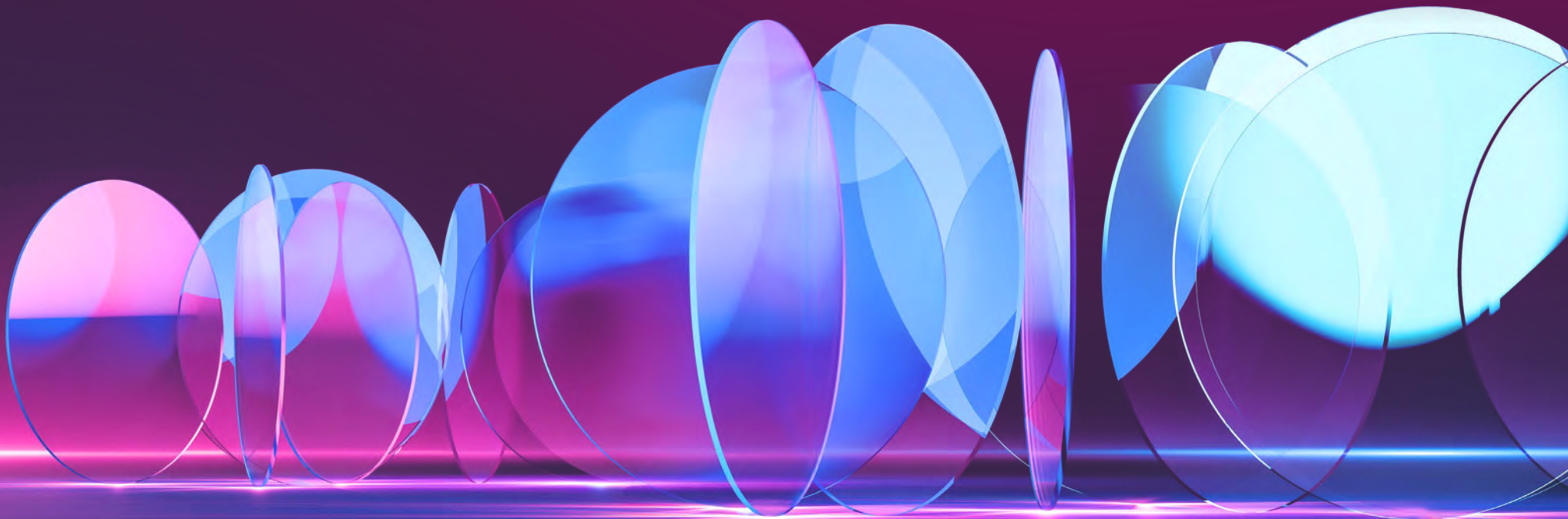


An Evaluation of *CAVA's* E-Commerce UX

Essential Insights for CMOs



SUMMARY

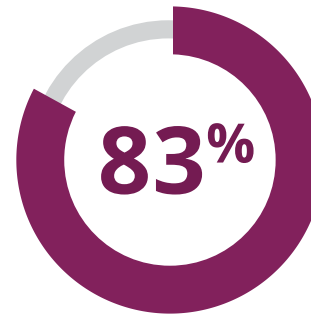
Customization Without Clarity Undermines the Digital Experience

CAVA, a fast-casual restaurant chain celebrated for its customizable bowls and salads, has quickly carved out a niche in the competitive fast-casual dining industry. However, as CAVA's popularity rises, so do the expectations of its digital-savvy customers. While the brand's in-store experience emphasizes flexibility and personalization, our evaluation reveals that its digital interface struggles to deliver the same level of satisfaction.

Our comprehensive analysis of CAVA's digital platform uncovers several key challenges that could undermine the brand's appeal. These issues, ranging from navigation hurdles to inconsistencies in information display, highlight a gap between CAVA's customer promise and the actual online experience. As CAVA continues to grow, addressing these UX shortcomings will be crucial to maintaining its reputation and ensuring customer loyalty.

In this report, we discuss specific areas where CAVA's digital experience falls short, offering insights that are vital for CMOs looking to enhance their brand's online presence and effectiveness.

