



ELIAS NISSILÄ

Creating a functional and aesthetic online store for art print sales

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>This thesis report discusses theoretical aspects concerning online store functionality and aesthetics. This thesis work also includes the creation of an online store which is used to sell artwork prints. The aim of this work was to gain a theoretical background through research to help in the creation of the online store.</p> <p>Multiple sources concerning the topics of the thesis were researched to get justification for the decisions that were made during the online store creation. Qualitative research was implemented by reading books and online articles that discussed E-commerce, web design and various other topics that relate to this work. A website building tool called Squarespace was used to create the online store.</p> <p>Simply creating an online store in the current E-commerce atmosphere is not a challenging task. With the help of website building tools like Squarespace, one can create a fully operating online store without any coding skills. However, many factors can affect the success of an online store, even the color of the store pages can be a crucial element that affects the customer's behavior.</p> <p>The online store and all its pages were created on this thesis work. However, some legal and logistical aspects that are required for the online store to be functional for the customers are still unfinished. Therefore, the online store will not be published at the same time as the thesis report.</p>		
<p><u>Key words</u> electronic commerce, aesthetics, user experience, shops, websites</p>		

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1 INTRODUCTION

This project-based thesis includes the creation of an online store. The online store will be selling art prints of artworks made by the author of this thesis, Elias Nissilä. The theoretical part of the thesis will discuss various aspects concerning E-commerce and online store design. The empirical part of the thesis will include the implementation of the theory on the online store that will be created. The goal of the thesis is to establish an international sales channel for a trade name to sell art prints effectively internationally.

2 PURPOSE AND PROJECT OBJECTIVES

2.1 Purpose

There are many ways for artists to sell and market their artworks. Creating a personal online store is one of those ways. The purpose of this thesis is to create an online channel for an artist to be able to reach the potential customers from anywhere on the globe. Establishing this sales channel online has the potential to bring a continuous flow of income for the artist. This thesis will also serve as a guide for people or businesses who are planning to create an online store.

2.2 Objectives

The objective for this thesis is to create an online store that is functional while being visually pleasing and aesthetic. The online store should have everything needed to make the customer able to order artwork from it. Simple store navigation, shopping

cart, product selections and customer service will be included on the website. To create a pleasant customer experience for the webstore visitor, various articles and books on web design will be researched. The goal is to have a thorough theoretical background for the online store implementation. The theory that will be used as a model for the thesis is part 3 “Website Functionality and Aesthetics” from a book “Starting an Online Business All-In-One for Dummies”, by Shannon Belew, and Joel Elad. As the online store that is created in the thesis will be selling art, it makes sense that the store itself should be artistic and therefore visually pleasing and aesthetic.

The online store will be created using Squarespace, which is a platform that can be used to create online stores and websites. Similar color schemes that are used in the artworks, will be used on the online store to create a sense of unity between the products and the sales platform. A logo will be created for the store and the brand itself, to create a visual image for the brand. The navigation design of the website will be done in a manner that considers the psychology of online shopping to ensure that the usability of the online store does not hinder the potential sales that could be achieved through the store.

2.3 Research questions

The research questions used for this thesis describe the goal of finding out what makes an online store functional and aesthetic. Online store functionality consists of multiple essential parts that make the store functional. Therefore, the research questions include finding out what those essential parts are. The research questions also need to include the aesthetic aspect of the online store creation, because an important goal for this project is to create an aesthetic online store. The research questions are listed below.

How to create a functional and aesthetic online store?

- What are the essential parts for an online store to be functional?
- What makes an online store aesthetic?

2.4 Project tasks

The project task on this thesis is to use an E-commerce platform to create the online store. The platform that will be used on this project is going to be Squarespace. The creation of the online store will be happening concurrently with the writing of the thesis. However, the website will not be open for customers immediately after the thesis is finished as the boundaries of the project include many steps that need to be handled before the products can begin to be sold through the online store.

2.5 Boundaries of the project

There are many steps to create a functioning online store to sell products. This thesis will mainly focus on the creation of the online store itself. Therefore logistics, printing, marketing, and financial aspects will not be thoroughly discussed in the thesis. Legal aspects, like terms & conditions and privacy policy will not be handled in this thesis. Including the entire process in the thesis would make the core of the thesis unclear and the thesis too broad in scope.

2.6 Conceptual framework “Creating online store Printelias”

The conceptual framework “Creating online store Printelias” was created to include the main topics included in this thesis. Various concepts concerning E-commerce and online store functionality as well as aesthetics are present in the framework. The idea of the conceptual framework is to combine the functional and the aesthetic into a working online store with the help of Squarespace. The concepts that are discussed in the functionality research of the thesis have been listed under “functionality” in the framework, and the same thing was done for the aesthetic part. Image 1 below is the conceptual framework for this thesis.



Image 1. Conceptual framework "Creating online store Printelias"

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is a research method that focuses on understanding and interpretation, rather than the analyzation of vast quantities of data. Qualitative

research uses words rather than numerical values as a basis for the reliability of the research which makes it more focused hypotheses rather than something that can be measured with data. Qualitative research is more flexible than Quantitative research which focuses on numbers and data. (Hammersley 2013, 1&10.)

Qualitative research method will be used in this thesis, as the implementation of the project is an online store. Flexibility is important, because the online store has potential to grow and change with time according to the behavior of the customers. Quantitative data about the usability of the online store will be available after the site has been published, in the web analytics of the online store. The research was done by reading various books, online articles, and web pages.

