Designing for Hedonic Shopping Motives:

Creating a Framework for E-commerce Imagery

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The ways in which people research, shop and purchase items has evolved in tandem with the evolution and expansion of e-commerce consumer purchasing. However, the reasons that people shop have essentially stayed the same. It is widely accepted that consumers are motivated by either utilitarian or hedonic goals. Utilitarian consumers are primarily concerned with purchasing products in an efficient and timely manner; whereas, hedonic consumers are primarily focused on the potential entertainment and enjoyment that arises from the shopping experience (Childers, Carr, Peck & Carson, 2001). Acknowledging these differences in shopping motives is important relative to the quickly changing retail environment. In 2012, U.S. retail e-commerce sales amounted to 225.5 billion U.S. dollars. In 2017 these sales are projected to nearly double to 434.2 billion U.S. dollars. (“U.S. Retail E-commerce,” 2015). With a significant increase in total projected online sales, it is essential for retailers to research, evaluate, and adapt current e-commerce design practices in an effort to capture this expanding market.

A key component of current e-commerce design is the photography used to sell products and services. Viewing the product you would like to purchase, whether it be in-person, in a catalog or on a screen, is important to any shopping experience, but is crucial for online shoppers. E-commerce consumers expect high-quality photos on retail sites, because this is the primary tool available for presentation of products and services online. A National Retail Federation report shows, 67% of online customers say the quality of a product image is very important when selecting and purchasing the object, even more important than the item’s description (54%) and
its ratings & reviews (53%). With consumers placing considerable value on product photography, it is vital for retailers to evolve current e-commerce design methods (Bullas, n.d.).

Despite prior research confirming that the two primary motives for retail shopping — utilitarian and hedonic — also apply to the online shopping experience, (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001) e-commerce design has predominantly focused on fulfilling utilitarian goals. Designers have created simple interfaces, quick navigational tools and easily accessible merchandise to meet these practical, task-orientated needs (Nielsen, 2003). As a result, standard design has seemingly been created within the industry which treats the online presence of a company as a virtual warehouse of products. Typical e-commerce designs rarely take into consideration hedonic shopping motives.

Conventional methods of e-commerce design have provided users with a functional, utilitarian method for shopping; but, enjoyable, hedonic moments are largely absent from the online retail experience. The goal of this thesis is to draw upon the hedonistic qualities indicative of print retail design and apply them to e-commerce imagery, thus allowing 1) consumers to fulfill not only utilitarian needs, but also a spectrum of hedonic shopping motives and 2) businesses to create retail images that brand and differentiate themselves from competitors. The standardization and style of retail photography within e-commerce design will need to adapt if businesses want to differentiate their product and brand through this medium and if businesses aspire to target digital buyers who are not exclusively focused on fulfilling task-oriented shopping objectives.
Chapter 2: Defining the Image

Prior research has defined and utilized utilitarian and hedonic motives to discuss various aspects of the shopping experience. That being said, these concepts which are especially prominent in marketing research, have not been specifically applied to a primary component of shopping — retail photography or imagery. Photography is especially important to the e-commerce environment because it is the main, if not the only, medium in which consumers view the items for sale online. The characteristics used in prior research to construct hedonic and utilitarian shopping motives have been applied to the context of e-commerce imagery to define images as either hedonic or utilitarian.

For the purposes of this thesis, a standard e-commerce product image, photographed on a white background, and intentionally static and objective in its presentation, shall be defined as a utilitarian image. In contrast, a product image, photographed with designerly intent or depicted in a staged environment, shall be defined as a hedonic image. These definitions may be further developed as related to consumer shopping motive theory as follows: A utilitarian image is deliberately presented to evoke no visceral response whatsoever; while, a hedonic image is created with the intention of evoking a visceral connection with viewers.

It is difficult to fully discuss the intricacies and characteristics of images without accounting for the context in which they are used. The application and conditions of both types of images will be further discussed in order to understand the unique qualities they possess.
Chapter 3: Background & Context

In her book *Graphic Design Theory*, Meredith Davis argues that “the images we create produce the society in which we live, over and above any short term goal to sell or persuade” (Davis, 2012, page 205). The cultural impact of images may be unintentional, but is nevertheless pervasive. With a multitude of e-commerce images being produced and published everyday, analyzing their intricacies and potential cultural influence is increasingly important. Product imagery in its current state is mostly generic in format and perspective, however, anyone who buys a product online interacts with these images. Inconspicuously integrated into our daily lives, we have openly accepted and used these photos without thinking twice. As e-commerce continues to expand, it is timely to explore and evaluate the images that have gone unnoticed and undiscussed in contemporary theory and research.

While e-commerce images have not been given much consideration by researchers, other photographic genres like fashion, travel, and photojournalism have been studied, analyzed and theorized about for decades. These “classic” types of photography are typically considered art, while the product image, and even more specifically the e-commerce image, is simply viewed as a necessary tool and has been disregarded as having design potential, let alone emotional appeal. Even selfies, a relatively new genre of digital photography, have been written about and discussed in-depth (Saltz, 2014; Senft & Baym, 2015) because they demonstrate artistic, expressive qualities. Some researchers have analyzed e-commerce photography, but they tend to focus only on the images in terms of their usability (Nielsen, 2010). These studies document where and
how people view website images but they fail to explore the emotional connections or cultural implications that these images may have on their users.

**Images in Consumer Society**

Images may play many and varied roles depending upon the society, industry, and context in which they are used; but, for “consumer societies dependent upon the constant production and consumption of goods in order to function,” images are a central component (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, page 189). Cultural ideas regarding beauty, self-image, and lifestyle are constructed through images, most notably those found in advertisements. A key strategy of both historical and contemporary retail images is to encourage the consumer to envision his or herself within the photo. Sturken and Cartwright describe this process as abstraction. Abstraction occurs when a consumer imagines themselves in the situation portrayed as well as in a future situation with the products or goods they could or would like to purchase. This advertising technique has helped to solidify the concept of branding and the importance of product imagery.

**Cultural Photographic Theory**

In *Graphic Design Theory*, Davis points to the cultural theory of Jean Baudrillard when discussing codes in design and photography. According to Baudrillard, furniture catalogs and other advertisements with similar imagery encourage us to consume by presenting scenes that are complete only when we purchase all the matching components of the system. The value of
an individual object is found within the larger system (Davis, 2012, page 23-25). For instance, the global furniture retailer, IKEA, is one of the few contemporary companies still creating and publishing catalogs. The images in these catalogs portray various kitchen, dining room, living room and bedroom scenes that are all perfectly arranged with furniture, lights and other products from IKEA (See Figure 1). Each item is strategically placed within the image frame, creating a complete system of products. The “system” images such as the ones used by IKEA have been historically and repeatedly shown in catalogs; but, these are almost entirely absent from the online shopping environment. This absence reinforces the homogenous website designs and imagery that are typical of standardized e-commerce model with which consumers are familiar. This is particularly interesting given the success of “system” images in influencing consumer behavior and constructing cultural ideals.

Figure 1. Spread from IKEA's Spring 2016 catalog. Retrieved February 21, 2016 from http://www.ikea.com/us/.
The evolution of technology and as a result, e-commerce, has left consumers with sterile images. These photos are nearly the exact opposite of the “system” images predominantly discussed and analyzed by theorists. The absence of context and environments found in systems makes it difficult for shoppers to love and connect to the photograph. Roland Barthes’ explains his theory of photography in the short book *Camera Lucida*, describing the studium of a photograph as culturally determined and “ultimately always coded” (Barthes, 1981, page 51). The studium can be summarized as a vague interest in the image and one that is simply “all right,” (Barthes, 1981, page 27). Barthes also proposes the punctum to describe a much more “intense and personal reaction” to an image inspired by a certain detail (Grundberg, n.d.). This detail which evokes the excitement or interest is missing from modern e-commerce imagery. With the evolution of technology and the expansion of online shopping, this theory is applicable and should be revisited.

**Product Imagery**

*Origin of Product Imagery*

Advertising and mass consumption as we currently recognize it played a critical role in creating a consumer society because the medium was responsible for displaying new products to consumers, whether it be through posters, magazines or catalogs. Advertisements were one of the first, if not the first, instance of product photography. These first product photos were representative of the cultural norms of the time and are important to understanding
the development of product imagery, which is why they must be studied in relation to the e-commerce industry.