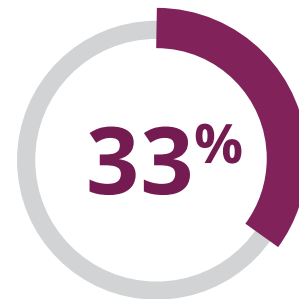
Key Findings



83% of user experience issues were related to **broken or misaligned user journeys**



66% of user frustration was due to **navigation disruptions**



33% of users had difficulty completing their order due to **insufficient information and a lack of transparency**



RESEARCH METHODS



Heuristic evaluations



Usability testing



Thematic analysis of findings

DEMOGRAPHICS



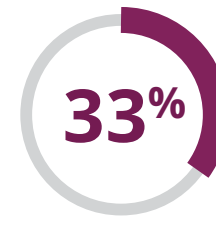
 Female



 Male



 Desktop



 Mobile



Age range

25 - 65

Customization Process Creates Friction

CAVA's digital platform emphasizes customization, a feature that sets the brand apart in the fast-casual dining market. Initially, this strength became a significant weakness when the user experience (UX) did not effectively support the customization process.

When users interacted with CAVA's online ordering system, they were presented with a wide variety of ingredient choices, allowing them to create meals tailored to their preferences. As users progressed through the customization process, they initially selected an ingredient, only to later realize they prefer a different option to complete their order. However, the system required users to manually deselect their previous choice before selecting a new one. This added unnecessary complexity and disrupted the flow of the ordering experience.

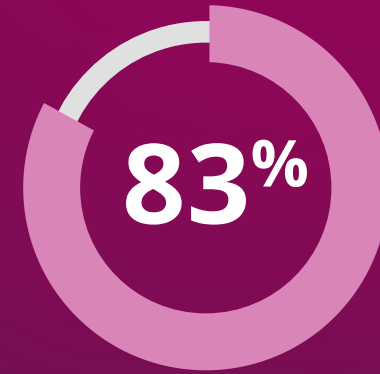
The lack of automatic deselection when a new choice was made contradicted intuitive design principles, leading to user frustration. This cumbersome process introduced friction into what should be a seamless and enjoyable customization experience, potentially causing users to abandon their orders.

CAVA recently improved its platform to address this issue. It now clearly informs users that only one item can be selected, or they can split their order with another item, simplifying the selection process. A user no longer has to deselect an item to choose another. Additionally, the system now informs users when they have reached their max selections. This change reduces user frustration and enhances the overall customization experience.

IMPACT OF UX UPDATES

To align with user expectations and industry standards, CAVA redesigned this aspect of their UX. Implementing clearer indicators that show only one option can be selected at a time, and automatically adjusting the system to deselect previous choices or gray out incompatible options, streamlined the customization process. This not only reduced user frustration but also increased the likelihood of order completion, ultimately enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

USABILITY TESTING HIGHLIGHTS ↗



83% of users experienced difficulties during the customization process due to unclear selection rules



83% of users encountered issues with the item removal process due to an unexpected and counterintuitive response, which disrupted their flow and caused unnecessary complications

INSIGHT 2

Item Removal Process Requires Too Many Steps

In digital platforms, particularly in e-commerce, simplicity and predictability are key components of a positive user experience. However, CAVA's item removal process introduced unexpected functionality that not only complicated the ordering experience but also led to user confusion and frustration. When users attempted to remove items from their order, they anticipated that a single click on the remove button would immediately subtract the selected item. Instead, users reported that clicking the remove button unexpectedly added more of the item rather than removing it. This counterintuitive response forced users to double-click or take additional steps to successfully remove an item, deviating from the standard single-click action that interfaces should employ.

This unpredictable behavior disrupted the user's flow and contradicted their mental model of how the system should function. In well-designed user experiences, actions should be straightforward and aligned with user expectations. When an action intended to remove an item results in adding more, it not only confuses users but also introduces errors and inefficiencies into the process. Such discrepancies in expected behavior will erode user trust in the platform, leading to dissatisfaction and a higher likelihood of order abandonment.

The complexity of the prior system exacerbated these issues, and users were left questioning the site's reliability. Trust is a critical factor in any e-commerce transaction, and when users feel uncertain about how a system responds to their actions, their overall experience will be negatively impacted.

IMPACT OF UX UPDATES

CAVA has recently made improvements to its ordering process to better guide users. Now, when a product is selected, it clearly indicates that multiple units can be added. Additionally, a new "add extra" option appears once the maximum quantity is reached, allowing for easier adjustments.

However, to further enhance the user experience and streamline the process, CAVA should optimize the item removal functionality. Currently, removing an item requires additional steps. Instead, a single click on the remove button should instantly subtract the item from the order. Additionally, using distinct "+" and "-" symbols for adding and removing items would clarify actions and simplify the interface. These changes would help prevent mistakes, reduce frustration, and create a more efficient ordering experience, ultimately leading to increased customer satisfaction.

