

Develop Website Information Architecture

Web Development Team

Session 2 – Plan Content Structure

Labelling

Another task performed by the Information Architect is to develop a labelling scheme for use on the website. Labels refer to those elements on a website that provide contextual or navigational information. Labels are used to identify content and website locations. Examples include:

- Labels on navigation elements
- Web page headings
- Links

Appropriate labelling improves a website's usability by conveying information about content and therefore facilitating navigation. Using familiar website labels allows users to identify the type of information represented by the labels. For example, the label:

- "Home " represents the first or top-level page in a website
- "About us" provides information about the organisation
- "Search" provides a tool to search the site using keywords
- "Site-map" provides a representation of the entire site

Labels can be textual or visual. If using textual labels, ensure consistency throughout. Look at the examples of different button labels below:

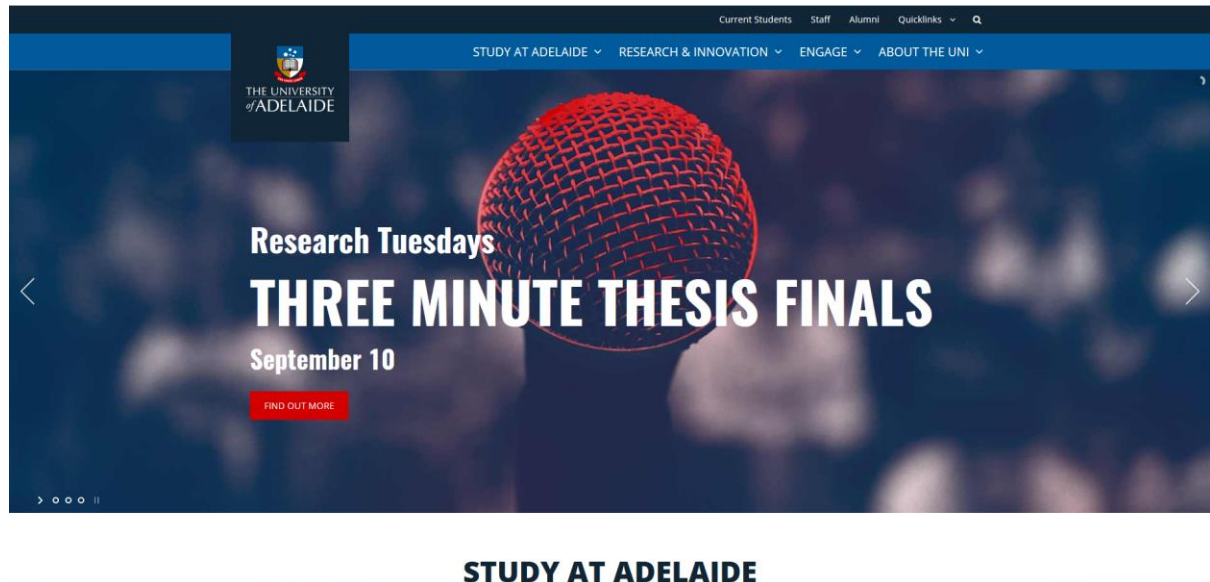
Example 1	Home page button	Search button	Contacting us button
Example 2	Home button	Search button	Contact button
Example 3	Home button	Searching button	Contact button

Which of the three examples above would you say was the most grammatically consistent?

When deciding on a labelling scheme for a website, it is useful to create a list of labels to be used and order them alphabetically. They should then be checked for grammatical consistency and to ensure they are clear and unambiguous.

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Using the previous example of “The University of Adelaide” for organisational structure, do the labels in this site make sense?

