Transactional Website

http://www.dabs.com

dabs⊙com

Introduction

Dabs is a company who sell a wide range of electronics (ie, From floppy disks, to multimedia PCs), they usually buy in bulk, this passes savings onto the customer. Dabs was started, in 1987 by David Atherton, an entrepreneur, and a writer, Bruce Smith.

The name "dabs" was chosen as it was the initials of its founders names (**D**avid **A**nd **B**ruce'**S**"

Illustration 1: The Dabs trading office in Westhoughton, Bolton

Prior to the website, dabs was a mail order only service, known as Dabs Direct. David sold Dabs on 28/04/06 to British Telecom.

A Description of the Site

The Dabs site is very easily accessible, on the NEXT PAGE, I have drawn a structure chart. The people who diesigned the site had ease of searching in mind as there are four different ways to find items on dabs.

Category selection. These are on every page and allow people to start a new search at any time

Dabs "quicklinx" which allows one to quickly find an item you looked at earlier.

Search box, once again, on every page to easily start a new search.

The featured product of the week, this tries to get people interested in buying something they wern't originally looking for

Illustration 2: The Dabs site on openSUSE Linux 10.2, Firefox 2.0.0.2pre

It is also worth noting that the web interface adapts to fill the browser's window, this makes the web site easier to navigate, as the whole of the screen is in use.

Here is the site map:

Sitemap

Main Sections

About Us
Accessibility
Basket
Business Terms
Buying for Business
Delivery Charges
Feedback
Help
Home Page
Learn More
My Account
Promotions
Privacy Policy
Shop by Brand
Wishlist

Product Categories

Components & Storage
Computers
Electronics
Networking & Communications
Peripherals
Software & Books
Mobile Phones
Clearance Corner

My Account

Change Login Details
Edit Contact Details
Manage Address Book
Manage Payment Methods
View Orders and Returns
Edit Communication Preferences
View and Spend Vouchers

Help

New To Dabs
Managing Your Account
Managing Your Order
Returns & Refunds
Products
Policies

Learn More

Dabs brands and Services
Components and Storage
Electronics
Computers
Networking and Communication
Peripherals
Software and Books

On every page you can see your basket and you can order and pay at any time.

To view all the products on the web page, the user must scroll, this can be a little inconvenient, but in this instance, there is no other option, the user has the abilities to change how many results are displayed on each page.

The site uses only one frame, this means that there is no chance of losing the navigation utilities.

The search utility is extremely powerful and can found the type of items i was searching for. For instance, I searched "agp nvidia 256" and what was shown was a graphics card, that has an AGP interface, an Nvidia Chipset and 256MB of video RAM

Illustration 3: The perfect search result shown on Windows 2003 Server R2, Firefox 1.5.0.9

The layout is the same on every page, this makes the site look neat and tidy, and makes finding what you want a lot more simple. The whole site has been designed to work on different web browsers and on various operating systems:
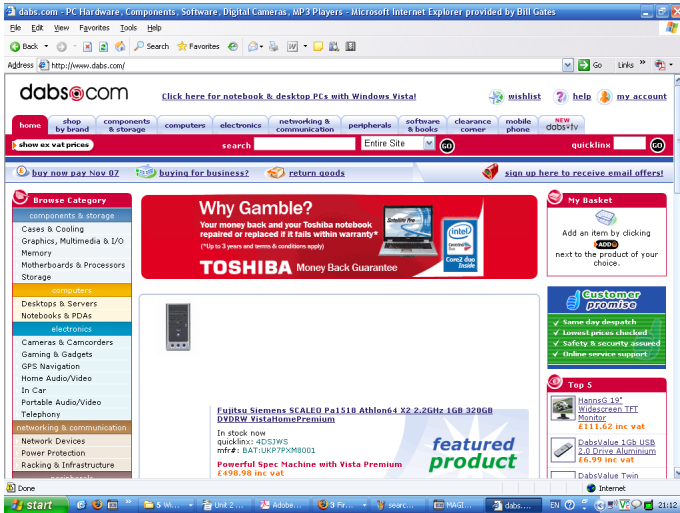
Illustration 4: Microsoft Internet Explorer 6 on Windows 2003 Server R2
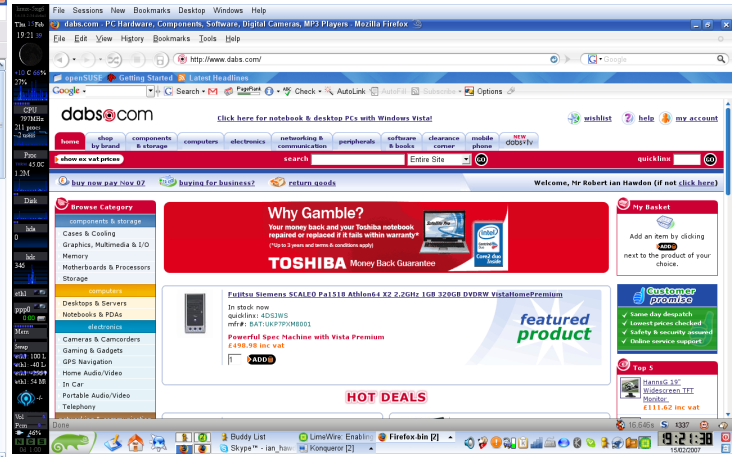

