

Ordering Senior Portraits Online Usability Study

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The senior portrait proof selection and ordering process is a senior-parent team effort. Seniors lead in selection of proofs, parents advise and have approval of the final order. The user experience with the current website allowed users to choose their proofs and order their packages with few hiccups. The dynamic of having two people looking at the site rather than one facilitated the easy flow. In this study, every senior-parent pair successfully completed their order. The three biggest obstacles to complete an order were locating the url, customer # and access code, determining which package to select and resolving error messages. The majority of participants preferred online ordering to other methods of ordering their proofs. The advantages of convenience, ease and speed were weighed against the ability of in-person studios to provide guidance through the ordering process as well as “touch ups” to specific areas of a photograph.

PARTICIPANTS

The usability study was held on September 20, 2005 in 5 one hour sessions from 4:00 PM to 9:00 PM. Participants were senior-parent pairs, seniors and their parents. 4 were mother-daughter pairs, 1 was a father-son pair.

3 seniors had already taken their senior photos before being invited to participate in the study. Of these three, 2 had taken their photos at Steve Lucas Studios, one had used Petersons. The reason most selected their portrait studio was the recommendations of friends, other seniors or their siblings had taken their photos at the studio in prior years. 2 seniors had not yet taken their senior portraits prior to the invitation.

All participants had their photos taken a week prior to this study at Lifetouch's studios and were given their proofs during the study after a brief introduction and a few questions.

Once given the proofs, the senior-parent pairs were directed to complete an order online. Before, during and after the ordering process they were observed and answered questions.

Prior ECommerce Experience

With the exception of one parent, both seniors and parents had prior and recent experience purchasing on the Internet.

Senior Parent Online Buying Relationship

When the senior shops on the Internet, 4 of 5 senior-parent pairs described their Internet purchasing behavior as the senior locating the goods or service and then asking the parent to approve the final purchase. 1 senior has her own credit card and can order without parental permission, but in most cases, even this senior consults with her parent before making a purchase.

In one case, the Dad approves all Internet purchases.

All 5 parents said they would allow their son or daughter to order by themselves using their credit card.

Preferable Method of Ordering

3 of the 5 senior-parent pairs were asked how they would order their senior portraits. Two of the parents mentioned they would simply fill out the forms and mail it in. One parent and all three seniors mentioned online as a method they'd use to order. Interestingly enough, the three seniors and parents mentioned online without being told there was an online method available.

When asked about online ordering, one parent commented, "I assume all options on a piece of paper are available online."

RESULTS

Picking up Proofs

Parents or seniors said they would pick up the proofs at the studio, depending on the schedule and availability of the senior and parent. Some studios require that the senior and parent schedule a time to come into the studio to look at the proofs, rather than pick them up and take them home. All three seniors who had taken their senior photos prior to the study invitation went to the studio accompanied by their Mom. One included her grandmother.

Proofs in the Mail

If and when portraits come in the mail, 5 out of 5 parent-seniors say that Mom, the first to get to the mail, would typically open the proofs first. One parent said she would ask her daughter permission before opening them. 4 out of 5 parents said they would alert their senior the portraits had arrived either by phone or in person. Only the male senior and his family said they would simply leave the photos on the counter for all the family to see.

Senior Review

Once the senior received the photographs, all the senior females said they would look at the proofs alone. 2 of the senior females said they would then show them to their friends next and the other 2 senior females mentioned they would look at the proofs with their Mom next. One senior female said she would drive to her friend's house and show them to her friend after looking at them by herself.

Decision on Proofs

Seniors either look at proofs alone, with friend or with parents, but when the senior orders, he/she looks at photos and packages with parents – they order together.

Mom's opinion holds tremendous sway not only in selection of poses, but also in selection of packages, add ons and ultimately placing the order.

In a very simplistic way, seniors make the final decisions on poses, parents make the final decisions on packages and payment.

Draw Your Own Web Page

4 out of the 5 senior-parent pairs, a total of 8 people, were asked to draw a picture of the first web page they would expect to see when they went online to order their proofs.

2 of the 4 parents included a login feature

All 4 seniors and 3 of 4 parents included promotional photos on the web page. One senior included photos of the packages available on the page.

5 of 8 included the word "Order" on their page.

4 of the 8 included an option that implied looking at your photos - either "Review Proofs", "View", "Order Your Pictures" and "Look at Your Pictures"

2 parents included menu options for Review proofs, pick poses or packages and pay.

