

Table of Contents

Summary.....	1
What is the purpose of the website and how do you come to that conclusion?	2
Who is the target audience of the website and what is the motive of targeting them?	2
How logical do you think the navigation of the website is?	3
How and why are pictures being used on the website?	4
How good is the accessibility of the website? For example, how does the website appear to visually impaired people?.....	4
What flaws do you see in the website from both a usability and design perspective and what solutions would you propose?	5
Navigation.....	5
DOM Structure and CSS Styling	6
Accessibility	6
Graphical Profile	6
References	7

Summary

This paper is a review of the Danish Brewery Royal Unibrew's website accessible at:

<http://www.royalunibrew.com>. In summary the website has very low accessibility, poor navigation, poor DOM structure and very bad graphical design. It is recommended to redesign the structure of the DOM away from the current HTML table based structure to a structure that utilizes HTML5 semantics to contain content and a CSS flex-box grid to handle placing the content. It is furthermore recommended to fix several navigational bugs and quirks while enforcing a more logical and consistent set of rules to the navigation of the site.

Since the purpose of the website seems to be to deliver information to its users, it is recommended to give the users full navigational access to all parts of the website at all times. It is recommended to utilize media queries and 'srcset' attributes to images to adjust the presentation of the website on mobile devices.

It is recommended to redo the graphical design of the webpage to a cleaner design with less decorative content as well as trying to better fit the graphical profile of the website to the profile the company uses in other contexts.

What is the purpose of the website and how do you come to that conclusion?

The main purpose of the website seems to be to provide information to investors as well as providing a general outlet of information for other audiences. I've come to that conclusion based on what information is available on the website. Being both a consumer of beer and having worked in an investment bank I could only really see the website useful for the later. There is hardly any consumer related information and the information there is in that context, is hidden away behind a very convoluted navigational structure.

Information that is relevant for investors such as stock price information are more easily accessible and is both in focus on the initial page as well as taking up most of the space on the different sub-pages. The reason I am also mentioning the website as being a general outlet of information to various audiences is because there is a lot of information besides what is needed by investors. However due to the poor presentation of that information it seems more like a side-note than something consciously put in there with a specific purpose. Considering the rather poor structure of the website (more explanation on this follows) I don't think it is unlikely that they have simply included a lot of information with no real purpose.

Who is the target audience of the website and what is the motive of targeting them?

On the initial page of the website you get a clear impression that the primary audience of the website is investors. If you read the page in the natural order from top to right then down, you will first read the navigational pane that has 7 tabs where 3 of them are 'Markeder', 'Investor' and 'Presse' which are highly relevant for investors and almost irrelevant for consumers.

There is nothing in the navigational pane that is directly relevant to how the consumers interact with the company. However, it could be argued that the contact tab is relevant in relation to consumer complaints and that the 'Om os' tab is relevant for consumers who takes company profiles into consideration when buying products.

Moving down into the content area of the initial page it is comprised of 3 content boxes with investor information, 3 content boxes with press information, 1 content box with markets information and a content box with the Danish Authorities hygiene report on the company's production facilities. Again emphasis seems to be on the investor audience.

Moving over to the left side navigation pane, which actually is a list of external links, you see their products listed. Those links will lead you to Royal Unibrew's daughter companies on their own websites. It seems like the strategy is that the daughter companies' websites are handling the consumer audience, which again reinforces the idea that the parent company Royal Unibrew's website is targeted to investors.

How logical do you think the navigation of the website is?

The navigation of the website is in a tree like structure where you start from the initial page and then navigate downwards in the hierarchy through first selecting in the top navigation pane and then selecting in the left navigation pane. The rules seem to be that from the initial page the top navigation tabs take you to the sub-pages 1-7 and from there you can go to each of those sub-pages own sub-pages. Clicking on the logo in the top will take you to the top level initial page.

Structurally this setup makes sense, however the technical implementation seems broken and there are a lot of inconsistencies in where and how the sub-links are being displayed. The left side pane seems to be allocated to hold the navigation for the sub-pages, however on the initial page it is used for external links and on the Contact sub-page the sub-links are placed in the content area leaving the left side pane empty.

