Project X

31.05.24

— **Project Initiation Document - Coralie Erasmus**

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Introduction

For Project X, I'm diving back into one of my favorite assignments from last semester: redesigning a website. This time, I'm going to take it further by focusing on detailed research and incorporating advanced animations. My goal is to create a more engaging and dynamic user experience, pushing my skills in web design and interactivity to the next level.

Current brand website design

The current website features a variety of information all laid out quite the same. You've got different tabs for things like "Our story", "Our beers", "Find us", "Blogs" and more. On the 'Our beers' pages they give a short written description of each beer together with a bit of background on the beer and also serving information.

Company description

Balashi Brewery, based in Aruba, is a popular choice among island residents. They produce three specific beers: "Balashi," "Chill," and "Magic Mango." What sets these beers apart is the use of Aruba's desalinated water, combined with malt from Scotland and hops from Germany. Each beer targets a different audience:

- Balashi is a classic beer, appealing primarily to an older demographic.
- Chill is a lighter beer, aimed at a younger generation (18+)
- Magic Mango, a newer addition, also targets younger consumers and appears to be particularly popular among women. (As shown on their marketing)

Problem statement

The current website feels static and fails to engage users effectively. It doesn't capture the unique essence of each product, merely displaying bottle colors without differentiation. Despite each beer being targeted at a specific audience, this is not reflected on the site each beer is presented in the same way, with only the page colors varying. For those unfamiliar with the brand, such as potential investors or exporters, the website does not convey the distinct taste or target audience of each beer. Moreover, the user experience is lacking, with outdated and unimpressive animations detracting from the overall appeal.

Project objectives

My goal is to redesign the website with a fresh, modern approach. I aim to present information efficiently, avoiding pages filled with dense text. The design will reflect the distinct vibe and taste of each beer through specific visuals. For instance, the "Chill" beer, described as light and crisp, will be represented using appropriate colors, shapes, and graphics. The result will be a website that perfectly encapsulates both the brand identity and the unique identity of each product. This will differentiate them from other brewery brands while adhering to modern trends and industry standards for brewery websites.

Research questions/ sub-questions

- How can we enhance the interactivity and dynamism of the Balashi website to significantly improve user experience?
  - What feedback do users have about the existing website, and how can it inform the redesign?
  - How do beverage brands create dynamic website effects to enhance user experience?
  - How can we incorporate multimedia elements (e.g., 3D models, animations) to enrich the user experience?
  - What design trends in our industry can we incorporate to keep the website modern and appealing?
  - How can we integrate dynamic elements in a working prototype and user test it?

What feedback do users have about the existing website, and how can it inform the redesign.

Initial Impressions of the Balashi Brewery Homepage: Most users found the homepage acceptable but noted that the chosen image appeared a bit off. They suggested that the hero section should scroll automatically rather than requiring manual image switching. Despite these issues, users understood that the site was about beer.

Navigation to the 'Our Beers' Section: Users easily navigated to the 'Our Beers' section. However, many felt that an arrow or indicator prompting them to scroll down would be helpful, as it initially appeared there was no additional content below.

Finding Alcohol Volume Information: Users had no trouble locating the alcohol volume information and found the surrounding details comprehensive and easy to understand.

Attempting to Purchase a Beer Case: All users struggled with the purchase process. The website redirected them to a different site, disrupting the experience. Additionally, the external site was non-functional, preventing users from adding items to their cart or making a purchase.

Locating Contact Information: Some users had difficulty finding the contact information because it was listed under "Find Us" rather than "Contact Us." Additionally, users noted the absence of a phone number for direct contact.

How do beverage brands create dynamic website effects to enhance user experience?

Examples I am Basing this Research On:

- [Meadlight](#)
- [Kombu Drinks](#)
- [Calexo](#)
- [Brew District 24](#)

Common Design Patterns Observed:

1. Interactive 3D Elements:

- Visual Engagement: Using 3D models of their products, such as bottles or cans, which users can rotate and interact wit-h, creating a more engaging experience.

- Enhanced Realism: Implementing realistic 3D effects to give a sense of the physical product, making the online shopping experience more tangible.

2. Unique Scrolling Effects:

- Parallax Scrolling: Layers of images or content move at different speeds as the user scrolls, creating a depth effect that captures attention and makes the site more visually appealing.
- Scroll-triggered Animations: Animations that play as the user scrolls down the page, adding dynamism and encouraging further exploration.

3. Flavor-Specific Pages:

- Customized User Journeys: Each flavor having its own dedicated page with unique designs and color schemes tailored to match the beverage, enhancing the user's exploration and discovery process.
- Personalized Content: Providing detailed descriptions, images, and interactive elements for each flavor, which helps users make informed decisions and feel more connected to the brand.

