

Increasing Online Photo Gift Sales Through Emotional Interplay

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Abstract

Understanding the rapid advances in image processing and photo gift creation technology is a challenge for the traditional customer. For them, it is hard to imagine what great products can be made out of their personal photos let alone visualize how they will eventually look. Photo gift producers need a tool to show their clients the possibilities available.

In 2007, Personello, the German photo gift company, interviewed 500 potential photo gift clients and found out that there were two major reasons why potential clients did not buy a photo gift. Reason One: Clients felt they did not have a suitable image. Reason Two: Many clients preferred traditional products like mugs because they did not want to risk buying something they couldn't imagine.

We took our studies one step further and analyzed what made our customer's photos unsuitable, and discovered that a lot of good images were spoiled by bad backgrounds. As a result of this, Personello created the DAZZ.com 'Photostyle' creation service which eliminates the original background of the customer's photo, restyles it and sets it into a collection of new backgrounds to suit a variety of products and occasions.

In order to introduce the customer to our complete range of photo gift products, and give them a variety to choose from, their collection of 'Photostyles' is presented on all of our photo gifts. To recreate a store-like shopping experience the customer can take a closer look at the gift by clicking on the picture. A video file opens enabling the customer to visualise the final product from all sides. For example, see jigsaw pieces drop onto a desk and fly together piece by piece until the customer's personal image appears.

The DAZZ.com service increases the customer base by opening up a channel to reach out to new customers who previously considered their photos unworthy. Once the customer sees the 3D video clips of their restyled photo on a range of products an emotional bond is created to the product which, more often than not, leads to a sale. The innovative video presentation serves to create a buzz amongst users triggering them to share their experience with others.

This paper outlines the problems that hold potential customers back from having a photo gift made, and shows how offering choice and providing entertainment can arouse emotions that stimulate customers to buy. Thus increasing photo gift sales.

Expanding the Customer Base

Millions of people own digital cameras today and are not shy of snapping a moment before it disappears forever. They have nothing to lose, all it will cost them is time. Not a lot of

thought goes into the photo. People are not styled and positioned in front of appealing backdrops. They are snapped naturally. It is not unusual to see cute pictures of children in front of dirty dishes and kitchen cabinets – almost all moms have pictures like this somewhere.

These photos belong to two types of people, one will love them regardless because they hold a precious memory and they will have them put on a product, the other will feel they are not good enough to show. The customer that has the product made regardless, is great because he is a customer. However, no matter how good the quality of the product is, if the photo looks bad the product looks bad which in turn reflects badly on the company. The person that has no confidence in their photo will never become a customer and is therefore of no use to the company.

We realize that not everyone can be a master photographer or a photo editing wizard. For this reason, we felt that if we had a service that improved the customer photo, not only would we increase customer satisfaction and the value of our products, we would also turn people that are less confident in their photography ability into new, satisfied customers.

In general, it seemed that both types of photo snapper were unaware of what could be done to improve their photo and even if they were aware, they just didn't have the time, the money or the inclination. This is how the idea for the DAZZ.com 'Photostyle' creation service evolved. We needed a simple and affordable photo enhancement service to suit a mass market and improve the look of the final product. Furthermore, we needed to show them a host of possibilities for their photo in one go, without them having to do any work.



What is a 'Photostyle'

A 'Photostyle' is the result of removing the original background of a photo, restyling the look (charcoal, sepia, pop art etc.) and setting the image into a new background.



Background designs are not only based on the theme/occasion they need to suit (romantic/Valentines, seasonal/Christmas, fun/bachelor party etc.) but also on the product they are designed for.



Whereas a straight edged design works well on a card or a mousepad, a swirly or jagged edge makes a 'T' shirt or mug more appealing.



The 'Photostyle' collection expands the possibilities the customer has for his photo and reminds him of all of the occasions for which he needs a gift. For example, when the customer sees a cheeky photo of his kids turned into a cartoon with a speech bubble in which he can add a witty comment, the customer may be triggered into thinking 'that makes a great picture for our Christmas card'. Whereas beforehand he probably wouldn't have had the photo printed let alone send it to anyone.

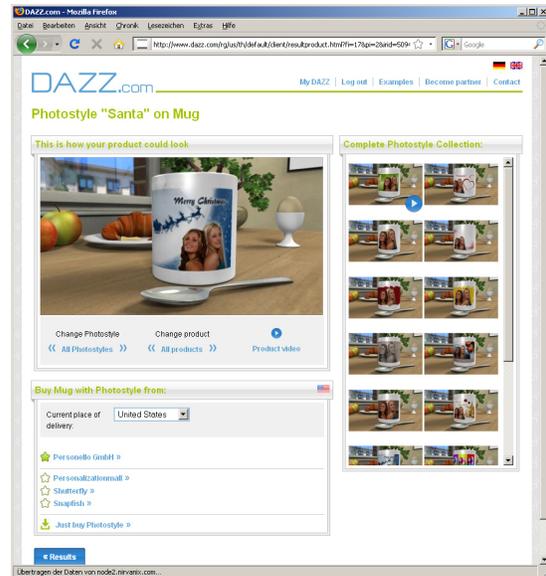


The customer is presented with a wide choice of 'Photostyles' from which he can ultimately choose the best to suit his needs, the others can be disregarded. Should the customer not find any he likes, he has lost nothing because this service is free with no obligation to purchase and download the 'Photostyle'. The advantage for the company is that, the customer has been introduced to the range, has registered with us, and could try our service some other time with a different photo should he please.

