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**Design & Accessibility Analysis**

In this assignment I will be conducting a Design and Accessibility Analysis on the American Airlines (AA) website (<https://www.aa.com/homePage.do>).

**Composition Analysis:**

**What values and priorities does this website communicate (e.g., what is most important, least important, etc.)?**

The website wants to communicate that the airline can provide its customers with an adventure. Once a user enters the homepage of the website, the very first thing that catches their eye is the carousel of pictures in travel destinations with unique nature and outdoor scenery. The first picture of the carousel that I happened to see was the one below, but as the pictures change, I also saw pictures of mountains and tropical beaches. Hence, AA allures website visitors with the idea of an adventurous getaway, an unforgettable travel experience and then prompts them to book a flight.

Graphical user interface, website

Description automatically generated

Another important value for AA is dependability and reliability. They place heavy emphasis on promoting their loyalty programs in order to create a long-lasting relationship with their customers and increase/ maintain a high customer retention rate. The moment a user enters their website, they are asked to login to their AAdvantage account which provides them with perks and discounts, and they can also see an advertisement of the AAdvantage credit card which also provides them with travel perks. These encourage users to build a relationship with AA.

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated

**How does the design help to communicate these priorities?**

As the websites main priority is for people to book a trip, the second section which includes all the main services of the website is the biggest one. Following the principle of proximity, the section includes a white box with AA’s three main services (Book, Manage trips, Flight Status). This makes it easier for the user to navigate the website and utilize the company’s services.

Graphical user interface, application

Description automatically generated

What is more, as costumer loyalty is very important for AA, the Login button on the first section is in a different color than the other menu choices on that section and is also in bold. Hence, it stands out to the website visitor who could then either be enticed to create an AAdvantage account or login to their existing account.

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated

**What are the strengths of the design of this website?**

In line with the principle of alignment, the website uses a clear grid to separate the different sections. The homepage is divided into six main sections which are separated by these faded grey lines, which makes it easy to navigate:



Each section is also divided into different parts by perpendicular lines, as pictured below. This design makes coherent and organized the page content in a way that a user can easily understand. For instance, it is very clear that a website visitor interested in the AAdvantage credit card would click on “Learn more” at the 2nd row and 3rd column of the below picture.

Graphical user interface, website

Description automatically generated

Another strength of the website’s design is how it remains consistent with the fonts and color pattern. According to the principle of repetition, it is helpful to use a specific pattern to unify the design. For example, in the above picture, all the titles have the same font, font size, and color and the same is true for the descriptions right below them. However, the website has successfully avoided over-repetition by keeping in mind the principle of contrast. This is because the fonts, font size, and color of the titles and the descriptions right below them are different. This makes it clear to the user that the text that follows the title provides further details about the topic the title discusses and makes the titles stand out to a website visitor who is skimming through the homepage to find the information relevant to him.

Last, the page has a consistent color pattern throughout its different sections. It uses a monochromatic pattern with different shades of blue and grey. The monochromatic color scheme unifies the design as different groups have different colors, which makes navigating the page pleasant to the eye.

Graphical user interface

Description automatically generated

**What are the limitations of the design of this website?**

The website’s layout leaves a lot of whitespace. Although putting margins around grouped objects is helpful for the users, I find that the margins on the two sides of the page are a bit excessive and believe that less whitespaces on the left and right margins of the homepage would have sufficed.

There is some awkward whitespace in the first box in the picture below as well. Although the whitespace is used to keep the two boxes the same size for consistency purposes, I think it makes the first box look quite empty, which makes this part of the page less pleasant to look.

Graphical user interface, application, Word

Description automatically generated

Another limitation of the website is that it does not adapt to the window size. Decreasing the width of the window leads to awkward layouts, such as the one shown below. Unless, the window width is at max, the homepage hides information requiring the user to scroll horizontally and vertically to see the content which makes the website hard to navigate.

Graphical user interface

Description automatically generated

**Are there comparable websites that do a better job with composition? Please describe.**

Another airline website that has all the strengths the AA website has and has successfully dealt with the limitations listed above is the Lufthansa website (<https://www.lufthansa.com/us/en/homepage>).

Graphical user interface, website

Description automatically generated

The homepage at Lufthansa’s website has significantly less whitespace, but still has clear margins around the content. Unlike AA, Lufthansa does not have whitespace on the sides of the picture. It instead uses the background picture of the sea as the margin for the box that include its three main services (Book, Manage trips, Flight Status).

Additionally, the website adapts to changes of the window width by changing the layout of the grid in order to still be able to include everything without making the users to scroll horizontally.

Graphical user interface, text, application, email

Description automatically generated

**Accessibility Analysis:**

**What accessibility checks did you do (please include screenshots if applicable)?**

1st test: navigated the website without using my mouse and only using the Tab and the arrow keys.

2nd test: navigated the website using High Contrast Mode

3rd test: navigated the website by turning off the images

**How did you do them?**

1st test: I pressed the tab key and when necessary, the arrow keys to click through all the interactive objects of the AA homepage. I was able to access all the objects and navigate the website successfully using only these keyboard keys.

2nd test: I scrolled through the homepage under High Contrast Mode. The design under this Mode is somewhat inconsistent. For example, the description in the first picture is in white text and the hyperlink is in yellow, but in the second picture the description and the hyperlink are both in yellow.

Graphical user interface

Description automatically generatedGraphical user interface, website

Description automatically generated

3rd test: I turned off the show pictures option. The main services of the company are not affected, still clearly shown, and can easily be found and navigated, which is good as the website can still be functional without the use of pictures.

Graphical user interface, application

Description automatically generated

However, some sections of the website look somewhat messy. The text description of the pictures overlaps with other text and make it hard or even impossible to read.

Graphical user interface, text, application, Word

Description automatically generated

Moreover, the section with travel alerts is not clear. A picture of a map is definitely necessary in this section, but in the case that images are disabled it is necessary for the website to at least include an alternative text.

Graphical user interface, application, Word

Description automatically generated

**How accessible was the site?**

The AA website is accessible to quite a few groups of people, but it needs to improve some aspects of the website in order to be accessible to other groups as well. The website is accessible for users with mobility issues as it can easily be navigated website without using my mouse and only using the Tab and the arrow keys. The website is somewhat accessible to users with light sensitivity since it only has some minor design inconsistencies when used in High Contrast Mode. The website is not very accessible to users who may have a slow internet that does not allow the images to load or have disabled images for other reasons, as the alternative text is hard to read in many sections of the homepage.

**What changes could/should it make to improve its accessibility?**

There are many ways in which the AA could be made more accessible, especially in ways that the three tests I ran could not show. To begin with, it is necessary for the website to fix the layout when pictures are disabled. Second, it may be helpful to remove the hyperlink from the entire descriptions of the section “Today’s Offer” so that the description is in white text and only the underlined text is in yellow.

**Are there comparable websites that do a better job with accessibility? Please describe.**

The Lufthansa website does a better job in the three accessibility tests listed above. Although AA is easily navigated through the Tab and Arrow Keys, the Lufthansa website is more interactive and has prettier designs when navigated through the Tab and Arrow Keys. It even has a pop-up for the date selection which significantly elevates the user’s experience.

Calendar

Description automatically generated

In terms of the 2nd test, the Lufthansa website is consistent across the board and does not have of the minor hiccups that make the AA website somewhat less accessible to users with light sensitivity.

A screen shot of a computer

Description automatically generated with low confidence

Last, it is very easily navigated without the use of images. The alternative text that substitutes the images is very clear and easy to read and does not overlap with other text at any point.

Graphical user interface, text, application

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