarked.*





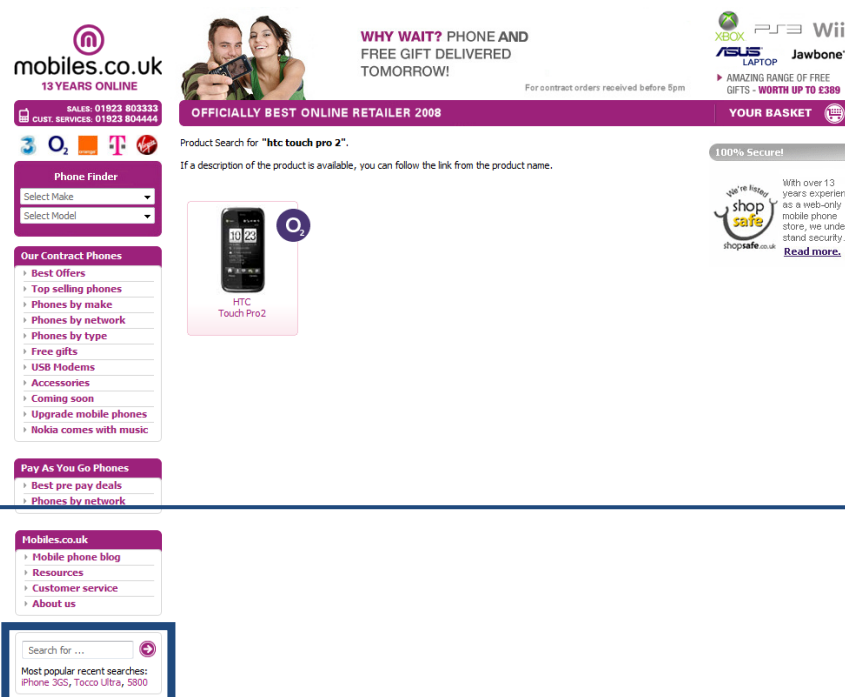
Orange was alone in offering a web search (with the option of selecting the Orange site) on its home page and nowhere else.

*In contrast, Orange provided Search in the content area of the home page only. It defaulted to a Google search of the entire web.*



**Revise/refine from results page:** In order for users to adjust or refine their search, a search field – populated with the search text used – needs to be present on the results page. (To receive the top mark, it needs to appear at both the top and bottom of the results page when it is more than a single screen long.) The sites benchmarked were less consistent in providing this feature; around half provided a populated search field at the top of the results page. Of the remainder, mobiles.co.uk showed an empty search field too far below the fold on most screens to be visible while others showed only an empty search box. No site included a populated search field at both the top and bottom of the results page (although Vodafone in fact implemented this improvement while our report was in preparation – their score does not reflect this change, however).

*On the mobiles.co.uk results page, users needed to scroll to the second screen to find the search field (about 3 cm below the fold on a 1024 x 768 pixel screen).*



Search result **details** help users to make informed decisions about which items are most relevant. The type of result – product information or support advice – as well as price (for products) are typical examples. Expansys did best on this measure, although it did focus on providing product information rather than other types of result (although forum postings could be selected). Mobiles.co.uk received the lowest score for providing no details other than an image – see the screenshot above (although their search appeared to be limited to product results only).









Expansys search result details were very effective for locating products.

Search:

Home

### "Touch pro 2"

Rank	Product	Categories	Stock	Price
1	 HTC Touch Pro2 UK, English, QWERTY, Wi-Fi, GPS	Smartphone > With Touchscreen	100+ In Stock Now	£499.99
2	 HTC Touch Pro2 Value Pack UK, English, QWERTY, Wi-Fi, GPS	Smartphone > With Touchscreen	1-5 In Stock - 1 Day	£554.99
3	 HTC Touch Pro2 + T-Mobile Combi 30 + Web N Walk £34.26 Mthly, 18 Months, 700 Mins, Unlimited SMS/Data		21 In Stock Now	£139.99
4	 HTC Touch HD Screen Protector SP P200 2 Pieces	Accessories > Screen Protectors & Cleaning	44 In Stock Now	£7.99
5	 HTC Touch Pro2 Business Pack UK, English, QWERTY, Wi-Fi, GPS	Smartphone > With Touchscreen	Normally less than 5 days	£584.99
6	 HTC Touch Pro Screen Protector 2 pieces	Accessories > Screen Protectors & Cleaning	10 In Stock Now	£7.99

**Manufacturer**

- ORA (509)
- HTC (160)
- Proporta (24)
- NLU Products (19)
- Canon (16)
- Herbert Richter (13)
- O2 (13)
- Martin Fields (10)
- D-Link (9)
- Freemove (9)
- [Expand All](#)

**Category**

- Pocket PC Screen Protectors + Cleaning (43)
- Pocket PC Cables, Cradles + Connectivity (53)
- Pocket PC Power Adaptors + Batteries (46)
- Pocket PC Cases + Covers (33)
- External Hard Drives (26)
- Digital Camera Accessories (24)
- Pocket PC Stylus + Pens (24)
- Pocket PC Vehicle Kits (23)
- Pocket PC Headsets + Handsfree (21)
- Contract Phone Deals (16)
- [Expand All](#)

Where many results are returned on a page, their **layout** determines how easy it will be to scan them for required information. The best layout is usually tabular form (as in the Expansys example above), but with appropriate use of colour and formatting, other layouts can be almost as effective. A second consideration for layout is how many results are shown on the first screen. It is helpful for users to be able to see a reasonable number of results on the first screen without scrolling, so they can quickly select the appropriate result. Again, Expansys received top marks for showing 6 results on the first 1024 x 768 pixel screen while several other sites managed only a few results because of the poor use of vertical space.