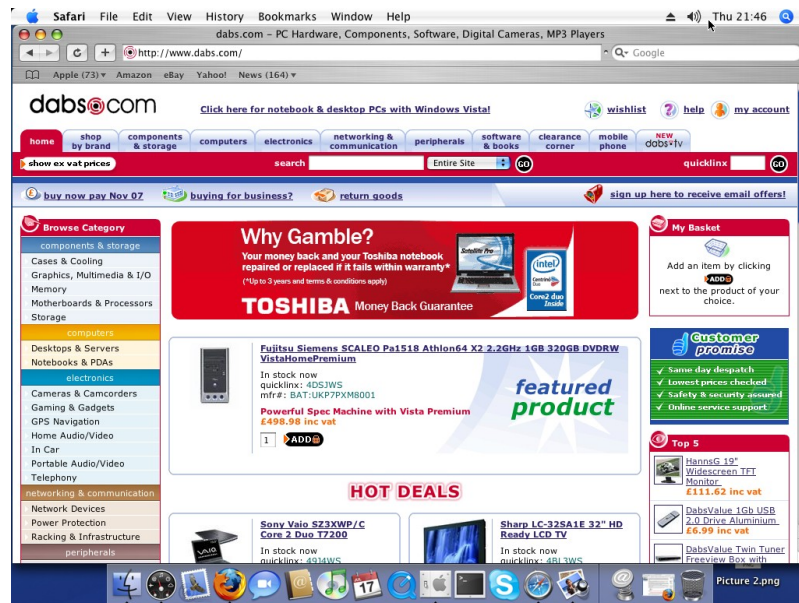Illustration 5: Mozilla Firefox 2.0.0.2pre on openSUSE Linux 10.2

Illustration 6: Safari 2.0.3 on MacOS X Tiger (10.4.6)

As you can see, MSIE 6 has a bit of trouble with the layout on the featured products, but the site still functions.

What Dabs Sells

Dabs sell many electrical products, ranging from MP3 players, to PCs. But dabs biggest market is selling parts for PCs for example, graphics cards.

When "electronics" is clicked, you are invited to refine the search, where you can search for "cameras and camcorders", "gaming and gadgets", "GPS navigation", "home audio/video", "in car", "portable audio/video" and "telephony"

Dabs's way of searching lets the end user, find what they want easily, just as the products they have to offer are aimed at various people, (from teenagers to adults, male and female), their interface is designed for different people too.