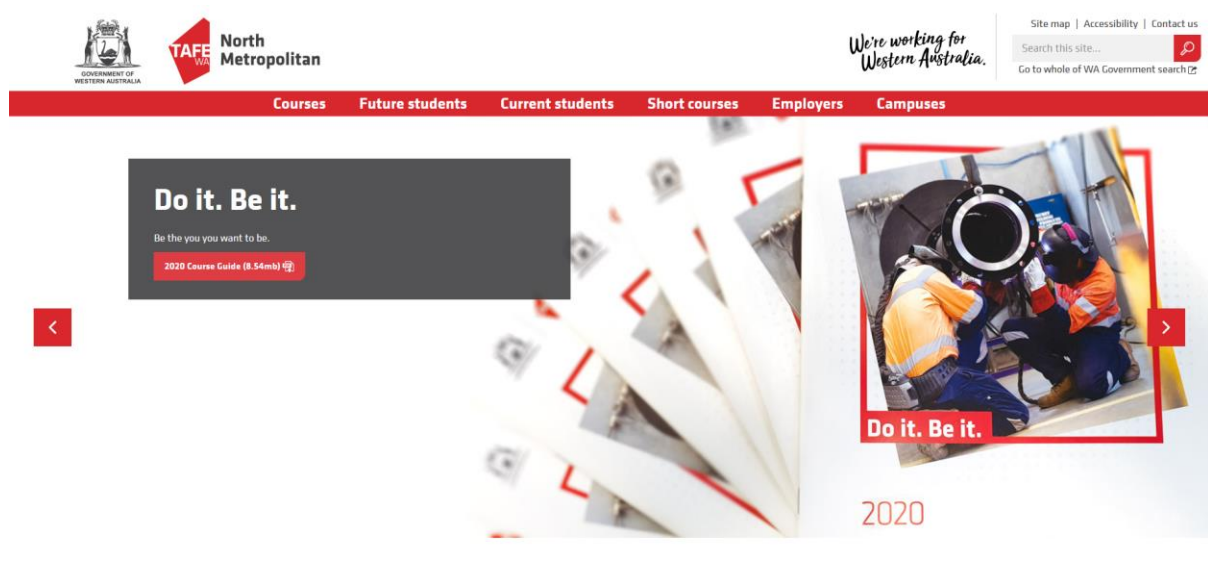
- STUDY AT ADELAIDE
- RESEARCH & INNOVATION
- ENGAGE
- ABOUT THE UNI

When you see them listed as all uppercase also has a visual theme shouting. But when but into the context of the colours and design of the site does look ok. Can you spot one label that can be a little ambiguous. If you look for a word that would say the same, do a search for a synonym and the word “CONNECT” or “JOIN” could be better choices.

Have a look at North Metropolitan TAFE site and see what labels are used.

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Each of the labels do make sense:

- Courses
- Future students
- Current students
- Short courses
- Employers
- Campuses

When the labels are in a list as above, they make sense and imply that it will take you to the designated information. It also looks better being in “Sentence case”.

What do you think about the advertising?

- Do it. Be it
- Be the you you want to be

One of the key components of a website’s information architecture (IA) is an effective nomenclature or labelling system. According to Wikipedia, a [nomenclature](#) is a system of names or terms, or the rules for forming these terms.

In website design and development, there are essentially three different types of labels:

- Document labels
- Content labels
- Navigation labels

All three of these labels are important to both users and technology. A label can communicate to users what content is about. A label can be used to describe a section of a website. And a label can also convey information sense and addresses the following questions:

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- Where can I go? (clear navigation)
- Where am I now? (orientation)
- Can I tell that I have arrived at my destination? (arrival)
- How can I get to the destination that has my desired content? (route selection)
- Should I click on this link? (content value)

Labels are an important part of the design and gives the user the sense of professionalism of the site and the anticipation that the information will be found under the labelled links.

Icons

Icons, such as those shown below are often used for labelling. While icons provide visual relief on a website, it can be difficult to ensure the icons are universally understood.



With mobile phones so prevalent throughout the world, icons are more important because of this. The icons must explain what they mean with no words. They are self-explanatory. Having said that, many websites are set-up to explain what they and how to use them. The following site is set-up for explaining what the iPhone icons mean.

[iPhone Icons: A guide to the Most common iPhone Symbols & Their Meanings \(2019\)](#)

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So, it seems that most icons are not self-explanatory in design. Below is a look at some of the icons and some confusion with them.

Cog, Widget or Gear



We started with this one because it demonstrates some of the confusion. First off, it's a symbol that goes by different names. In the real-world, the symbol can mean "widget," a word that has a meaning among developers that has nothing to do with that real-world meaning. On an app or website, it typically means "settings." Click it and you can adjust something.