3.2 Project-based thesis

Simply a project report is not enough to be called a thesis. However, by incorporating theory and research to a project report, the requirements for a project-based thesis are fulfilled. For example, in this project-based thesis, simply creating a project report on the creation of the online store would not be sufficient for a thesis. By conducting research on several topics concerning online store creation, and including the theoretical background to the report, it becomes a proper thesis report. (Kananen 2015, 61.)

4 PRINTELIAS

Printelias is the name of the online store that will be created on this thesis. Artwork prints require less workhours per piece, as printing an artwork is much faster than creating each piece by hand. For this reason, using an online sales channel to sell art prints is an appropriate choice, as the supply has potential to reach the demand even if there are multiple daily customers. However, it is not realistic to paint or draw multiple original artworks in one day. That would make it difficult for the supply to meet the

demand in case there were multiple daily customers. As the workhours required to create a single art print are low, it is possible to sell the artworks at a much lower price, which makes them much more available for customers who do not like to spend substantial amounts of money on art. Printelias will be the personal online sales platform that will be used to sell the digital artwork prints created by the creator of this thesis.

It is important for the Printelias online store to be functional, so that customers can quickly browse and easily purchase artwork online. By having a functional and user-friendly online store, the potential customers will not get frustrated with the navigation of the online store and it is more probable for them to finish their order, rather than to lose interest and forget about ordering the artwork they were interested in. As Printelias sells art, the online store experience will be made visually pleasing and aesthetic, to create a brand identity that leans on artistry.

5 E-COMMERCE CONCEPTS

5.1 E-commerce

Electronic commerce, more commonly known as E-commerce is a modern way of selling products and services on the internet. E-commerce is commonly used in context with online stores that sell physical products which are shipped to their customers, but e-commerce also includes services such as Netflix and Spotify, and crowdfunding sites like Kickstarter, as monetary transactions are present in each of these cases. E-commerce has become a widely popular sales method for various kinds of businesses around the globe because there are various pros to running a business partially or completely on the web. (Kotler & Keller 2019, 536.)

There are many areas where online stores have an advantage compared to a physical store. Costs can be saved in salaries of the sales staff, rent of floor space, and some

companies even send their products to their customers straight from their suppliers so there are no warehousing costs either. Online stores are also very convenient for the customers because they can do their product research and purchases simultaneously from the comfort of their homes. The downside to this is that the customers need to wait for the shipping time of the product. Companies that begin working online with a website without a pre-existing firm are called “pure-click companies”, whereas companies that exist before they set up a website are called “brick-and-click companies”. (Kotler & Keller 2019, 536.)

5.2 E-commerce platform

An e-commerce platform is a software tool that enables businesses to manage their online presence thoroughly, and even create an online store from scratch. There are various e-commerce platforms available, and most of them offer a variety of products that offer different services for varying prices. For example, Squarespace which is a widely popular E-commerce platform and a website creation tool, has four different plans that they sell to customers with diverse needs (Website of Squarespace 2020).

Shopify, which is another popular E-commerce platform offers their customers three plans which range from 29\$/month to 299\$/month. The plans usually differ from each other in various aspects. For example, the more expensive Shopify plan lets the merchant control pricing for international customers with a fixed exchange rate with “manual foreign exchange rates”, but the cheapest Shopify plan only has a fixed foreign exchange rate. (Website of Shopify 2020.)

5.3 Domain name

Domain name is the text that is written on the computer’s URL bar when going to a website. A domain name is the online identity of the web store. Therefore, securing a good domain name is an important aspect when creating an online presence. For existing companies, the domain name should match the name of the company as closely as possible. A good domain name includes the following traits.

1. Easy to spell.
2. Simple to remember.
3. Relatively short
4. Contains important keywords.

It is important that the domain name is easy to spell, as it means that the potential customers have an easier time finding you as they will not be spelling the domain name incorrectly. By having a simple to remember domain name, online store visitors can find the page by writing it directly onto the URL bar. However, if a domain name is not simple to remember, and the visitor has not bookmarked the store site, they might have difficulties finding the page. Relatively short domain can make it easy to spell while making it simple to remember. Keywords are words that describe the business of the site, and they also make a site more visible in the search engines. By having a keyword in a domain name, it describes the site's industry while helping it gain visibility. (Belev & Elad, 2017, 140.)

5.4 Web analytics

Web analytics are a tool to monitor the information that goes on in an online store. It is a great asset to gather data of the behavior of the store visitors. Web analytics lets the store manager see if there are improvements to be made to the site judging by the customer behavior. For example, web analytics let the store manager see if the visitors come back, or if they leave the site after seeing the home page. (Website of Squarespace 2020.)

Web analytics give an audience overview to the store manager. Audience overview gives data about how long the website visitor spends on each site, how many different pages they see, how many links they press and even the demographic types of your visitors. Audience overview also gives information about how effectively a site can present information on the pages. (Belev & Elad 2017, 466.)

Data is very appreciated in modern organizations because information is a crucial tool to grasp a clear image of the way that a business is doing. Collecting data is also a great way to perceive trends. Knowing the trends concerning one's business is important, because adapting the business strategy to known trends can be a useful tool.

5.5 Aesthetic web design

The Web is a highly interactive communication tool which makes the user experience incredibly important. When people visit websites, they click buttons and links, write information on forms, and perceive all the auditive and visual stimuli on the website. For this reason, it is important to think of web design as its own form of media rather than try to simulate other media like books for example. Interaction design is the flow that website users follow when they use the site to purchase an item for example. The challenge in web design is to create the site in a manner that the interaction design of each page utilizes the potential that a website can have. This means that the design needs to be done so that the user can easily and quickly navigate the site logically and consistently, without getting disoriented. To create a user-friendly online store, the structure and information on each page should be created in a manner even a new visitor can easily navigate and interact with the store to purchase a product. The correct use of widgets like menus, links, icons, and buttons is a key aspect when creating a user-friendly online store. Positioning and size are important when including widgets on an online store. (Lopuck 2006, 55.)