When hovering over the navigation pane you get direct access to that sub-page's sub-links, however the technical implementation seems broken as the sub-tabs are being displayed in the middle of the screen and not where you expect them right under the navigation pane. Having bugs on the website or having a user's not being able to locate what they are looking for can really hurt the companies brand because it signals a very unserious attitude (*Sundström, T. 2005, Varumärke*).

If you click on the 'Om os' tab and then click on 'Koncernledelse', then on the left side pane you see that 'Koncernledelse' is actually 2 steps down in the hierarchy from the 'Om os' tab. This means that in order to get to 'Corporate Governance' you have to first click on 'Koncernledelse' and then go up one level in the hierarchy and click 'Corporate Governance'. This way of having pages only accessible by moving upwards in a hierarchy is very illogical and makes the path to reach specific pages unreasonably long and convoluted.

Another navigational quirk is, that if you select 'Om-os' and then 'Koncernoversigt' then a new navigational list appears on the right side of the page outside of what appeared to be the containing grid of the website. If this wasn't illogical enough, if you then click on 'Mærker' you then appear on a page that seems to be on the same level as the pages accessible through the top navigation pane, except that this page isn't on the navigation pane. It is generally a bad idea for a website to break its own boundaries for no reason as it confuses the user (*Sundström, T. 2005, Låt formgivningen hålla samman webbplatsen*)

I believe there are many more points that could be made about problems with navigation on this website, but it is probably suffice to say that the navigation of the website is extremely convoluted and problematic. It took me several attempts of navigating through the website to actually find this 'Mærker' page that holds all their essential product information.

In terms of usability it is essential that the user understands the navigation of the site and are able to locate the information that they are seeking on the website. (*Sundström T. 2005, De fyra dörrarne*). It is very hard to understand how the navigation on the website actually works, because it works in so many different ways depending on where you are on the website.

How and why are pictures being used on the website?

In the header-row of the initial page there is an animation that changes 3 pictures. Those 3 pictures can be generalized as 2 pictures of people drinking beer and 1 picture of a spinning globe. I assume that the purpose here is to visualize the company profile which based on those pictures is a global company delivering beer to consumers.

Besides that, there are pictures of their products in the content area accompanying links to news articles. The purpose here is to visualize what product the news articles are referring to. There is also an animation on the left side pane on the initial page that shows different products fading in and out. The purpose here seems to be visualizing products that are new but it is only clear to the user if you wait until you see the last part of the animation which says 'news, news, news'. The only picture here that utilizes its media format to deliver information to the user is the stock price over time chart.

When you go to the sub-pages the picture in the header pane is a visualization of what that sub-page is about. For example, on the contact page you see a picture of secretaries speaking on the phone. Interestingly on the markets pane the spinning globe is removed in favor of a picture of some water. Even though I didn't like the spinning globe it would have made more sense to have it on this page. In general pictures on the website are used as a visualization of information already in written form on the page with the exception of the chart showing the stock price over time and a picture of tabulated data on the 'Om os' > 'Koncernoversigt' page. The image on this page is used to display tabular information. While it is important that images have a purpose (*Sundström, T. 2005, Undvik dekorationer*), they should do so by utilizing their format and tabular information is best shown in text/tables not in pictures.

How good is the accessibility of the website? For example, how does the website appear to visually impaired people?

The only picture that I could find with any alt text attributed to it, is the logo on the top of the page, all of the other pictures black-box elements for the visually impaired. It is best practice to leave alt text empty for images that hold no additional informational purpose (*W3C 2008, Decorative Images*). While most pictures on this website doesn't provide additional information there are a couple where the user experience is very affected by not being able to see the pictures or read any alt text. The most important pictures in this case is the stock chart over time and the income statement that instead of being shown in text was a picture of tabulated data.