The Argos PAYG site managed to show only one result on the first page. Given that the search was for 'touch pro 2' (an HTC handset), the results were fairly spurious.

www.argos.co.uk

Hello [Sign in](#) | [Register](#) | [My account](#) [My Trolley](#) (0 items = £0)

[Home](#) | [Store locator](#) | [Customer services](#)

Search by word or catalogue number  [A-Z Index](#)

[Kitchen & Laundry](#) | [Home & Furniture](#) | [Garden & DIY](#) | [Sports & Leisure](#) | [Health & Personal Care](#) | [Jewellery & Watches](#) | [Gifts & Hobbies](#) | [Home Entertainment & Sat Nav](#) | [Video Games](#) | [Photography](#) | [Office, PCs & Phones](#) | [Toys & Games](#) | [Nursery](#) | [Latest Price Cuts](#)

You searched for **PRO II** 31 results found

**17 matches in Office, PCs and phones**

- Computers and laptops (16)
- PC consumables and software (1)

**9 matches in Sports and leisure**

- Camping and caravanning (6)
- Swimming (2)
- Home gym equipment (1)
- Racquet sports (1)

**2 matches in Photography**

- Digital camera memory cards (2)

**1 match in Health and personal care**

- Dental (1)

**1 match in Home entertainment and sat nav**

- DVD, Blu-ray and video (1)

**1 match in Video games**


- Playstation 2 (1)

**END OF CATALOGUE SALE**  
100s OF HALF PRICE DEALS  
Subject to availability. Offer ends 24/07/09

Items per page: 20 | Sort by: Relevance | [GO](#)

1 - 20 of 31 items | Page: 1 2 Next > | [Show all items](#) | [List](#) | [Gallery](#)

Compare features for up to 10 items | [COMPARE SELECTED ITEMS](#)



SanDisk 2GB Ultra II Memory Stick Pro Duo, †  
5787416 [more detail](#)

1/2 price 56 in 1 card reader when you buy this item.

£24.49

[compare](#)

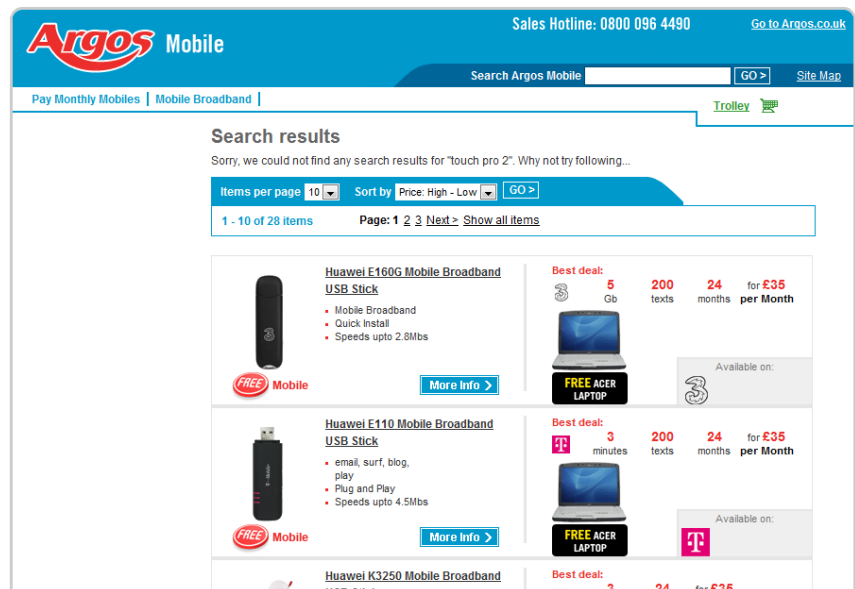
Home delivery within 2 days | Can be reserved, subject to store stock | [Check stock in your area](#) | [Buy or Reserve](#)

★★★★☆ (1)

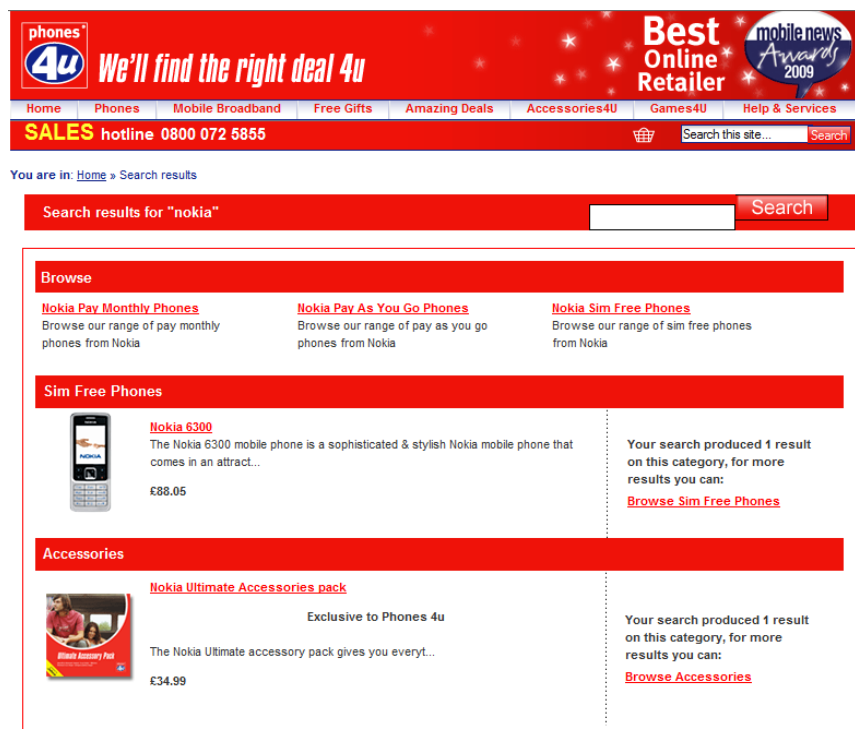
Argos did do slightly better on the **organisation** of results (see the top half of the screen shot above) but only on their Pay-As-You-Go (PAYG) site. On the Pay-Monthly (PM) site, the search results were not organised at all:



The quality of results was no better on the Argos Pay-Monthly site. However, here there was no attempt to organise results.