6 ONLINE STORE FUNCTIONALITY

There are many features in an online store that affect the functionality and the customer experience. These features include quick usability, simple navigation, working links and viewable images, for example. Another important aspect concerning online store functionality is having a mobile-optimized store for visitors using smartphones or

tablets. Overall functionality of an online store affects the user experience greatly. (Belev & Elad 2017, 152.)

Functionality is an essential aspect for the Printelias online store. The customer should easily be able to find various products in distinct categories, and if they decide to purchase a product, they should be able to add it to their shopping cart and order the product from there. Different categories will be included in the store to help the navigation between products. As the artworks will be sold in two different sizes, the customer will be able to choose the size they want with ease. A mobile optimized version will automatically be created for the Printelias online store thanks to Squarespace (Website of Squarespace 2020).

6.1 Platform (Squarespace)

The website building platform that will be used on Printelias online store is Squarespace. Using Squarespace makes it easy to build a beautiful online store because they have many templates to choose from. The templates are all optimized for all devices, so one does not need to create a separate mobile version. Squarespace also has built in SEO-tools and analytics which are important when marketing the website. The analytics section in Squarespace offers a lot of information concerning the website traffic. After conducting research on currently available E-commerce platforms, Squarespace was a good overall option for the Printelias online store. One deciding factor was the fact that they had a campaign that gives students a 50% discount. (Website of Squarespace 2020.)

6.2 Online store navigation

The navigation of an online store should be clear and comprehensible, while providing information and links to all essential pages in the online store (Geest 2001, 147). Customers should be able to easily navigate the online store and use it efficiently (Geest 2001, 156). Therefore, the navigation of an online store should be simple and obvious so that the visitor can perform their tasks by using logic.

6.3 Shopping cart

The shopping cart part of an online store is the page which handles the product transactions. In the shopping cart page customers can indicate the items they want to purchase, and they can also execute the purchasing transaction by giving out their payment information. The merchant offers services in the shopping cart site like payment options, purchase confirmation, shipping options and information (Geest 2001, 73-74).

6.4 Products & Categories

The product category page plays an essential role when trying to get a customer to purchase an item on an online store. It is important to create an online store that makes it easy for people who just want to make a purchase and leave the store. However, the journey of exploration is enjoyable for some customers. The role of the category page is to make navigation through the products easy and quick. An important trait for categories is for them to be obvious so that the customer knows what they are about to browse. (MacDonald 2020.)

6.5 Customer service

E-commerce customer service is the way of aiding customers. This can include helping in making a purchase or resolving issues for example. Customer service is an important aspect of an E-commerce site, and in the current landscape, customers place a lot of value in good service. A quick response time is valuable in E-commerce customer service. Efficient customer service is important for both the customer and the business. (Moore 2020.)

7 ONLINE STORE AESTHETICS

The appearance of an online store is important to the customer similarly as it is in a physical store. Therefore, the theme and the colors of the online store should be made while considering the preferences of the customer. 93% of customers are concerned of the visual appearance of the product they are buying, and the place they buy it from. (Polly 2018.)

An important goal on the creation of the Printelias online store is to make it aesthetic, therefore beautiful and pleasing to use. Because the store will be selling art, it is expected that the online store visitors have an appreciation for visual beauty which makes it important for the user experience of the website itself to be as aesthetic as possible. A goal is to also create a brand image with the help of a logo and color schemes that are repeated in the art as well as in the design of the website.

7.1.1 Colors

The color design of the website will be similar as the artwork, but it is also important that there is enough contrast between the text and the background so that the text will be easy to read. This means that if the background is a dark tone, the text should be a light tone and vice versa. Pastel and soft colors generate a calming impression for the online store which makes them a suitable color scheme for shoppers that carefully consider the purchases they make (Polly 2018).

7.1.2 Purchase button color

Different industries have a different color that is the most popular. In a list of popular shopping websites, red was the most used color overall. The second most popular color was green, and third was blue. However, in online stores that sell clothing, black was the most popular color. (Dobrevá 2016.)

Image 2 below is a visual presentation of how different colors affect North American consumers in different ways.