4. Comprehensive Product Information:

- Transparency and Trust: Detailed information about taste, calories, and volume is presented in an accessible and visually appealing format, building trust and transparency with consumers.

5. About Us Pages:

- Brand Storytelling: Concise and engaging 'About Us' sections that tell the brand's story, mission, and values, helping to build a connection with consumers.
- Humanizing the Brand: Including photos, videos, and personal stories to make the brand more relatable and authentic.

6. Contact Sections:

- Easy Accessibility: Clear and easily accessible contact information, including forms, email addresses, and phone numbers, encouraging customer engagement and inquiries.

7. E-commerce Integration:

- Seamless Shopping Experience: Direct links to purchase products, integrated with user-friendly shopping carts and checkout processes to streamline the buying experience.

8. Social Media Links:

- Cross-platform Engagement: Prominent links to social media platforms to encourage users to follow and engage with the brand on multiple channels.

9. Graphics and Illustrations:

- Taste Descriptions: Using fruit graphics and other illustrations to visually describe the taste and ingredients of the beverages, making the information more appealing and understandable.
- Brand Aesthetic: Consistent use of graphics and illustrations that align with the brand's overall aesthetic and messaging, creating a cohesive and attractive visual experience.

How can we incorporate multimedia elements (e.g., 3D models, animations) to enrich the user experience?

Incorporating multimedia elements such as 3D models and animations can significantly enrich the user experience by making content more engaging, interactive, and informative. Here are several ways to effectively incorporate these elements:

1. Interactive 3D Models

Applications:

- Product Showcase: Let customers interact with 3D models of your beverage bottles or cans. They can rotate, zoom in, and examine the packaging from all angles.
- Custom Packaging Preview: Allow customers to design and preview custom labels or packaging in 3D before placing an order.

Implementation:

- WebGL and Three.js: Use WebGL for rendering interactive 3D models directly in the browser. Three.js can help you create these models easily.

- Augmented Reality (AR): Integrate AR so customers can see what your products look like in their own environment. Tools like ARKit and ARCore can make this possible.

2. Animations

Applications:

- Smooth Transitions: Use animations to create smooth transitions between different sections of your website, enhancing the browsing experience.
- Product Storytelling: Create animated videos or GIFs to tell the story of your beverage—from sourcing ingredients to the final product.

Implementation:

- CSS and JavaScript: Use CSS animations for subtle effects like button presses and hover states. For more complex animations, libraries like GSAP (GreenSock Animation Platform) are perfect.
- SVG Animations: Use SVG animations for scalable and crisp visuals that work well on any screen size.

3. Engaging Videos

Applications:

- Behind-the-Scenes: Showcase the process of how your beverages are made with engaging behind-the-scenes videos.
- Customer Stories: Share customer testimonials or stories through short, compelling videos.

Implementation:

- HTML5 Video: Embed high-quality videos using HTML5 for cross-device compatibility.
- Interactive Video Platforms: Use platforms like H5P or Kaltura to create videos where users can interact with different elements or make choices within the video.

4. Virtual and Augmented Reality

Applications:

- Virtual Tours: Offer virtual tours of your brewery or manufacturing facility. This can give customers a deeper connection to your brand.
- AR Experience: Develop an AR app where customers can scan your product label to unlock exclusive content, such as recipes, fun facts, or discounts.

Implementation:

- WebVR: Use WebVR to create immersive experiences that can be accessed directly through the browser.
- Mobile AR Apps: Develop mobile apps with AR features using ARKit for iOS and ARCore for Android.

5. Interactive Infographics and Data Visualizations

Applications:

- Ingredient Sourcing: Create interactive infographics that show where your ingredients come from, emphasizing quality and sustainability.
- Nutritional Information: Use interactive charts to display the nutritional information of your beverages in an engaging way.

Implementation:

- D3.js: Use D3.js to build interactive and dynamic data visualizations.
- Chart Libraries: Utilize libraries like Chart.js or Highcharts for animated charts and graphs.

6. Subtle Background Animations

Applications:

- Animated Backgrounds: Use subtle animated backgrounds to set the mood and enhance the visual appeal of your website.
- Parallax Scrolling: Implement parallax scrolling effects to give depth and dynamism to your site as users scroll through.

Implementation:

- CSS and JavaScript: Use CSS for simpler animations and JavaScript for more complex interactions.
- Lottie Files: Use Lottie animations for lightweight and scalable animations that can easily be integrated into your site.