Before the invention and eventual universal use of photography, products were first depicted as black and white illustrations (Figure 2). The amount of detail and line work varied in complexity but allowed for products to be visually represented instead of relying solely on descriptive text. Illustrations at this point in time were fairly cryptic and had minimal components, but allowed viewers to see a basic representation of the item being sold. In 1870, Royal Baking Powder became the first advertiser to feature a picture of its package in an advertisement (Figure 3). This style of product imagery is ironically similar to the standard e-commerce photographs expected by contemporary consumers.
Color illustrations and paintings gained popularity throughout the early to mid 1900s and added a level of detail that was absent in previous advertisements (Figure 4). Illustrations also became extremely realistic during this time and in many ways were the precursor to photography. Reflections and shadows cast on metal appliances like the Simplex Iron (Figure 5) or the Toastmaster toaster (Figure 6), exemplified the authentic lighting conditions that illustrations began to depict. This meant that items were no longer being portrayed as flat, two dimensional objects but instead looked more like the actual, real-life product being sold. With the use and popularization of modern photography during the mid 1900s, products no longer had to be artfully illustrated but instead could be captured as they really were. Whether illustrated or photographed, product advertisements were not documentary in perspective, but portrayed the product deliberately and subjectively.

Product Differentiation

A study of historical product advertisements not only reveals the birth of product photography but also demonstrates specific marketing techniques traditionally used in the representation and sale of consumer goods. Arguably one of the most important strategies exemplified across decades of product advertisements is the concept of differentiation. Product differentiation is the process of making a product appear different from other items that have the same intended purpose. Driven by competition between brands, product differentiation is typically constructed through the creation of unique or distinctive design, photography or messaging and encourages
consumer preference. By describing or displaying differences between products, brands
demonstrate the unique aspects of their own product and “create a sense of value” ("Product
differentiation", 2015).

This tactic is evident when the representation of one particular item is studied across
various advertisements. For example, the inundation of silverware and flatware brands during
the 1960s required differentiation through advertisements. This technique is most clearly seen
through the varied visual depictions and portrayals of the product itself (Figure 7–9). Even
though all flatware essentially does the same thing, historical advertisements were beautifully
designed to strategically highlight the “differences” between various products and more
specifically, brands. All of the advertisements utilized photography but each composition was
drastically different from the other and the product was highlighted in a distinct way. Some products were displayed in full, documenting the overall form and shape of the utensil, while others were dramatically cropped, showing only a portion of the item but exhibiting the intricate details. Product photography was used to emphasize differentiation and value.

The Lauffer advertisement (Figure 7) for instance implemented a minimalist design and an organic arrangement of silverware to showcase the curves of their product. The spoons were meticulously placed on top of each other to create a seemingly effortless composition while the Tiffany Sterling advertisement (Figure 8) placed the spoon and other flatware pieces on a rigid crossword puzzle grid in comparison. A Gorham silverware advertisement (Figure 9) exhibits an extreme close-up image, focusing solely of the utensil stems and their elaborate design elements. This advertisement also included an additional photograph which depicts an elegant woman
using the silverware. Even though each advertisement has a unique message and overarching conceptual direction, the visual differences in product representation are immediately obviously to the viewer and allow the product to stand out from the others. Again, product photography is the foundation of this differentiation.

*Lack of Differentiation Online*

In comparison to the product photography discussed previously, the lack of product differentiation in contemporary e-commerce photography is glaringly obvious. A quick browse through any modern online retail website reveals a total void of personality and originality in current product photography. Even though e-commerce photography grew out of the design, style and types of product images featured in historical advertisements, digital images do not exhibit the same qualities indicative of historical product differentiation strategy.

An analysis of online silverware product photography in comparison to the traditional flatware advertisements further demonstrates this fact. For example, the Gorham brand is still in existence and sells flatware sets which are available for purchase through Macy’s website (Figure 10). Instead of designing unique photographic compositions to set Gorham flatware apart from other brands, the products are now part of the standardized e-commerce photographic style. Images of Gorham flatware are nearly identical to almost every other flatware being sold at Macy’s and through other online retailers. Forks, knives, and spoons are placed in the same exact orientation, no matter what the brand or where the product is being sold.
Advertisements like other design artifacts transitioned through many stylistic periods, fluxing between highly decorative, super minimalistic, and somewhere in between. The e-commerce image has not experienced the same sort of stylistic or design transformation. Since its inception, e-commerce product photography has almost always stayed the same. Products have consistently been displayed on solid white backgrounds, with harsh, unexpressive lighting. Retailers have benefited from this approach by creating standardized systems for image production. These standardized systems have become the archetype of e-commerce photography. Since current e-commerce product images are designed for utilitarian, goal-oriented tasks, they purposefully lack scenes and environments. As a result, this challenges consumers to envision themselves in the product or item portrayed.

Our society has become so accustomed to purchasing products that we have accepted
the most basic, primitive tools from which to buy. Some may argue that this has created a faster, easier experience for consumers; but, that mentality only takes into consideration users interested in goal-focused or utilitarian shopping. It has been researched and cited time and time again that people shop for more than just utilitarian reasons. By only creating and using standardized images, e-commerce businesses not only neglect hedonic shopping motives but also miss an enormous opportunity to brand their images. John Scott and Ruth Miller explain that e-commerce vendors, especially those that sell identical products, have incentives to differentiate themselves other than by price (Scott, J., & Miller, 2008). This differentiation can be achieved through unique and distinctive product photography, reminiscent of the imagery created and used decades ago.

The E-commerce System

E-commerce design can be described and classified in many ways but two of the most dominant and overarching characteristics of the current design practice are exemplified in the design and arrangement of product images. A quick browse through current online retail sites yields many of the same design elements and structures. Companies often choose to copy successful sites or construct a design mirroring their offline store, instead of creating virtual spaces that enhance the online shopper’s experience (Hausman & Siekpe, 2009). The most popular example of this phenomenon has been in the replication of the e-commerce giant, Amazon. Professional and amatuer designers have continuously replicated elements of the Amazon.com
design purely because of the site’s status as the world’s largest retailer (Pettypiece, 2015). The research company, Nielsen Norman Group, warns that Amazon “is simply so different from other e-commerce sites that what’s good for Amazon is not good for normal sites,” (Nielsen, 2005). The blind adoption of the Amazon-like style has resulted in well-indexed products which are extremely utilitarian but lack any sort of hedonic appeal.

Design of Product Images

Product images make up the majority of e-commerce sites and highlight a single item at multiple angles, typically on a white background. The item is usually centered within the frame of the image and includes minimal or no shadow, as if the product is floating in space. This eliminates any possible distraction that could result from lighting or cropping and places sole focus on the item. White backgrounds are universally used to create consistency amongst varied products and to isolate the subject (Figure 11).

Depending on the retailer, the variety and amount of images used to show an item will vary. Some companies will only supply shoppers with a single image, while others present multiple shots of the same product. If additional shots are included, they tend to follow a standard set of angles, depending on the category of product. For instance, product images for apparel will include a model facing forwards, sideways and backwards to show the piece of clothing from
different points of view. Additionally, a flat shot of the item, closeup of the fabric or detail shot is sometimes included (Figure 12). In comparison, general merchandise, such as towels or plates, will typically be shown in fewer shots or are only shown in a single image. Some retailers will also show separate product shots if there are multiple colors of an item, or instead will simply provide color swatches.

Another component to current e-commerce photography is the ability to zoom or rotate images. These tech features enable viewers to interact with product images and view items in ways similar to in-person shopping. Zooming is a prominent feature amongst e-commerce images, unlike rotation which is limited to certain types of products and retailers. 360 degree rotation options are typically seen on retail sites that offer customization of products such as,

athletic shoes or cars (Figure 13). These rotation features are usually created by combining multiple product images into a sequence to create the appearance of 360 degree rotation.

**Figure 12.** Various e-commerce image examples. Retrieved October 21, 2015 from http://shop.nordstrom.com/.

**Figure 13.** 360 degree rotation. Retrieved February 24, 2016 from http://www.nike.com/us/en_us/.

**Arrangement of Product Images**

The bulk of product images are traditionally placed on category pages, in a grid based structure and are used to document the inventory, thus allowing customers to quickly research various items. These pages normally have between three to four columns of products and extend down
the length of the webpage or until the available products end. The organization of products into a three to four column structure is utilized by almost every e-commerce site, no matter what the retailer sells (Figure 14).

**Figure 14.** Example of e-commerce grid structure. Retrieved November 4, 2015 from https://www.jcrew.com/.

Product images are also found on individual item pages, which is where the additional images, if available, can be viewed. Individual product pages also follow a universal design in which the main image is located in the upper left corner and thumbnails are provided underneath to show any additional photos. Text descriptions are located to the right, along with sizing, color, quantity and an “add to bag” or “add to cart” button. Customer reviews, which sometimes include user-generated photography, are found below the product images and description.
The standardized treatment and placement of e-commerce images has produced sites that have been purposefully stripped of any overbearing design or styling for the sake of ultimate usability and functionality. Researchers have cited that “organizing product information around aesthetically pleasing consumption settings or complementary product combinations, tends to lack clear organization structure which consumers need to achieve goal-oriented tasks efficiently,” (Mathwick, Malhotra & Rigdon, 2002). This strategy assumes that consumers are only interested in shopping because they are focused on a goal, or in other words, only motivated from a utilitarian perspective.