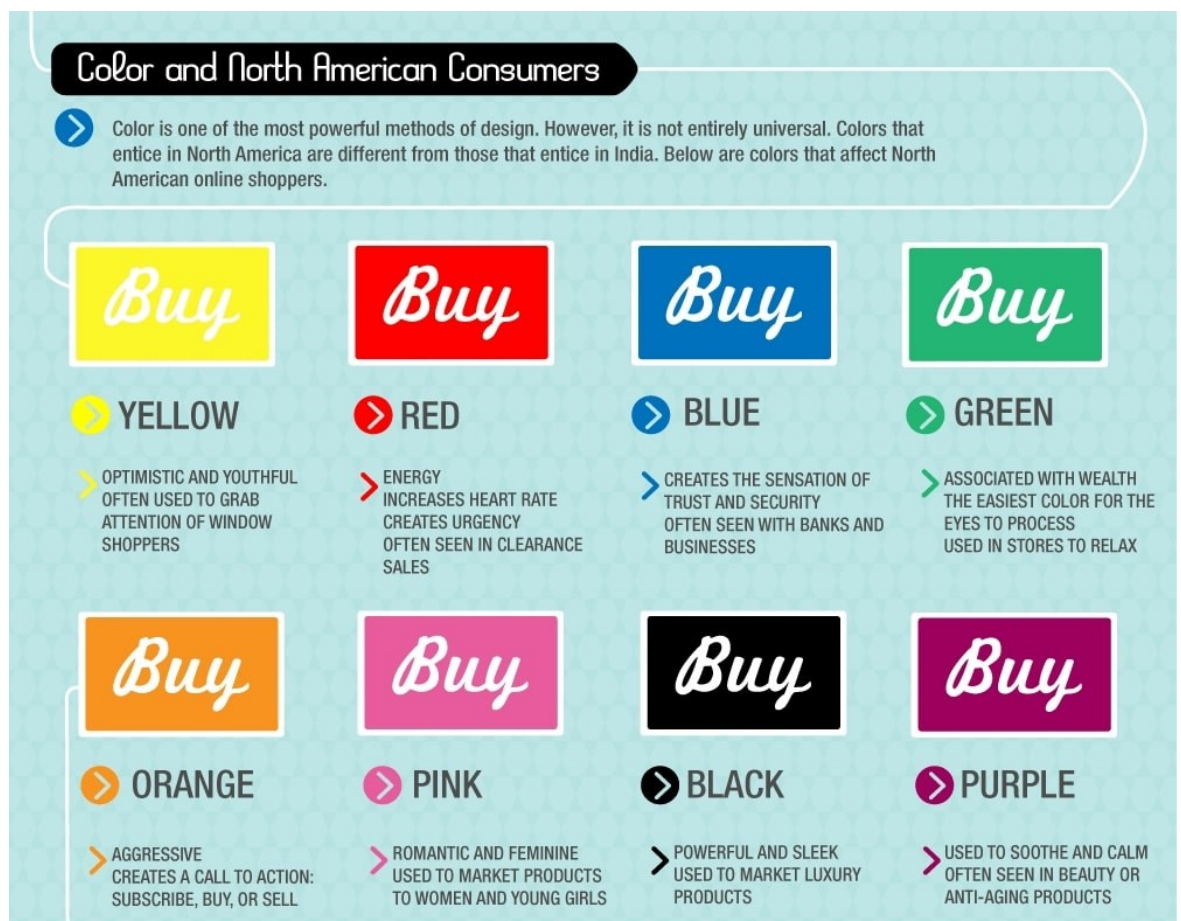


Image 2. Color and North American consumers (Blankenship 2016)

7.1.3 Logo

A logo is a trademarkable brand element that serves to identify and differentiate a brand (Kotler & Keller 2019, Glossary). The Printelias online store can achieve a stronger brand image by having a logo that helps potential customers to identify the brand. Therefore, creating a logo for the Printelias online store early on can serve as a valuable tool on creating a strong brand image. The logo will be designed by the author of this thesis, and it will be displayed in the implementation part of the thesis.

7.1.4 Psychological design

Online stores ought to be structured in a manner that the usability is easy. This means that the order in which the items on the site are presented, is based on their importance. It is also important not to put too much information in one place, because that makes the page look too busy. A busy page can distract the user and make it difficult for them to make the decisions that the merchant wants. Therefore, the homepage and the navigation bar should be as short as possible to make them comprehensible. A minimalistic design makes it easier for the customer to complete a purchase without requiring too many clicks on the online store. (Belev & Elad 2017, 45.)

Based on that, one can conclude that creating an online store with only the essential options without adding various elements that serve no specific function is important to keep the user experience as comprehensible as possible. A minimalistic web design would work well with the task at hand, as the goal is to get the visitors attention to the displayed artworks, rather than unnecessary elements on the online store's design.

8 IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation includes the creation of the online store for art print sales according to the theoretical background research that was done in the theoretical part. The online store will be created in a manner that it is aesthetic and functional for the visitor. The usability of the online store is important to achieve as many sales as possible. Using Squarespace to create the online store makes the creation possible even to a person without notable IT-skills. The end goal is to have the online store up and running to create sales. However, the goal for this thesis is to make the online store finished without publishing it yet, as there are various aspects concerning the business side that need to be taken care of before the store is published. These aspects were discussed earlier in the 'Boundaries of the project'-chapter. To create the finished online store, the goal

is to have a user-friendly navigation, beautiful visuals, products, categories, customer service and a shopping cart in the online store.

The implementation part of this thesis report includes the decisions that were made to create the online store. The reasons for why the decisions were made will also be included here. The online store creation process includes many steps to create a complete online store with a functional and aesthetic customer experience.

8.1 Colors

In E-commerce, different colors are used to invoke different feelings on the viewer. Purple is a color that is often associated with luxury and royalty. Yellow is a color that is associated with youthfulness and happiness. (Schäferhoff 2019.)

Every color has a counterpart that works as a complimentary color, and that is useful to utilize that when creating a color scheme for a website (Connie 2020). As a combination, yellow, and purple are colors that are on the opposite sides of the color wheel which makes them complimenting colors to each other. Yellow and purple as a combination were chosen as the colors for the brand thanks to their separate associated feelings and their ability to work together as complimentary colors. Therefore, yellow and purple will be the main colors used on the website. The combination of yellow and purple is also widely used in the artwork which makes it a good color scheme to use as a brand color scheme to create a sense of unity between the brand and the artwork.