USABILITY TESTING HIGHLIGHTS ↗

Ordering Multiple Quantities is Cumbersome

In a digital environment where customization is key to delivering a personalized and satisfying user experience, restrictions on user choices can lead to significant frustration. CAVA's current add-on functionality presents such a challenge, particularly in its limitation on how many dessert items, such as cookies, a user can add to their order at one time.

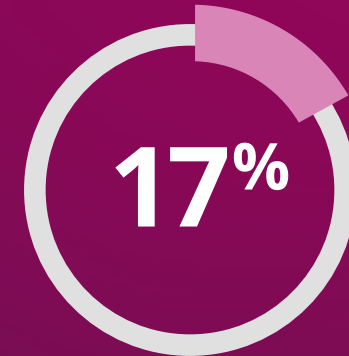
During the ordering process, users expressed frustration with the website's restrictive functionality, which only allowed them to add one dessert item at a time. This limitation is especially problematic for customers who wish to order multiple quantities of the same dessert. Instead of being able to easily adjust the quantity, users are forced to repeat the entire selection process for each additional item. This not only lengthens the ordering process but also creates unnecessary frustration, potentially discouraging customers from adding more items to their cart.

Such a design flaw violates core principles of flexibility and user control, leading to frustration and potential cart abandonment. Users expect to customize their orders freely, but this limitation disrupts the natural flow of the process, giving the impression that the system is not aligned with their preferences. This not only diminishes the overall user experience but also hampers CAVA's ability to increase order value, as users may forgo adding additional items due to the cumbersome steps required.

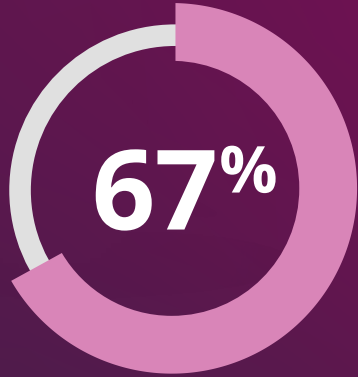
UX RECOMMENDATION

To enhance flexibility and user satisfaction, CAVA should update its ordering system to allow users to select multiple quantities of any item, including desserts, during the item selection and customization stages. By providing this functionality, users can effortlessly tailor their orders to meet their needs, resulting in a more seamless, enjoyable, and user-friendly experience.

USABILITY TESTING HIGHLIGHTS ↗



17% of users encountered frustration due to the website's restrictive functionality, which only allowed them to add one dessert item at a time



67% of users experienced disruptions in their ordering process due to navigation issues when attempting to access the catering menu, which negatively impacted their overall experience

INSIGHT 4

Website Redirect for Catering Causes Disruptions

In e-commerce, seamless navigation is crucial for driving customer satisfaction and boosting conversion rates. However, CAVA's current approach to navigating its catering page introduces significant challenges that disrupt the user experience and create frustration.

Users attempting to access the catering menu are unexpectedly redirected to a separate website, a move that immediately breaks the continuity of their journey. This abrupt transition leaves users feeling disoriented, as they find themselves stranded on an external site with no clear or intuitive way to return to the main CAVA website. The sudden shift not only interrupts the natural flow of the ordering process but also creates a fragmented experience that feels disjointed and inconvenient.

The lack of a visible and straightforward option to navigate back to the main CAVA site exacerbates the problem. Users naturally expect to explore different sections of a website without being taken out of the overall flow. When this expectation is not met, the experience can feel clunky and poorly designed, leading to confusion and frustration. This type of navigation discrepancy not only disrupts the user journey but also poses a risk of losing customers to competitors who offer a more cohesive and user-friendly experience.

UX RECOMMENDATION

To provide a more cohesive and user-friendly experience, CAVA should consider integrating the catering page within the main website. This would ensure that users remain within a consistent navigation framework, reducing the likelihood of confusion and frustration. Alternatively, if a separate site for catering must be maintained, CAVA should ensure that a clear, easy-to-find link is available for users to return to the main homepage. By maintaining a consistent navigation flow and minimizing disruptions, users will be able to explore catering options more comfortably and confidently, leading to a smoother ordering process and increased customer satisfaction.