**Hedonic Image in Context**

Retailers have historically used multiple and varied infrastructures and artifacts to sell products to consumers, but catalogs in particular have been an integral part of the retail experience. Unlike many contemporary retail strategies, catalogs are known for their extensive use of visceral, or as defined here, hedonic imagery. Therefore, catalog design has been used to examine and highlight the various components of hedonic images.

One of the first instances of catalog design was in the 1870’s with the formation of the Montgomery Ward and Sears catalogs. Thousands of illustrations, over hundreds of pages, were used to depict the wide array of products available to consumers (Figure 15). Even though the product depictions in these original catalogs were illustrations, placed on indexed pages, their impact on American culture was revolutionary. There have been endless catalogs, published
by varied retailers over the years but all have been primarily focused on presenting products to consumers through the use of an image. Product images purposefully designed to be high-visceral have been the hallmark of the historically successful Martha Stewart brands.


Martha by Mail

Created as a natural extension of Martha Stewart Living magazine, Martha by Mail (Figure 16) launched in 1996. Martha by Mail was a mail-order catalog designed to supply readers with all the tools, materials and ingredients needed to create the projects found in the popular publication. The catalog originally started as an insert within Martha Stewart Living; but, became so popular
that by 1998 was a fully functional catalog and consumers could purchase goods online through marthabymail.com. Readers not only loved the products but the catalog itself was highly regarded and treasured because of its beautiful design. Best described as “soft, approachable minimalism”, the catalog’s look inspired and enabled readers for years (Edwards & Valentine, 2001, page 54).

A key element to Martha by Mail’s success was the sensitivity to photography and more specifically, product styling. Each image, whether it was a full scene or individual product, was flawlessly styled. For example, instead of merely presenting an individual metal cookie cutter, full-page spreads were created showcasing beautiful decorated cookies in addition to the tool that create them (Figure 17). This simultaneously highlighted the product and inspired readers to decorative ideas that they could also replicate. Additionally, readers saw ideas and products they weren’t familiar with or expecting. This spontaneous discovery and exploration is a staple trait amongst catalog design and is a result of hedonic imagery.

It’s also important to note that the photography in Martha by Mail ran “the gamut, from evocative covers and romantic section openers to product shots,” (Edwards & Valentine, 2001, page 58). The different applications of imagery worked as a whole to create a story-like narrative within the context of the catalog. No matter what the conceptual idea or theme of the catalog, products were used as characters to tell the story. The combination of beautiful photographic styling, spontaneous discovery and narrative pacing were and continue to be key principles to successful catalog design and in turn, retail sales.
Today, catalogs are less critical to the overall shopping experience, but the images they contain continue to provoke entertainment, desire, surprise and wonder amongst viewers. Even though these hedonic factors remain influential in the buying behaviors of contemporary consumers, there is a void of catalog-like images within e-commerce design. Williams-Sonoma provides the best example of e-commerce imagery that parallels the catalog experience consumers have valued in the past. Williams-Sonoma produces highly-visceral imagery in both their catalog (Figure 18) and their website (Figure 19).

An in-depth survey of e-commerce retailers, identified Williams-Sonoma as a key player.

in the utilization of hedonic product imagery. A vast majority of product images reflect hedonic qualities. For example, products are photographed in the environments in which they are used or are photographed with textured, varied backgrounds. The number of items offered for sale by Williams-Sonoma does not hinder the high-quality and range of imagery provided for each product. Williams-Sonoma is the apex of e-commerce photography for a retailer of this size.

*Photo-centric Pinterest Model*

Images, like the ones found in traditional catalogs, are scarce on online retail sites, but another digital platform stepped in and has been filling the gap. The social media site, Pinterest, allows users to “pin photos into collections called boards, which serves as a big catalogs of objects” (Madrigal, 2014). Their army of 70 million users loyally pin items to more than 1 billion boards on the platform every month (Alba, 2015). These pins consist of images collected from across the Internet which means there are endless sources of image generation and consequently, varied types of photos. User-generated photos and retail produced imagery are commonly seen side by side. Most of these images do not fit the standard, sterile model.

In comparison to e-commerce sites, Pinterest’s design puts primary emphasis on the photography and as a result encourages serendipitous discovery. These characteristics are cornerstones of Pinterest’s success but also have historical connections and roots in the traditional catalog designs that were previously mentioned. Users’ extensive and unwavering participation in the platform implies a strong desire for an online shopping experience that is
Pinterest is the top traffic source to retailer’s websites, which suggests that consumers are consistently utilizing the image-centric platform during their online shopping process. Instead of visiting retail sites for item discovery or inspiration, contemporary shoppers are using Pinterest as their initial researching tool. Once consumers find the product they want, they visit the retail site or another distributor to purchase the item. This process could drastically change because Pinterest has taken notice of its users’ behavior and has recently launched buyable pins. Currently only available on iPads and iPhones, this feature allows consumers to directly purchase items from Pinterest (Figure 20). This makes it extremely easy for consumers “to realize their digitally expressed aspirations in the physical world with no more than a few taps on a smartphone.”

Figure 20. Pinterest iPhone application. Retrieved October 22, 2015 from http://www.pinterest.com/.
A) Hedonic Imagery

Pinterest’s main appeal is the vast array of interesting imagery available for users to view, organize or to even purchase. Although there are some traditional product images on Pinterest, the majority are drastically different from the photos seen on typical retail sites since they are user-generated. For instance, a search for leather jackets yields seemingly endless images, most of which show real-women, not models or manikins, in an environment (Figure 21). In comparison to typical e-commerce photos, these images are visually interesting and impactful because they contain personality, style and emotion.


Another important characteristic to the photos on Pinterest is that most have an authenticity which is lacking from the majority of retail imagery. Many images on Pinterest
are not overly edited, photoshopped or even manipulated at all. This is important because unlike brand-perfect retail images, consumers are able to see the products as they actually are.

Displaying user-generated imagery has been utilized by many travel websites. Tripadvisor.com allows users the option to view management photos and travelers’ photos. This is especially helpful because users can see how the establishment looks from the perspective of a previous traveler who has no ulterior motive. User-generated photos simply offer an honest portrayal of the product or service the consumer is interested in purchasing. Many retail sites also allow customers to post their own images in the user reviews section of an individual product page. In this case the images are used as additional information and are not displayed or presented alongside the brand-generated photography.

B) Thematic Collections

A key feature of the Pinterest site is the ability to create collections of images through the use of boards. Boards allow users and brands to easily organize the images they have generated or found in one place. When designing a board, creators are asked to provide a title and select an organizational category (Figure 22). Boards tend to have themes, topics or an overarching focus under which all the images fall. This process of collecting, organizing, and curating images is reminiscent of catalog design because the content is related. Both historical and contemporary catalogs have traditionally provided viewers with monthly, seasonal, or thematic collections of images, which have been carefully organized depending on the chosen topic. Many retailers
are recreating the catalog experience through the creation of Pinterest boards. For example, the women’s clothing company, Madewell, has a Pinterest account which currently includes ninety five different boards (Figure 23). Some of these boards are seasonal such as the “Rome / Fall 2015 Catalog” (Figure 24) while others are specific to a particular fabric (Figure 25) or garment (Figure 26). Additionally, Madewell has created boards that do not show their products but instead highlight images depicting topics such as travel, art and typography. The use of boards by retail companies on pinterest is recognition that the “system” image helps to not only sell products but adds brand value.

**Figure 22.** Example of Pinterest board setup. Retrieved November 4, 2015 from http://www.pinterest.com/.


C) Serendipitous Discovery

For hedonic shoppers, having fun is essential and one of the ways to achieve the enjoyable moments of shopping is through spontaneous discovery. This means that consumers find an item or product that they did not originally know they wanted, but upon discovery, are interested or intrigued by the item. The experience of spontaneous discovery is widely associated with window-browsing or catalog shopping because consumers are usually unaware of the available products until they participate in the experience. Similarly, Pinterest’s goal is to become the “number one destination for discovering things, an alternative to search,” (Alba, 2015). Instead of helping users find specific information — such as Google, Pinterest wants to help users find things they did not know they wanted or needed. Replicating serendipitous discovery within the context of e-commerce has generally not occurred or been discussed because the images that are typically associated with this experience are absent from the digital environment.

Although a few e-commerce sites are beginning to meet the needs of hedonic shoppers, retailers are largely missing an opportunity to use product imagery as a tool for differentiating and branding their products. E-commerce photography has been neglected within the field of academic research, even though it is an integral tool for contemporary shoppers. Therefore, specific research of product imagery must be administered.
Chapter 4: Research Methods

After reviewing background and secondary information, there was a need for primary research to help validate or invalidate assumptions. Since the medium under study was constantly accessible via the Internet, observing and collecting information occurred consistently throughout the course of the thesis project. Various research methods were utilized and the process occurred over four phases; initial image exploration, understanding the image, in-depth analysis and understanding the retailer.