Squarespace gives the option to create color palette that uses three colors, and the software automatically uses the palette to place the colors on different parts of the site to create a site that has high contrast and easy readability. Yellow and purple colors were placed on the color palette on Squarespace, and the colors were placed on the website in the following manner. A lighter tone of yellow and a darker shade of purple were chosen to create more contrast.

8.1.1 Color of the “Add to cart” Button

A black “add to cart” button was chosen. The research indicated that black was the most popular color choice for brands that sell clothing, which means black is a not bad option. Clothes and artwork are both products of visual beauty which makes them close in terms of potential customers. Black was also a color that is present on the online store, but not dominant which makes it suitable for the visual aesthetics of the store. Choosing a red color would have been another option, as red is the most popular color for purchase buttons in popular online shopping sites. However red was not chosen for this online store, because red color is not present in the store in any other place of the store design, so it would have disrupted the overall color scheme. Image 3 below shows how the “add to cart” button looks on a product page of the online store.

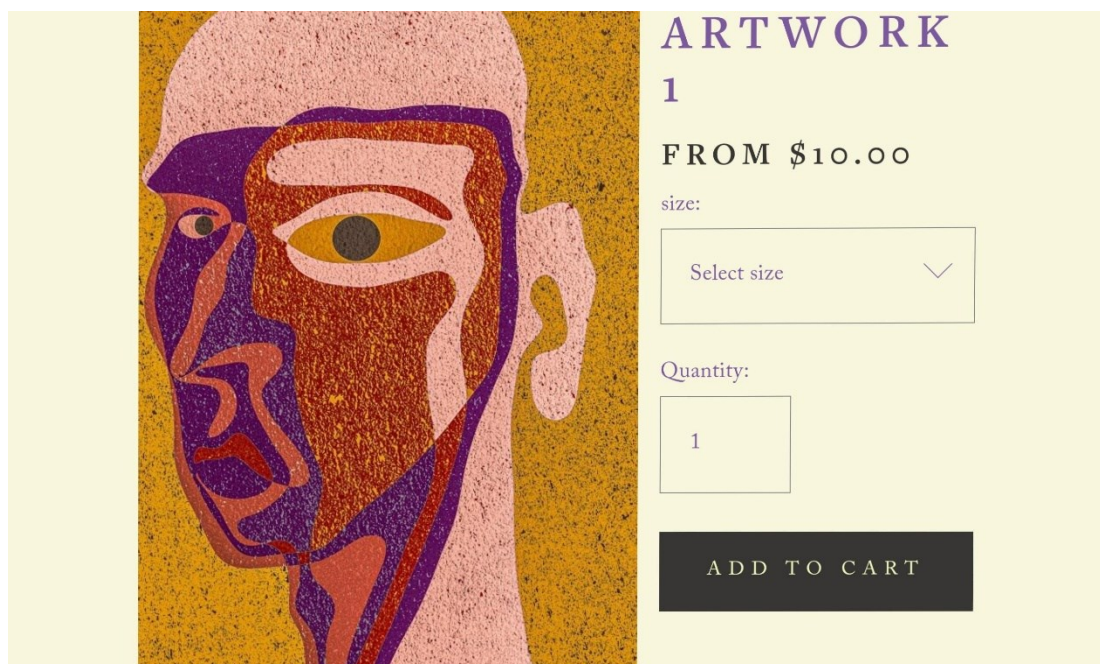


Image 3. A screenshot snip from www.printelias.com “Artwork 1”-product page

8.2 Logo

The design of the logo included weighing out options based on the preference of the website owner. To create a unique logo that is aligned with the brand image, a cartoon-like face that has a similar style as many of the artworks was created. In addition, a sketch of a brush and a pencil were added to the logo to refer to the art creation side

of the brand. After creating the visual part of the logo, the name of the brand was written under the logo. The logo was designed by using software application called Autodesk Sketchbook. After designing the outlines of the logo, colors were added to the logo in a manner that suits the design of the online store. Image 4 below shows how the logo that was designed looks on the online store header.



Image 4. Printelias logo

8.3 Domain

The domain of Printelias online store was easy to decide, since Squarespace subscription included a free domain name for a year. As there was no need to worry about different prices for different domains, the remaining concern was availability. Currently a lot of domain names are already in use as the internet is globally an extremely popular marketplace. However, www.printelias.com was available to be used for the online store. As a Finnish person, most of the websites that I use end in either .fi or .com. Because the Printelias online store will target a global audience, .com was chosen to be used for the domain of Printelias.

8.4 Homepage

The design of the homepage of the store was kept very minimal so that the customer is not distracted away from the artworks. Printelias online store has a header that includes the navigation bar and the logo as well as link icons to social media and the

shopping cart. The header is the same in all the pages in the online store to make navigation easy no matter which page the customer is on.


Under the header, the homepage has an introductory sales slogan: "Your walls deserve art". The slogan refers to the walls in people's homes, which is the most usual place for people to place paintings. Under the slogan there is a sentence that directs customers to make a purchase while referring to the slogan: "Choose your favorite prints here and give your home a visual upgrade".

Under the sales slogans there is a showcase of the artwork and different categories. There are three artworks of three different categories, and under the showcase there is a large black button "BUY NOW" which directs customers to the store page with the products and categories. Another option was to add buttons under all the categories in the showcase, but that made the homepage look more busy and had the potential to distract the customer, so only one button was placed at the bottom of the homepage to direct customers to the products.