When the result has been refined to "portable audio/video", 7 results are shown, and another box saying that the search must be refined even more to get a sensible amount of *relevant* results.
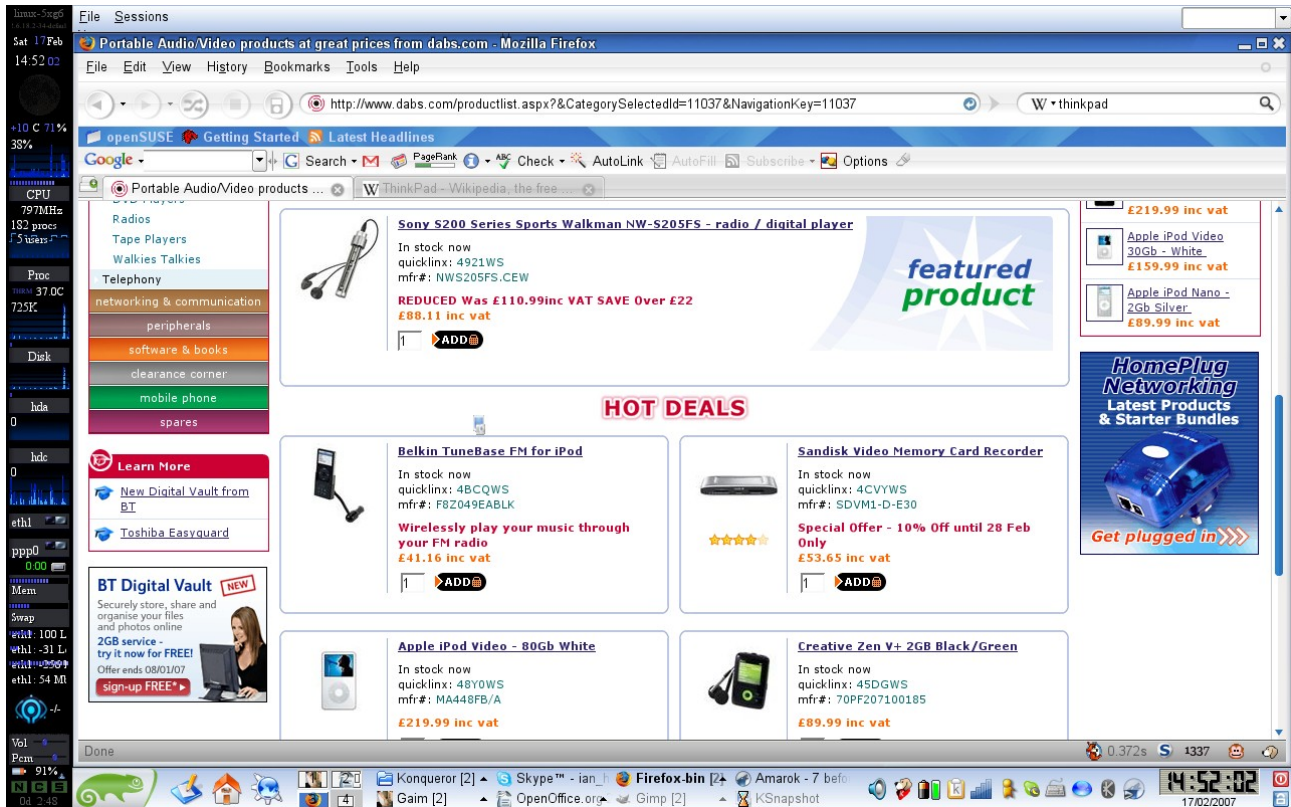

Illustration 7: The results for "portable audio/video"

When refined to "Digital Audio/Video Players (MP3/MP4)", a few results are shown, there is the "featured product", 4 "hot deals" and then we get on to the results, they are displayed 10 to a page, this can be changed to 20 or 50, also the results can be filtered, to show the following:

Popularity
Alphabetical (asc)
Alphabetical (desc)
price (asc)
price (desc)
Latest Products
Customer Rating

Illustration 8: The results are rearranged to suite the customers needs

This lets the user find what they want, more easliy, for instance, if the person wanted something for a low price, they can select "price (asc)" and their results would be reordered.

Information about the products

Dabs describes all of its products in great detail, when an item is clicked, dabs tells you the overview on each product, a technical specification and other customers reviews

Illustration 9: Overview Description

Illustration 10: Technical Specification

Illustration 11: The Reviews

Before anything can be bought, the customer must be registered to Dabs.com, if he is, he can log in with his email address and password. If this is the first time someone has used dabs, they have the option of starting a home, or a business account

Illustration 12: Account type or use an old account

When the user selects "Home user", they get a page with the usual please fill if your contact details, once you have created your account, the user then

goes to their account settings and puts in their payment details

Illustration 13: The user enters his card details

Of course, any good site will make sure that your details are not able to be viewed by anyone else, and dabs is no exception. Dabs uses 128bit encryption on their SSL portion of their website, this means the **only** you and their server can understand what information you have typed onto their web page.