There is pretty much no use of any HTML5 semantics and everything on the website is contained in HTML table/div and span elements. This means that the content of the website cannot be separated from the structure of the website. If content was contained in HTML5 semantics such as <article>, <h>, <nav> or similar it would be easier for the reader to understand the structure of the page without seeing it and all the information that exists on the web-page could be retrieved and displayed in different formats more easily as recommend by WCAG (*W3C 2008, WCAG*).

The website is not responsive at all and doesn't utilize any CSS media queries or 'srcset' attribution for images, plus all of the container boxes in the webpage are defined with fixed width's making accessing it on any media device apart from a computer a bad experience. Everything is zoomed out heavily on mobile devices and navigating the site requires the user to zoom in and out all the time. This is both a problem for people with bad vision as well as for people with decreased motor skills. Even for people without any disabilities the website is almost totally inaccessible on smaller screen devices.

What flaws do you see in the website from both a usability and design perspective and what solutions would you propose?

There is a lot to change here so I have grouped it into the following categories: Navigation, DOM Structure and CSS styling, Accessibility, Graphical Profile.

Navigation

I believe that the intended navigational structure is that the top navigation pane holds navigation to the top level pages and the left side navigation holds the navigation to the sub-pages. Therefore I would move the sub-page navigation on the contact page to the left pane, opening up the content area on that page to more general contact information.

Furthermore, I would fix the technical bug that appears when hovering over the top navigation pane so that the sub-pages appear right under the tab that the cursor is hovering over. I would move away the external links to daughter companies from the left side pane on the initial page, either to their own tab or to replace the current content areas on the initial page. Everything that is currently in the content area on the initial page is redundant information that can also be found on any of the sub-pages that are dedicated to that information. Moving the external links to the content area or to their own tab gives more space to accompany the external links with more information, which is very needed as currently users are being directed away from the website without any clear information on why that is.

It is currently very hard to drill down through the hierarchy of the website for two reasons: 1) You can only see selected parts of the hierarchy depending on where you are. 2) The parts of the hierarchy you can see on the left side pane are not very logical, sometimes it is links to pages 2 steps down in the hierarchy, sometimes 1 step down sometimes it is even links to pages that are in different branches of the hierarchy.

To get a better overview of the websites informational structure and to ease the navigation for the users, I would include the whole hierarchy on the left side pane with icons to expand and collapse the different branches in the hierarchy. Choosing to collapse and expand the hierarchy shouldn't force the website to actually load those pages, this should be done only when the user clicks on the link and not on the expand/collapse icon. This way we don't unnecessarily have to load the page every time the users clicks down one step in the hierarchy and it will be faster for the user to reach their intended destination.

DOM Structure and CSS Styling

Making the website responsive and working all media devices would require a total re-design of the site. The content areas are currently being contained in table elements with HTML defined widths. I would change the site to work in a flex-box grid system allowing the content that are currently split in columns to wrap down under each other with varying screen sizes. Furthermore, I would make a media query to remove the left side navigation bar and optionally compress that navigational functionality into a bar on the bottom of the screen (fixed to always appear on screen). I would also use a media query to compress the top navigation bar into a 1 icon drop down menu and optionally remove the header pictures if they take up too much space on small media devices.

Accessibility

I would ensure that all non-decorative images have alt text attributed to them. I would also make sure not to use images to display tabular information.

I am not really sure about the accessibility implications of using flash elements, which currently is being used on the website. I would challenge the need for their existence, but if the client insists on them being there, I would recreate them with a combination of HTML, CSS and JavaScript.

Furthermore, I would make sure to use correct HTML5 semantics for the different sections and contents of the webpage to achieve a better non visual interpretation of the website (*Mozilla Foundation, HTML element references*).

Graphical Profile

It is important that a company has a distinct graphical profile that users can recognize and connect to their brand awareness (*Sundström, T. 2005, Webbprofil*). Royal Unibrew do have a very distinct graphical profile when it comes to their products and when you see them in the stores or serving at festivals. That profile however, has not been translated very well into their website.

I would try and find out what typography and colors they are using on their products and in their TV commercials and incorporate that in redesigning the graphical profile of the website. I would try to aim for a very clean design since the main purpose of website seems to be in delivering information and having too much decorative content works against that purpose.

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