

## A User Experience Perspective on Digital Publishing Products: A Case Study of “Harper’s Bazaar mini” (Postprint)

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**Date:** 2023-03-24T00:00:00+00:00

### Abstract

With the development of Internet technology, mobile communication technology, and digital technology, various Internet trends continue to emerge, and users increasingly pursue convenient, fast, and fragmented reading methods akin to short videos. Against the backdrop of the national advocacy for nationwide reading, Fashion Bazaar has also responded to users’ demands for digital reading by launching the revamped mobile client-based Fashion Bazaar mini in early 2020, which has gained favor among fashion-conscious users. This paper will adopt James Garrett’s Five Elements of User Experience as its theoretical foundation, with Fashion Bazaar mini as the primary research object, to explore how Fashion Bazaar mini’s user experience has achieved success and how it can improve its user experience, thereby providing targeted recommendations for digital reading applications in China.

### Full Text

#### A Study of Digital Publishing Products from the Perspective of User Experience: A Case Study of *Harper’s Bazaar Mini*

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**Abstract:** With the development of Internet technology, mobile communication technology, and digital technology, various Internet trends continue to emerge, and users increasingly pursue convenient, fast, and fragmented reading methods similar to short videos. Against the backdrop of the national advocacy for nationwide reading, *Harper’s Bazaar* has responded to users’ demands for digital reading by launching the revamped mobile-client-based *Harper’s Bazaar Mini* in early 2020, which has gained favor among fashion-conscious users.

Grounded in James Garrett’s five elements of user experience as the theoretical framework and taking *Harper’s Bazaar Mini* as the primary research object, this paper explores how *Harper’s Bazaar Mini* has successfully implemented user experience design and how it can be further improved, thereby providing targeted recommendations for digital reading applications in China.

**Keywords:** User experience; *Harper’s Bazaar Mini*; Digital reading

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The 2021 National Reading Survey (19th edition) revealed that 77.4% of users prefer reading on mobile devices. In *The Experience Economy*, Joseph Pine predicted that the future would belong to the experience economy era. In this economy, users no longer limit themselves to pursuing the practical functions of products but instead seek spiritual satisfaction and prioritize personal experience. Against this backdrop of digital reading, traditional fashion magazines have undergone digital transformation. As early as 2016, *Harper’s Bazaar* launched *Bazaar in*, which enabled users to view, purchase, and interact with fashion content. Through *Bazaar in*, users could browse digital editions of *Harper’s Bazaar*, receive trendy fashion updates, and interact closely with celebrities. In early 2020, *Harper’s Bazaar* revamped *Bazaar in* and introduced the more streamlined *Harper’s Bazaar Mini*, a change that more prominently emphasized the concepts of fashion and compactness while opening a new path for the magazine’s development. As a branch of digital reading, fashion magazines like *Harper’s Bazaar* have leveraged rich fashion magazine resources and novel reading methods to deliver superior reading experiences. This paper examines the five elements of user experience in *Harper’s Bazaar Mini* and identifies areas for optimization.

## 2. Overview of User Experience Theory

User experience, as the term suggests, refers to the subjective experience users generate when using any product—whether they feel satisfied during the process. Numerous scholars have provided various definitions and references for user experience in previous research. The concept of user experience first emerged in the 1940s, and in the 1990s, Donald Norman offered a more explicit definition, dividing user experience into three levels: visceral, behavioral, and reflective [1]. In the early 21st century, James Garrett, the renowned American “father of Ajax,” summarized the five elements of user experience based on his experience helping companies improve their websites and published the book *The Elements of User Experience: User-Centered Design for the Web* [2]. In this work, Garrett proposed five elements that influence user experience in product design, organized into five layers: strategy, scope, structure, skeleton, and surface. Specifically, the main content of each layer includes website objectives and user needs, functional specifications and content requirements, interaction design and information architecture, interface design and navigation design, and the application of visual design elements. These elements directly or indirectly

affect user experience. In summary, user experience is crucial to a product's survival, and high-quality user experience is the key factor in converting "casual browsers" into "actual purchasers." This paper will analyze *Harper's Bazaar Mini* according to James Garrett's five elements of user experience to examine its successes and identify areas for improvement.

### 3. Analysis of *Harper's Bazaar Mini* Through the Five Elements of User Experience

#### 3.1 Strategy Layer

**3.1.1 Corporate Objectives** The strategy layer represents forward-looking design considerations that product managers must address before product design. Regarding corporate objectives, product managers must determine what the company wants to achieve through the product. Originally named *China Fashion*, *Harper's Bazaar* was renamed in 2005. From its inception, the magazine strategically positioned itself as a mature, high-quality fashion magazine for women and successfully launched celebrity digital editions. In 2003, editor-in-chief Su Mang initiated the Bazaar Star Charity Night, which continues to this day. *Harper's Bazaar* has become a leading fashion magazine and a favored publication among celebrities. The revamped *Harper's Bazaar Mini* launched in early 2020 represents a comprehensive upgrade, presenting professional and authoritative content on celebrities, fashion, lifestyle, and beauty secrets through mobile screens. It serves as an electronic fashion magazine and celebrity lifestyle guide designed to make reading more engaging, with its digital format also demonstrating *Harper's Bazaar's* commitment to environmental sustainability.

