

Improving the Information Architecture of bedbathandbeyond.com

To begin to make sense of bedbathandbeyond.com’s structure, we must look at it from a user’s perspective. As I discussed in Homework 2, one of the main problems with the site is that there are simply too many items available that deviate from the company’s main brand message. The brand is centered on offering items that are commonly used in the average home. Therefore, the website should be structured to reflect that.

One of the first changes I would make would be to remove the items that are not strictly related to the brand message. Items such as jewelry, thermostats, electronics, and light bulbs have no place on a site geared toward home domestics. Because users do not relate these types of items to bedbathandbeyond.com, their inclusion on the site could cause confusion and frustration due to the overwhelming number of categories.

New and Modified Navigation Systems

After the extraneous items are removed from the site, I would overhaul the navigation, eliminating the ambiguous categories such as “Baby & Kids,” “Seasonal,” and “More.” To accommodate the removal of some of the top-level categories, I would create a new global navigation system that would sit at the top of every page, directing users to other websites owned by the same company. This navigation is currently buried at the bottom of each page. By surfacing it to the top, users will have an easier way to explore items such as baby clothes and grooming products that will no longer live on the bedbathandbeyond.com site.

My proposed global navigation would be:

Visit our other sites:	Buy Buy Baby	Harmon Face Values	Cost Plus World Market
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Because I have created a new global navigation system, I would then create a new local navigation system that would live on all pages of bedbathandbeyond.com.

Find a Store	Get offers by email or SMS	Buy Gift Cards	Track Order	Contact Us	Login	Shopping Cart
Bedbathandbeyond.com logo						Search
Bed	Bath	Kitchen & Dining	Furniture & Décor	Storage & Cleaning	Sales & Clearance	
Shop by Brand: A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z						

In this local navigation system, I expanded the “Shop by Brand” category to include an alphabetical index. This gives users an easy way to find a specific brand if she already knows what she’s looking for. I also separated the “Bed” and “Bath” categories, combined “Kitchen,” and “Dining” into one tab, renamed “Home Décor” to “Furniture & Décor,” and removed “What’s New,” “Seasonal,” “Baby & Kids,” and “More.” By bringing “Bed” and “Bath” both up to the top level, this will reduce the number of clicks

it takes for users to find the item for which they are looking. I combined “Kitchen” and “Dining” because these items are very closely related; for example, if a user stores her dinnerware in a cabinet in the kitchen, then it may make sense to her to search for “dinnerware” in the “Kitchen” category. By combining these two categories, she no longer has to decide between “Kitchen” and “Dining.”

I renamed “Home Décor” to “Furniture & Décor” because roughly one third of the items in this category are furniture. That is such a large percentage that I think it is worthwhile to surface the term to the top. This category would also now include items such as patio furniture and outdoor landscape décor. I removed “What’s New” from the top level because there is currently only one item (jewelry) listed under this tab, and jewelry does not belong on bedbathandbeyond.com. If the company wants to include a “What’s New” category, it should be moved down a level into each individual category (Figure 1). This way, users have an easy way to tell which items have been recently added to the category.

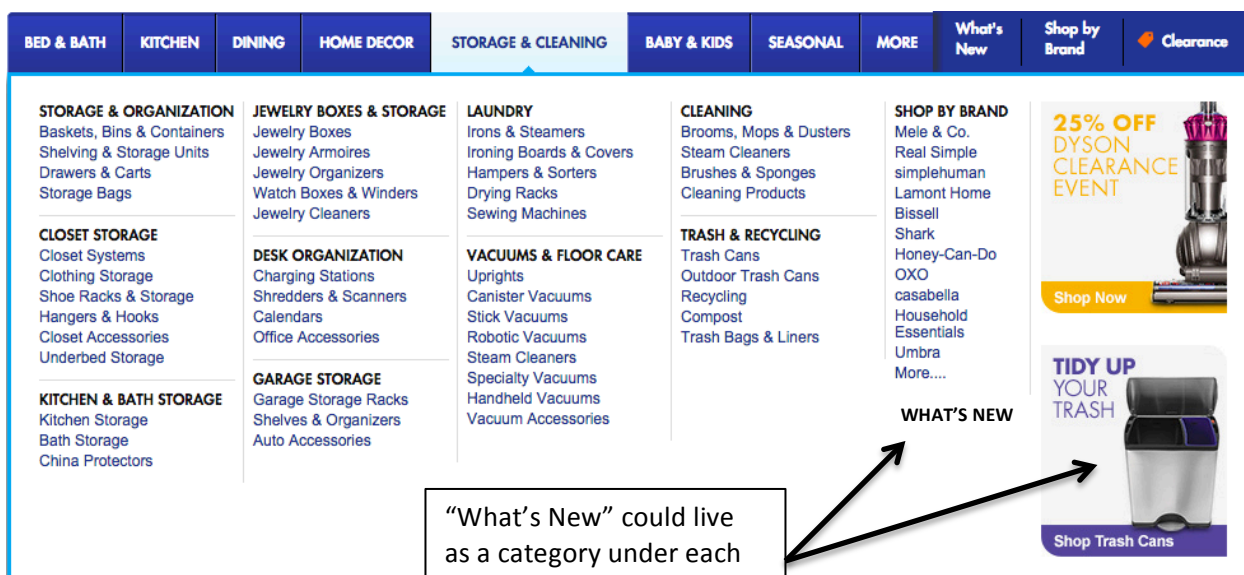


Figure 1: Storage & Cleaning tab with “What’s New” sub-category included

Modified Search System

Bedbathandbeyond’s current search system likely overwhelms users when they are searching for known items such as bath towels. To remedy this, I would lower the number of results to include only the most relevant to the search term and offer other ways for the user to search, such as the “Related Search” list of terms. For example, in the case of the search for “bath towel,” I would present only the results for items that live in the “Bath” category. I would present them in a hierarchical manner, with the best-selling item listed first. I would eliminate the tabs across the top because users likely do not need access to videos, guides and advice, or other results when searching for known items (Figure 2). The additional information in videos and guides should be placed on individual product pages when relevant to the specific item.

