

## ELLE Online ([ellemag.com](http://ellemag.com)) Competitive Situation

The ELLE redesign team has defined a competitor as any fashion and beauty web site that may steer viewers or advertisers away from the ELLE Online site ([ellemag.com](http://ellemag.com)). Although this definition could include a multitude of good and bad web sites, the team has targeted the most directly relevant sites with compelling content. The re-designed ELLE Online site will be directly compared to these sites for user experience (i.e., information architecture, graphic design, and site usability), commerce potential, branding and promotion, competitive positioning, and use of appropriate technology for production and maintenance of the site.

The overall vision for the ELLE Online site is to be the source of choice for online users and advertisers in the area of fashion, health, and beauty content on the Web.

The fashion and beauty sites below made our top three competitors list due primarily to the survey respondent rankings, the relevant content included, the overall quality of the site, and the direct competitiveness of the branding and promotion with ELLE Online. The top three competitive sites are (additional competitive sites follow at the end of the Competitive Situation section):

- ELLE International ([elle.com](http://elle.com))
- Cosmopolitan ([cosmomag.com](http://cosmomag.com))
- Vogue ([vogue.co.uk](http://vogue.co.uk))

### Description of the Top Three Competitive Sites

#### 1. Cosmopolitan ([cosmomag.com](http://cosmomag.com))

The Cosmo site is technically a part of Home Arts Network by Hearst Communications Inc, but still utilizes it's own domain name (i.e., you can link to [homearts.com](http://homearts.com) from the homepage). There is a wide range of content from fashion, style, beauty, advice, and relationships included in this site.

Content and format:

- This Week's Tips - tips on beauty, fashion, health, relationships, and sex
- Your Weekly Astrologer - horoscopes
- Agony Advice - Q & A from readers that even readers can submit answers
- The Cosmo Quiz - four quizzes for discovering yourself and your partner
- Beauty Giveaway - answer a survey and be eligible for a prize
- Bachelor of the Month - interview with a featured bachelor
- Cosmo Asks You - solicitation from viewers for material on crises, confessions, sex, romance and your body
- In Cosmo This Month - contents of the paper edition magazine
- Cosmo Calendar - a general what's-going-on guide
- Cosmo Subscriptions - subscription information for the paper edition

c2o competitive assessment:

Although all three of the competitive sites scored similarly on c2o's competitive scorecard, Cosmo received the highest score of the three sites with a score of 39 out of a possible 80 points, followed by ELLE International with a score of 37, and Vogue UK with a score of 34.

Cosmo scored the highest on the overall user-centric metric of the three competitors (23 points out of a total 30). Cosmo's user-centric emphasis is in the areas of relevancy and freshness of the site content, site aesthetics, overall user experience, and rewarding the user for disclosing information about themselves.

Cosmo could not be assessed on Commerce Potential because at the time of the assessment the site did not offer any online purchasing to their audience (0 out of a total 20).

Cosmo scored fair on the Branding and Promotion metric (9 points out of a total 15). Some of the branding and promotion advantages that the Cosmo site has are the following: a consistent brand identity and message, overall image conveyed, and ease of finding the site from search services.

Cosmo, as well as ELLE International and Vogue UK, scored fair on the Competitive Positioning metric (9 out of a total of 15). All three sites were rated relatively well on site presence and functionality when compared to other competitive sites in general.

## 2. **ELLE International** ([elle.com](http://elle.com))

Compelling and comprehensive web site with lots of content in a clean, yet, stylistic design.

Unfortunately, ELLE International is the owner of the 'elle.com' domain name. The site is affiliated with CNN Interactive that provides news coverage in a link to 'Quick News' at Cable News Network ([cnn.com](http://cnn.com)). CNN also duplicates the ELLE International content within their site.

Content and format:

- ELLE Channel - fashion tips, desktop patterns, tips/trends delivered to your desktop daily; have to download the software and take a survey to join
- monthly - splash screen treated like a magazine cover; article titles are active links to the article in the appropriate sections
- Style - beauty tip is short and nicely laid out on page; other tip links are listed at top
- Self - fashion and beauty tips from ELLE experts worldwide
- State of Mind - horoscopes and book reviews
- Status - a variety of longer articles
- Senses - tidbits on all kinds of stuff (e.g., travel, recipes, and products)
- Bla-bla bla - bulletin board with a list of topics and responses
- links to all the other world-wide ELLE sites

e2o competitive assessment:

Of the three main competitors, ELLE International scored closest to the Cosmo site; the difference in scores being in the area of the overall user-centric metric (19 points out of a total 30 compared to Cosmo's 23 points in this area). The lower scores were specifically in the areas of freshness of content, the interaction design, strategic use of technology, and compensation for user's information disclosure.

