Pilates on the Plains Website Meta-Analysis
Interoffice Memorandum

To Dr. Derek G. Ross, Dr. Stewart Whittemore, and Dr. Susan Youngblood
From Kaitlin Coyle
Date January 17, 2025

Subject Pilates on the Plains Website Meta-Analysis
Keywords Web Development, Design, Usability & Accessibility, Approaches

Introduction
The following memo addresses the MTPC Portfolio Committee's request for a meta-analysis of the Pilates on the Plains (POTP) website we designed in Dr. Youngblood's ENGL 7060: Web Development course. The analysis discusses the audience, context, purpose, and design process and theories that informed the website's creation.

Audience, Context, Purpose
POTP is a Yoga and Pilates studio located in Auburn, Alabama that serves a wide audience, most females, ranging from adolescents to elderly; however, the studio also caters to men. This website's purpose is to inform those interested in Pilates about the studio, its location, and its Pilates class offerings and pricing. I envisioned users' context of use on a mobile device; however, it has also been optimized for desktop viewing. This website's goal is to offer useful, accessible, and easy-to-access information.

Project Management & Workflow
I designed this website with two classmates: Colleen May and Anna Mathis. We followed Kimball & Hawkins' (2008) iterative project model which involves rhetorical analysis (i.e., audience, context, purpose), client meetings, developing prototypes, and usability testing (Kimball & Hawkins, 2008), allowing each prototype to evolve via client and user feedback. We designated clear roles based on Burnett et al.'s (2013) discussion of effective collaboration: everyone "brings different backgrounds," perspectives, and skills (p. 458). Based on Anna's membership at POTP, she was group facilitator, leader, and client point of contact. Colleen was text editor and usability testing coordinator, while I was design lead and usability support. My contributions consisted of the physical website's design using the Wix CMS.

Design Process & Theory
Petrie and Kheir (2007) discuss how the Internet has heightened accessibility concerns, which they describe as a subset of usability defined by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) as "how to make Web content more accessible to people with disabilities" (e.g., "blindness and low vision, deafness and hearing loss," etc.) (W3C, 2023). Usability focuses on "the extent to which a product can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals...in a specified context of use;" however, Petrie and Kheir (2007) explain that some accessibility problems affect disabled

and non-disabled users, what they call “universal usability problems” (p. 398). The relationship between usability and accessibility suggests accessible websites are more useful and usable for *both* user types. I followed these standards in designing the POTP website, discussed below.

Branding

Colors convey an organization’s “values” and “identity” while “promotional graphics” (e.g., logos) are “a graphic shorthand for everything a company represents,” with both elements serving branding purposes (Kimball & Hawkins, 2008, p. 211, 248, 258). The website’s colors (i.e., green, black, white, and light gray) and logos came directly from the client’s branding. The website’s background and foreground color combination consist of either white text on a black background or vice versa. When we tried using green text on a white background, this failed the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines’ (WCAG) minimum contrast level 4.5:1 at 2.37:1. Per these guidelines, however, any text or images that are “pure decoration” or “part of an inactive user interface component” do not have contrast requirements, thus we reserved this color only for decorative images (i.e., container boxes, pull quotes) (W3C, 2023).

Layout

Usability “laws” suggest users don’t read pages, they “scan them” because they are “usually on a mission” (Krug et al., 2014, p. 31). One of our users’ missions was to sign up for a class, so we placed the “Sign up for a class” button on the Hero video, making it the first element users see. Shriver (2013) also discusses how “rhetorical clustering” and “chunking” helps users easily scan pages. The former is a “collection of coordinated text elements” (e.g., text, images) guiding readers towards content, while the latter uses white space to divide large text sections into short topics (p. 398-399). In our design, we used rhetorical clustering on the “Home” page to group content via signing up for a class, a one-on-one session, or contacting the studio. On “Our Team” and “Other Services” we used “chunking,” asymmetrical balance,—which arranges different shapes or objects to “equalize the weight on the page” (Beaird et al., 2020)—and contrast to separate information (i.e., fitness instructors and additional services). This promoted the website’s scannability. We also used headings to help with this, another technique Schriver (2013) explains helps show visual contrast. These choices improved the website’s usability.

During a class presentation, a classmate and accessibility specialist also discussed the importance of detailed descriptions for hyperlinked text, so screen readers can generate useful descriptions for those with a blindness disability (W3C, 2023). Per his suggestions, we added “ARIA labels” to our website’s HTML, providing additional contextual information on each of the “Read More” hyperlinks on the “Classes” page. This ensured screen readers would dictate more than “read more” for each instance of an offered class (e.g., “Read more about Pilates Mat”).

Conclusion

As Petrie and Kheir (2007) note, paying close attention to accessibility can help disabled users, but also create a more usable website for non-disabled users. This project taught me that careful adherence to accessibility guidelines can improve both usability and UX for *all* users.

Bibliography

Beaird, J., Walker, A., & George, J. (2020). *The Principles of Beautiful Web Design* (4th ed.). SitePoint.

Burnett, R. E., Cooper, A., & Welhausen, C. A. (2013). What Do Technical Communicators Need to Know about Collaboration? In J. Johnson-Eilola & S. Stuart (Eds.), *Solving Problems in Technical Communication* (pp. 454-478). The University of Chicago Press.

Kimball, M. A., & Hawkins, A. R. (2008). *Document design: A Guide for Technical Communicators.* Bedford/St. Martin's.

Krug, S., Bayle, E., Straiger, A., & Matcho, M. (2014). *Don't Make Me Think, Revisited: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability* (Third edition.). New Riders, Peachpit, Pearson Education.

Petrie, H., & Kheir, O. (2007). The relationship between accessibility and usability of websites. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 397–406. https://doi.org/10.1145/1240624.1240688

Shriver, K. (2013). What Do Technical Communicators Need to Know about Information Design? In J. Johnson-Eilola & S. Stuart (Eds.), *Solving Problems in Technical Communication* (pp. 386-427). The University of Chicago Press.

World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). (2023). *Web content accessibility guidelines* (WCAG) 2.0. Retrieved from https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/