

COMMUNICATING IDENTITY THROUGH WEB DESIGN



Introduction

It is a common misconception to classify websites as merely “good” or “bad”, as the effectiveness of a website’s design is subjective and deeply connected to the specific audience it aims to serve. In an era where user experiences are increasingly personalized, there is a risk of undervaluing the authenticity of unique character of individual web presences. As our expectations for seamless, conventional interfaces grow, we may inadvertently push web designs towards uniformity, a grayer, more homogenous digital landscape.

It is crucial, therefore, to appreciate diversity in a web design and evaluate a site not by its adherence to trends, but by its ability to express a unique intended and connect authentically with its intended community.

Good Communication Examples

Richard Stallman's Personal Website

Richard Stallman's Personal Site



The photo comes from [wikimedia.org](#)
 "Richard Stallman at LibrePlanet 2019" by Ruben Rodriguez

I continue to be the Chief GNUisance of the GNU Project.
 This is my long-term commitment and I plan to continue.
 You may have heard or read critical statements about me; [please make up your own mind.](#)

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[RSS site feed](#) for the most recent political notes and new material.

This is the personal web site of Richard Stallman.
 The views expressed here are my personal views, not those of the [Free Software Foundation](#) or the [GNU Project](#).
 For the sake of separation, this site has always been hosted elsewhere and managed separately.

I will have a trip to Europe in the second week of October and I am looking for invitations for additional talks in the same trip. If you would like to invite me to speak in that trip, please write to me at rms-invitation@gnu.org with "october" as the subject.
 It is more likely I can actually go if you have funds to cover the additional cost, and a speaker's fee would be nice.

- URL: <https://stallman.org>
- Analysis: This website is a prime example of function over form, where the simple, text-focused design is a deliberate choice that powerfully communicates the owner's identity and values. The site's lack of modern styling and non-essential scripts reflects Richard Stallman's advocacy for free, open-source software and his rejection of proprietary web technologies. The straightforward, hierarchical structure makes a vast amount of information accessible and prioritizes the user's ability to get information without barriers, which is the core of a good user experience for his intended audience.

Barefootwear

The screenshot shows the homepage of Barefootwear. At the top left is the brand name "Barefootwear". At the top right are links for "Guides", "Footwear", "Contact", and social media icons for YouTube and a magnifying glass. The main heading "Hi there." is prominently displayed in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below it is a brief introductory text: "My name's Andrew and this is Barefootwear, the best place for finding minimalist and zero-drop shoes, sandals, boots, and more. (:". A "Browse Footwear" button is located below the text. The central feature is a video player showing a man with a beard pointing towards the camera, surrounded by various barefoot shoes. The video has a "YouTube" watermark. To the left of the video, there's a call-to-action section with the text "Start Here" and three numbered links: "1. Why Barefoot", "2. How to Transition", and "3. Best Minimalist Shoes".

- URL: <https://www.barefootwear.org/>
- Analysis: This site uses a clean and sleek design to create a highly effective and trustworthy user experience centered on a specific niche. Its simple, grid-based layout and clear categorization allow users to easily find reviews and guides with minimal effort, as everything is accessible without excessive scrolling or navigating through noisy, distracting elements. This coherent and intuitive design establishes the site's authority and communicates its purpose clearly, making it a reliable resource for anyone interested in barefoot footwear.