Best Practices

- Performance Optimization: Ensure all multimedia elements are optimized for fast loading times to prevent slowdowns.
- Accessibility: Make sure multimedia content is accessible to all users, providing text descriptions for videos and 3D models, and ensuring interactive elements are navigable by keyboard.
- User Control: Give users the ability to control multimedia elements, like pausing animations or videos.

- Brand Consistency: Ensure all multimedia elements align with your brand's visual identity and messaging.

What design trends in our industry can we incorporate to keep the website modern and appealing?

1. Bold Typography

- **Why:** To make a strong visual statement and highlight key messages like product names, slogans, and calls to action.
- **How:** Use large, bold fonts for product names and promotional headlines, paired with readable body text.

2. Minimalist Design

- **Why:** Clean designs focus on the product and brand message, ensuring users aren't distracted by unnecessary elements.
- **How:** Use ample white space, simple navigation, and focus on high-quality images of your beverages and concise, impactful text.

3. Custom Illustrations

- **Why:** Unique illustrations can add a bespoke feel to your brand, making it more memorable and distinctive.
- **How:** Use illustrations to depict ingredients, the brewing process, or lifestyle scenes that align with your brand's identity.

4. Immersive Video Backgrounds

- **Why:** Video backgrounds can captivate users and convey the story behind your beverages more effectively than static images.
- **How:** Use high-quality, short-looping videos as backgrounds on your homepage or in sections that explain your brand's story or product line.

5. Interactive 3D Models

- **Why:** To allow users to interact with your products in a more engaging way, seeing them from all angles.
- **How:** Use WebGL or Three.js to create interactive 3D models of your beverage bottles or cans that users can rotate and zoom into.

6. Micro-Animations

- **Why:** Enhance user interactions by providing visual feedback and making the interface feel more responsive.

- **How:** Use CSS and JavaScript libraries like GSAP to create subtle animations for buttons, hover effects, and transitions.

7. Asymmetrical Layouts

- **Why:** To create a visually interesting design that breaks the monotony of traditional grid layouts.
- **How:** Experiment with non-traditional grid systems and overlapping elements to highlight key products or promotional offers.

8. Augmented Reality (AR)

- **Why:** Provide interactive experiences where users can visualize your products in their environment.
- **How:** Integrate AR features where users can scan product labels to see additional content or try virtual product placements, like seeing how a bottle fits on their table.

9. Sustainable Design

- **Why:** Appeal to eco-conscious consumers by showcasing your commitment to sustainability.
- **How:** Optimize images, use green hosting services, and minimize resource-heavy scripts and plugins. Highlight your sustainable practices and eco-friendly packaging in dedicated sections.

10. Gradient Colors

- **Why:** Add depth and a modern look to your design, making it more vibrant and appealing.
- **How:** Use gradient backgrounds, buttons, and overlays to enhance visual appeal, especially in sections showcasing product variety or special promotions.

What design trends in our industry can we incorporate to keep the website modern and appealing?

1. Dark Mode

- **Why:** Dark mode is popular for its aesthetic appeal and reduced eye strain in low-light environments.

2. Micro-Animations

- **Why:** These small animations enhance user interactions, providing visual feedback and guiding users through tasks.

3. Minimalist Design

- **Why:** Clean, minimalist designs are user-friendly and allow content to stand out without distractions.

4. Bold Typography

- **Why:** Eye-catching typography can make a strong statement and enhance the visual hierarchy of your content.

5. 3D Visuals

- **Why:** 3D elements can make your website more dynamic and engaging, especially for product showcases.

6. Neumorphism

- **Why:** This design style combines flat design and skeuomorphism, creating a soft, almost 3D effect that feels tactile and modern.

7. Asymmetrical Layouts

- **Why:** Asymmetry can make your design more interesting and break the monotony of traditional grid layouts.

8. Custom Illustrations

- **Why:** Unique illustrations can add personality and a bespoke feel to your brand, differentiating you from competitors.

9. Sustainable Design

- **Why:** Increasingly, users are concerned about environmental impact. Sustainable web design practices can appeal to eco-conscious consumers.

10. Voice User Interface (VUI)

- **Why:** With the rise of voice-activated devices, integrating voice search can enhance accessibility and user experience.

11. AI and Chatbots

- **Why:** AI-driven chatbots can provide instant customer service, improving user experience and engagement.

12. Immersive Video Backgrounds

- **Why:** Video backgrounds can captivate users and convey brand stories more effectively than static images.

13. Gradient Colors

- **Why:** Gradients can add depth and a modern look to your design, making it more vibrant.

14. Augmented Reality (AR)

- **Why:** AR can provide interactive experiences, allowing users to visualize products in their environment.

15. Personalization

- **Why:** Personalized content can significantly enhance user engagement and satisfaction.