USABILITY TESTING HIGHLIGHTS ↗

Obscure Nutritional Information Placement Hinders Accessibility and Transparency

Easy access to nutritional information is a critical factor for many consumers, especially those frequenting fast-casual restaurants known for healthier options like CAVA. However, CAVA's website currently falls short in providing this vital information in a user-friendly manner, leading to frustration and diminished trust among its customer base.

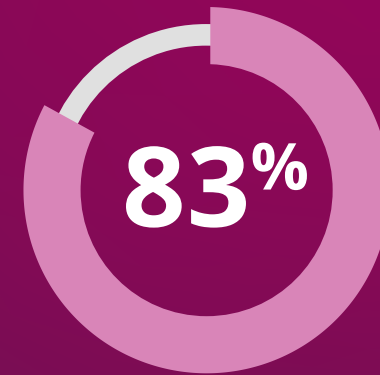
Users find it difficult to access nutritional information on CAVA's website. This essential data, highly relevant to CAVA's target customers, is buried in the footer of the website, far from where users naturally expect to find it—on the menu or item pages. This poor placement forces users to hunt for information that should be easily accessible, leading to frustration and a less efficient navigation experience.

This oversight violates key principles of accessibility and transparency, both of which are crucial for building a positive user experience. Nutritional information is not just a luxury for many users—it's a necessity, especially for those with specific dietary needs or health concerns. When this information is hidden or difficult to locate, it not only frustrates users but also undermines their ability to make informed decisions about their food choices.

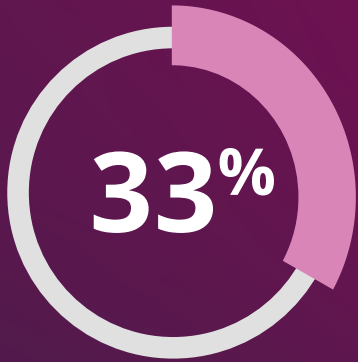
UX RECOMMENDATION

To enhance user confidence and engagement, CAVA should relocate the nutritional information to the menu and item pages, where it is most relevant and useful to users actively making decisions about their meals. By prominently displaying this information in the most logical and accessible locations, users will be able to make informed choices more easily, leading to a more satisfying and trustworthy experience.

USABILITY TESTING HIGHLIGHTS ↗



83% of users encountered difficulties in finding nutritional information, which negatively impacted their confidence in making informed dietary decisions and diminished overall engagement with the site



33% of users experienced uncertainty and hesitancy due to insufficient labeling on CAVA's website

INSIGHT 6

Lack of Descriptive Labels on Menu Items Leads to User Confusion and Hesitancy

Clarity and transparency are essential for creating a positive user experience. However, CAVA's website lacked detailed labels and descriptions for many of its menu items, particularly for drinks and desserts, leading to user confusion and hesitation during the ordering process.

CAVA's site displayed images of items like cookies and sodas without providing clear labels or descriptions, which were critical for helping users make informed decisions. This lack of transparency left users uncertain about what they were ordering, as they were unable to access important details such as brand names, ingredients, and specific item descriptions. Without this essential information, users felt unsure about the quality or suitability of the products, potentially leading to dissatisfaction or even abandonment of their orders. When customers couldn't easily access the information they needed, they questioned the quality or appropriateness of the products, which diminished their overall trust in the brand.

IMPACT OF UX UPDATES

CAVA recently enhanced its platform by adding tooltips that provide detailed descriptions of menu items, including brand names, ingredients, and specific details. This update significantly improved transparency, allowing users to quickly access important information.

To further elevate the user experience, CAVA could make these tooltips more visually prominent. For example, using a vibrant color instead of the current grey would draw more attention to the information, reducing uncertainty and enhancing decision-making. This change would create a smoother, more engaging interaction for users.

USABILITY TESTING HIGHLIGHTS ↗



CONCLUSION

Leveraging CAVA's UX Pitfalls as a Guide for Digital Strategy

Our analysis of CAVA's digital platform reveals several areas where the user experience still falls short of the brand's in-store promise of customization and flexibility. As CAVA continues to expand and attract a digitally savvy customer base, it is crucial for the brand to address these ongoing UX challenges to ensure that the online experience meets customer expectations.

By simplifying the customization process, enhancing the visibility of important information, and ensuring consistency in navigation and labeling, CAVA can significantly improve the overall user experience. Addressing these issues will help maintain customer loyalty, reinforce CAVA's position as a leader in the fast-casual dining market, and demonstrate a commitment to providing a seamless and satisfying digital experience that drives higher customer satisfaction and engagement.