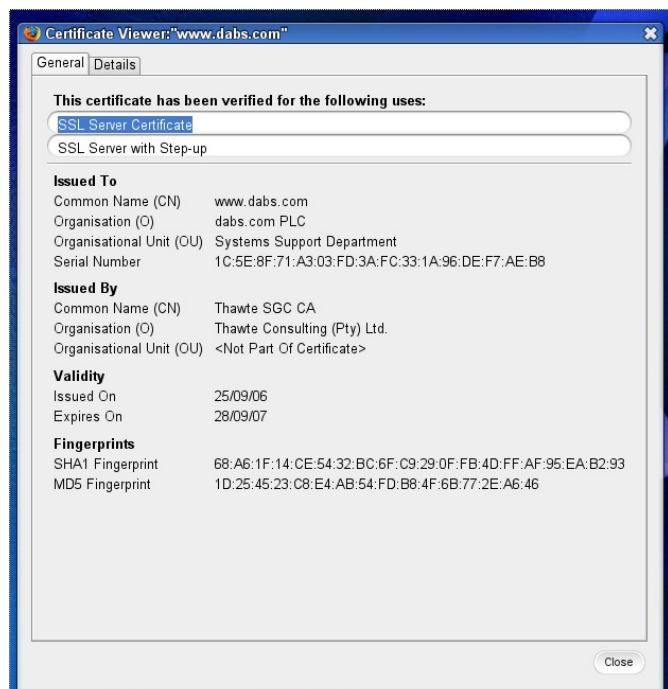*Illustration 14: All secure sites will allow you to verify their identity*

Illustration 15: The secure site has a digital certificate

Most website only secure the pages they need, this is to make the website load faster as it is not needing to be decoded on every page you click on. On Microsoft Internet Explorer, when a secure website is about to be accessed, the

used it informed by this dialogue box:

Also, when the user is about to leave a secure web page, another information box

Illustration 16: Microsoft Internet Explorer 6 "Security Alert"

Illustration 17: The page is now unsecured

appears to tell them this:

Other web browsers can tell you if you are on a secure site too, for instance, in firefox, when a SSL webpage is accessed, the URL bar changes colour (in this example, green)
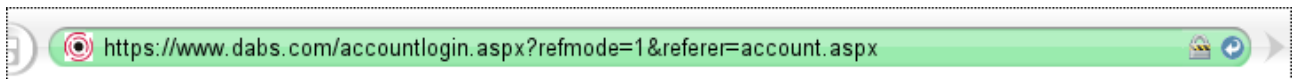
Illustration 19: A secure page on Firefox 2.0.0.2pre

This message is also shown to reassure the customer and inform the user that the site is secure.
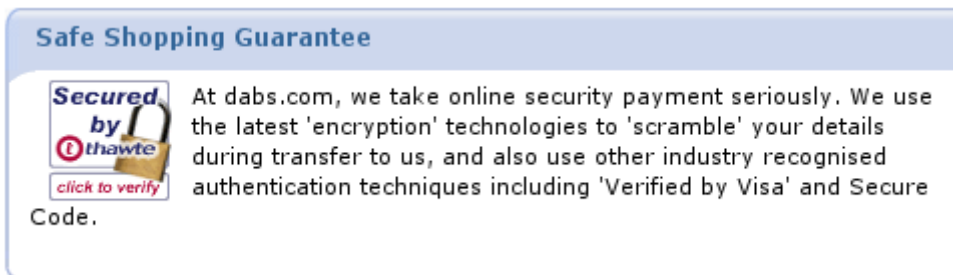
Illustration 20: Although the site claims to be secure, the only true way to check is to look for the "https" in the address bar

The last thing to look for to tell you that the site is secure is the letter "S" is after the "http" in the address bar.

Illustration 21: The https protocol is used

The Technology used to encrypt pages is called SSL, or Secure Socket Layer, it is an encryption system involving public and private keys, the resulting page is very difficult to crack.

