

Attention: Changying Zhou, Manager - Web Content

Presented by: Lexie Kirsch, User Interface Developer

February 14th, 2017



Lexie Kirsch  
11 Winthrop Street  
Medford, MA, 02155

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Changying Zhou  
Manager - Web Content  
Yamaha

Dear Changying Zhou,

Thank you for selecting Pollex Designs to perform a comparative assessment of the Yamaha, Kawai, Baldwin, and Steinway & Sons piano websites.

In this report you will find a competitive analysis of those websites according to the following attributes: conceptual design, user interface structure, utility, visual appeal, emotional engagement of targeted customers, color, density, contrast, control size, and consistency. I have also included five general and eight specific recommendations for your website. A table on the last page gives a brief summary of my analysis.

I look forward to hearing your feedback.

Sincerely,

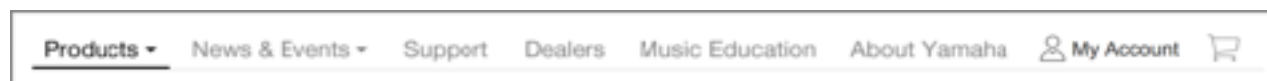
Lexie Kirsch  
User Interface Developer  
Pollex Designs

Cell: (650) 823 - 0490  
Email: [alexandra.kirsch@tufts.edu](mailto:alexandra.kirsch@tufts.edu)



## 1. Conceptual Design

In accordance with my mental model, each website has a row of clickable options near the top of its page. I appreciate that the Yamaha website uses a small triangle to indicate which option is a button and which leads to a pull-down menu.



The Baldwin and Steinway & Sons websites do not distinguish the buttons that can be hovered over with the ones that can only be clicked.



However, unlike the other websites, the bar at the top of the Yamaha website includes “My Account” and a shopping cart. These items, although also buttons, are less related to the others and do not respond in the same way (i.e., they do not turn purple and become underlined when hovered over) and therefore, they should be separated.

## 2. User Interface Structure

If I know for what I’m looking, the Yamaha website can get me there with the click of a single button, because the product categories are listed in the sidebar of the page. This requires no pull-downs or scrolling, unlike the other websites, which is very efficient. However, it does require the users to do more reading and scanning to find what they are seeking. This search may take up more time than clicking a second button, making the navigation less efficient overall.

Also, the Yamaha and Kawai websites show the trail of navigation from “Home” or “Top” to the current screen. This may help the users navigate the website, but it should be unnecessary, because the users should not be getting lost.



## 3. Utility

If the user’s goal is to acquire a piano, it would seem only the Yamaha, Kawai, and Baldwin websites should be used, since the Steinway & Sons website seems to provide only an option to request more information about a piano. If the user’s goal is simply to examine the specifications of a certain piano, all websites suffice, but the Baldwin website is the least organized since it nests important information in paragraphs. In the end, the utility of the website depends on the needs of the user, so user needs analyses should be conducted to identify the areas that need improvement.



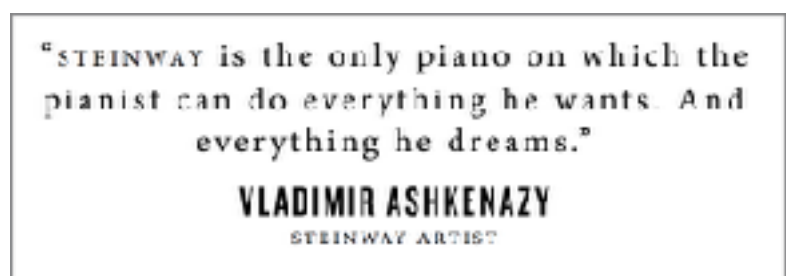
#### 4. Visual Appeal

The websites with the strongest visual appeal are Kawai and Steinway & Sons, because both websites catch the user's eye with a simple and elegant image that spans the width of the page. These images of black pianos stand out due to their contrast on a white background. The image of the piano on the Yamaha website is much smaller and less noticeable in front of a purple background.



#### 5. Emotional Engagement

The website with most noticeable emotional engagement is that of Steinway & Sons. The first thing the website offers is the option for the user to follow their newsletter and enjoy *stories*. Further down is a motivational quote. These small aspects make Steinway & Sons seem like the place to shop for a piano that makes stories and turns dreams into reality. The Yamaha website could benefit from similar emotional engagement.