Phones4u and Expansys both achieved top marks for organising search results. Their approach would help users to find relevant information more quickly.



Phones4u organised results well, but the quality (relevance) of results was disappointing.

Last, but certainly not least in our search measures, is the **quality** of results. There is a fine balance to be struck between providing too few results (perhaps because the search text is not exactly correct) and too many, where users must waste considerable time scanning to find relevant information. Scoring on this measure was very wide-ranging, with Expansys and Carphone Warehouse receiving the highest (but not top) marks. Tesco earned the bottom position through an indiscriminate search on its Tesco Direct site. This returned a wide variety of domestic appliances and home electronics when searching for 'LG'. While the results page did allow users to select a category, the



initial results were very disappointing given that the search was performed from the mobile phone pages:

*The Tesco Direct site searched its entire range of products even though the search was performed from the mobile phone pages.*

The screenshot shows the Tesco Direct website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like 'View basket / Checkout', 'My Account', and 'Help'. Below this is a search bar with the text 'Product name or catalogue no'. The main header features the 'TESCO direct' logo. A personalized greeting 'Hi William, welcome back (Logout)' is visible. A horizontal menu lists various product categories: PC, Photo & Gaming, Phones, Home Electrical, Sound & Vision, Furniture & Kitchen, Home & Bath, DIY & Car, Jewellery & Watches, Sports & Leisure, Toys & Gifts, Baby & Toddler, Garden, and Bank Holiday Offers. A prominent blue banner reads 'DOUBLE CLUBCARD POINTS On All direct Orders\*'. The search results section shows 'You searched for: "lg" within Direct' and 'We found 50 items'. It includes filters for Category, Brand, Network, and Price. The main product listing is for the 'LG GWL227YBQA Black Side By Side Fridge Freezer' with a price of £883.73. A 'My Basket' sidebar shows a '1x T-Mobile Nokia 6500c Mobile Phone Pink'.

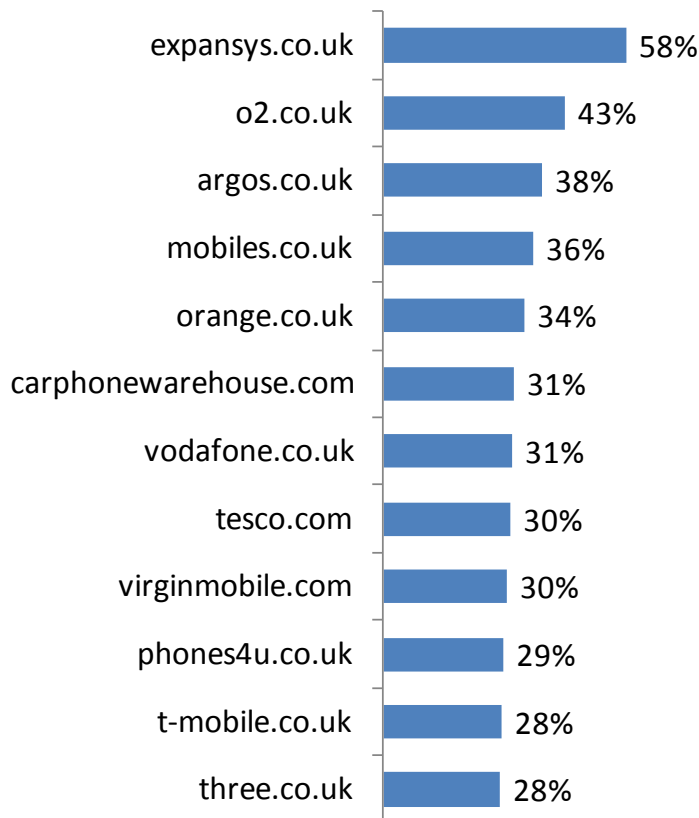
The Tesco Mobile Network site performed little better in that the main body of the search results were largely spurious (terms and conditions, upgrade details and network coverage). It is not possible for users to refine results without searching again (unlike in Tesco Direct, above):

*On the Tesco Mobile Network site, the main body of the results was spurious.*

The screenshot shows the Tesco Mobile Network website. The header includes the 'TESCO mobile' logo and a 'Welcome to our mobile network' message. A navigation bar contains links: Home, Shop, My Tesco Mobile, Our Tariffs, and Help & Support. Below this is a search bar with the text 'Quick links...'. The main content area features a large promotional banner for '£10 FREE TOP-UP when you buy a Tesco Mobile phone'. Below the banner, the search results for 'lg' are displayed. The results are mostly links to terms and conditions, upgrade information, and network coverage, rather than specific product listings. A sidebar on the right shows a list of phones with prices, including the 'LG KP170' for £24.97 and the 'LG KS360' for £79.97.



## Overall Usability



*O2 and Tesco achieved much higher scores in our usability benchmarking than in design. T-Mobile slipped substantially, due primarily to poor checkout performance.*

## Overall Usability Results

In the usability-focused metrics, we consider how easy it is to perform common tasks. Users are not directly involved. Instead we consider best practice and established design principles while taking a user-centred perspective.