**3.1.2 User Needs** *Harper's Bazaar* primarily targets modern, independent, sophisticated, experienced Chinese women who love fashion and pursue perfection, while also aiming to influence men's attitudes toward modern women and their understanding of beauty. The user base is mainly young women in first-tier cities. Following the launch of celebrity digital editions, most users gradually became fan communities. Consequently, the primary user needs for *Harper's Bazaar Mini* center on fashion trends, celebrities, and beauty content. The digital editions, priced at six yuan per issue, are also more affordable and economical.

#### 3.2 Scope Layer

**3.2.1 Functional Specifications** Based on the strategic layer's objective of creating a professional electronic magazine for fashion and beauty, *Harper's Bazaar Mini* enables functions including recommendations, subscriptions, purchases, reading, management, search, and social interaction. Launched in early 2020, each issue is priced at 12 yuan, with an annual subscription of 12 issues costing 78 yuan. Users who subscribe can purchase each new digital magazine upon release. After purchase, users can read the content, during which

*Harper's Bazaar Mini* connects content with purchasing behavior—users can click to jump to purchase pages, enabling shopping functionality. Additionally, the purchase page includes related recommendation links, and based on big data, pushes fashion items, books, films, and other content that users might find interesting. Notably, the reading function also conveys an environmental philosophy. The digital magazine not only solves users' storage problems for old magazines but also avoids paper waste. Below each digital edition, there is a dedicated comment section where users can leave messages and replies, enabling social interaction functionality.

**3.2.2 Content Requirements** *Harper's Bazaar Mini* is positioned to deliver fashion trends, beauty secrets, celebrity idols, and exciting lifestyles directly to users. Consequently, its content encompasses digital magazine editions, fashion news, creative videos, fashion products, and a series of fashion-related items. The digital magazine editions include categories such as celebrities, beauty, art, fashion, *Bazaar Men*, and *Bazaar Jewelry*, with celebrity digital editions particularly featuring the hottest newcomers in entertainment, critically acclaimed films, popular web dramas, and variety shows. On the discovery page, users can find fashion article recommendations, fashion videos, and event benefits. As Sha Xiaoli, executive publisher and editor-in-chief of *Harper's Bazaar*, explains, “It is not only a magazine where you can read exciting content anytime and anywhere, but also a platform where you can find your favorite items, directly link to corresponding shopping websites or brand official sites to view purchase information, or put them all in your wish list for collection.”

### 3.3 Structure Layer

**3.3.1 Information Architecture** Information architecture involves organizing and presenting content to users according to priority and classification, aligned with the strategic layer. *Harper's Bazaar Mini* features four primary pages: Home, Discover, Collection, and My Profile. The Home page displays the latest magazine showcases, advertisement streams, all magazine displays, QR code scanning, and celebrity digital edition entry. After entering the celebrity digital edition secondary portal, popular issues are displayed, and clicking on “All Issues” reveals a more detailed classification including celebrities, beauty, art, fashion, RISE, *Bazaar Men*, and *Bazaar Jewelry*. The Discover page primarily features three tab categories: Articles, Videos, and Events. Articles showcase daily updates of cutting-edge fashion news, Videos feature creative videos tracking hot topics and recommending fashion products, and Events include irregular fan activities. The Collection page contains My Bookshelf, Wish List, and Content Collections. My Bookshelf displays purchased magazines, Wish List contains favorite items collected while reading magazines, and Content Collections include magazine collections, topic collections, and article collections. The My Profile page includes magazine subscriptions, purchase history, system messages, my comments, feedback, cache clearing, about us, and more.

**3.3.2 Interaction Design** Interaction design involves creating conceptual models based on user habits to reduce learning costs and enable faster product comprehension. The conceptual models employed in *Harper's Bazaar Mini* include books and bookshelves. When reading digital magazines, the product follows the book conceptual model, with page-turning, marking, and sliding interactions all based on this model. The magazine display on the Home page and the bookshelf page layout in the Discover page follow the bookshelf conceptual model. When opening *Harper's Bazaar Mini*, the opening screen features the English letters BAZAAR, where the first black capital A dynamically transforms into a red lowercase a, employing visual interaction. Another visual interaction appears on the Home page, where the “in” icon surrounded by a star shape undergoes dynamic changes, indicating a clickable entry point. Additionally, the latest magazine covers on the Home page feature dynamic displays, and when users swipe up, the issue abstract is revealed. During magazine reading, a dedicated interaction hint page indicates that a single click calls up the menu, a double click enters the product recommendation page, left-right swipes switch pages, upward swipes view more content, and clicking the lower right corner of an image views the enlarged version.