Part 1) Initial Image Exploration

Image Maps

Due to the nature of the medium, and because new consumer products are constantly being distributed and published via e-commerce retailers, screenshots were a vital and necessary tool for documenting e-commerce photography. Collections or maps of images were first created to document the vast amounts of photography available to consumers from various online retailers. These served as a research tool as well as a critique of the contemporary standards of e-commerce photography. Each collection focused on a specific brand and allows the viewer to see many images at a single glance. Two initial maps were created in February 2015 and these maps document every image available on the “New Arrivals” page of Gap and J. Crew website (See Appendix A).

This initial analysis not only helped to visualize the abundance of e-commerce images
available, but also illustrates the two main categories of images — utilitarian and hedonic.

Utilitarian images make up the majority of the maps while hedonic images are much more limited. This observation is reflective of the e-commerce environment at large. Furthermore, these preliminary observations brought up a few questions: 1) Why do all product images look the same? 2) How do different types of images influence consumer behavior?

Part 2) Understanding the Image

Surveys

Surveys were created and administered to test research assumptions and observations collected during the previous phases. The primary goal of the survey was to understand if e-commerce images fulfilled hedonic and/or utilitarian motives. Unlike many other studies regarding utilitarian and hedonic shopping motives, this thesis was focused on a specific component of the shopping process — the product image. This set the research apart from traditional marketing surveys, because the principles were applied to a particular element instead of focusing on shopping at large.

Survey Items

Within marketing research, it is standard practice to use survey items developed, purified, and validated by prior research. The two items or statements used for this study were derived from previous shopping motive research and have been modified according to the conditions of
e-commerce photography. It is important to note that many of the items used within this survey have also been modified by several other researchers but never within the context of photography (Childers, Carr, Peck & Carson, 2001, Arnold & Reynolds, 2013, Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994).

For this research, survey participants were asked to 1) select the image that would be most useful while shopping and to 2) select the image that is most appealing. Participants had the option to select one of two images or to select “both” as their response. These statements were specifically chosen because they represent the fundamental motive of either a utilitarian or hedonic shopper, i.e. statements including most useful or most appealing image.

*Survey Images*

Images for this survey were selected based on a self-developed set of guidelines. To measure and compare the two different types of images — utilitarian and hedonic image sets were created (See Appendix B). A utilitarian and hedonic image was collected for a single item, from an individual product page. The brand, style and color of the item had to be identical in both images for the set to be considered valid. In addition, images were collected and organized into topics based on e-commerce sales data from the U.S. Census Bureau (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). These categories include Motor Vehicles, Furniture/Home Furnishings, Electronics, Building Materials/Garden, Food and Beverage, Health/Personal Care, Clothing/Accessories, Sporting Goods and General Merchandise.

After the pilot study results were analyzed, additional questions were added to test a
spectrum of images for a single product. To create consistency amongst the spectrum survey questions, only four images were included in each set, even if more were available for a certain product. It was a requirement that a utilitarian image and a hedonic image be included because these served as the end points for the spectrum. The images between the utilitarian and hedonic endpoints varied, but generally included an additional angle and a detail or close-up shot of the product.

Survey Results

Emails were sent to Kent State University undergraduate students through the College of Communication and Information listserv. These emails included a brief description of the research and a link to the survey which was administered online via Qualtrics. An initial pilot survey was launched in October 2015, followed by an updated survey in November 2015. The final survey yielded 121 results, 98 of which were from female respondents. Specific survey results and key findings are explored in Chapter Five. To view the full survey and complete responses, please see Appendix B.

Part 3) In-depth Analysis

While collecting images for this survey, several different factors started to emerge as possible influences related to product imagery. The size of the e-commerce retailer, the price of the product and the type/category of product seemed to influence the amount and type of
photography available to consumers.

**Observations — Product Images**

*Size of E-commerce Retailer*

Large e-commerce sites with thousands of products almost never included lifestyle images on their individual product pages. Small e-commerce sites with only a few, specialized products included lifestyle images in addition to their product images on individual product pages.

Medium size sites were more complex because they occasionally included lifestyle imagery for certain products, but not for all items. The items that did include a lifestyle/hedonic image were also typically highlighted in an online catalog and were unique/trendy/special in some way. The color of the items tended to be vibrant, usually red, because it was the featured product.

*Price of Product*

The price of the item and the level of detail or intricacy also factored into the amount and type of images included on the e-commerce site. For example, products that were more expensive or complex included more images versus less expensive and mundane items. Expensive items are generally more complex and have more features, which in turn requires more images to be included so consumers can understand the product.
Type of Product

Collecting images for certain categories of products was more difficult than others. In particular, the Health/Personal Care and the Food/Beverage categories were not as common on e-commerce sites as other products. Even when the products were available, the sites lacked hedonic, lifestyle images.

Observations — Retailers

The process of survey image collection not only revealed several factors or components influencing e-commerce photography overall but also uncovered factors influencing e-commerce retailers at large.

Catalog Connection

What some of these sites have in common is that they publish a catalog — whether it be digital or printed (Figure 27 & 28). The link between the availability of hedonic imagery on e-commerce sites and the utilization of a catalog as a retail tool makes sense. The inclusion of hedonic imagery exemplifies the fact that certain retailers place photography on a much higher level of importance than others. Hedonic images are more time consuming and difficult to create but satisfy the hedonic needs of shoppers. Retailers that are willing to spend the time and money creating the images and designs for catalogs recognize the influence and importance of hedonic imagery and therefore tend to include the hedonic imagery on their e-commerce site.
Figure 27. Screenshots of Land’s End online catalog and e-commerce site. Retrieved February 21, 2016 from http://www.landsend.com/.
Social Media for Hedonic Images

In addition, some contemporary retailers are using social media sites as a source for hedonic imagery — if they actually have any. Instead of creating and publishing hedonic images specifically for their e-commerce site, hedonic images appear to varying degrees on retailers’ social media outlets (Figure 29). An e-commerce site might be completely void of hedonic imagery and also lack a catalog, but the brand’s Instagram account for example, could be filled with hundreds of hedonic images. One reason for this phenomenon is that social media sites give companies the ability to view, collect and publish the images their consumers are creating. Some companies have teams devoted to creating and mining for social media content that incorporates their products and brand mission. This requires less time, energy and money for business because they are not creating extensive collections of images for their e-commerce site.

Figure 29. Screenshots of various retailer’s Instagram accounts. From left; Williams-Sonoma, Gap, and Gander Mountain. Retrieved February 15, 2016 from Instagram.
Unfortunately, if consumers are unaware of the company’s social media presence or are unfamiliar with the social media site, these images will never be viewed. If a consumer does find the social media outlet, it requires them to leave the e-commerce site to fulfill their hedonic shopping needs. It is certainly possible that the consumer originally viewed the image on social media and consequently visited the site because of the photograph they saw, but that is not always the case. Relying on external, social media sites as the source of a company’s hedonic imagery perpetuates the cycle of e-commerce retail sites primarily focusing on utilitarian shoppers. Hedonic shopping motives are treated as inferior and images are diversified to other online outlets, consequently removing and separating them from the actual retailer.

**Part 4) Understanding the Retailer**

The observations noted during the image collection highlighted various possible components related to retailers and their images, including the size of the e-commerce site, the price of the product and the type of product. Product matrices (Appendix D) and e-commerce site profiles (Appendix E) were then developed to help understand these observations and simplify theses attributes.

*Product Matrices*

Product matrices were created to specifically chart the price of products, the total number of images for each item and the number of hedonic images for each item. The goal was to develop
a method for examining and quantifying the reflective observations recorded in the image collection phase of the research. These attributes were plotted on a matrix to visualize the quantitative information and identify any relationships or connections.

Four different products were chosen and information was collected from nearly a hundred different e-commerce sites. The specific retailers included in the matrices were chosen based on pre-existing web analytics and traffic data provided by Alexa.com in the form of ranked lists. Alexa creates various ranked lists which can be sorted by country, category or global. For these matrices, the top ranked sites in various shopping categories served as the basis for data collection. More specifically, the categories chosen were apparel, recreation, home & garden and general merchandise because they aligned with the categories used in the survey described earlier. Products were then selected based on the categories and were searched for on each of the top 25 sites listed by Alexa. For example, backpacks were chosen as the product being examined for the recreation category. On each site the researcher searched for “backpacks” and chose the first item listed. If a search did not provide a result, the website was removed from the matrix. To view the full collection of matrices and complete data, please see Appendix D.

E-commerce Site Profiles

One attribute that was not included during the matrix was the size of the website. The size of websites can be determined using various parameters, but for this research, size was determined by the amount of products for sale on the retailer’s site. This attribute was previously identified
during the in-depth analysis as a possible influence on the amount and type of imagery available on e-commerce sites. Total number of products available on retail sites is not normally publicized which is why it wasn’t included as part of the matrix. That being said, total number of products can be calculated by hand. Ideally, the total number of products would be recorded for all retailers but given the scope and timeframe, it was not appropriate for this research. Therefore, a few e-commerce sites were chosen as examples and are identified in the following profiles. An approximate number of the products available is included and is based on calculations made by the researcher or have a citation provided from prior research. Data was compiled based on the total number of products available but is an approximation. When the researcher noticed repeated products or categories in various locations on the website, the information was only counted one time.