Wrench



This, also, is what we mean by a confusing icon, as it can, like the cog-gear-widget, also mean "settings." For example, Google Apps used to have a wrench icon for settings but now uses a "cog-gear-widget."

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Envelope



An envelope should mean email, right? It may. Or it may have a broader meaning, like “click on this to contact us.” Look for one on SmallBusiness.com and click it and the latter will happen.

Right Swerving Arrow



This means share. Click on it and you’ll likely see a list of ways to post the content you’re seeing onto social media sites or email it to friends or co-workers.

Another Sharing Icon

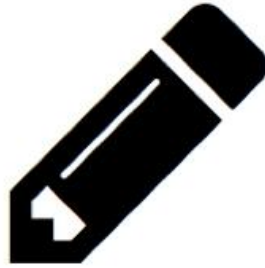


Perhaps we didn’t mention that the internet has no governing board that controls how many symbols can mean the same thing, as this one means “share” also., but wait, there’s more.

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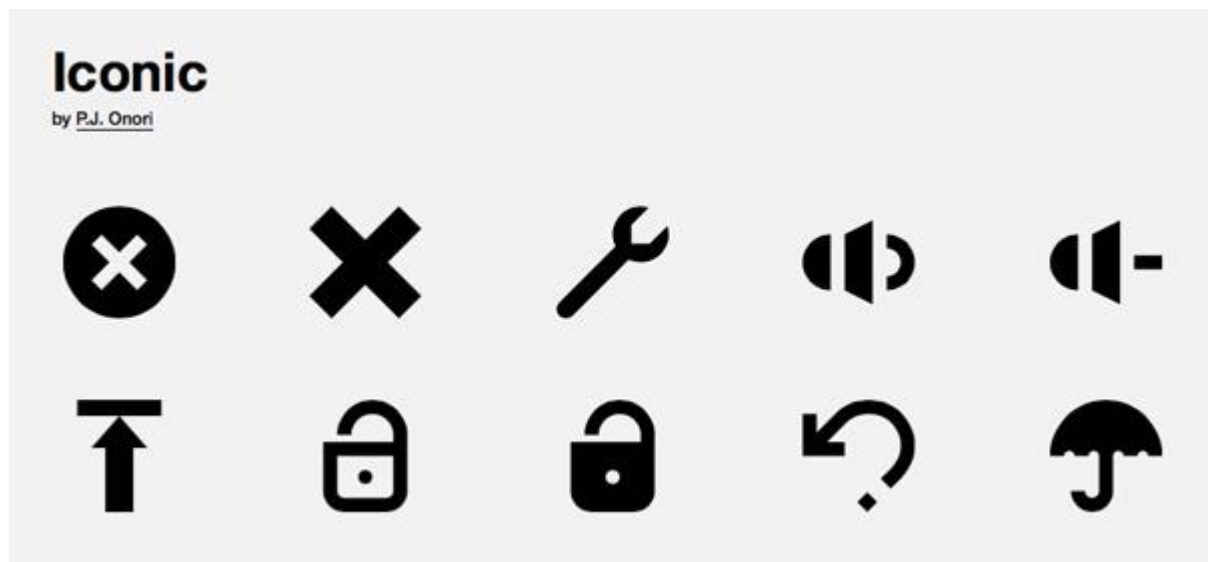
Pencil



This means “edit” pretty much anywhere you see it.

Universal Communication Mechanism

The primary attribute for icons is being a **common visual language** which effectively bridges language gaps. They're instantaneously recognizable and remove open interpretation. This makes them perfect for a digital context, as the Internet is shared by many people and their corresponding cultures.



Screenshot of [The Noun Project](#)

Designing an icon which is universally readable is still a huge challenge. [Our cultures](#) all have graphic conventions which can lead to confusion about the meaning behind some custom-designed icons.

Exploring a new interface consisting of many icons can be challenging at first sight. It takes us a while to become aware of where everything is and get used to each icon's meaning. For this reason, labelling icons (using the `title` attribute, or perhaps custom

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tooltips) will improve the effectiveness for learning a new interface and is considered a best practice. In actual fact, [it's widely accepted](#) that icons in combination with labels are more quickly processed by users.