3 of 8 put the word Prestige at the top of the page, 5 of 8 put the word Lifetouch. The "Lifetouch" designation was most likely due to having their portraits taken at "Lifetouch Studios" a week prior to the study.

Some interesting features in their drawings included:

- Crop/Change color of photos
- Shipping Info
- Contact Us
- List of Other Products available – Family Portraits, etc ...
- View Samples of Our Pictures

Security Expectations

All parents were concerned about the accessibility of their children's photos on the site.

Parents expressed concern for privacy and security and felt their senior photos should be protected.

"I don't want my daughter's face on the Internet."

9 out of 10 expected login and passwords on the site. 1 parent felt that while the privacy of the photos was important, a password and login should not be important in paying for the photos. This parent cited the case of purchasing airline tickets online – you need a credit card, but not necessarily a username or password.

Sharing Photos

All participants had some interest in sharing photographs, whether with family or friends.

4 of the 4 senior female –parent pairs thought sharing would be a valuable feature of the site. They mentioned they would share photos with friends or families.

One parent wondered why you would buy photos if you could share them.

Two parents thought sharing would be wonderful and asked how much it would cost.

The one senior male-parent pair did not see value in sharing although the parent said that his daughter would probably like the feature.

One senior pointed out that he would simply right click to copy the photo then attach it to an email or instant message if he wanted to share so he didn't need any special application to do so.

Image Manipulation Features

When asked and in two cases before they were asked, participants mentioned image manipulation features they would find valuable. Some of these features mimicked image manipulation they had experienced or observed at Lifetouch's studios when they had their portraits taken.

4 of the 5 pairs mentioned the ability to change backgrounds.

4 of the 5 pairs mentioned the ability to change photos from color to black and white or sepia tone and vice versa.

2 of the 5 pairs mentioned the ability to change or add soft focus.

One mentioned the ability to "touch up" the pictures for extra cost. She mentioned that the photographer she had used for her senior portraits would "touch up" or airbrush photographs, removing tan lines, etc ...

Images for Other Uses

One parent mentioned the ability to use the photo for resumes or school applications.

One senior mentioned the ability to send the photo of your choice to your high school yearbook.

Locating the URL for Prestige

When asked what url they would enter into the browser to order online, the participants dug through the print materials they were given.

While only one of the 5 pairs never found the correct address, only one found the url right away. The other 3 sorted through their proofs and documents looking for the address. Some looked on the envelope; several looked at the bottom and back of their photographs. Several also looked at the order form.

Two of the seniors said they would google the site typing in "Lifetouch." One parent and two seniors said they would type "lifetouch.com" or "prestige.com".

Driving

In 4 out of 5 senior-parent pairs, the senior operated the computer as they went through the online ordering process. Only in the first pair, the parent drove, but that may have been due to the fact that for this senior-parent pair, the facilitator pushed the computer in front of the parent.

Regardless of who was driving, both senior and parent were very much engaged in the process, each pointing out items on the page. Sometimes one would search the web page while the other would go through print materials looking for information.

Ability to Order Online

All five participants were able to successfully complete their order online. While there were occasional stumbles and confusion for some participants, there was never angst or frustration.

Additionally, the application did not falter or crash.

Also, 4 out of 5 participants went through the ordering process in its intended order without variance. One participant bounced around and examined many of the options in the site. This participant mentioned that she typically liked to browse through a website to see what options were available, then go back and order.

Senior Portraits Login Page

All participants quickly clicked on the Create Account button after reviewing this page. Only one parent was slightly befuddled, but the senior quickly pointed out that they needed to create an account.

Create a New Account Page

All participants quickly completed this page.

Add Access to Seniors Page

While all participants completed this page, two participants had difficulty locating their Access code. Two participants found the Customer # at the bottom of the proofs, but had difficulty locating their access code. For one participant, the facilitator had to point out where the access code was for them to continue.

One parent pointed out that the printed card that accompanies the proofs lists the Customer Number first, then the Access Code which is opposite the order on the web page.

Welcome to Prestige Portraits Online

All participants clicked on the View Poses button with little hesitation.

Poses Page

All participants selected Favorites and clicked the Continue button.

This comment from a senior sums up how participants experienced this page, "Just pick them – the next one is probably to order."

Participants sometimes had difficulty associating the proofs they had selected in the packet with the images they viewed on the site. Two participants

recommended adding the Pose # below each photo for better correlation between the physical proofs and the images online. Two participants also commented how the proofs they received were of much higher quality than the digital images they viewed online, which gave them confidence that the final product would resemble their proofs rather than the online quality.

Three participants tried the Zoom feature.