Dabs only accepts Credit or Debit cards as a form of payment, so it relies on the SSL system.

Ordering

Ordering on dabs is very simple, the first thing is to search for an item, for this I am going to look for an MP3 player with 512mb of memory

The thing to do next is to read the description, and specifications, and once you are happy, click the "add" button.

Once you have clicked add, the item appears in your virtual shopping basket, from here, the customer can either delete the item(s) or go to the checkout, the total price is also shown. I am now going to add another item, a 1Gb stick of DDR RAM
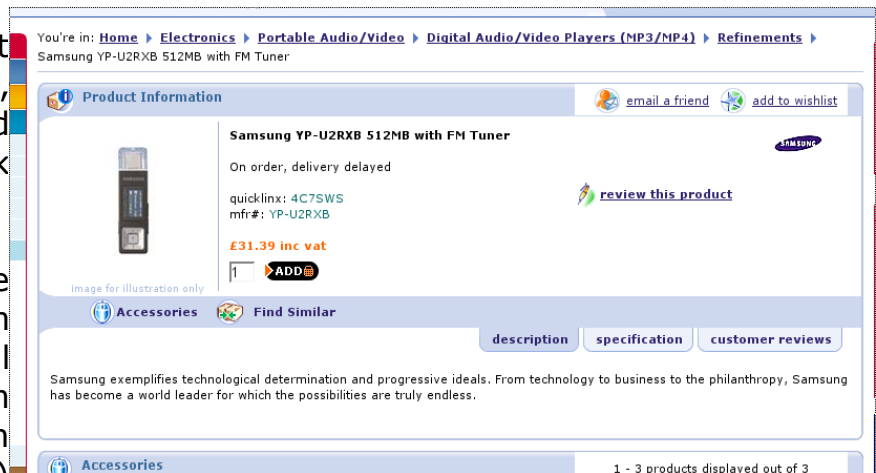
Illustration 22: The selected item

When checkout is clicked, the customer is shown a screen where they can review what they are about to buy and change if they want, also they can change where they want the items to be sent and how to pay.
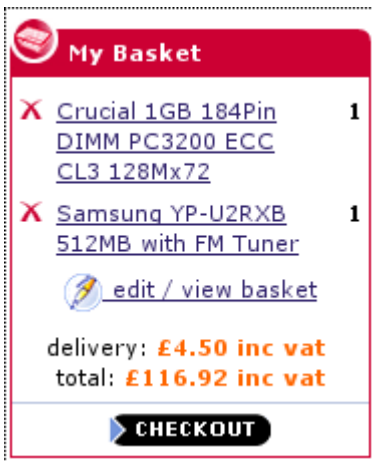
Illustration 23: The current basket
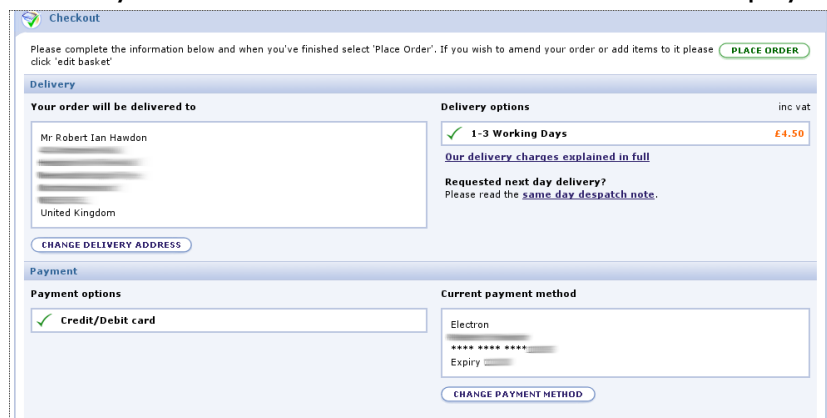
Illustration 24: The Dabs Checkout

Analysing searches and sale information

Dabs seems to analyse previous searches and what other people have bought

This is a great idea as it will let people return to a product the previously looked at, and also see what is the best product from a particular category is. All this information would be saved in a database and will allow the customer to see what's hot and what's not.