The Online Mall

The largest of all online retailers are websites such as Amazon and WalMart. These are commonly referred to as online malls and include an extensive product collection. Sites in this category have millions of items available to consumers (“How many products”, 2015) and consequently contain millions of product images. Due to the plethora of products and imagery required of these sites, hedonic imagery is very random and in general, limited. Standardization of imagery is necessary due to the various companies and brands selling their products through these types of sites.
The Mid-Sized Retailer

Websites that included hundreds or thousands of images are classified as mid-sized retailers and include sites like Gap and Gander Mountain. These retailers can normally be placed in a sub-category of shopping such as clothing, home and garden, toys and games, recreation, etc. because their product selection is focused. Depending on the retailer, they may sell products from various brands or solely their own.

Utilitarian images make up the vast majority of these e-commerce sites but limited hedonic imagery can sometimes be found on the retailer’s homepages. Additionally, if consumers look at other outlets related to the retailer, hedonic imagery can sometimes be found in other locations. For example, many of these sites tend to include links to their social media presence, where hedonic imagery related to the retailer is present and can be viewed. Even though catalogs are less prevalent, if they are available they tend to be on these mid-sized types of sites.

The Niche Retailer

Small e-commerce sites have been defined as having less than one-hundred products available. These sites tend to be focused on an extremely specific item or niche audience and include retailers such as Frank Body or Yeti Coolers. Retailers in this category typically sell a limited inventory, made up exclusively of products unique to their brand or company. This extremely limited product collection allows more individualized and visceral website design which typically incorporates hedonic imagery.
Chapter 5: Key Findings

The collection, evaluation and synthesis of primary research lead to several key findings.

Hedonic Images are Important for Consumers

Results from the survey undoubtedly support the notion that hedonic imagery is important to the consumer’s online shopping experience. The most common response — no matter what the statement or the product — was a preference for the hedonic image. Of the nineteen image-set questions, respondents selected the hedonic image 74% of the time and the utilitarian image 26% of the time. In other words, even the utilitarian prompted statements resulted in the choice of the hedonic image. This finding is particularly interesting because it suggests that hedonic imagery is relevant, beneficial, and applicable for both utilitarian and hedonic shoppers. Furthermore, this introduces the idea that hedonic images are not only visually appealing and visceral, but that they also help accomplish needs of goal-oriented, utilitarian shoppers.

Even though respondents were given the option to select “both images” — the utilitarian image plus the hedonic image — this response was never the most common answer. It is important to note however that when the data is compared, utilitarian and “both” had significant responses. More specifically, for each question an average of 60 respondents chose the hedonic images, 32 respondents chose the utilitarian images and 29 respondents chose both images. These numbers highlight the need for both utilitarian and hedonic image inclusion on e-commerce retailer sites.
With that being said, the information provided in hedonic imagery is typically absent from the standard, utilitarian e-commerce image. For example, products shown within context or an environment allow viewers to see the size of the product in relation to other objects in the space and how the item is meant to be used. Products shown on a model or animate object allow users to see the fit or styling of the item. This is all useful information for utilitarian shoppers who are focused on making well-informed decisions.

An analysis of the utilitarian images selected most often reveals similarities in the type of product. Of the five utilitarian photos selected most often, three of the images featured products that were personal or health related electronics. The toothbrush, razor, and a fitness tracker are all products used with or directly on the human body. Utilitarian images for these products allow the consumer to see the details of complex electronic devices. Details can be highlighted on these products that viewers may not be able to see in a hedonic image. Additionally, the hedonic images for these types of products included models which could interfere with, repel or distract the consumer from the item being sold, depending on their personal preferences. This reveals a category of products where hedonic imagery may not be useful or desired by consumers.

The other utilitarian images selected most often featured products used for transportation — a bicycle and automobile. These items are generally more complex, expensive and usually require consumers to consider several options before purchasing. In addition, shopping for these items requires extensive time and research. Survey results for these images are complicated and inconsistent because of the many attributes associated with these types of products. When
images of an automobile were tested in the second portion of the survey, participants selected the hedonic image. When consumers were prompted with the utilitarian statement, they selected the utilitarian image and vice versa. For this product category, the need or desire for hedonic imagery seems to depend on the motive of the consumer.

In general, the results from the survey reveal most importantly that hedonic imagery is beneficial and applicable for both utilitarian and hedonic shoppers. Secondly, results indicate that the category or type of product does affect the consumers need or desire for hedonic imagery. While the vast majority of products benefit from having hedonic imagery, some consumers may not need or find immense value in hedonic imagery for certain types or categories, like personal health electronics. Additionally, the need for hedonic imagery for certain product categories is also reflective of or determined by the consumer’s primary shopping motive.

**Price of Product is Related to the Total Number of Images — Sometimes**

After studying the data points on various matrices, the researcher concluded that the price of a product is related to the overall number of images displayed but not to the amount of hedonic images. In other words, the more expensive an item, the more images a retailer usually provides on their website. This connection is apparent on the apparel and recreation matrixes. When consumers are spending more money they are given more information on the product they’re purchasing in the form of imagery. What’s surprising is that there is no connection between the cost of the product and the amount of hedonic images. Creating hedonic images is more
time consuming and expensive than creating utilitarian images. However, hedonic imagery is a valuable investment for any retailer and especially relevant for retailers with more high-end products. If a consumer can buy a shirt from hundreds of online retailers why would they purchase the more expensive product? Imagery is a key tool in selling the product and lifestyle especially when there are so many comparable items available.

The inclusion of hedonic imagery seems to be related or determined by the individual retailer, not by the price of the product. In many cases, the less expensive or mid-range priced items actually have more hedonic images available to consumers. This relationship is evident on the apparel, recreation and general merchandise matrices. For example, the chambray shirt sold by Lands End is considerably less expensive than some of the other shirts on the matrix but has the most hedonic images. Interestingly enough, the more expensive chambray shirts do not include a single hedonic image. It is important to note that some of the more expensive products included a video within the image galleries of their individual product pages but did not include hedonic imagery. Instead of creating hedonic imagery these retailers are utilizing video instead. This was only a trend on retailers within the recreation category.

However, the price of the product is not related to the amount of imagery provided to shoppers for the home & garden and general merchandise matrices. Unlike the apparel matrix and the recreation matrix, the cost of the item is inconsistent in terms of total amount of images provided by the retailer. The most expensive items on these two matrices have only one image for consumers to view on the e-commerce site while less expensive items have several. This
inconsistency may be related to the retail categories or the sample products from which data was collected. More research needs to be done to make a conclusive statement on these two shopping categories.

**Retailers May Understand the Value of Hedonic Imagery**

Another key finding derived from the research suggests that some e-commerce retailers already understand the impact and importance of hedonic imagery, but choose not to include or not to implement this type of imagery on their commerce site. These retailers utilize social media outlets as a secondary source of content for their consumers and publish hedonic imagery on alternative sites. This observation indicates that the retailers understand the value of hedonic imagery and the importance it plays in creating a unique brand, as well as attracting viscerally-driven consumers. Retailers are demonstrating an understanding of hedonic imagery, especially in terms of its value, but do not exhibit this across multiple platforms. Even though businesses may have an understanding of hedonic imagery they do not employ or practice the same techniques on their e-commerce site.

**Opportunity for Evolution in Mid-Size E-commerce Category**

Arguably one of the most important key findings was the development or discovery of the key target audience or in this case, target retailer. It became most apparent through image collection and site analysis that large e-commerce sites or online malls like Amazon and WalMart have
extremely extensive product collections. These sites have carved out a dominating presence in the e-commerce industry and have crafted design techniques and strategies that work for their intended audience and goals. This thesis and research is not intended for those sites because they work best when used as a utilitarian tool.

Instead, applications of this research are focused on targeting mid-sized e-commerce retailers, as many are currently missing an opportunity to attract and fulfill the needs of hedonic shoppers. The size of websites can be determined using various parameters but for this research the size was determined by the number of products for sale on the retail site. Total numbers of products were counted for each site and have been organized based on the associated e-commerce profile category (See Appendix D). Collecting and organizing this quantitative information was important in understanding the scope of each site in terms of product volume. This information allowed for a direct comparison of e-commerce retailers based on the number of products and in turn, approximate product images.