ELLE International does currently include online purchasing to their audience, however, the potential was severely limited to the fact that this was the only part of the entire site that was done in the French language and currency. Therefore, this area scored only one point for having online purchasing, but no additional points out of a total of 20 points because of the French localization on an English language site.

ELLE International also scored fair on the Branding and Promotion metric (9 points out of a total 15). ELLE International scored well in this area for brand reinforcement and search presence.

## 3. **Vogue** ([vogue.co.uk](http://vogue.co.uk))

Other than the terse content of the Vogue magazine publication on [phys.com](http://phys.com) (phys is described in the *Other Competitors* section below), the Vogue UK site is the main source of the Vogue Magazine content.

Content and format:

- Daily -daily articles

- Media Watch - fashion daily in the media
- Dress Sense - what a designer is wearing
- Calendar - events and trivia for each day of the month
- Collection - the seasons top trends
- Competition - weekly question where you may be eligible to win prizes
- In Vogue - contents of the paper magazine
- Beauty - sections on beauty product news and beauty tips
- Interview - interviews of designers
- Archive - 'flash back' type experience of issues for select years (1946, 1966, 1986, and 1991)
- Help - FAQs, subscription information, how to get back issues of magazine, and contact information
- Conde Nast - link to the parent site

c2o competitive assessment:

Although Vogue UK scored slightly lower overall (33 points) compared to Cosmopolitan and ELLE International (39 and 37, respectively), the site was still considered to be a top competitor. Vogue UK was scored slightly better than ELLE International in user-centric measures, however the Vogue UK site did not measure up as well to either of the other two sites in the branding and promotion metrics.

## Other Competitors Described

Other potential competitors or compelling fashion/beauty sites are:

- CondeNet at [swoon.com](http://swoon.com) - includes the specific magazine content of Glamour and Mademoiselle. Swoon is a comprehensive web site (under one domain name) that features a variety of magazines, personals, forums, chats, quizzes, columns, and bookstore shopping. Swoon can be considered as a one-stop-shop on the Internet for fashion, beauty, and health for men and women. GQ and Details magazines are also included in the site. One of the greatest advantages to Swoon is the online community that they can create with their audience.
- CondeNet at [phys.com](http://phys.com) - includes the specific magazine content of Glamour, Mademoiselle, Allure, and Vogue. Another comprehensive web site (under one domain name) in a similar format and potential user community as Swoon. Phys also features fitness and nutrition sections. Self and Conde Nast Sports for Woman are also included in the site.
- iVillage, The Woman's Network ([ivillage.com](http://ivillage.com)) - comprehensive network site similar to Swoon, Phys, and Home Arts, but does not include magazine specific content.
- Marie Claire ([marieclaire.com](http://marieclaire.com)) - this site is actually a part of the Home Arts Network ([homearts.com](http://homearts.com)) by Hearst Communications Inc. The site starts out with the marieclaire.com domain, but all of the content is on the homearts.com domain. Marie Claire is a pretty straightforward site for women filled mostly with feature articles on fashion, beauty, and career.
- Harper's Bazaar ([bazaar411.com](http://bazaar411.com) - Hearst Magazines) - fashion site, but somewhat limited in content; also a part of the Home Arts Network
- Tear Sheet Magazine ([tearsheet.com](http://tearsheet.com) - Model Network, Inc) - fashion site with lots of content specifically about models and modeling

- New York Style ([nystyle.com](http://nystyle.com)) - content is similar to other fashion web sites (beauty, health, design, etc.), but divided into two main areas, shopping and magazine; they also include other kinds of design and art other than fashion
- Lumiere ([lumiere.com](http://lumiere.com)) - published by Triple Com) - a very compelling web-only publication that has won 11 internet awards to date; best archival method of all the sites researched; lots of fashion content
- Fashion UK (a.k.a. – “F.UK” - [widemedia.com/fashionuk](http://widemedia.com/fashionuk)) - a good web-only publication with some very good ideas for content and site design; draw-back is that it is too localized to London, UK; London shopping guide section is a really good idea for London area residents or travelers

## Conclusion

In order to compete with all other sites in fashion, health, and beauty, the ELLE Online site ([ellemag.com](http://ellemag.com)) must be designed to take the following into consideration:

- the user experience - a fairly high standard that has already been set by the competition. c2o can accomplish this through their user-centric design process.
- the commercial potential of the site - currently lacking on competitive sites. c2o and HFM must continue to research this area of e-commerce potential.
- branding and promotional aspects - a fairly average attempt by the competition. It will take c2o and HFM to work together on powerful ways to create brand identity and to promote the ELLE Online site to advertisers and the public.
- competitive positioning - another area that ELLE Online can out pace the competition through the presence and functionality of the site.
- compelling strategy, information architecture, graphics design, and the use of advanced implementation and maintenance technology unlike what is currently utilized on existing sites today