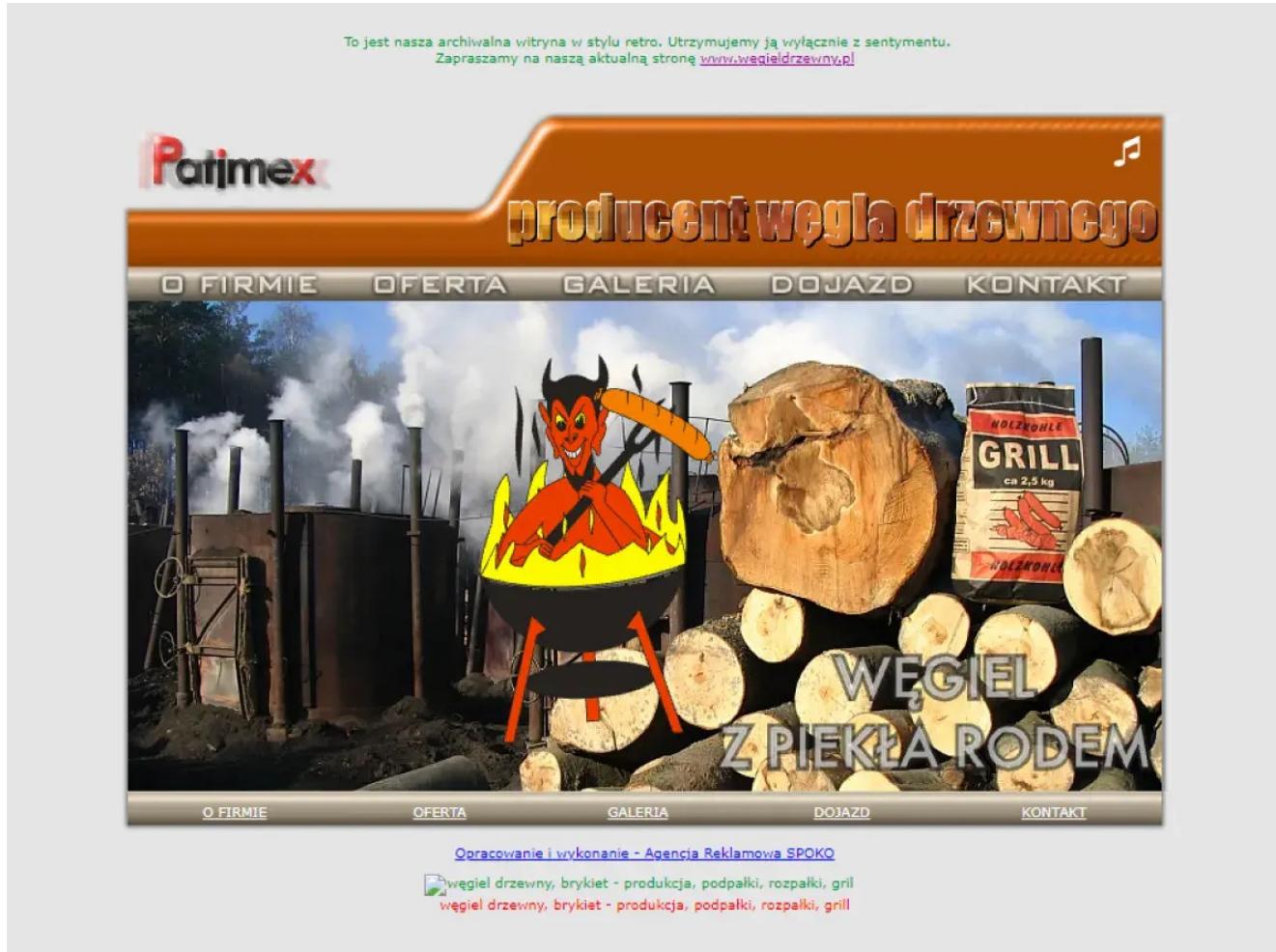
Bad Communication Examples

Ling's Cars



- URL: <https://www.lingscars.com/>
- Analysis: A well-known example of chaotic web design that communicates poorly by breaking nearly every established rule of user experience. The site bombards users with flashing GIFs, jarring colors, and a complete lack of visual hierarchy, making it incredibly confusing to navigate. While this maximalist style is a deliberate reflection of the owner's eccentric brand identity, from a communication standpoint focused on clarity and coherence, it creates a disorienting and overwhelming interface.

Patimex



- URL: <http://www.patimex.com/>
- Analysis: The Patimex website communicates poorly through a sparse and inconsistent design that can leave a user questioning the company's legitimacy. The homepage has an out-of-place image, while other pages contain very little information, creating a confusing experience that does not build trust or clearly state the company's purpose.

A Case Study in Authenticity: The MySpace Era



Source: <https://katlicause.wordpress.com/reflections-2/final-reflection/>