

Technical University of Denmark



Make your own product in the Customerpedia

Shafiee, Sara

Publication date:
2017

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link back to DTU Orbit](#)

Citation (APA):
Shafiee, S. (2017). Make your own product in the Customerpedia MADE - Manufacturing Academy of Denmark. Accessed Jan 01, 2017, from <http://www.made.dk/forskning/make-your-own-product-in-the-customerpedia/>

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Make your own product in the Customerpedia

We are all unique!

We are all different and unique. Each one of us has a set of specific desires, needs and attitudes. This is why we need to make and specify our own products the way we want, not the way industry dictates. We no longer have to feel like a hostage of a company's choices. We are putting together a wiki - a customerpedia - of our choices in our role as customer. Valuing the customers is something industries and markets are competing on. Type of industry does not really matter. Based on all the different tastes in this world, it is not easy to let everybody start to design their own products. We want to build on the values that have meaning for us: creativity, adventure, wisdom, joy, passion.

On the other hand, we spent hours on shopping but we are not always satisfied with the result. Let's face it! We frequently get disappointed with the products we shop because our needs and expectations are not fulfilled. However, personalization of your shopping experience is not a dream anymore. You can save more time and money when buying customized products that meet your special needs. The solution is a sort of Information Technology (IT) system, which is referred to as a configuration system. In a configuration system, we use the computers to store, examine, retrieve, and manipulate data related to products, demands and processes. The main consequences are fewer expenses for the customers and more revenue for producers.



We are all unique!

*Severa Yellow and Scarlet Macaws sitting in a row by Reza Kabir
Photo by rezakabir on Fivehundredpx.*

Easy and cheap shopping, anyone?



Impulse shopping (2017), retrieved from <http://www.wisebread.com/9-simple-ways-to-stop-impulse-buying>.

Configuration systems can save considerable amount of time and resources! Several researches indicate that wrong consumerist behaviors such as impulse shopping waste human capitals in contemporary societies. We are all victims of store environments, windows displays, in-store sales or promotion signs and glitter of the stores. Online shopping can make our purchase more planned and less emotional. Now just imagine you can personalize your online purchase. That is, instead of ordering your targeted product on a website, you make intentional smart decisions on all its features such as color, size, materials, packaging, etc. So you can be the creator of your own shoes instead of just buying them. Almost all of the well-known fashion and apparel companies use this simple selection system to give the customers the joy and freedom of being themselves.

A better product, a better life!

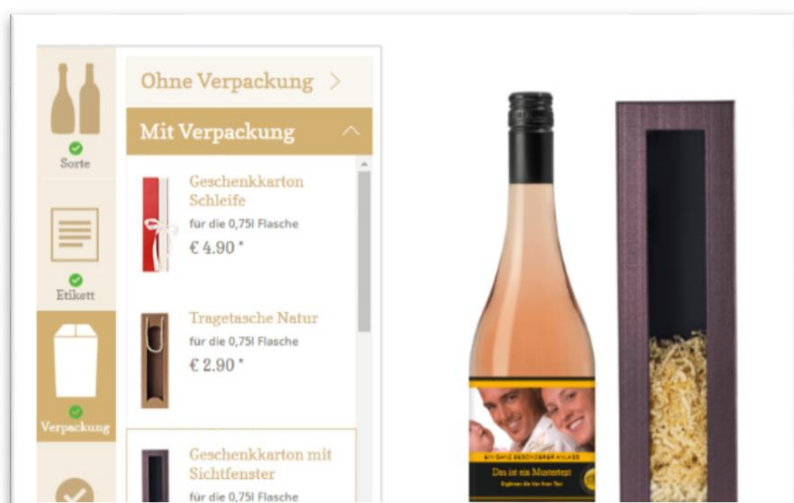
Configuration systems are not just about enjoying shopping; it has many other important applications, e.g. for, products related to health. They can change a normal and simple medical aid to a high value product for the society! To shed the lights on the perceived values, I'd like to share a real story. My uncle has had the hearing problem form his birth. Maybe you think that hearing aids are great helpers as I did! Once in a family gathering, I found out that he had a painful struggle to communicate. His hearing aids could not solve his problem completely due to its unsuitable size and volume. "Half of the loaf is better than none", he responded me with a smile on his face. Taken form the words of my uncle and people with the same problem, it can be interpreted that factors such as environment, gender, age, shape of ear, etc. can influence the effectiveness of a medical instrument. Thus, a simple configuration system can make life easier and happier for people like my uncle by providing the possibility of personalizing a product based on their needs.