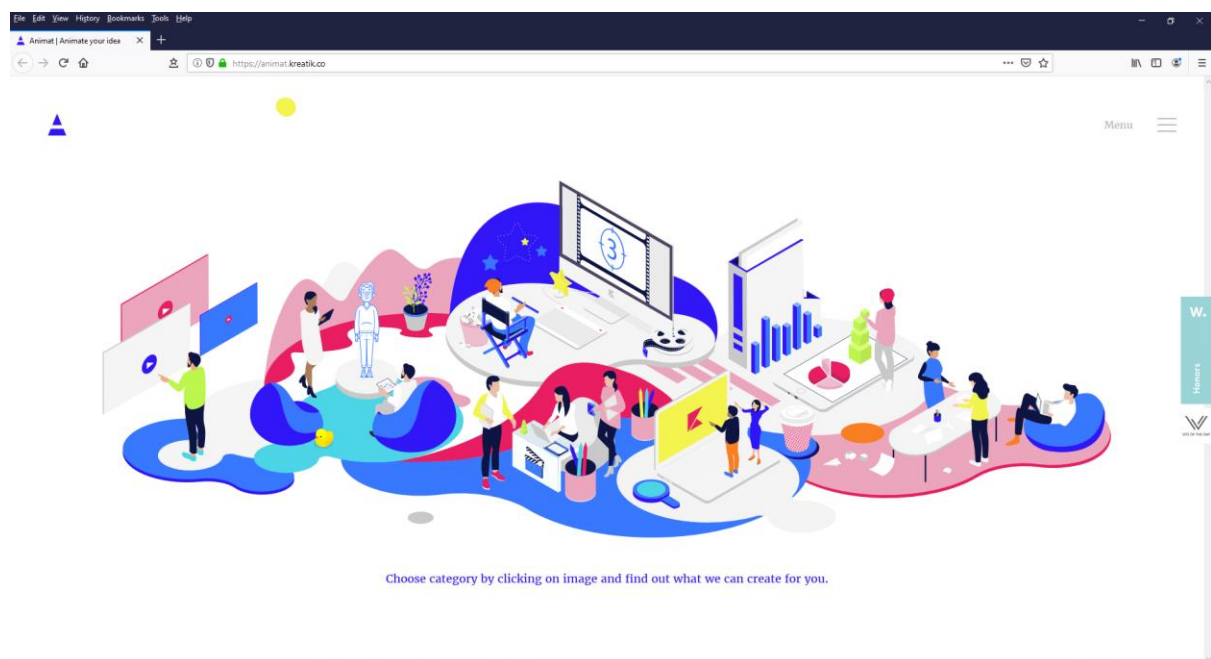
There are many sites dedicated to using icons and explaining what they mean. Does this defeat the purpose of icons by having to explain them? Have a look and see what conclusion you can draw from the following example sites. Point being, you may evoke some new ideas.

Not your common icon set

Animat

by [Kreatik](#) (Poland)

Video explainer, infographic, micro animation or do you need a complex set of animations? Whatever unusual goal you want to accomplish - we're here for you. Let's work on these moves.



<https://www.awwwards.com/sites/animat>

These icons are very elaborate and convey a sense of meaning for the navigation of what they do. Hovering over each area explains what each area does and enables the user to navigate to the page that further explains more detail.

Do you think this works well?