The metric groups in this section are:

- Selection
- Checkout
- Account management
- Support

They represent the four main phases of buying and receiving a product (selecting it, paying for it, checking your account for delivery details and getting support when things go wrong).

Overall usability scores in our survey were somewhat lower than in design. This was largely due to poor online services for customers beyond the purchasing process (our account and support groups). For some sites, though, even selection and checkout provided disappointing user experiences.

The overall score is an unweighted average across the groups.

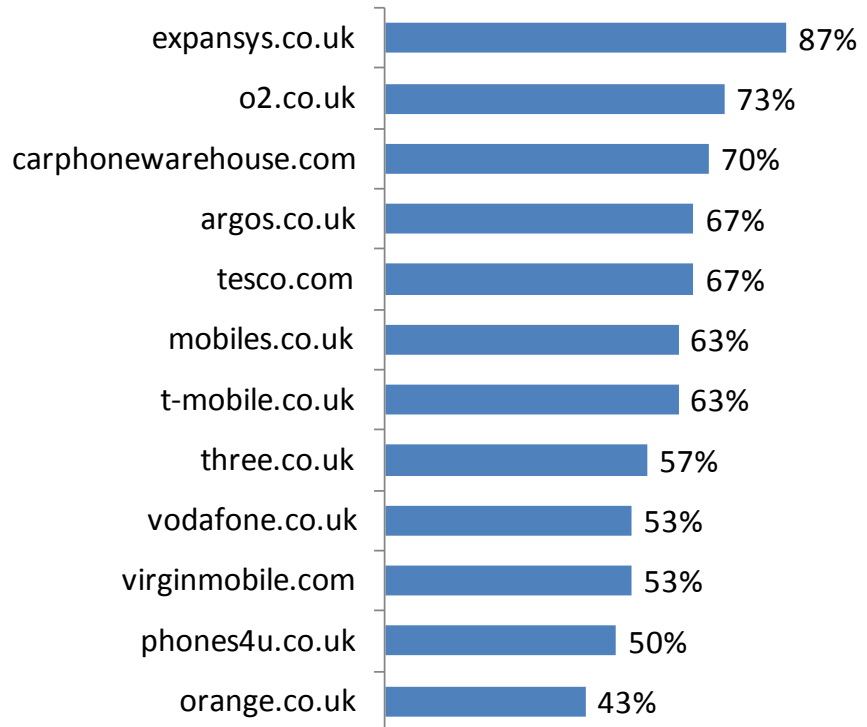


# Usability Benchmark

## Selection



*Selection is all about choosing a product and placing it in a virtual shopping basket. This is arguably the most important set of tasks in an e-commerce site, yet the results of our benchmarking show a wide range of scores.*



## Selection Results

The selection tasks represent the natural sequence of locating a product and placing it in the shopping basket. (Checkout is dealt with separately in the next benchmarking group.)

The tasks and their corresponding measures are:

- Start shopping
- Select by type/brand/model, features or price
- Product availability
- Add to basket
- View/edit basket
- Start checkout

While tasks like 'start shopping' may sound a little basic, some sites make this much more difficult to perform than others, as discussed below.

Other tasks, which consumers take for granted in a physical (bricks and mortar) shop, are surprisingly absent in UK mobile phone e-commerce – checking product availability is handled poorly or not at all by some sites. The task that was easiest to perform in this group was 'start checkout' (although we assumed that users could find the shopping



basket, which was not always easy – see ‘shopping basket’ in the design metrics on page 36).

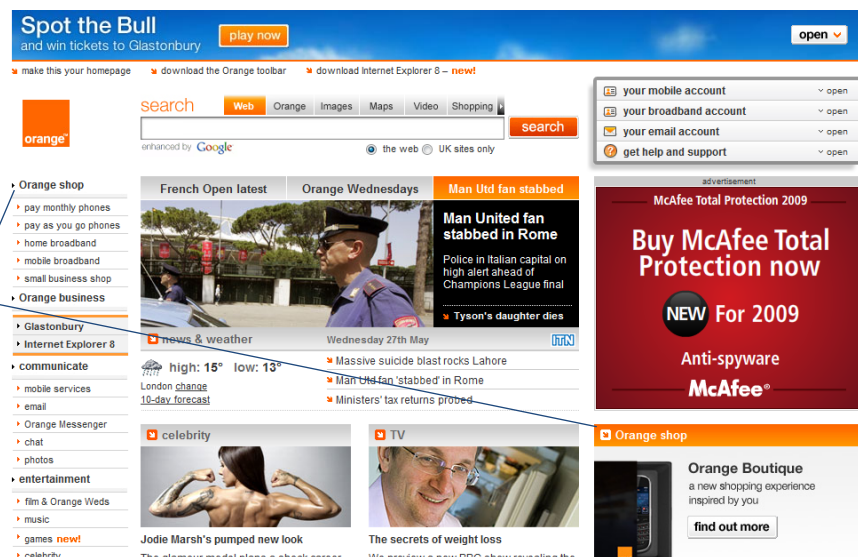
**Start shopping:** How easy is it for potential customers to see that this is an e-commerce (rather than a catalogue) site and to start selecting a product? The ideal solution would make the shopping basket icon or the word ‘shop’ prominent and provide a number of links into the product pages themselves. Virgin Mobile received the top mark for their approach, as shown in this screenshot:

*The Virgin Mobile site made it easy to start shopping – giving users three main routes to product information.*



By comparison, the Orange site disguised its e-commerce ambitions – instead displaying a varied collection of news and links:

*Orange provided two clues to its shopping facilities but they were fairly subtle considering the attention-seeking graphics and articles on the home page.*



Potential customers may know exactly what they are looking for, but in many cases being able to **select products by type/brand/model, features or price** greatly improves the user experience.