This data collection revealed that mid-sized retail sites like Gap and Gander Mountain have similar product volume ranges to a site like Williams-Sonoma, which has previously been highlighted and detailed as a key player in the utilization of hedonic product imagery. Therefore, sites that have similar amounts of products to Williams-Sonoma should theoretically be able to accomplish the same quality and quantity of hedonic imagery on their own sites.
Chapter 6: The Spectrum

The research methods and analysis of key findings lead to the development of a model or framework which visualizes the concepts detailed in earlier chapters and is specific to e-commerce photography. Here, this framework will be referred to as a spectrum. A spectrum is defined as a condition that is not limited to a specific set of values but can vary infinitely within a continuum. In the case of the e-commerce spectrum, the range varies between utilitarian and hedonic values as earlier defined in this study (Page 4).

For the purposes of this thesis a standard e-commerce product image, photographed on a white background, and intentionally static and objective in its presentation, shall be defined as a utilitarian image. In contrast, a product image, photographed with design intent or depicted in an environment, shall be defined as a hedonic image. These definitions may be further developed as related to consumer shopping motive theory as follows: A utilitarian image is deliberately presented to evoke no visceral response whatsoever; while, a hedonic image is created with the intention of evoking a visceral connection with viewers.

Spectrum Categories

Specific terminology has been created to further dissect, define and explain these concepts. Nine categories span the range from utilitarian to hedonic. Product photography can be analyzed using various categories developed within this research because all images fall somewhere on the
utilitarian to hedonic spectrum. These categories include the following.

**Flat**

The photographs in this category are shot straight on and have a front/foremost aspect which is typically centered in frame on a white background. This is the most utilitarian image on the spectrum and is the most common image found on e-commerce sites. The image appears to float and is shot on a white background to create maximum contrast. This is the easiest product shot to quickly produce because the background is always consistent and static. There are no variations in lighting or placement of the product.

**Pivot**

Images that fall within this category are also photographed straight on, but are turned or adjusted to highlight various aspects and are typically for non-apparel products. They are also typically centered in the frame and are on a white background. This category is vital for online consumers because they are unable to manipulate the product and view it from multiple angles since they are not viewing the item in-person. The pivot shot provides necessary product information and is primarily utilitarian in its role on the spectrum.

**Detail**

Products shot in micro view provide necessary specific information not visible from a full
product shot. The specific item element typically encompasses all or a majority of frame. This
detail shot normally leaves minimal or no background space. Again, this is a vital utilitarian
image for e-commerce shoppers because specific details may not be discernible from a standard
product shot.

Partial Animate — Flat

These images are photographed with or on an animate object, typically a human being. The
emphasized area for product placement is dominant and results in cropping of visual information
that isn’t directly product oriented. Specifically the head or other elements are cropped out.
Products are shot straight on, are centered in frame and on a white background. Front, back and
side shots are consistently provided from retailer to retailer. The absences of body parts or other
animate features makes this image category less relatable to consumers and therefore utilitarian
focused.

Full Animate — Flat

Images in this category are similar to the previous category but are instead photographed with or
on a full animate object. Specifically this means that the model in its entirety is part of the image
and is contained with the frame. The shot is primarily straight on, centered in frame and includes
a front, back and side shot on a white background. The potential for consumers to identify or
relate to the model portrayed in the images bring this category into a somewhat hedonic range.
Full Animate — Dynamic

Products within this category are photographed with or on a full animate object. What differentiates these from the previous category is that they are shot from varied aspects or more specially, are dynamic in terms of composition. The posing and positioning of the animate is varied and includes movement. The shots are straight on, centered in frame and are on white backgrounds. The potential for consumers to identify or relate to the model portrayed in the images bring this category into a greater hedonic value range because the model is more compelling.

Hybrid

Images within this category include design elements from adjacent spectrum categories; i.e. full animate — dynamic and lifestyle. These images are dynamic in terms of composition, but are photographed straight on. The position of the product or animate can vary within the frame but is always shown on either a textured or colored background. These varied backgrounds create visual interest and provide unexpected and unique product environments which are specific to this hedonic category.

Lifestyle

These images show products within a context or environment and have varied photographic angles or aspects. Most importantly, these products are normally shown within the context in
which they’re actually used or could be used, which means the background varies from item to item. Consumers can envision or imagine themselves in the situation portrayed with the product or item available for purchase. This category is one of the most hedonic on the spectrum because it attempts to tell a story with products.

*Animate in Lifestyle*

Images within this category are photographed with or on an animate within a context or environment which results in varied backgrounds. They have varied photographic angles and aspects. This category is the most hedonic on the spectrum because it attempts to tell a story with products and animates.

*Sample Spectrums*

Three sample spectrums have been provided to exemplify the variety and range of image categories and various products (See Appendix F). A spectrum for a chambray shirt, watering can, dinner plate and dog coat have been developed as examples of the spectrum applied to typical e-commerce products. It is important to note that not all of the spectrum categories are utilized for each of the product examples. For example, there are no hybrid or lifestyle images for the dog coat product spectrum because this image category may not be commonly used to market this product type. However, in this sample product the flexibility of the spectrum is highlighted. This allows for many and varied images to be included or omitted in the various categories while
still completing a full range within the spectrum.

The strength of the spectrum is established from both the potential for flexibility of categories within the range and from its application to any product image. More specifically, nine categories have been established within e-commerce spectrum, but adding, deleting or revising these categories within the range would not diminish the concept of the spectrum; and, is in fact another strength. A spectrum could be developed for a given product or project so that users have a very specific range from which to work. The framework thus becomes applicable for both consideration of e-commerce images at large and for creating a range of images in a very specific or finite situation.

**Human Faces**

Humans are hardwired to respond to human faces which is why product imagery including faces has been placed further towards the hedonic side of the spectrum. In a classic and famous study by Robert Franz from Case Western Reserve, newborn babies were shown two images side by side to study their focus and attention span. One of the images was of a human face and the other was a bullseye. The babies spent twice as long looking at the image of a human face than they did at an image of a bullseye (Fantz, 1961). As a result of this study, psychologists and researchers have suggested that we are born with an inherent preference for viewing human faces.
Applications for Spectrum

Improved Communication

One of the most important functions of the spectrum is its ability to improve communication between designers, photographers, creative directors or anyone else involved in e-commerce imagery. With clearly defined and organized categories for product imagery, the framework has the ability to limit confusion amongst employees working on e-commerce teams. The spectrum creates a system in which products and imagery can be easily discussed and examined because photographs have been defined and described using specific terminology. This is especially important given that fact that photography and digital design are dynamic, unfixed industries.

Not only does the spectrum help to limit confusion amongst teams producing product imagery, but it limits missteps when interacting with retailers and clients. In some situations retailers will have an e-commerce photo team of their own working in an in-house studio. Other times imagery will be produced by an outside photography studio unrelated to the retailer. Communication between these various entities, whether it be an in-house or outside photo studio, is key in producing consistent and quality imagery. The spectrum helps to clearly define expectations for retailers and e-commerce teams. It also allows for a quicker production process, consistent workflow and successful deliverables to the client. Having a smooth workflow is vital given the high volume of images being produced for retailers on a consistent basis.
**Ability to Target Motives**

Utilization of the spectrum also enables brands and retailers to evaluate their current e-commerce imagery based on a range of shopping motives. Ideally this framework would be used to help highlight gaps in current product photography and plan for new areas of development or expansion. Retailers are able to target specific shopping motives based on product image categories because a full range of options is provided. The focus on varied shopping motives is what differentiates the spectrum from standard brand books or style guides that are solely focused on creating consistent branding.

**Review of Feedback**

Once the spectrum and affiliated terminology was fully developed and refined, samples were sent via email to various industry professionals for feedback. Information was collected from two photographers who are specifically working within the e-commerce industry and are part of in-house studio teams. Additionally, a former creative director of a mid-sized e-commerce retailer was included to provide feedback from a management point of view. These professionals will be titled Photographer A, Photographer B and Creative Director A for the purposes of anonymity.

**Photographer A**

This photographer works for a classic, American clothing retail chain, is part of an in-house e-commerce team and specifically deals with apparel products. The retailer serves an
international consumer base and the images created for this company are sold on their own e-commerce site. When asked if the spectrum would improve communication between designers/photographers/creative directors, the professional responded positively and specifically mentioned that it could “be helpful to communicate with merchants and other eCommerce-tied positions. There are a lot of misconceptions and misunderstandings when talking about what is physically possible, legally possible, fiscally possible, etc. in a photo studio environment. The spectrum could help ease the flow of conversation between ideas and reality, especially for people in design/photography/creative positions that are clearly visual learners.”

Additionally, Photographer A commented on the ability of the spectrum to guide the “goal of the photo” and the “feasibility” of it being produced accordingly. The professional provided an example in which a retailer may want to include full animate photos but simply cannot afford to hire models at the higher rate of full body shots. Instead they could utilize the partial animate category and stay within their desired price point.