#### 6. Color

When it comes to color, having fewer colors is typically beneficial. With the exception of images, Baldwin's and Steinway & Sons' color schemes are black, white, and gray. Similarly, Kawai's scheme is black, white, gray, and red. The Yamaha website also features black, white, and gray, but in addition, purple, red, and yellow. Although the purple is appropriate as the Yamaha brand color, the red and yellow are unnecessary and should be replaced.





## 7. Density

The Yamaha website is the most dense with information. Although this can increase efficiency in some cases, it is overwhelming. A website should *guide* the users to their goals, not dump all the information on them and expect them to filter through it themselves. The Steinway & Sons website addresses this problem with a bar at the bottom of their display of images. This allows the user to get all the same information but in smaller, more manageable doses.



## 8. Contrast

Contrast is critical for clarity! Particularly for text, light colors should be paired with darker colors, so the words can be read clearly. The Steinway & Sons website frequently places white text over a background that is also light, such as white piano keys or a white room, and this makes the text less legible.



Similarly, the Yamaha website features white text on a gray background, which lacks contrast. A black background would be more appropriate for white colored text.



## 9. Control Size

According to Fitt's Law, the larger the target, the faster the users can access it. This is particularly important for buttons on a website. The Yamaha website has the smallest buttons and links—likely because there are so many of them—which makes it more difficult for users to press them quickly and efficiently. Increasing the most relevant links would make them more likely to be used.

## 10. Consistency

Finally, it's important to be consistent throughout a website. This applies to images, fonts, and overall template. An example of poor consistency is the Steinway & Sons' call to the user to subscribe to their newsletter. This example features different fonts, font sizes, font colors, font weights (bold v.s. not), and different capitalization. These differences are made intentionally to draw attention to different words, but they are nonetheless distracting. The Yamaha website does a better job of using a consistent font within each *section* of the website, but inconsistencies *between* these sections remain. For example, one heading is written in a different font and color than another heading on the same page. Is the second heading a subheading of the first? It is unclear.





## General Recommendations

1. Engage the user emotionally (e.g., through images or stories of satisfied customers)
2. Remove red and yellow colors from website
3. Remove extraneous information from home page
4. Avoid putting light-colored text on a light-colored background or dark-colored text on a dark-colored background
5. Increase the size of the most relevant links for easier user access

Product Categories

## Specific Recommendations

1. "My Account" and the shopping cart should be separated from the other items in the main bar of options at the top of the page.

Products ▾ News & Events ▾ Support Dealers Music Education About Yamaha  My Account 

2. Remove the unnecessary trail of navigation

[Home](#) > [Products](#) > [Musical Instruments](#) > [Pianos & Keyboards](#) > [Acoustic Pianos](#)

3. Make the options pictured on the right into buttons/links to their respective pages
4. Put the piano pictured on the right in front of a white background for contrast
5. Make the text pictured on the right purple
6. Give the photos below a section of their own instead of trying to squeeze them all onto the home page



7. Remove the arrows pictured on the right because they are unnecessary (options are already separated by a dotted line)
8. Reformat these links so there is less empty space

<a href="#">C Series</a>	<a href="#">CX Series</a>	<a href="#">CE Series</a>
<a href="#">YUS Series</a>	<a href="#">G Series</a>	<a href="#">EX Series</a>
<a href="#">U Series</a>		<a href="#">Solenkofer</a>
<a href="#">P Series</a>		
<a href="#">M Series</a>		
<a href="#">SU Series</a>		

Product Categories

→ [Premium Pianos](#)

→ [Grand Pianos](#)

→ [Upright Pianos](#)



## Report summary

Attribute	Weight	Yamaha		Kawasaki		Baldwin		Steinway & Sons	
		Rating	Weight x Rating / 10	Rating	Weighted Score	Rating	Weighted Score	Rating	Weighted Score
Conceptual design	10	5	5	10	10	8	8	9	9
User interface structure	15	7	10.5	8	0	9	13.5	6	9
Utility	10	0	0	9	0	7	7	5	5
Visual appeal	15	5	7.5	10	15	7	10.5	10	15
Emotional engagement	5	7	3.5	7	3.5	5	2.5	4	2.5
Color	10	7	7	10	10	10	10	10	10
Density	5	5	2.5	4	2.5	4	4	10	5
Contrast	10	0	0	9	9	8	8	6	6
Control size	5	0	0	8	4	10	5	7	3.5
Consistency	15	7	10.5	9	13.5	9	13.5	5	7.5
Score	100		65.5		87.5		66.5		74.5
Rank			4		1		3		2