Of the twelve sites we benchmarked, only Carphone Warehouse provided a fully-functional ‘phone finder’ (illustrated below). Tesco



Direct (but not Tesco Mobile Network) also had a ‘faceted’ search but users would have been hard pressed to find it since entering ‘Tesco mobile’ into Google led to the Tesco Mobile Network site.

Pay monthly

Pay as you go

Upgrades

New and exclusive

**Phone finder**

▶ Apple iPhone

▶ BlackBerry

▶ Motorola

▶ Nokia

▶ Samsung

▶ Sony Ericsson

Sim cards

Deal finder

Trade in your phone

Compare phones

Recently viewed items

Sony Ericsson C510

## Phone finder

Find a phone

Sony Ericsson

Model

Colour

Style

Availability

Show Free phones only

Mobile phone features:

3G

Camera

MMS

Speakerphone

Wi-Fi

Camera Type

Bluetooth

FM Radio

MP3 Player

Touch Screen

Windows Mobile


Quad Band

Camera Type

Photo quality is measured in megapixels. It's one of the simplest ways of comparing digital cameras: just look for the biggest number!

FIND PHONE

Available phones

Phone	Contract type	Colours	Style	Features	Price	
 <div> <div>Sony Ericsson Xperia X1</div> <div>Slide out the QWERTY keyboard and the whole thing has the appearance of a tiny laptop.</div> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pay Monthly</li> <li>SIM Free Handsets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Black</li> <li>Silver</li> </ul>	Candybar	<div>FM</div> <div>Bluetooth</div> <div>3G</div> <div>Quad Band</div> <div>Camera</div> <div>MMS</div> <div>Speakerphone</div> <div>Wi-Fi</div>	from Free	<div>MORE INFO</div> <div>Compare phone</div>

*Only Carphone Warehouse offered a fully-featured ‘phone finder’. Features (such as Camera Type shown here) were explained with helpful popup windows.*

One of the enticing promises of e-commerce is ‘instant gratification’: on many sites, phones ordered before 5 pm would be delivered the next day. However, this promise was made even if the phone was out of stock in some cases (as Three advised later in the checkout process). For this reason, potential customers need to be reassured about **product availability**. It is not enough to assume that ‘no news is good news’ (that users should take for granted that products are in stock). This was a very low scoring area for the majority of sites. Seven of the twelve received zero scores, while only one site – Expansys – showed clear availability information for every product, thereby winning the top mark:

Only Expansys showed clear availability information for all products.



HTC Touch Pro2

Version: UK, English, QWERTY, Wi-Fi, GPS

eXpansys Code: 179097

Handset Only Price: £499.99 (434.77 exc.)

Discounts available for orders of 5 units or more - call 0161 868 0868

Business Customers: For information on bulk order discounts and company accounts - please email Jane on [info@expansys.com](mailto:info@expansys.com)

With Contract From Free on T

Availability: 100+ In Stock Now

If you order this product before 4:30pm today, UK customers could expect delivery tomorrow morning.

Add to Basket

or

Check out with PayPal

Sites between these two extremes reported if a phone was out of stock (Argos, for example) but otherwise failed to mention availability.

Assuming that the right product can be found at the right price and availability (see the content design section starting on page 9 regarding prices), users will want to place the product in their shopping basket.

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To make this as easy as possible, the 'Add to basket' (or similar) button or link should be large, in an eye-catching colour and easily seen without scrolling. Expansys, Argos and phones4u all did this well, achieving top marks. (phones4u did not use a distinct colour, but its large, bright red 'buy now' buttons were quite hard to miss on the product pages.)

**Toshiba G810 Mobile Phone.**† **£440.49**  
526/0388

BUY NOW, PAY 6 Months LATER when you buy with the Argos Card. Typical **27.9% APR** variable.  
[More credit info](#)

---

Home delivery within 2 days

Cannot be reserved for store pick-up

**Check stock in your area**

GO >

---

Add to your order...

☐

[Universal In-Car Charger](#) 546/4407

**£4.97**

Buy or Reserve >

*The use of green on the Argos site made the 'Buy or Reserve' button stand out.*

**View/Edit basket:** It should be easy for users to see the contents of their shopping basket and to edit them if necessary. Unfortunately, some sites have adopted a single-phone policy as a security measure. While it may be reasonable to limit the number of phones that can be purchased at a time, a single-phone limit is unnecessarily restrictive for many purposes. Perversely, the sites that had this limitation in our survey (Orange, phones4u and Virgin) had no upper limit on the price of phones that could be ordered. So while users were prevented from buying two £20 phones, they could order a £200 phone without restriction. This does not lead to a good user experience. Orange further frustrated users by not warning them of this behaviour. The current contents of the basket were simply replaced by any new phone added.

## SHOPPING BASKET

Okay, here's what you have chosen so far.

Unable to add your selection. The basket may only contain 1 Pay As You Go product(s).

Description	Quantity	Monthly	Today
<p><b>Alcatel S520</b> Get a month's free text allowance straight away if your first top up is £10 or more.</p>	<input type="text" value="1"/> <a href="#">remove</a>		£19.99
Subtotal (including VAT):			£19.99
Delivery:			£4.88
Order total:			£24.87

Of the sites without this restriction, Expansys made it easiest to view and edit shopping basket contents, through the simple expedient of displaying shopping basket details on every page:

*Virgin Mobiles (shown here), along with Orange and phones4u did not allow more than one phone in the basket.*



Shopping basket contents were shown in the right-hand panel on every Expansys page.

Consequently, Expansys received top marks in this metric while the sites with single-phone baskets (Orange, phones4u and Virgin) had the lowest scores.