Cookies

Dabs, like many other sites, use cookies, cookies are used to identify a person when the revisit a website. A cookie is a text file that is downloaded to their home folder and each time that website is visited, the browser looks for the text file, and can be used to automatically log in.
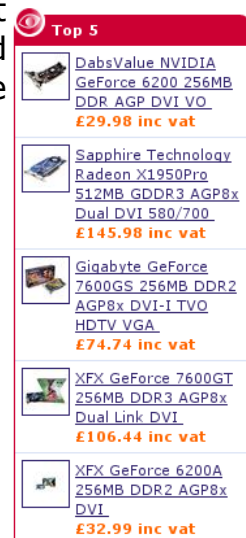
The cookie **could** (but not necessarily) be a tracking cookie, this could be considered spyware. What this means, is that dabs could use this cookie to see what other sites have been accessed and if they have products that are also sold by dabs, then they may feature the same product on their home page.

Advertising

On the main website, dabs use very few adverts, and each advert is, relevant to dabs.

Illustration 25: A relevant BT Advert

For example, there are a few BT adverts, these are usually advertising phones or broadband. The reason most, if not all, of the adverts on the dabs page are for BT are because, BT own dabs.

Dabs also advertises products on its home page, this allows people to see a product that they, otherwise, would not usually buy.

If you have ever bought something from dabs and have specified the option in your account, dabs will send you a catalogue each month with the latest items and what's hot etc.

Illustration 26: An advert for laptops with Vista

Special Offers

Dabs has a various selection of special offers, usually they are featured in an advert (like above), dabs also has a clearance corner. Here the customer can see all the items dabs are trying to get rid of. They have the usual choice of categories, that can be rounded down to find exactly what you want. Dabs do the usual trick of making things look cheaper, by reducing things by a penny or a pound. Eg. £10 becomes £9.99

Illustration 27: Dabs customer support status

Contacting Dabs

Dabs lets customers contact them, either by email, or via live chat. The chat is not available 24/7, but when it is up, it enables the customer to talk to a dabs representative in an IM chat style.

Dabs lets their customers know the status of the technical support team.
Ease of interaction with the website

Ease of interaction with the website

Any website should be easy to navigate, or people will move away, and use another website to buy something. Dab's use of navigation, lets people easily find what they want.

Some websites are hard to navigate, for instance, I came across a site called stupid.com, an American site that sells random and useless items. The website is horrible to navigate, and the colour scheme and layout look like that were created by a child.

Illustration 28: Stupid.com's awful site layout

The purpose of the dabs site is to let people look for something they want, see what others think before parting with their money. The site does this well and keeps the customer in mind. The site is easy to use. The background colour is plain white, this is good as it look professional and white seems to be the colour fashion at the moment. There is no animation, this is a good thing as it doesn't distract the attention of the customer. The page is updated virtually everyday.

I believe that dabs has done a really good job on making a website that is accessible to all, the only criticism I can find is that the text can't be enlarged, but most web browsers can do this for people.
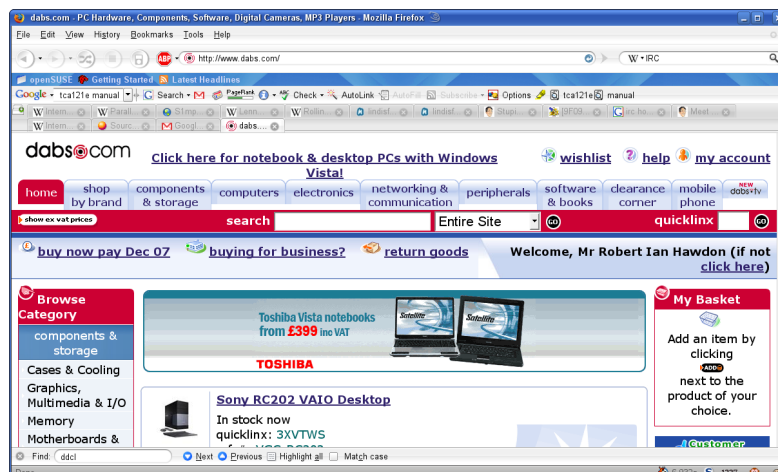

Illustration 29: The dabs site can be enlarged by most web browsers