Search Results / 1704 results for "bath towel"

Related Search : hotel towels, wamsutta bath towels, towel stand, bathroom wall hooks

Departments

- Bed & Bath (966)
- Kitchen (4)
- Home Decor (50)
- Storage & Cleaning (13)
- Baby & Kids (335)
- Seasonal (23)
- More (51)

BRAND

Find a brand

- Avanti (281)
- Croscill (79)
- SpaSilk (71)
- Wamsutta (32)
- Creative Bath (28)

COLOR

Showing 1 - 30 of 1681 product(s) Sort by Best Match Per page: 24 1 2 3 ... 57

Quick View Compare Lasting Color Cotton Bath Towels by WestPoint Home™ 18 Reviews Bath Towel \$5.99

Quick View Compare Microdry® Cotton Bath Towels Clearance! Additional Colors Available 84 Reviews

Quick View Compare Dri Soft 100% Cotton Bath Towels Additional Colors Available 84 Reviews

By default, sort by best selling, making it easier for users to find the most popular items.

Figure 2: Search Results

On each individual product page, bedbathandbeyond.com already includes sections for related products, including a "Frequently bought with" section and a "Customers also viewed" section. On the product page is the appropriate place to direct users to other items that they may want to consider, instead of cluttering the Search Results page with unrelated categories.

Knowing Your User

On the current home page, bedbathandbeyond.com includes a section called "Just For You." This section shows up regardless of how many times a user has visited the site. If the user hasn't previously visited the site and established a shopping history, this section clearly demonstrates that the company lacks the appropriate information to make a targeted "Just For You" section useful.

Until a user has established a shopping history, bedbathandbeyond.com should repurpose this area into a "best seller" list. The site currently includes a section near the bottom of the page called "Most Popular," but it is buried in a second-level tab and very easy to miss (Figure 3). Bringing this section up into its own area helps give users who are just browsing an idea of where to start.

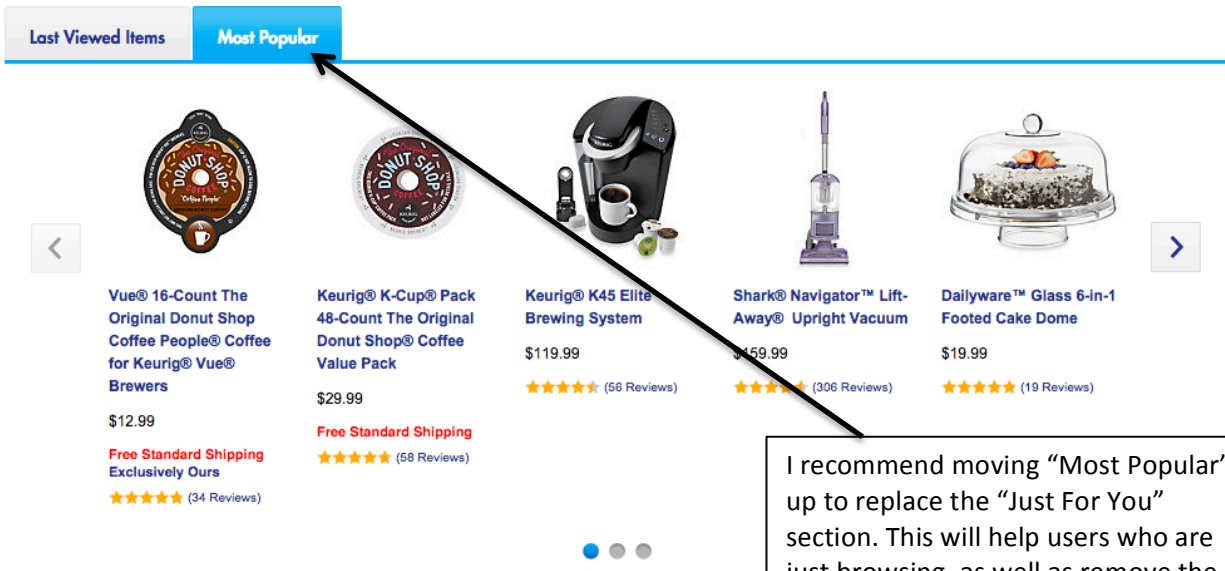


Figure 3: Most popular items, currently located near the bottom of the page

I recommend moving “Most Popular” up to replace the “Just For You” section. This will help users who are just browsing, as well as remove the emphasis on the lack of user knowledge that is inherent in the current “Just For You” section.

Once a user has established a shopping history, the “Just For You” section may make more sense — but only if it includes relevant products that are specifically tailored to the user’s past purchases and browsing history

Conclusion

There are myriad other information architecture issues throughout the bedbathandbeyond.com site, but the changes I have discussed would be a good place to start. By far, I think the most important thing the company needs to do is revisit the strategy plane to examine their brand message and their users’ goals through extensive user testing. Based on the current website, the company’s strategy seems very muddled, and as a result, their catalog of products is overwhelming, unorganized, and seemingly random. If they simplify the site’s organization dramatically, I believe that they would be better positioned to meet their business goals and increase user satisfaction.