Regarding error prompts, when users click on the Collection page without logging in, a login page appears as a prompt. Additionally, most magazines in the app are paid content, and these feature a trial reading function. After viewing several pages, attempting to continue reading triggers an error prompt indicating the trial has ended and the magazine must be purchased to unlock all chapters. In celebrity digital editions, attempting to read triggers an error prompt that jumps to the order payment page.

### 3.4 Skeleton Layer

**3.4.1 Interface Design** In interface design and information display, the two most critical aspects are visual focus and information hierarchy. As a fashion app, *Harper's Bazaar Mini* embodies a fashionable and minimalist style with clear information hierarchy, distinct primary and secondary elements, and browsing habits that prevent users from feeling overwhelmed. On the Home page, the top bar left side features QR code scanning, the right side features celebrity digital edition entry, and the area below the top bar displays the latest magazine showcase as a card-based information flow. This card occupies the optimal page position, capturing visual focus, followed by an advertisement area below with rotating images, and at the bottom, a gallery-style display of past issues. The Discover page adopts a popular card-based information flow that intuitively highlights article images for recommendation purposes. In the card layout, article titles are positioned in the lower half of the page, following users' visual focus habits. The Collection page employs a list-style design with a search function in the top bar and display areas for My Bookshelf, Wish List, and Content Collections below. The My Profile page primarily uses a list-style design.

**3.4.2 Navigation Design** *Harper's Bazaar Mini* employs a common tab-based bottom navigation design, a navigation pattern that conforms to thumb-friendly operation zones. The four bottom tabs are Home, Discover, Collection, and My Profile, enabling rapid switching between the four main modules through tab clicks. On the Discover and Collection pages' top bars, there is a navigation design for direct search engine access, providing global search within the application. After entering the top bar navigation page, a “hot” search prompt appears below in a tag layout displaying popular searches, offering inspiration when users are unsure what to search for.

**3.4.3 Information Design** Information design involves content display on top of interface and navigation design, serving to convey product ideas to users. *Harper's Bazaar Mini* does not use many icons, with the most prominent being the celebrity digital edition icon on the top right of the Home page, which employs a star symbol containing the English letters “in.” The star is presented with dynamic lines, representing celebrities, while the “in” represents trendy fashion. All other information design in *Harper's Bazaar Mini* is remarkably minimalist, using only black text and English letters to embody the fashionable and minimalist characteristics of *Harper's Bazaar*.

### 3.5 Surface Layer

The icon for *Harper's Bazaar Mini* features the English letters BAZAAR. The use of English makes *Harper's Bazaar* appear more fashionable and trendy. Among the six letters, five use uppercase black, while only the first letter “a” uses lowercase red, creating a more design-conscious appearance. Additionally, the left side of the letters uses thin lines while the right side uses thick lines, better highlighting *Harper's Bazaar's* edgy attitude toward fashion. Furthermore, the letter spacing appears compressed, making it more aligned with *Harper's Bazaar's* fashionable characteristics.

The default primary color scheme for *Harper's Bazaar Mini* is white and black, with red and gray as secondary colors. The bottom navigation bar switching, My Profile page presentation, and font settings all use black. Secondary button font colors on the Home, Discover, and Collection pages appear in gray, while the horizontal slider bar uses red. White, black, gray, and red are all high-purity colors that, when combined, align with *Harper's Bazaar's* fashionable positioning. The interface color scheme is comfortable and sophisticated, remarkably minimalist, fashionable, and elegant.

Moreover, the use of white space is highly effective. Beyond the magazines themselves, the pages appear free of any superfluous elements, highlighting the core function of “reading.” With white and black as the primary colors and generous page 留白, the interface feels clean, minimalist, fashionable, and elegant. When using *Harper's Bazaar Mini*, the comfortable and concise visual design and style make it easy for users to immerse themselves without being distracted by excessive information.

## 4. Conclusion and Reflection

In the competitive era following the transformation of fashion media, the short, fast, and efficient format of digital editions has won user favor and generated considerable sales. However, while *Harper's Bazaar Mini* has received mostly positive reviews, many users have also expressed dissatisfaction. The Apple App Store comment section contains both praise and criticism. Positive reviews primarily address the satisfaction of users' needs for high-definition images, styling inspiration, celebrity following, and fashion design. The main issues in negative reviews can be summarized as follows: first, app-specific problems such as frequent crashes and slow page loading; second, functional design issues where users cannot find where to save images; and third, functional defects including failed digital edition purchases or inability to locate purchase records. These functional defects require continuous optimization by the app developers.

In conclusion, as a traditional fashion media outlet, *Harper's Bazaar* has actively embraced the wave of digital reading by launching a paperless digital journal app, consistently applying Internet thinking throughout. In future digital transformations, it is essential to prioritize user experience, continuously optimize products, and strive to deliver the best possible user experience.

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