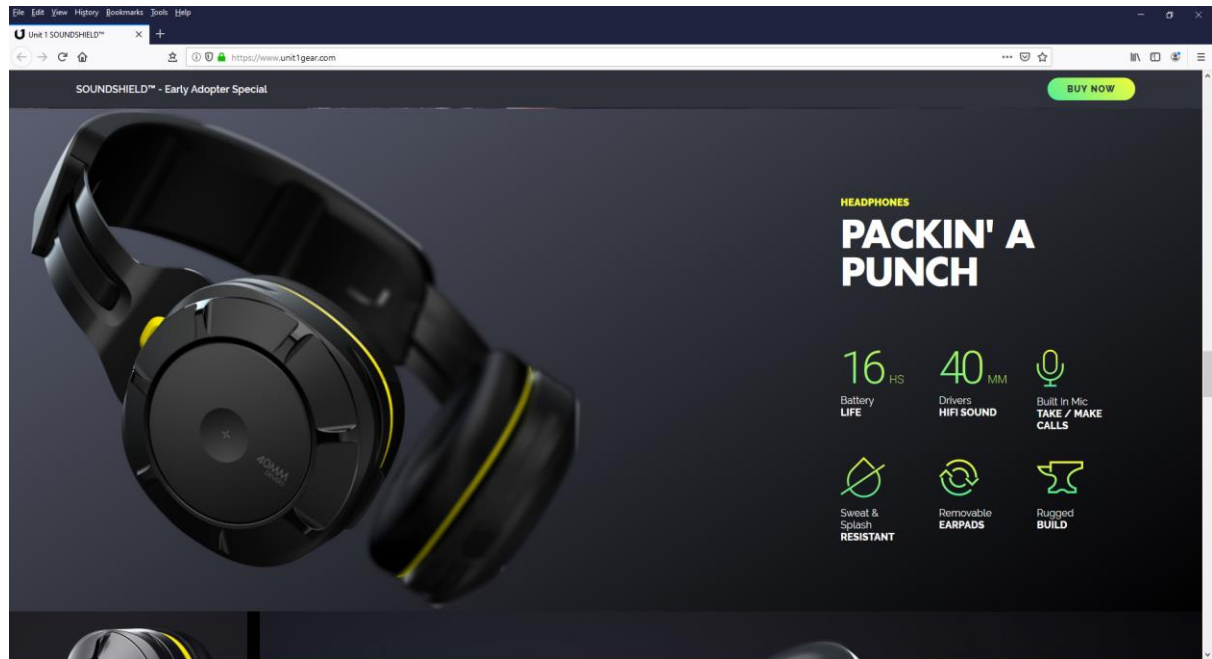
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Unit1 Soundshield

by [Disruptive Brand Innovation](#) (Argentina)

UNIT1 SOUNDSHIELD - Web & Shop Experience. Start-up that aims to reinvent the Action Sports category. Digital Identity creation.



<https://www.unit1gear.com/>

Are these icons understandable? They do make sense. The microphone has an explanation to talk or make calls. The build explanation has an Anvil to mean heavy or there take on this is rugged.

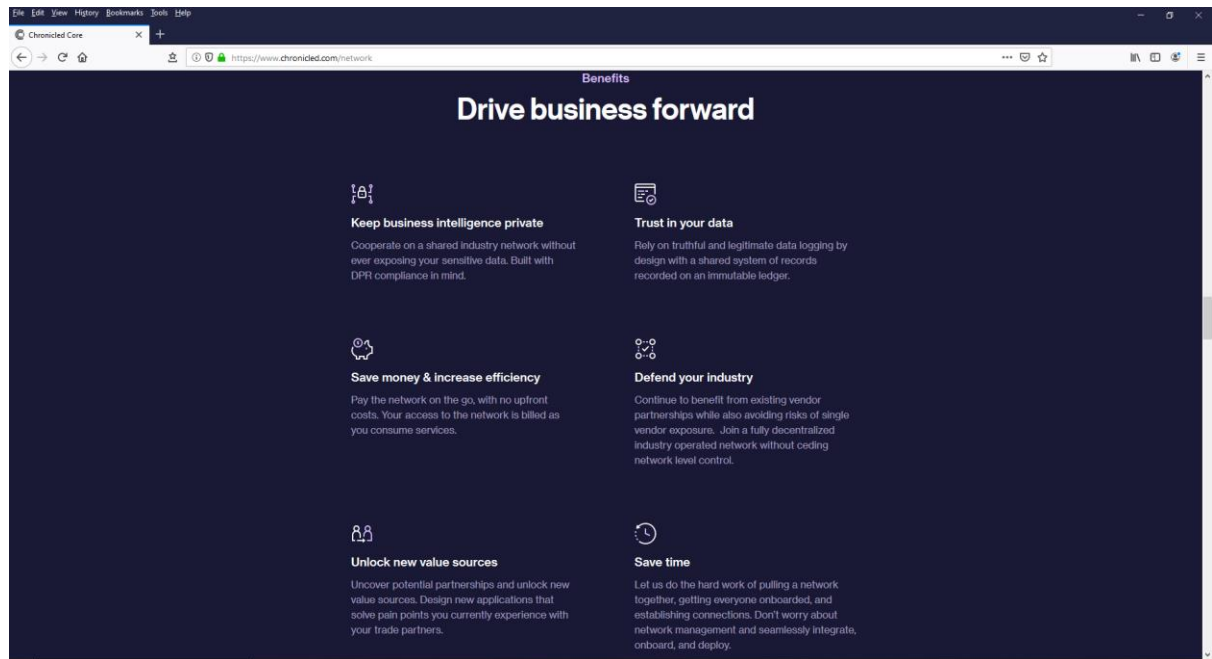
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Chronicled