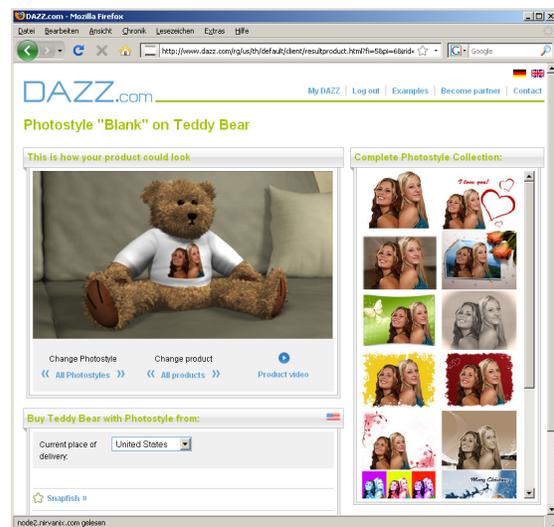
Helping the Customer Imagine the Unimaginable

When a customer is in a store, he is presented with a choice of products. He can see them, touch them, and be aroused to buy them. Online it is different, 2D pictures of products do not stimulate you in the same way. If the customer sees a mug with a professional demonstration photo on it, how does he know that his photo will make the mug look just as good? What motivation does he have to buy the product? This type of selling requires a great deal of trust from the side of the customer.

This led to the most innovative feature of the DAZZ.com service, which is, that each personalized product photo is embedded into a mini video clip. This not only reveals all angles of the product with the customer picture on it, it also sets the product in context. For example, you don't just get a view of the mug, you see the mug with your photo in a breakfast setting alongside a boiled egg and daily newspaper. It becomes easier for the customer to imagine himself drinking from his personalized mug, not to mention maybe grandma, grandpa, aunt Sally



Or take a teddy with a photo 'T'shirt, at DAZZ.com you see a teddy with your photo bounce on the sofa and wave to you. When your emotions are touched you can imagine it having the same effect on the recipient of the gift and feel confident about making the purchase.



This type of presentation plays a great part in stimulating the customer to buy and feel good about his choice. Touching people's emotions takes away the sterile atmosphere of online shopping and adds an element of enjoyment. A positive mood motivates positive actions and so increases sales.

Creating a Viral Buzz

'YouTube' videos spread like wild fire for the simple reason that people love to be entertained and entertain others. Who doesn't enjoy passing on something they think is fun? People love to have something new to talk about. The DAZZ.com video clip presentation is like a 'YouTube' for photo gifts.

Even if for some reason the customer doesn't buy a photo gift, this is a feature he will talk about, spreading the word about the website in a viral way. After all the customer is not at risk of losing any money, he can try it for himself risk free, and who knows – maybe in this kind of an atmosphere he'll feel comfortable to shop!

Introducing New Products Online

If a store wants to introduce a new product they set up an eye-catching display and employ a demonstrator. Online it is different. In order to find a product you must first type what you are looking for into a search engine.

If I have created a new product, called, for example, the 'Fotocard' I will not be able to show it to anyone who doesn't type the word 'Fotocard' into the search engine. It is unusual for people to look for things they do not know and in general, people will not buy what they do not know. Even if they read the term 'Fotocard' somewhere, how are they supposed to know what it is exactly? Here, there is no motivation to buy.

The DAZZ.com presentation slips this new product in alongside an old one, the customer can't help but notice it, and the video clip lets the customer see what the product is and how it can be used – see a wallet open, and watch a plastic card float out from the credit card slots with your personal image on one side and a calendar on the back – a 'Fotocard'. The product becomes clear with no explaining.



The DAZZ.com video presentation, makes introducing new products easier. The customer is able to see what the product is and form his own opinion in an instant. This increases the opportunities of online sales.

Turning Reluctant Customers into Satisfied Customers

In conclusion, the DAZZ.com service lets pictures speak for themselves - arousing emotions, stimulating the imagination, eliminating risk and creating the ideal shopping atmosphere.

Author Biography

Ulf Unbehaun studied Business at the University of Friborg in Switzerland and has a Post Graduate Degree in Artificial Intelligence. He is the founder and managing director of Personello.com, a leading German photo gift company that specialises in software technology and product innovation for the photo gift industry. Personello has 30 employees, and 2008 marked a gross turnover of 2.5 million Euros (3.4 million US\$).