**Photographer B**

Photographer B works for a global greeting card company and leads the e-commerce photography department operations. The majority of this professional’s time is spent shooting product and editing images but is also responsible for managing e-commerce photo editors, communicating with management and delivering final imagery directly to the client. In this case, the photographer is part of an in-house e-commerce photo team but the images are used
on e-commerce sites independent of the greeting card company. More specifically, major clients for this Photographer include Amazon, WalMart and Target to name a few. For that reason, the process and workflow for this e-commerce professional is slightly different than the previous example. Photographer B mentioned that “Amazon is the big dog” and that e-commerce teams need to “adjust their workflow and process to Amazon so they minimize the impact on the company and photo team.” Even though this research is not concerned with large scale or mall e-commerce retailers this information is extremely reflective of the utilitarian workflow forced upon photographers working within this genre.

When asked if the spectrum would improve communication between designers, photographers, and creative directors, Photographer B responded “yes” and explained that it would help during the start of a project. They noted however that the process “it is more complex and (that) trends and styles are almost a living and breathing thing. There is a constant evolution in sales and we as Photographers/Designers will need to adapt to future trends.” This helps support the notion that the spectrum needs to be flexible and adaptable given the fluidity of trends and changing landscape of photography.

Creative Director A

A former creative director of a mid-sized e-commerce retailer, this professional has been included to provide feedback from an executive point of view. The retailer Creative Director A formerly worked for specifically sells paper products like wedding invitations and stationery.
When asked if it would be helpful to have a model or framework when art directing photographs, this professional explained that a tool like the spectrum would have been helpful in their previous career. More specifically, they commented on the fact that the “tool itself would have been a great training tool for on-boarding new team members who might have needed to understand the nuances.” This professional explained that once these details are learned, the tool is not needed unless training a new member. In that case, “translating this ‘tribal knowledge’ into (a) trainable tool is super helpful, and not done often enough/neglected.”

Creative Director A also mentioned and explained the complexity of e-commerce product photography and the variety of questions that become apparent when making design decisions. Additionally, they noted how much time and decision making goes into answering such questions, but that “it would have been helpful when we launched new product categories on the site” and would have helped to “eliminate the guesswork design direction can often include”. This is especially important given the fact that e-commerce retailers are “constantly churning through new product launches, on a daily basis” and “it truly is a mass production effort and creativity can fall by the wayside”.

Chapter 7: Research Implications

One of the main tasks required of any designer is understanding the needs of the people for which they are designing. American psychologist Abraham Maslow famously developed a pyramid to explain the basic needs of all human beings. In his book *Designing for Emotion*, Aarron Walter takes Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and applies it to interface design and highlights the parallels between basic human needs and basic design features. Basic features like functionality, reliability and usability have been the primary concern of e-commerce designers while the pleasurable aspects of interface design are absent or missing (Figure 30). The “pleasure, fun, joy, and delight” Walter describes as being part of the top tier are the same hedonic qualities previously discussed in relation to product imagery (Walter 2011, page 7).


Identifying, researching and documenting product imagery as a singular design element, worthy of individual research, has underscored its value and ultimate importance to the whole of e-commerce design. Furthermore, documenting contemporary e-commerce photography
trends and practices is vital to fully understanding both its current and future impact. This is especially important because the medium in which these images live is continually fluxing. As W.T.J. Mitchell explains, there are no images “without real things to represent” (Mitchell, 2005, page 73). The same can be said about photographs because they are a “trace of the world, a copy, a resemblant object, not the thing itself” (Elkins, 2007, page 28). E-commerce images are unlike many other genres of photography because the subjects portrayed in these photos are objects for sale and their individual lifespan is relatively short and temporary. The way in which these objects are photographed and utilized reveals interactions about the cultural in which we live and the need to research and understand them is ever present.

**Implications for Retailers and Consumers**

A number of research implications are evident for retailers as well as consumers. First, one of the most important aspects of this research is the creation of an intersection between hedonic and utilitarian motives and design. This intersection with the application of traditional marketing principles is unique to this research. More specifically, applying utilitarian and hedonic shopping motives to a specific medium like e-commerce photography was a progression of existing research and knowledge. This approach opens the door for other areas or fields of design to utilize these concepts and evaluate success based on the fulfillment of specific shopping motives instead of solely focusing on usability.

The application of these marketing concepts was evident throughout the primary
research, but is most apparent within the survey phase. Information and data collected during the
survey has specific implications for e-commerce consumers because it highlights the need for
a range of product imagery within the online retail environment. This emphasises the concept
that e-commerce imagery is not only a tool for utilitarian shoppers but also fulfills the needs
of hedonic consumers which have largely been neglected until this point. Retailers can directly
apply this information to their own e-commerce sites and shift some focus to the complete range
of shopping motives and to improving their consumers’ online experiences. Applying these
research findings will enhance the e-commerce experience for consumers which in turn has the
ability to potentially improve sales for retailers in this dynamic sector of the economy.

Secondly, the e-commerce photography spectrum captures a wide range of shopping motives
in relation to specific product imagery. This has a large scope of applications for e-commerce
retailers and in turn, online consumers. Retailers can employ the spectrum in a variety of
situations including, but not limited to: 1) the evaluation of current and future imagery based on a
range of consumer shopping motives, 2) the ability to highlight gaps in photography and identify
areas of expansion, 2) the improvement of communication between e-commerce teams as well as
clients, 4) the enhancement of translating existing photographic knowledge to new hires and, 4)
the elimination of design direction guesswork and photographic inconsistencies.

Additionally, the spectrum has been designed and developed specifically for e-commerce
photography but has the potential to expand to additional photographic genres and mediums.
Depending on the situation or context, categories and descriptions may need to be adapted or
additional sections included. This would allow retailers to evaluate their range of utilitarian to hedonic imagery on variety of designed artifacts in the future.

**Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

As with any research, there are limitations and areas for expansion within future research. Given the scope and time for this thesis, more extensive research into the subcategories of e-commerce and the related product imagery could be investigated. Subcategories of e-commerce were identified as a factor in determining the amount and type of product imagery. These concepts were touched on briefly but could be explored further. For example, future research could focus solely on a specific category of e-commerce and key findings developed based on that sector alone, instead of the economy at large.

Additionally, the expansive variation in imagery categorized within the spectrum was not fully tested. Insights and assumptions were made based on secondary research. Primary research in the form of the survey evaluated a limited a level of imagery and not the full spectrum. The survey assessed the extreme endpoints of the image spectrum but did not account for the various categories in-between. Particularly the mid-range spectrum images would provide a source of interesting future research and could consequently provide additional information for retailers.
The research from this study uncovered a number of key findings, resulted in an e-commerce image spectrum and proposed several implications for retailers as well as consumers. With e-commerce sales continuing to expand, this thesis research and image spectrum is suggested for retailers who are interested in capturing and expanding their share of the online market.
APPENDIX A: Image Maps
APPENDIX B: Survey Images and Questions
Utilitarian Statements: Select the image that would be most useful to you while shopping
Utilitarian Statements: Select the image that would be most useful to you while shopping
Utilitarian Statements: Select the image that would be most useful to you while shopping
**Hedonic Statements:** Select the image that is most appealing to you
Hedonic Statements: Select the image that is most appealing to you
**Hedonic Statements:** Select the image that is most appealing to you
ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

**Gender**
- Female (81%)
- Male (19%)

**Age**
- 18 — 25 (96%)
- 26 — 34 (2%)
- 35 — 49 (2%)
- 50 — 65 (1%)

**Do you enjoy online shopping?**
- Yes (92%)
- No (8%)

IMAGE RESPONSES

**Most Common Responses**
- Hedonic (74%)
- Utilitarian (26%)

**Average # of Responses**
- Hedonic (60.39)
- Utilitarian (31.9)
- Both (28.67)
Matrix 1: Backpack (Recreation)

Total Images for Product vs. Price of Product

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price of Product</th>
<th>Total Number Images Available for Product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$259.95</td>
<td>Most (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$22.50</td>
<td>Least (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$89.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>$64.95</td>
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</tr>
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<td>$69.99</td>
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<td>$35.99</td>
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<td>$129.77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$29.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$133.99</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>$269.95</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>$29.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$44.90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

Retailers

A) Rei     $259.95
B) Cabelas   $22.50
C) Llbean   $89.95
D) Backcountry  $64.95
E) Midwayusa   $69.99
G) Sportsmansguide  $35.99
H) Bassport   $129.77
I) Cheaperthandirt  $29.99
J) Moosejaw   $133.99
K) Brownells   $269.95
L) Gandermtountain  $169.00
M) Opticsplanet  $169.99
N) Timberland   $120.00
O) Knifest  $144.99
P) Ems    $89.00
Q) Towerhobby  $46.99
R) Mec    $89.00
S) Horizonhobby*  $999.99
T) 511tactical*   $99.99
U) Pyramydair   $29.95
V) Rcmart   $44.90
W) Cotswoldoutdoor*  $112.00

* Retailers with video

Total Images for Product vs. Price of Product
Matrix 2: Backpack (Recreation)