by [Good Kind](#) (Canada)

Chronicled helps enterprises use blockchain technology to build industry ecosystems that facilitate more collaboration and security. We created their new brand strategy and website.



<https://www.chronicled.com/network>

These icons are designed as a company brand type to fit with the theme. An explanation has been given to each icon to give meaning.

Can you guest what these icons mean?

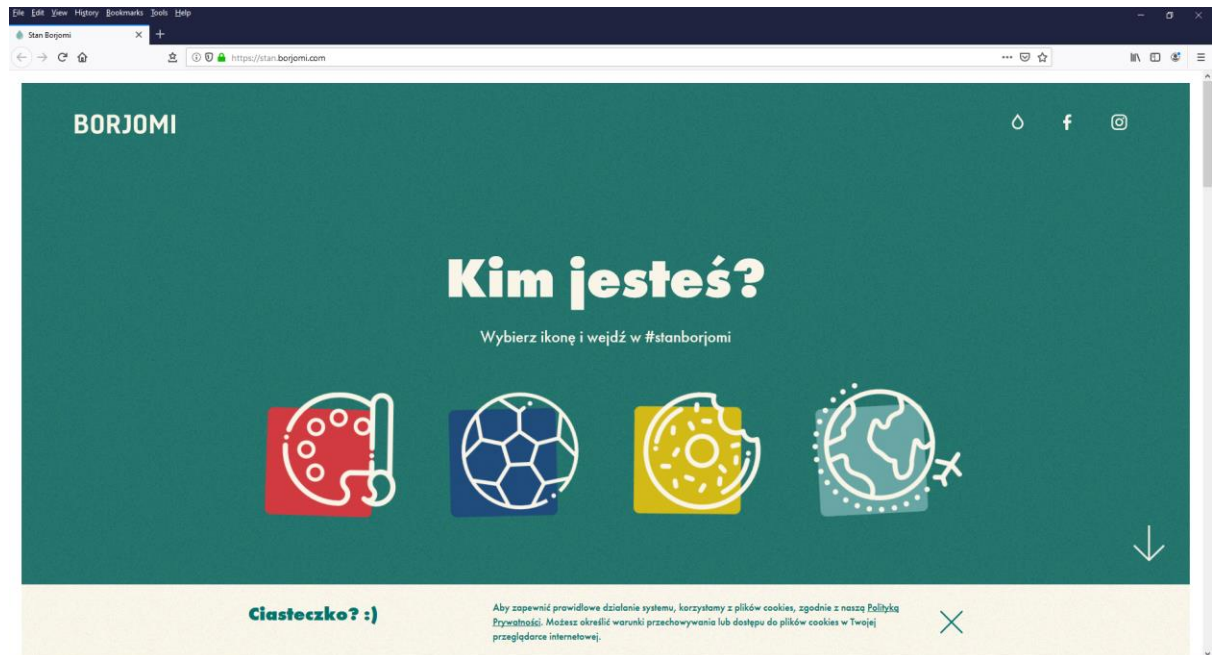
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BORJOMI

by [Kreatik](#) (Poland)

Borjomi is a producer of mineral water. This landing is one of the elements of our marketing strategy for the polish market and it presents 4 archetypes (Icons), to which we direct our messages.



<https://stan.borjomi.com/>

Can you guess what they mean? If you are not Polish, then you would have to guess what they do.

This is what icon meaning is all about. Trying to be specific enough by a graphic without using words.

For more details, see the awwwards site for a full list and explanation of different icons used on sites.

<https://www.awwwards.com/websites/icons/>

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