At the bottom of the homepage and all the pages there is a footer, that can have information such as contact information. In the case of this online store the footer has the name and city of the artist, and a link to the social media and to the customer service form. The following page of the report includes Image 5 that shows the homepage of Printelias.com.

printelias.com


Home Store Artist Contact




PRINTELIAS

YOUR WALLS DESERVE ART


Choose your favorite prints here and give your home a visual upgrade



ABSTRACT



COLORFUL



BLACK&WHITE

BUY NOW

PRINTELIAS

Artist: Elias Nissilä
Turku Finland

[need help?](#)

Image 5. the homepage of www.printelias.com

8.5 Navigation

A goal was to create the navigation of the website to be easy and efficient. Therefore, a horizontal navigation bar was placed to the header of the online store, and as the header stays on the top of the page on every page in the store, the navigation tool can be used easily on every page of the store. The navigation bar only has essential links to keep the minimalistic design and simple usability. Image 6 below shows how the navigation bar of the online store looks like on the header.

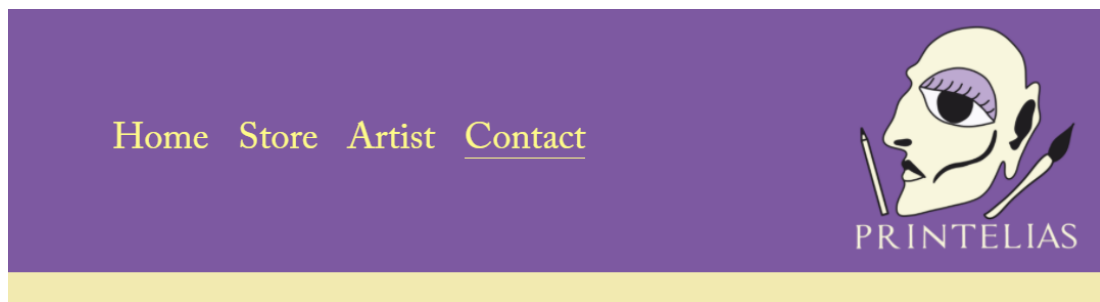


Image 6. A screenshot snip of www.printelias.com header

8.6 Products & Categories, and the store page

All the artwork prints that will be sold on the Printelias online store will be available in A4 and A3 sizes in the product pages of the online store. Every product page in the store requires the customer to choose a size of their choosing if they want to purchase the artwork. The customer can navigate themselves to the product pages by browsing the store page on the site and clicking the artwork they are interested in.

The store page also includes a list of different categories. Currently there are four categories for customers to choose from: Abstract human figures, Abstract shapes, Black&White, and Colorful Art. These categories help customers narrow down the products to their preferences to make the browsing of the products easier. For example, if there is a customer that is only interested in artwork that is black and white, they can

select the Black&White category. The Black&White category includes Abstract human figures and Abstract shapes categories, while excluding all the artworks that have colors other than black and white.

These four categories help the navigation of the customer, because the categories describe the artwork included well. The categories make it possible for customers to filter out artwork options that they might want to exclude. For example, if a customer wants to buy an artwork in black and white, it is easy for them to choose the right category.

The product placement strategy will be done based on the popularity of the products. In the beginning the artworks that have had most attention on social media will be placed to be the first products that the store visitor sees. In the future it is also possible to use the statistics from the web analytics to promote the best-selling artworks. Image 8 on the following page shows how the store page of the online store is seen before choosing a category.



Image 8. A screenshot of the www.printelias.com store page

8.7 Shopping cart

The shopping cart of the online store can be found from the right end of the site header. After adding an item or many items to the shopping cart, the customer can adjust the quantity of the chosen products. The total cost of all the items in the shopping cart is also visible before continuing the purchase. When a customer decides to go through with a purchase, they can press the checkout button, which will direct them to the payment. The payment function has yet to be added to the store because some financial aspects have not been established yet. Image 9 below shows how the shopping cart looks when a customer has added a product to it.