The final step in the selection process is to **start checkout**. As can be seen in the Expansys screenshot above, a large, brightly coloured checkout button makes this process very straightforward. Problems arise when the checkout button (or link) is not very obvious or not visible at all – often the case when the shopping basket summary occupies more space than it really needs to. Overall, this was the highest scoring measure of the selection group. Top marks went to sites with a large and highly visible checkout button: Argos, Expansys, T-Mobile, Tesco and Three.

The 'Proceed to Checkout' button was not visible on this Carphone Warehouse shopping basket page because of the poor use of vertical space. (Note the large areas of unused space.)

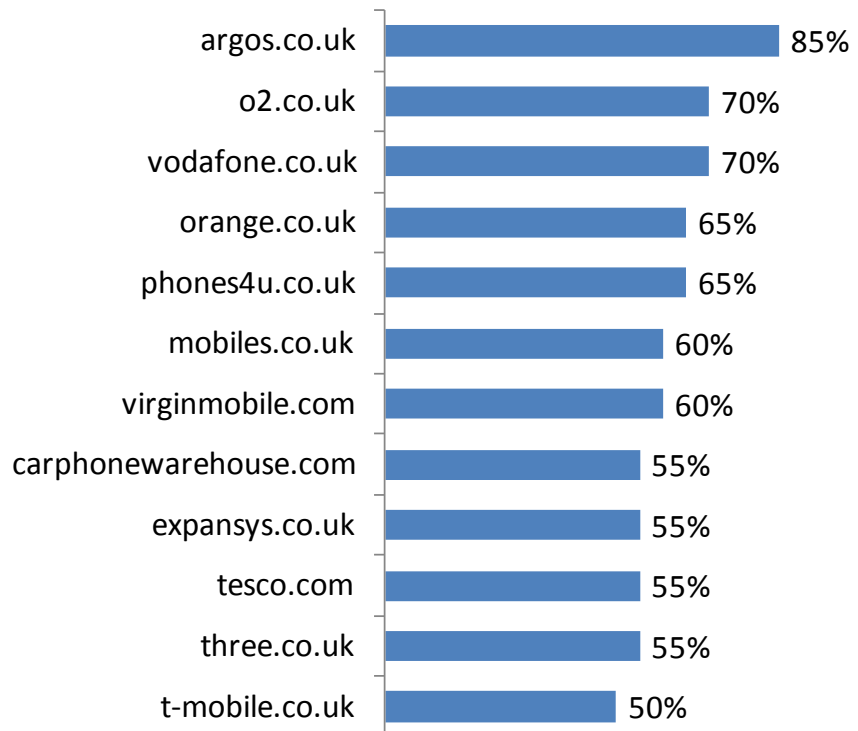


# Usability Benchmark

## Checkout



*Argos took the number one slot in the results table, noticeably ahead of O2 and Vodafone. T-Mobile used an idiosyncratic design which led to a fairly poor customer experience.*



## Checkout Results

Around 45% of users who abandon their shopping basket do so because of the time it took to complete the transaction or failings in the checkout itself (Websurveyor, January 2006). While this figure includes the overall transaction time, checking out is usually the longest part of the process.

In this benchmark group we look at four aspects of sites' checkout pages:

- Login/register
- Billing & delivery details
- Payment details
- Purchase confirmation

For the **login/register** measure we consider whether a site permits checkout without a formal registration, and for customers who have used the site before, whether they are given the chance to log in without re-entering all of their details. Only Argos and Virgin Mobile explicitly invited users to login when starting checkout. Since most other sites did not support the concept of a registered user for purchasing (some did for phone service provision), the lack of mandatory registration is not surprising.



Argos (shown here) and Virgin were the only sites to invite users to sign in when starting the checkout process.

Account sign inClose

Not registered?

Continue to checkout >

You don't have to register to buy on Argos.co.uk.

Want to register? You'll be offered the option to register later in the checkout process.

Already registered?

Why not sign in to speed up your checkout?

Email address:

Password:

(min. 6 characters incl. 2 numbers)

[Forgot your password?](#)

Sign in >

Even when logged in, Expansys required users to enter their full address and contact information.

Billing Address As shown on Bank/Credit card statement: \* = Required field

Company:

Address: \*

City: \*

County:

Post Code: \*

Country:

☐ I want to ship my order to a different delivery address

Contact Information

Email Address: \*   
(In case we need to contact you about your order)

Telephone Number: \*   
(To assist correct delivery)

Billing and delivery details were handled well by many sites. But T-Mobile received a low score for placing its personal details form below the fold and allowing users to click 'Buy now' without seeing it (in this case, nothing appeared to happen).

(1 of 2) The 'Buy now' button was very prominent on this first screen (at 1024 x 768 pixels), clicking it had no apparent effect...

3 Store

Home | 3 Store | Internet & Services | 3 Business

Find a Mobile | Pay Monthly | Skype on 3 | Mobile Broadband | Laptops | Hot Deals | Pay As You Go | Recommend a Friend | Accessories | Help

Checkout

Free standard delivery on everything

Happy with your order? Buy now

Item	One-off cost	
<div> <div>FREE CALLS</div> <div>3 Skypophone S2 on Pay As You Go</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FREE Skype-to-Skype calls forever</li> <li>Plus an extra free sim card to give to a mate</li> </ul> </div>	£69.99	Remove
<div>Do you want a £10 starter top-up with your mobile?</div> <div> <input type="radio"/> Yes (£10 will be added to your total)           <input checked="" type="radio"/> No Thanks         </div>		
<div>When you top up you get:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A bundle of free texts that gets bigger the more you top up</li> <li>A generous allowance of mobile internet access</li> <li>FREE 3-to-3 calls</li> <li>FREE voicemail in the UK</li> <li>FREE Windows Live Messenger</li> </ul>		
<div> <div>Entrust</div> <div>Total cost</div> </div>	£69.99	Buy now

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*(2 of 2) ...until users scrolled down to see a screen full of error messages. (If they did not think to scroll down, they would have been stuck on this page forever.)*

Sites that performed well in this measure used post codes to save typing, although no site had the ideal combination of good page design and easy data entry.

