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PUI: Assignment 5 Web HTML and CSS Prototypes
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Assignment Reflection

Strong design solutions are about more than just creating beautiful designs, it necessitates a deep understanding of the interaction between humans and computers. In understanding how computers work, we as designers can make informed design decisions that better utilize a system's strengths and compensate for its weaknesses. In my Programming Usable Interfaces class, I was tasked with creating a website for an imaginary cinnamon roll bakery called, Bun Bun Bakeshop. I began by completing a heuristic evaluation to identify any user interface bugs in my original website designs. I then adjusted my designs to resolve the identified bugs and better align with client's brand identity before creating the website using HTML and CSS.  In speaking with my class's teaching assistant (TA), he gave me the go-ahead to change my website design as much as needed to improve usability, which has resulted in a new and improved overall site design!

Heuristic evaluation of my original website design revealed problems in efficiency of use, minimalist design and recognition rather than recall. In an attempt to give users more flexibility between choosing from a preset list of flavor options or creating their own cinnamon roll combination, I originally split the two options into separate pages each with a unique workflow. Separating out the workflows starting at the home page, resulted in users needing to choose a path before seeing the available cinnamon roll options and added numerous extra steps for those who wanted both preset and custom flavor combinations. During the heuristic evaluation, I realized both tasks could be done using the same page and that separation was unnecessary. In the newest designs, users begin by seeing all existing flavor options and can change their icing choice from the product details page of each preset flavor rather than having to complete a separate workflow. Immediately showing users the available preset options and enabling them to choose preset or custom flavor combinations from the same pages is an approach I would implement into the coded version of my site.

Many pages of my original design were cluttered, difficult to navigate and had a steep learning curve. As Bun Bun Bakeshop is a site that most people will visit infrequently, it was essential the instructions for use of the system in choosing premade or custom buns  was easily retrievable. Originally, the preset selections page contained every bread and icing combination possible which resulted in the page being very long and overwhelming. To help users search through the large list of options, I initially added a filter feature for choosing specific bread and icing combinations. In the new website design, only one of bread each option is shown with its most popular icing combination. On each bread's product detail page users can choose to keep the preset icing flavor or choose their own. Correcting for this interface bug led to a more intuitive and minimalist design, something I would try to promote across the site. To better match users' existing model of how similar websites work, I included drop down menus and clearer call to actions. Conducting a heuristic evaluation helped me to redesign my website to better solve real user needs in a more efficient manner.

After resolving interface bugs, I created a website using HTML and CSS. Numerous challenges and bugs arose in the  implementation process. Some of the main challenges were image resizing, positioning content next to each other and exploring making a homepage that would also work with mobile. Many of the images used needed to be resized in order to fit properly within the new design. For consistency purposes, I attempt to make stylistic changes primarily using CSS. Unfortunately, numerous attempts resulted in no noticeable changes to the images. To overcome this challenge, I referenced numerous online sources on image resizing and tested out each one to see if it worked. With each code change, I would  check my work in a Chrome browser before moving on. A similar process of trial and error and reading existing documentation was used to solve the problems of position content next to each other and making the home page mobile friendly. To position content next to each other, I utilized containers and grids. Meanwhile, to see if I could make the home page mobile friendly, I referenced numerous sources and slowly built the functionality from the ground up. This process of understanding how everything will connect before moving on to a new step created a solid foundation for my design and code.

To me, the idea of Bun Bun Bakery being a modern and minimalist bakery that wants to make choosing your own cinnamon rolls easy are themes I would reflect in my design choices. To draw users into the site, the latest version of the home page starts with a clean and an eye-catching display of cinnamon rolls with elevated simple font inviting visitors to the website. A sense of openness and modern minimalism was also implemented through a color palette of black, white and grey. Important buttons were given a clean and simple frame that showed importance without distracting too much from the rest of the page.

The heuristic evaluation and implementing my designs using HTML and CSS significantly changed how I see design and what is needed to make an effective and intuitive website. Through coding the site, I learned the importance of writing clean, descriptive code and trying to reuse and minimize code where possible. By understanding how the various pages connected through code, I gained a new understanding different content supports each other. Although I believe that my initial website designs were effective, the newer, cleaner and more straight forward version of the site is significantly more efficacious.

External sources:

W3schools.com
Stackoverflow.com
Youtube.com
Computerhope.com
Thesitewizard.com