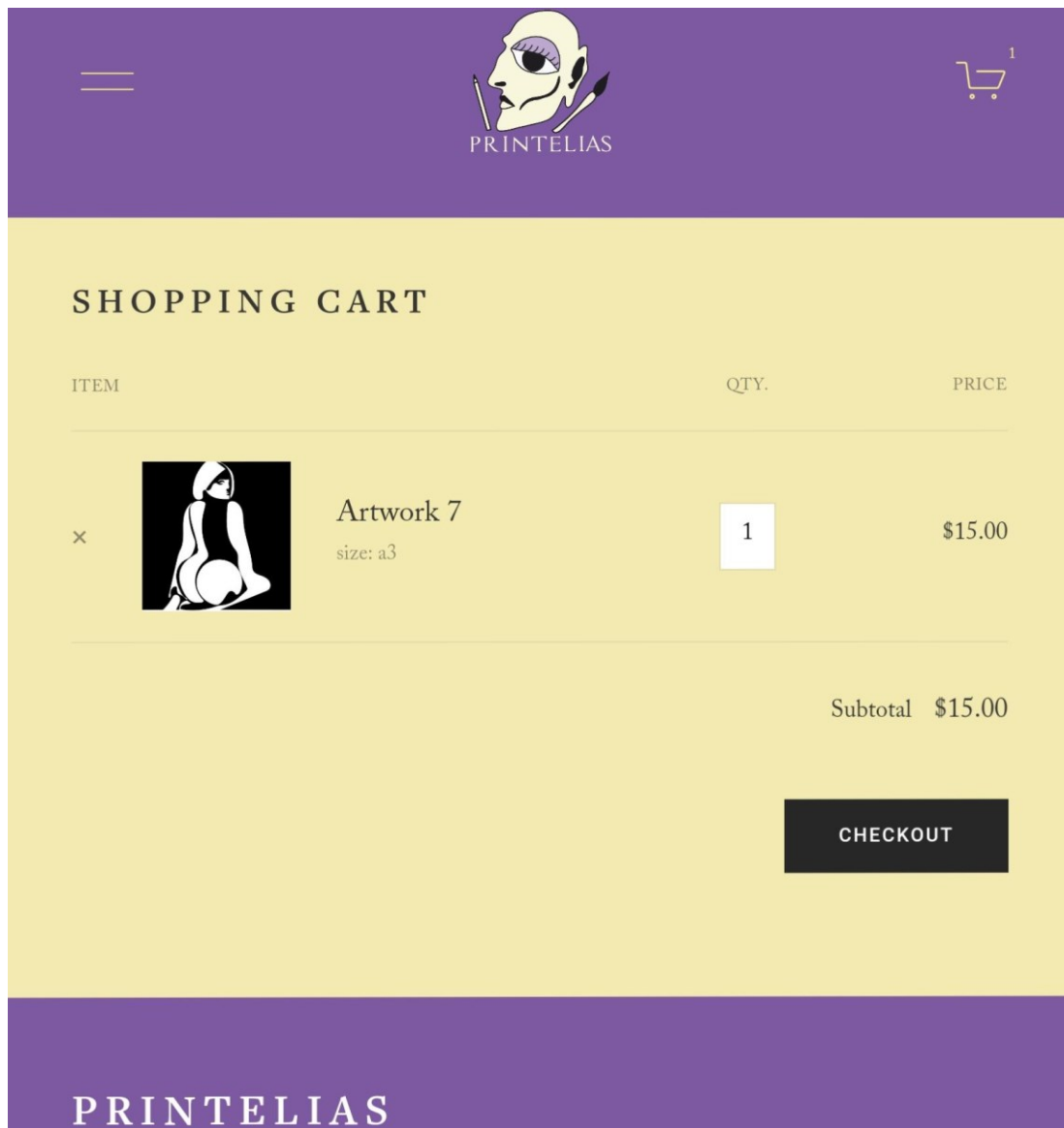


Image 9. A screenshot snip of the mobile version of www.printelias.com shopping cart page

8.8 Web analytics of Printelias

Using Squarespace as the platform will give the Printelias online store a lot of data about the traffic on the website. The web analytics will give information about how the customers found the store, which products are most popular, and how the customers are navigating the website. By using the data provided by the web analytics, it is possible to adapt the website and the marketing strategies according to the behavior of the customers. For example, boosting the visibility of a product that is very

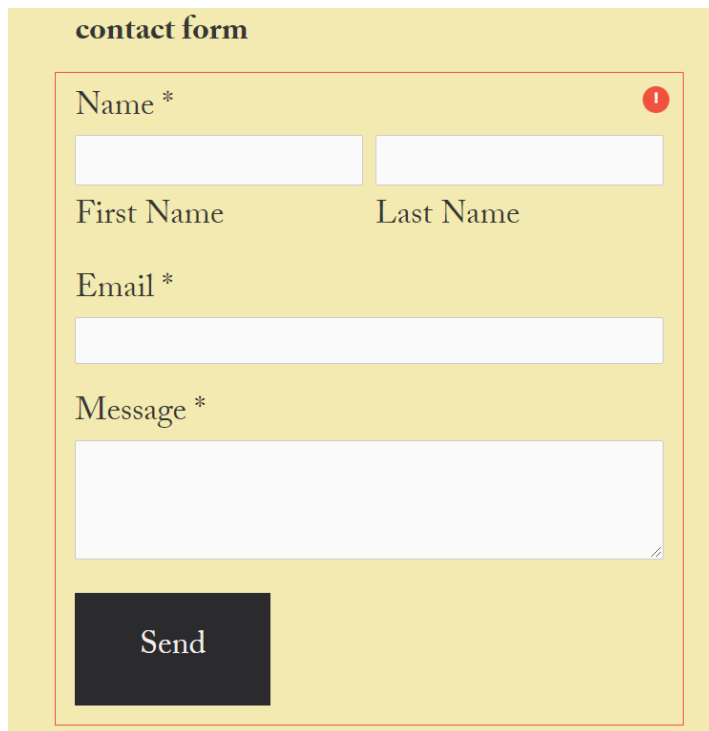
popular, or adding more budget to a marketing channel that has proved to bring most traffic.

8.9 Customer service

The customer service page on the online store will be executed by using a form. The support page on the navigation bar will open a contact form that the customer can fill in case they want to contact the merchant. The contact form is a good customer service option for the Printelias online store, as it requires little effort, but it lets the customer ask for assistance quickly without needing to draft an email manually. The message from the contact form will automatically be sent to the vendor's email.

In the beginning, the online store will also have personal contact information of the merchant on the customer service page, to make problem solving faster in the beginning of the store. In case the online store traffic gains a lot of volume, and the contact information results in continuous phone calls to the merchant, the information will be removed, and the contact form will remain as the sole customer service method.

Image 7 below shows the contact form. First the visitor gives their information. After that the customer writes their message which is sent to the email of the vendor.



The image shows a contact form titled "contact form" on a light yellow background. The form is enclosed in a thin red border. It contains the following elements:

- Name ***: A label with an asterisk and a red exclamation mark icon. Below it are two white input boxes for "First Name" and "Last Name".
- Email ***: A label with an asterisk. Below it is a single wide white input box.
- Message ***: A label with an asterisk. Below it is a large white text area with a small cursor icon at the bottom right.
- Send**: A dark grey rectangular button with the word "Send" in white text.