*Argos asked for house name/number and postcode as a simple first step to save typing.*

On average, the benchmarked sites performed slightly better on **payment details**. But even here, there were some frustrating user experience issues. Unusually, the Orange site insisted on knowing the name of the issuing bank for a credit card while Virgin used the same size entry fields for both 2-digit and 4-digit numbers:

*On the Virgin site, the size of the two date fields – month & year – was the same but the instructions said otherwise.*

The use of screen space was again a problem, even though only a small amount of information is needed for credit card processing. O2 failed to accommodate this on a single (1024 x 768 pixel) screen, while showing full top-level headers, navigation and considerable white space:



*O2's credit card form did not fit on a single screen because of a poor use of available space.*

**Purchase confirmation** provides customers with closure, but when poorly designed, can lead to failed orders instead. Carphone Warehouse, for example, succeeded in making the final step in their process look like an order confirmation:

*The heading said 'order summary', it was the last step shown and the 'confirm order' button was below the fold on this Carphone Warehouse page. Customers were quite likely to think they were done.*

Consequently, Carphone Warehouse received the lowest score of the sites benchmarked. Because of other shortcomings, no site achieved a perfect mark, although many were above average.

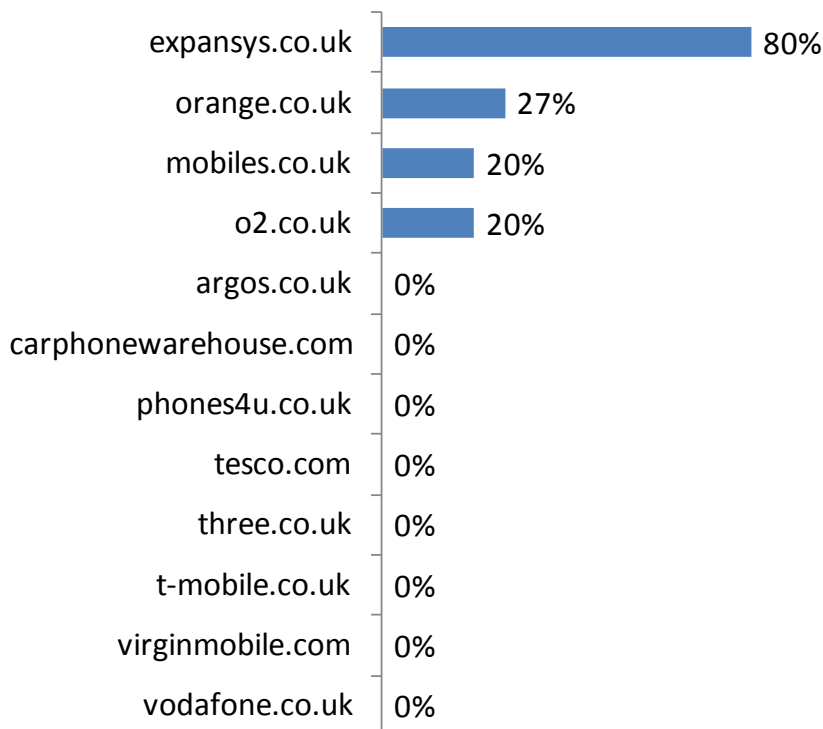


# Usability Benchmark

## Account Management



*The majority of UK mobile phone e-commerce sites did not provide login accounts for purchasing. Customers had to rely on email updates, or more often, ring customer service to track or cancel an order.*



## Account Management Results

For many other e-commerce market segments, customers would have the expectation of being able to log in to manage orders. Of the 12 mobile phone sites benchmarked, a small number offered a limited account-management service for purchases while only Expansys provided a relatively full set of features.

The tasks we considered in this group were:

- Check order progress
- View/modify/cancel recent orders
- Find/reconcile charges

An online facility to check order progress was offered by only four sites. Of these, Orange and O2 used an order tracking page based on order number (see the Orange example, below). In both cases, this relied on customers receiving an email with the appropriate link. The order tracking page was otherwise impossible to find on the web sites.

Order tracking from mobiles.co.uk was a little more sophisticated but poorly realized since a login password was not established during purchase. The web site sent one later by email. However, if the customer had already managed to register for online access, the password was reset.



The Orange order tracking page was impossible to find from the web site. Users had to rely on the order confirmation email. Annoyingly, the order number was not supplied in the link.

Expansys was the only benchmarked site that allowed users to **view, modify or cancel recent orders**. Again, this is a feature that Amazon and other more general e-commerce sites have offered for some time. While Expansys did not permit orders to be modified, viewing or cancelling them was very straightforward.

Expansys was the only benchmarked site that provided order management facilities.

Date	Order reference	Status	Total
15/05/2009	95FQ010EAAC0	Customer Cancelled	£37.42

A task often overlooked by developers is **finding or reconciling charges**. Anyone who is trying to verify a credit card statement may need to do this and it is fairly simple to achieve. A list of orders, total cost (including VAT) and a brief description is all that is required. Expansys had most of this information in the order history panel shown above. However, its omission of an order description (it showed just a reference in the history section) denied it a perfect score. All other sites received a zero score for this measure.