Package Page

4 of the 5 participants had issues with the Package Page. Only the participant who had browsed package information from the print material and had already narrowed down his choices quickly proceeded through this page.

Some comments included:

“What are all these checks for?”

“Let’s skip this step”

“Woah, that’s a lot of information”

“Too much like a spreadsheet.”

To better understand the packages, 4 of 5 participants referred back to their print materials.

Once participants understood the purpose and function of the page, 4 out of 5 participants spent several minutes trying to determine what they wanted to order. In one case, the participants had spent nearly 10 minutes on the Package Page and due to time constraints, the facilitator had to prompt the participant into selecting a package to continue.

3 out of 5 participants recommended that the page more closely resemble the print materials.

“List package names with descriptions like the print materials”

“Easier to look in the book, easier to visualize in the book.”

2 of the 5 participants left this page without selecting a package looking for other options. One chose the Help option. Another simply clicked the Next button without selecting a package. Both eventually returned to the Package page and selected a package.

Apply Poses Page

All participants enjoyed this page and quickly figured out how to click and drag images into the open slots.

All participants worked solely with those images they had selected as favorites. None of the participants reverted to see all the poses in the left hand column.

Two participants wanted to “delete” images they had put in some of the open slots. Both quickly determined that pasting over these images accomplished the same result as deleting them.

It was very time consuming for one participant who ordered 80 wallets to fill all the wallet slots and this senior-parent pair found this a bit cumbersome.

One parent commented she was not adept at clicking and dragging.

Two participants viewed the Design options associated with wallets. Both participants looked for further explanation of these Designs and accessed the Pop Up page, but did not find the page helpful. Later one participant said “This is just referring to the type used.”

A La Carte Page/ Add On Page

Two participants mentioned it was confusing at first to see another person’s photo in the A La Carte and Add On page. Other participants also were a bit perplexed at first by these pages, needing to scroll through them to understand the purpose of the page.

All participants however, determined the purpose and function of this page and were able to select additional products or not, then continue.

When selecting Add Ons, there was no indication of Poses already selected for previous packages. One participant didn’t remember which pose she had selected when selecting poses for her Add On wallets.

Some comments include:

“Hey Riley, you turned into a woman.”

“It would be nice if this was my daughter’s face.”

“That would be good for a senior party, but it is too expensive.”

Shipping Page

All participants quickly completed this page.

Shopping Cart Page

Two participants encountered errors on their Shopping Cart page. Both of these participants were still looking for the Proceed to Checkout or Continue button, despite these errors being posted.

Both errors centered around poses being incorrectly applied to package slots. In both cases, more poses than were allowed by the package or Add On were selected.

In both cases, after some study, the senior-parent pair eventually found the error, corrected it and continued.

Two senior-parent pairs found unwanted items in their shopping carts. They simply deleted the items by setting a quantity of zero and continued.

Payment Page

All participants quickly completed this page.

Place Your Order Page

All participants reviewed their order then clicked the “Place Your Order” button.

Confirmation Page

All participants quickly completed this page.

One parent mentioned he would like the option of being able to print out the Order and Confirmation.

Reasons and Benefits Of Ordering Online

All participants felt the ordering process made sense, were comfortable ordering online and felt the password, login and security features were appropriate and adequate.

One participant commented, "The website didn't require anything extra to lookup. You were given everything you needed."

Participants pointed out the following benefits for ordering online with Prestige:

- 3 participants mentioned ordering online was faster; there were no trips back and forth to the studio.
- 3 participants commented ordering online was more convenient; it was not necessary to make appointments or coordinate multiple schedules. Online ordering made the senior proofs more accessible.
- 2 participants noted ordering online has built in checks and controls to prevent the ordering of extra poses vs. mailing. "It was very clear what you were ordering, what you were getting."
- 1 participant mentioned that you can take your time ordering online, there is less time pressure than sitting in a photographer's studio.
- 2 participants felt ordering online was easier than filing out the form.

One participant commented that the ordering process was easier at the studio since you were guided through the process.

Here are some other participant comments regarding the website:

"User friendly."

"Nice amount of options."

"Liked ability to customize your package."

"Just as easy to fill out the form."

Recommend Prestige to a Friend?

When asked, all participants said they would recommend Prestige and ordering online to other seniors.

Share Feature

The three seniors who viewed the share feature readily understood how to share photos.

Conclusions

Overall, the user experience with the current website allows users to choose their proofs and order their packages with few hiccups. All participants felt the ordering process made sense. The application did not crash or falter.