Image 7. A screenshot snip of the www.printelias.com customer service page's contact form

9 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

9.1 Product images

Currently the images that display the products only include the digital version of the artwork that will be printed. However, in the future as the products will go for sale as the online store is published, the goal is to have both the digital file, as well as a picture of the print itself on the products screen. By having a picture of the printed-out paper on the product screen, the customer can see exactly how the artwork they want to purchase looks when it arrives.

9.2 More options

The goal is to develop the online store in the future to give more customization options for the customers. For example, by outsourcing some of the printing to a company with an ability to produce large canvas prints. Some customers could possibly be interested in paying a larger price for a larger and sturdier canvas print. More options could be added by having customers be able to decide colors for the existing artworks to make their favorite prints to be more fitting to the color schemes in their home.

9.3 Original artworks

Many physically painted and drawn unique artworks are made by the artist. A lot of these original artworks are also for sale. In the future, a section might be added to the online store to boost the sales of these paintings and drawings to bring more income and satisfy the need of the customers who want to buy something unique and support the artist.

9.4 Adapting to statistics

After the online store will begin getting traffic, the analytics tool will begin to provide information of the customer behavior. After gaining a lot of data on the statistics, it is possible to compare the values to the standards of the industry and make assumptions based on that. For example, if the store visitors go on the product page, but rarely add items to the cart, changing the color or the placement of the "add to cart" button could be changed to see if the statistics improve.

9.5 Legal aspects

There are legal issues that need to be taken into consideration before publishing the online store. As customers are required to give information while making a purchase from an online store, the vendor should let the customer know about how that

information will be used. This is called General Data Protection Regulation, or GDPR for short. GDPR is one legal aspect that will be included in the Printelias online store before publishing. (Website of Tietosuoja 2021.)

Return policy is another legal aspect that will be included in the online store before publishing. Online stores are required to include an option for the customer to return the product in case it is unsatisfactory. However, the return policy can differ between different stores. Therefore, it is important to include the return policy information to Printelias.com. (Website of Lainasto 2021.)

10 CONCLUSION

The creation of the online store Printelias was successfully created during this thesis project. However, some aspects like logistics are still unfinished during the time of the completion of this thesis report. Therefore, the online store is not published for customers yet. The research done for the thesis project handled online store functionality and aesthetics. The goal was to create an online store that is easy and pleasing to use, which meant that the user experience for the store visitors should be enjoyable.

The research done for the thesis project not only assisted in the creation of the online store, but the brand image as well. The creation of the logo and choosing purple and yellow for the brand color scheme gave Printelias an identity as a brand. The combination of the purple and yellow work well, and the research implied that both of those colors have feelings associated to them that suit the brand image. Yellow is associated with youthfulness and happiness, and purple is associated with luxury and royalty (Schäferhoff 2019).

The research questions will be answered below:

- What are the essential parts of an online store to be functional?

1. Easy navigation through different pages and product catalogs.
2. Customer service in case the customer requires help in making a purchase for example.
3. A shopping cart where the customer can view the products they have added there and continue to make their purchase.

- What makes an online store aesthetic?

Online store aesthetics include the visual parts of the user experience as well as the usability of the online store. An aesthetic online store has good usage of color and comprehensible usability that does not require countless clicks. An aesthetic online store does not look busy, which means it is minimalistic and does not have many unnecessary elements.

In conclusion, creating an online store is not an extremely challenging task in the current digital climate, thanks to various E-commerce platforms like Squarespace. The platforms make it easy to create an online store that is both functional and aesthetic, but the decisions that affect the outcome are made by the creator of the online store. However, just the platform itself is not enough to start an online store as the merchant needs to create the brand, availability of products and customer service for example.

11 DISCUSSION

I managed to answer the set research questions for this thesis, however as the research questions can be interpreted in many ways, someone else might have an answer that differs from mine. Creating a functional and aesthetic online store required research on what makes online stores functional and aesthetic. I created the online store in that manner by doing the research.

By having chosen the qualitative research method, I saved time and effort. Most things that include web design and online customer behavior are constantly studied around

the world. Therefore, it was more effective to research information that had already used the vast amount of quantitative research concerning the subject at hand.

As the thesis project was made for a personal business, an excessive amount of research was not done. Processing the information while doing the research and quickly concluding on what to do in terms of the online store was possible because there was no customer who I needed to assure with thorough arguments backed by research.

The research and the work done on the online store and brand itself was especially useful in creating a brand image early on. The creation of the logo and the brand color scheme were the first steps in the journey to becoming a brand with a personality.

The results of the project implementation are satisfactory. However, the boundaries of the project included many steps that are essential to publish the store. Many of the steps are still undone, like getting a tradename and taking care of logistics, therefore unfortunately the online store will not be open for customers yet.

All the steps that were within the boundaries of the project were taken care of during the thesis work. Therefore, an online store was created for a brand from scratch. And not only is the online store functional and easy to use, it also is aesthetic. Using Squarespace as online store creation tool is what made the online store creation very practical. Therefore, researching and using the benefits that Squarespace supplies can be a useful aspect even after publishing the store.

During the creation of this thesis, I have learned a lot about online store creation, starting a business, and writing a report. I have also learned about my personal weaknesses and strengths. Most interesting topic I learned about during this project was online store creation and web design. I can see myself being interested in these topics in the future as well and possibly see myself working on projects that include web pages, e-commerce and digital user experience.

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