By incorporating these trends, Balashi's website can stay ahead of the curve, providing a modern, engaging, and user-friendly experience that resonates with visitors.

How can we integrate dynamic elements in a working prototype and user test it?

Since Figma itself is primarily for static designs and simple interactions, we will use additional tools and methods to simulate these dynamic elements and gather user feedback effectively.

Possible steps to Integrate Dynamic Elements and User Test

1. Design Static Elements in Figma:
   - Start by designing the static parts of the website prototype in Figma. Include placeholders or static images for the areas where the 3D visuals or interactive elements will go.
   - Clearly mark and annotate where dynamic elements will be, so users and stakeholders understand these are intended to be interactive.
2. Use Figma Plugins and Integrations:
   - Use plugins like "Anima" or "ProtoPie" which can help simulate more complex interactions within Figma.

- ○ For truly interactive 3D elements, create these using tools like Three.js, Babylon.js, or Blender (for 3D modeling). Host these elements on a web server or platform that allows embedding, such as CodePen or GitHub Pages. Then use Figma's prototyping features to link to these external prototypes.
3. Embed Interactive 3D Visuals:
    - ○ Develop 3D interactive visuals separately using WebGL or a similar technology. Ensure they are hosted online and accessible via a URL.
    - ○ Use Figma's prototype links to open these 3D visuals in an iframe or a new tab. This way, users can interact with the 3D models directly, though outside the immediate Figma prototype.
4. User Testing the Prototype:
    - ○ Ensure all links and interactions are working smoothly. Test the flow personally to catch any glitches.
    - ○ Use a usability test plan.
    - ○ Observe how users interact with both the Figma prototype and the 3D visuals. Pay attention to their behavior, any confusion, and their verbal feedback.
5. Iterate Based on Feedback:
    - ○ Review the user testing sessions to identify pain points, usability issues, and areas for improvement.
    - ○ Make necessary changes in Figma and the 3D visuals based on the feedback. Iterate the design and interactions until you achieve a smooth and engaging user experience.

Workflow example

1. Design in Figma:
    - ○ Create the homepage with placeholders for interactive 3D product models.
    - ○ Add navigation, text, and other static elements.
2. Develop 3D Models:
    - ○ Use Blender to create a 3D model of a beverage bottle.
    - ○ Export and integrate this model using Three.js for web interactivity.
3. Host 3D Models:
    - ○ Host the interactive model on GitHub Pages or another web hosting service.
    - ○ Ensure the model is fully functional and accessible via a URL.
4. Link in Figma:
    - ○ Use an interactive hotspot in Figma to link to the 3D model URL.
    - ○ Add a button or image placeholder in Figma that, when clicked, opens the 3D model in a new tab or an embedded frame.
5. Conduct User Testing:
    - ○ Set up a user testing session with tools like UserTesting.
    - ○ Provide users with a link to the Figma prototype and clear instructions on interacting with the 3D elements.

○ Collect and analyze user feedback to refine the experience.

Tools and Resources

- Figma Plugins: <u>Anima</u>, <u>ProtoPie</u>
- 3D Modeling and Interaction: <u>Blender</u>, <u>Three.js</u>, <u>Babylon.js</u>
- User Testing Platforms: <u>UserTesting</u>, <u>Lookback</u>, <u>Maze</u>

These steps could help to effectively integrate dynamic elements into my Figma prototype and gather valuable user feedback to ensure a compelling and interactive user experience for Balashi's website.

Method / Approach

I will be approaching this project using the DOT framework research method.

Main research question:
How can we enhance the interactivity and dynamism of the Balashi website to significantly improve user experience?

Research Methods → Questions ↓					
What feedback do users have about the existing website, and how can it inform the redesign?		X	X		
How do beverage brands create dynamic website effects to enhance user experience?	X				
How can we incorporate multimedia elements (e.g., 3D models, animations) to enrich user experience?	X				X
What design trends in our industry can we incorporate to keep the website modern and appealing?	X		X		
How can we integrate dynamic elements in a working prototype and user test it?	X	X		X	X

Planning

May 30th 2024 - Upload project plan

June 4th 2024 - Begin conducting research based on the research questions

June 8th 2024 - Research should be done

June 9th 2024 - Prepare to begin designing, research how to add certain things into Figma

June 10th 2024 - Start designing

June 15th 2024 - Finish designing

June 16th 2024 -Implement into portfolio

June 19th - Upload final portfolio with Project X integrated

Coach

Segrs, Guido G.F.P.

I chose Guido as my project coach because he offers valuable constructive criticism and has a deep understanding of the essential elements of the project especially regarding the research aspect. Additionally, he is approachable and easy to communicate with.