Hedonic Images for Product vs. Price of Product

Price of Product

Retailers

A) Rei     $259.95
B) Cabelas   $22.50
C) Llbean   $89.95
D) Backcountry  $64.95
E) Midwayusa   $69.99
G) Sportsmansguide  $35.99
H) Basspro   $129.77
I) Cheaperthandirt  $29.99
J) Moosejaw   $133.99
K) Brownells   $269.95
L) Gandermountain  $169.00
M) Opticsplanet  $169.99
N) Timberland   $120.00
O) Knifecenter   $144.99
P) Ems    $89.00
Q) Towerhobbies  $46.99
R) Mec    $89.00
S) Horizonhobbies*  $999.99
T) 511tactical*   $99.99
U) Pyramydair   $29.95
V) Rcmart   $44.90

* Retailers with video

Hedonic Images for Product vs. Price of Product

Available for Product
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retailers</th>
<th>Price of Product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>A) Gap</td>
<td>$59.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) HM</td>
<td>$29.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C) 6PM</td>
<td>$62.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D) Zappos</td>
<td>$168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E) Forever 21</td>
<td>$22.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F) Llbean</td>
<td>$49.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G) Jcrew</td>
<td>$78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H) Land's End</td>
<td>$59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I) Yoox</td>
<td>$164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J) Ralph Lauren</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K) Sierra Trading Post</td>
<td>$34.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L) AE</td>
<td>$49.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M) Mango</td>
<td>$59.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N) Shopbob</td>
<td>$80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O) Net-A-Porter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P) ModCloth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q) Abercrombie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R) Levi</td>
<td>$64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S) Children's Place</td>
<td>$14.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T) Old Navy</td>
<td>$9.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U) Dickies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V) Foot Locker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W) H&amp;M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X) Nordstrom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y) Target</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z) Walmart</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Available for Product
Total Number Images
**Matrix 2: Chambray Shirt (Apparel)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price of Product</th>
<th>Hedonic Images</th>
<th>Available for Product</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><strong>0</strong></td>
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<td>Retailers with video</td>
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<td>B</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td>J</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td>K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td>L</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td>O</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td>P</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td>Q</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Retailers:**

- A) Gap  $59.95
- B) HM  $29.99
- C) 6PM  $62.99
- D) Zappos  $168
- E) Forever 21  $22.90
- F) Llbean  $49.95
- G) Jcrew  $78
- H) Land's End  $59
- I) Yoox  $164
- J) Ralph Lauren  $125
- K) Sierra Trading Post  $34.95
- L) AE  $49.95
- M) Mango  $59.99
- N) Shopbob  $80
- O) Net-A-Porter  $200
- P) ModCloth  $49.99
- Q) Abercrombie  $58
- R) Levi  $64
- S) Children's Place  $14.97
- T) Old Navy  $29.94
## Matrix 1: Lamp (Home & Garden)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRICING</th>
<th>TOTAL IMAGES</th>
<th>AVAILABLE FOR PRODUCT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Least (1)</td>
<td>F) Containerstore   $129.99  G) Hayneedle     $100</td>
<td>H) Restorationhardware  $675  I) Lampsplus     $179.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Retailers with video*
### Hedonic Images for Product vs. Price of Product

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price of Product</th>
<th>Hedonic Images for Product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- A) HomeDepot   $39.97
- B) Lowes     $58.65
- C) Potterybarn   $170
- D) Williams-Sonoma   $325
- E) Westelm    $199.99
- F) Containerstore   $129.99
- G) Hayneedle     $100
- H) Restorationhardware  $675
- I) Lampsplus     $179.95
- J) Acehardware   $8.49
- K) Homedecorators   $179
- L) Uncommongoods   $27.99
- M) Pbteen    $149
- N) Roomstogo     $79.99
- O) Kirklands    $39.99
- P) 1000bulbs    $158.42

### Retailers with video

- HomeDepot
- Williams-Sonoma
- Restorationhardware
- Lampsplus
- Acehardware
- Homedecorators
- Uncommongoods
- Pbteen
- Roomstogo
- Kirklands
- 1000bulbs

---

Matrix 2: Lamp (Home & Garden)
Matrix 1: Paper Plate (General Merchandise)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retailer</th>
<th>Price of Product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A) Amazon</td>
<td>$17.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) Walmart</td>
<td>$6.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C) Ikea</td>
<td>$1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D) Target</td>
<td>$1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E) HomeDepot</td>
<td>$27.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F) Costco</td>
<td>$78.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G) Wayfair</td>
<td>$30.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H) Overstock</td>
<td>$27.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I) Staples</td>
<td>$7.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J) Sears</td>
<td>$7.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K) BedBath&amp;Beyond</td>
<td>$2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L) Toysrus</td>
<td>$16.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M) SamsClub</td>
<td>$19.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N) OfficeDepot</td>
<td>$41.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O) Rakuten</td>
<td>$76.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P) Kmart</td>
<td>$5.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Retailers with a video

Total Images for Product vs. Price of Product

Most (6): A, B, C, D, E, F

Least (1): M
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retailer</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amazon</td>
<td>$17.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walmart</td>
<td>$6.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ikea</td>
<td>$1.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>$1.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home Depot</td>
<td>$27.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Costco</td>
<td>$78.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayfair</td>
<td>$30.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overstock</td>
<td>$27.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staples</td>
<td>$7.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sears</td>
<td>$7.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed Bath &amp; Beyond</td>
<td>$2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toys R Us</td>
<td>$16.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam's Club</td>
<td>$19.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off Ice Depot</td>
<td>$41.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rakuten</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kmart</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kmart</td>
<td>$5.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopko</td>
<td>$4.79</td>
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<td>G. Webster</td>
<td>$5.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>F. Cormier</td>
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<td>E. Hammerly</td>
<td>$2.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>D. Rosset</td>
<td>$2.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Lees</td>
<td>$2.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Wilmot</td>
<td>$5.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Amoson</td>
<td>$11.99</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Hedonic Images for Product vs. Price of Product

Matrix 2: Paper Plate (General Merchandise)
APPENDIX E: E-commerce Site Profiles
### E-Commerce Site Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Website Example 1</th>
<th>Website Example 2</th>
<th>Website Example 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>True Color</td>
<td>Gap</td>
<td>Walmart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Frank Body</td>
<td>Gander Mountain</td>
<td>Amazon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>The Niche Retailer</td>
<td>The Mid-Sized Retailer</td>
<td>The Online Mall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Online Mall** (large)
- Extensive product collection
- Contains millions of product images
- Hedonic imagery is limited
- Standardization of imagery is necessary

**The Mid-Sized Retailer** (medium)
- Large product collections
- Some hedonic imagery on homepages
- Limited product collection
- Or social media likes

**The Niche Retailer** (small)
- Limited product collection
- Unique, individualized, visceral designs
- Typically incorporates hedonic imagery
- Excessive product collection

**True Color (approx. 1,400 products)**

**Gap (approx. 9,286 products)**

**Walmart (approx. 356,227 products)**

**Gander Mountain (approx. 42,502 products)**

**Amazon (approx. 479,606 products)**

**Frank Body (approx. 10 products)**

**Yeti Coolers (approx. 140 products)**

**YETI **

**YETI Coolers**
- Large product collections
- Some hedonic imagery on homepages
- Limited product collection
APPENDIX F: Spectrum Samples
Product: photographed straight on, front/foremost aspect, typically centered in frame
Background: white

Product: photographed straight on, but is turned or adjusted to highlight various aspect (typically non-apparel product), typically centered in frame
Background: white

Product: micro view of item element, encompasses all/majority of frame
Background: minimal/none

Product: photographed with/on animate but the head or other elements are cropped out. Straight on, centered in frame
Background: white

Product: photographed with/on animate, head is shown in the image. Straight on, centered in frame, varied aspect
Background: white

Product: photographed with/on animate within a context or environment. Varied photographic angle and aspect
Background: varied

Product: shown within a context or environment. Varied photographic angle and aspect
Background: varied
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>Product photographed straight on, front/foremost aspect, typically centered in frame</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pivot</td>
<td>Product photographed straight on, but is turned or adjusted to highlight various aspects (typically non-apparel products), typically centered in frame</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail</td>
<td>Product micro view of item, element, encompasses all/majority of frame</td>
<td>Minimal/none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial Animate — Flat</td>
<td>Product photographed with/on animate, head or other elements cropped out. Straight on, centered in frame</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Animate — Flat</td>
<td>Product photographed with/on animate, head shown in image. Straight on, centered in frame</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Animate — Dynamic</td>
<td>Product photographed with/on animate, head shown in image. Straight on, varied aspect</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>Product photographed with/on animate within a context or environment. Varied photographic angle and aspect</td>
<td>Varied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
<td>Product photographed with/on animate within a context or environment. Varied photographic angle and aspect</td>
<td>Varied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| E-commerce Photography Spectrum | Dog Coat |

---

**Utilitarian**
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   statista.com/statistics/272391/us-retail-e-commerce-sales-forecast


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