The proof selection and ordering process is a senior-parent team effort. While seniors are the primary decision makers in review and selection of proofs, parents advise and have approval of the final order. Simplified, seniors make the final decisions on pose, parents make the final decisions on packages and payment.

The senior-parent surfing dynamic facilitates easy flow through the website as two sets of eyes and brains consult on how to best achieve desired results. While one may have been confused, the other helped with recognizing error messages or determining how to read the package page and other items. The “two heads are better than one” phenomenon naturally increases the product’s usability.

Parents expressed concern for privacy and security and were comfortable that the website’s password, login and security features adequately addressed their concerns.

All participants had some interest in sharing photographs, whether with family or friends. Females seemed more interested in sharing than males in our small sample group.

The three biggest obstacles to complete an order were locating the url, customer # and access code, determining which package to select and resolving error messages. Addressing these issues will improve usability and result in more orders, less problems.

The majority of participants preferred online ordering to other methods of ordering their proofs. The advantages of convenience, ease and speed were weighed against the ability of in person studios to provide guidance through the ordering process as well as “touch ups” to specific areas of a photograph.

Future features and utilities for this site might include image manipulation mechanisms; tools seniors see value in and which would help Prestige trim some of the competitive edges from other studio’s services.

Recommendations

Print Materials

Put the url for website on all collateral print materials - on the order form, front of envelope, back of photos and any other applicable locations.

On printed materials, flip the order of Access Code and Customer # to match the order on the Add Access to Seniors page.

Optimize for Search Engines

If seniors are going to use search engines to find the Prestige site, ensure the site is optimized for search engines.

Add Access to Seniors Page

On the Add Access to Seniors Page, add a graphic or link to an image of the piece of paper included in the proof packet where seniors and their parents can find their Access Code and Customer #.

i.e. [Can't Find Your Customer # and Access Code? Click Here.](#)

Apply Poses Page

Add the pose # to photographs so senior-parents can associate the pose # on the proofs to the photos on the website.

Packages Page

Redesign the Package Page to look more like the print material

Need Help Picking a Package? Add a Wizard to the Package page which allows users to enter their requirements and have the application recommend a package.

Adding Poses to Packages Page

Include the # of poses on this page in a prominent fashion. At least two of the 5 participants missed that each package limited the number of poses. The result was a generation of error messages which the participants had issues resolving. Since the number of pose requirements generated both errors in the study,

creating messages or controls regarding the number of poses on this page may limit downstream errors.

Improve the description of Design options for wallets. It was not clear to the participants what differentiated one wallet design option from another.

A La Carte and Add On Pages

Use the senior's image if possible. Using the senior's image in the samples would not only make the initial reaction to this page less jarring, but also perhaps spur sales with these items. Viewing a 24X30 of yourself or your daughter is much more enticing than seeing another person in the sample.

To assist in recognition of the purpose of these pages, add prominent text to top of page reading "Would you like to purchase additional photos?" or "Would you like to purchase these keepsakes?"

Specify which poses are included in the cost and which poses will incur additional cost.

Provide a reference to the poses already selected for the Package sheets. This would be helpful to seniors who are buying additional sheets such as wallets and need to determine how many products with each pose they have already ordered so they can determine which products still need to be ordered.

One parent mentioned that the 24X30 would look great at a graduation party. As a trial, it might be worthwhile targeting some items for graduation parties or sending parents an email in April to remind them of graduation party size portraits.

Shopping Cart Page

Always display the "Proceed to Checkout" button on the Shopping Cart page. People look for the "Proceed to Checkout" button and expect it. Continue to post the error on the Shopping Cart page. If there is an error, however, when seniors click the Proceed to Checkout button, pop up the error with a link to access the page where the problem occurs.

Confirmation Page

Provide an option for the user to print an order and confirmation number.

Enhancements

Add the ability for senior to submit his/her photo to a yearbook.

Add a Tell a Friend option, the ability for someone to send a note to their friend informing them of Prestige's services.

Shipping Info - add a page or pop up which explains method and timeframe for shipping products.

Step Numbers

While as a group, the senior-parent pairs did not have significant problems navigating through the site, adding Step Numbers might reduce confusion, provide guidance and ultimately improve usability.

Instead of "Next" buttons, buttons could read "Next – Select Package" or "Next – Apply Poses".

Future Features and Functions

Add image manipulation tools as a service of the website. When asked for additional functions, students mentioned the ability to change backgrounds, switch between black and white, color and sepia tones and other image manipulation functions

Over time, there is a risk that studios will be looked upon as being able to perform services such as touchups and airbrushing - more service options than Prestige can offer.