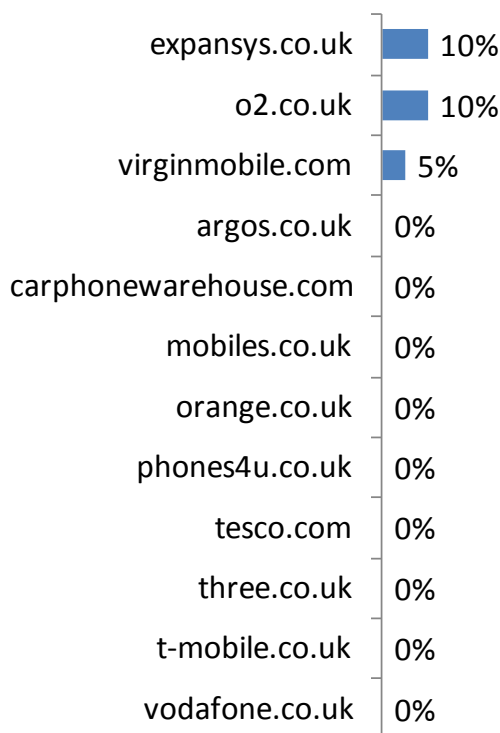


# Usability Benchmark

## Online Support



*The majority of benchmarked sites asked customers to phone with problems or questions, often to 0870 (national rate) numbers. Expansys, O2 and Virgin received some marks for offering online support forums.*



## Online Support Results

In common with the account tasks above (starting on page 55), the online support tasks were also difficult to perform due to a lack of features. The tasks were:

- Deal with delivery delays/problems
- Report damaged/non-functional goods
- Ask support question
- Return goods

None of the benchmarked sites made it possible to do more than view a few question-and-answer (FAQ) pages online. Asking support questions was the only exception, with Expansys and O2 providing forums for customer to leave questions. Virgin offered a simple, automated question and answer facility.

*Many sites failed to provide straightforward advice on late delivery. Here, Expansys did give simple instructions, but customers were required to email or call.*

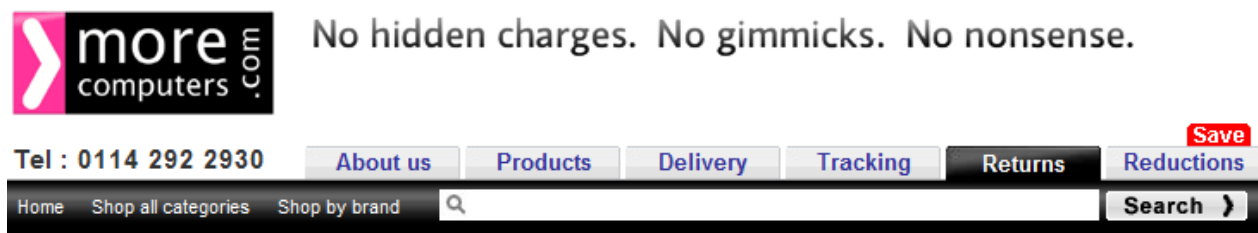
### Report a late delivery

If you have received a shipping confirmation email and the package has not arrived when you expected, please contact [trackorder@expansys.com](mailto:trackorder@expansys.com), or alternatively call +44 (0)161 868 0868.

Consequently all of the benchmarked sites received no points for **dealing with delivery delays/problems** and **report damaged/non-**



**functional goods tasks.** Needless to say this is fairly poor in user and customer experience terms, especially when sites such as Amazon, Dabs and More Computers, to name but a few, offer a full range of online services for these issues.



*For comparison, the easy access to tracking and returns info (with online services) from More Computers is a great improvement on most UK mobile phone sites.*

None of the benchmarked sites allowed customers to **ask a support question** (and get an immediate response) online. Expansys support forums allowed questions to be posted, but users had to register separately. O2 offered an automated question and answer facility that worked well for our test question 'How do I cancel an order?'. However, Virgin's similar service failed with the same question, providing just a list of general billing questions – none of which dealt with cancellation of any kind (see below).

## ABOUT YOUR BILL

**Need some help understanding your bill? Then you've come to the right place**

*Virgin's 'Your questions answered service' provided a list of spurious results when asked 'How do I cancel an order?'.*

**MOST ASKED QUESTIONS**

- [What is Virgin Mobile doing about the reduction in VAT?](#)
- [How much are prices being reduced because of the VAT reduction?](#)
- [How can I see my bill?](#)
- [When do I get my bill?](#)
- [Why do I get my bill on one day and my airtime package on another?](#)
- [Can I change the date my Direct Debit is taken?](#)
- [Why is my bill higher than my package?](#)
- [When will my payment be taken?](#)

**ASK US A QUESTION**

Please type your question in full, for example:  
Where can I get an E-Top up card?

  
**ASK**

Got a question about billing?

→ [Read more](#)

It was also not possible to **return goods** online with any of the benchmarked sites. Virgin's automated Q&A service asked if we would like to buy a Virgin Mobile phone when we asked 'How do I return a phone?' while other sites were more forthcoming in providing instructions to call customer service. Again, returning orders using an online form is common in other e-commerce market segments – see the example from Amazon, below.



*Amazon makes returning  
goods very  
straightforward, even  
providing return postage  
(although this is free only if  
the goods are faulty).*

[Returns Support Centre](#) > **Select Items for Return**

The items for this order are displayed below. Please follow the return instructions that are displayed for each item. For more details on what can be returned, please see our [Return Policy](#).

**Order #: 202-0914273-7692303**

[View Order Summary](#)

**Item(s) shipped on 24 Jun 2009** < Return window will close on 1 Aug 2009 ([What's this?](#)) >

☐ 1 of **ArmA 2 (PC DVD)**

Condition: new

Sold by: Amazon EU S.a.r.L.

Reason for return:

[Continue](#) 





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