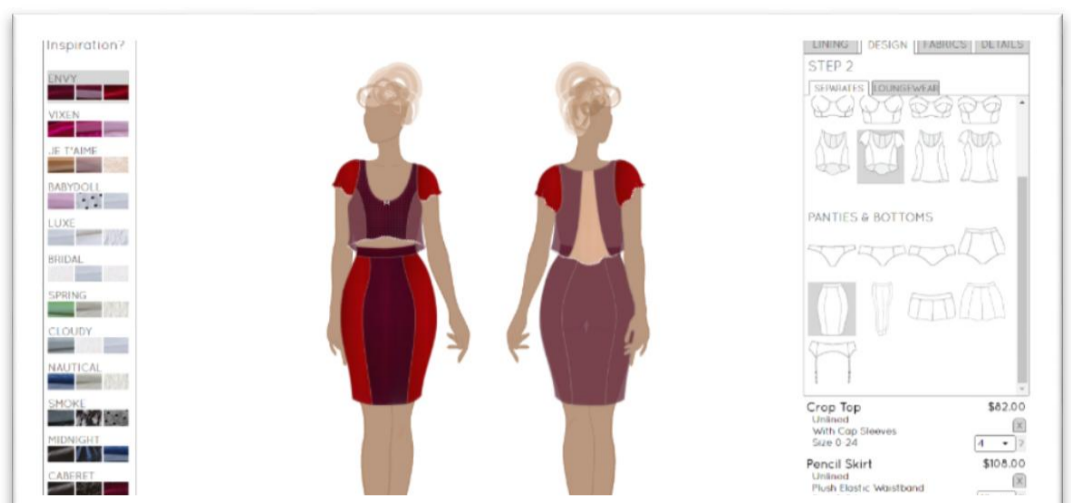
Rationing: Many NHS trusts are being forced to deny hearing aids to patients with mild hearing loss (2017). <http://www.mirror.co.uk/tech/people-hearing-problems-five-times-7370064>

Business to Business application of configuration systems

There are lots of configuration platforms in the market to help the producers offering online customized products. One of the examples could be the configuration of food and apparels. These systems are easy to use for the customer and companies have full control over prices, colors, textures, discount offers and a lot of other specifications that customer define. This particular platforms study the different



DeinSekt configuration system (2017), referenced on www.combeeneration.com, <https://www.deinsekt.de/>



ImpishLee configuration system (2017), referenced on www.combeeneration.com, <https://impishlee.com/customizer/>

Finally, the configuration systems also play an important role in engineering companies. Imagine yourself in an engineering company as the sale manager of the computers. The configuration systems performance is not just about the selection it provides for the customers on the website (maybe that is the fun visible part). In the sales process of the companies, they receive all the specifications from the customer and estimate the price or print the 2D, 3D figures and send out the catalogues and proposals as well. These configuration systems specifically called Configure, Price, Quote (CPQ) and they are already the fast and precise solutions in the sales phase. They are not just configuring but they are able to calculate the price and generate the documents.

What are the steps toward the configuration system?

How are these IT systems working? It can be explained in a very brief and precise way. First of all, a specialist in the field needs to know the details of the product, characteristics of potential customers and practical restrictions. This requires the knowledge of market, IT and people. In the second step, this information will be translated to an IT system. All the components in a simple product are interrelated and rely on a lot of rules. Afterwards, the system might need integrations to other IT systems. Piloting and assessing the system might take months based on the complexity of the configured product. The final step is very challenging, in the trust of the customers in the system guarantees its success.

What are the benefits?

You wonder if it can be resembled to having a tailor make a suit just for you which means you don't buy a prepared suit from the wardrobe of a store in a shopping center. Yes, you are right. We also "tailor" the products to suit the customers' preferences. The point is that while tailored suits are very expensive, tailored products customized by configuration systems have reasonable prices even cheaper in comparison with ordinary ones.

The selling point which make different industries interested in investment is that configurators simply save money. Configuration systems can save time from the resources and customer while they increase the quality by eliminating the manual tasks. By positively affecting the sales, design, engineering and manufacturing processes at the company, these systems are a big step towards automation process. They are making the customer autonomous in selecting and ordering. Furthermore, they are able to be connected to other IT systems and to transfer be up-to-date knowledge over the supply chain.

So just remember that the next time you decide to purchase something, you have this opportunity to personalize it. You are not a consumer anymore; you are a smart customer; you are a creator!