Recommendation Report

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Date: Thursday, November 7, 2024

Subject: Deliverable 3, Recommendation Report

Executive Summary

In this report, we aim to explain our findings and observations about Martiniere Landscape & Design's webpage. Our trial participants who represented real-world client interactions helped us draw conclusions to provide the recommendations presented in the following report. By using Think Aloud Protocol (TAP), we conducted testing by asking our participants to verbally explain each step they took in completing our prompts. By walking us through each step, we gained important insights into the website's navigational functions.

Problem Statement

During testing, we prompted five participants in individual video sessions to evaluate the website. We wanted to understand what was difficult for users to accomplish, how long it took users to find information, and if the information presented was relevant to the client's wants and needs. We asked ourselves, "Do these experiences motivate users to explore landscaping services with Martiniere Landscape & Design or do these experiences dissuade users from contacting the business?".

 By completing these tests with clients over Zoom, we expected to gain feedback from participants as we asked them to talk about each step while they maneuvered through the site. We recruited 5 users to participate in a usability test, more specifically Think Aloud Protocol. Some of them voiced their own theoretical solutions to the problems they encountered. For example, when struggling to find the Home Page, one participant stressed their frustrations that the website's Home tab did not display the word "Home". The participant took extra time to understand that the company's logo also acted as the home page tab, causing the user to take more time to find the information they desired to read.

 By conducting this test, we identified usability issues, confusing navigation paths, and any unmet needs that may affect client engagement and hinder the site's performance. The following report will explore collected data like the previous example, while highlighting various concerns related to navigation, content clarity, search functionality, accessibility, call to action (CTAs), design consistency, and visual transitions.

Demographics

User Profile 1

User 1 is a male homeowner aged 62. The user holds a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering, works as a senior business manager, and designed and constructed his outdoor living space in his own time. He may be interested in maintenance help and irrigation.

User Profile 2

User 2 is a male and long-term resident of Baldwin County aged 26. The user holds a bachelor's degree in education, is currently pursuing a master's degree in history, and is familiar with the company's location and offerings.

User Profile 3

User 3 is a female homeowner living in Auburn, AL aged 43. The user holds a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, and works in career services at Auburn University. The user is interested in home improvement, DIY projects, and may be interested in landscape design in the future.

User Profile 4

User 4 is a male and long-term resident of Alabama age 23. He is currently a college senior at the studying accounting at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, TX. He is very familiar with technology and design.

User Profile 5

User 5 is a female homeowner living in Auburn, AL aged 47. The user holds a bachelor's degree in accounting, works for the City of Tuskegee as an accountant, and they express an interest in outdoor living spaces.

Table 1 Demographics Overview

User	Education	Age	Job	Computer Use	Landscaping Use	Test Version
1	BS Electrical Engineering	62	Business Manager	Regularly	Yes	1
2	BA Secondary Education and Social Studies	24	Student	Regularly	No	2
3	Master of Science	43	Career Services	Regularly	Yes	1
4	College Accounting Student	23	Accounting	Regularly	No	2
5	Shakeitha Edwards	47	Accounting	Regularly	No	1

Methodology

In usability testing, we aim to evaluate the performance of each task using TAP. Tasks include navigating to find contact information, request quote forms, finding a list of landscape and

design services, viewing photo galleries, responding to CTAs, measuring performance times, assessing user satisfaction, and website credibility.

Test Settings

During all tests, participants relay feedback to technical communicators through a Zoom Video application. These participants meet at scheduled times in a virtual setting to contribute to each usability test. All participants are observed to be meeting in office and desk spaces.

Data Collection Methods & Tools

Each participant used their own devices to participate in this test. We recorded both audio and video during the testing session using Zoom's built-in recording feature. Participants used their access to the screenshare feature to share their screens during testing. Each of their devices included a webcam for testing as well.

During the test, Adalyn noted the participants' answers to the pre-test questions in a Word document. After the test, Appraisia reviewed each video from the Zoom recordings and notated participant information like task completion, time of completion, and additional participant recommendations in an excel document. She used this document to create tables and charts to display data.

Evaluation

After conducting our test, we used the Zoom recordings to analyze the tasks provided and if they were completed or not, how they were completed, and the time taken to complete the tasks. We relied on participant feedback heavily during testing. Through these methods, we were able to see some of the site's strengths and weaknesses of the site and the impact of these weaknesses on total user engagement, and this will help with proposing methods to reduce any complications. Using these data points, along with any additional feedback from participants, we will make recommendations for changes to the product.

Technical Communicator Roles

Adalyn Dugas

Participant Intermediary (point of contact), Participant Welcome Speaker, Email Coordinator, Notetaker

Appraisia Edwards

Participant Intermediary (point of contact), Facilitator, Notetaker, Video Inventory Manager

Lizzie McGlynn

Recording Specialist, Document Inventory Manager, Zoom Set-up Coordinator

Quantitative Data

Task Completion Rate

The task completion rate measures the percentage of users who successfully completed a specific task such as finding a service, requesting a quote, or navigating to the home page on the first attempt.

Task Completion Rate = (Number of Participants who Completed Task)/(Number of Participants Who Attempted Task) X 100

Table 2, Task Completion Rate Overview

Task	Task Description	Completion Rate
1	What services do Martiniere Landscaping and Design offer?	100
2	What areas do Martiniere Landscaping and Design serve?	80
3	What landscaping designs do Martiniere Landscaping and Design offer?	40
4	Please find examples of tree lighting.	60
5	Please find an example of a water wall.	0
6	Please find Martiniere's contact information.	100
7	Navigate to the page that allows you to request a quote.	100

These data percentages show that 5 out of 7 tasks in our qualitative report show above average completion rates. T4 and T5 data help us to conclude that website users may benefit from additional CTAs and descriptive tags.

Task Completion Times

Table 3, Time Taken to Complete Given Tasks

Task Completion Time
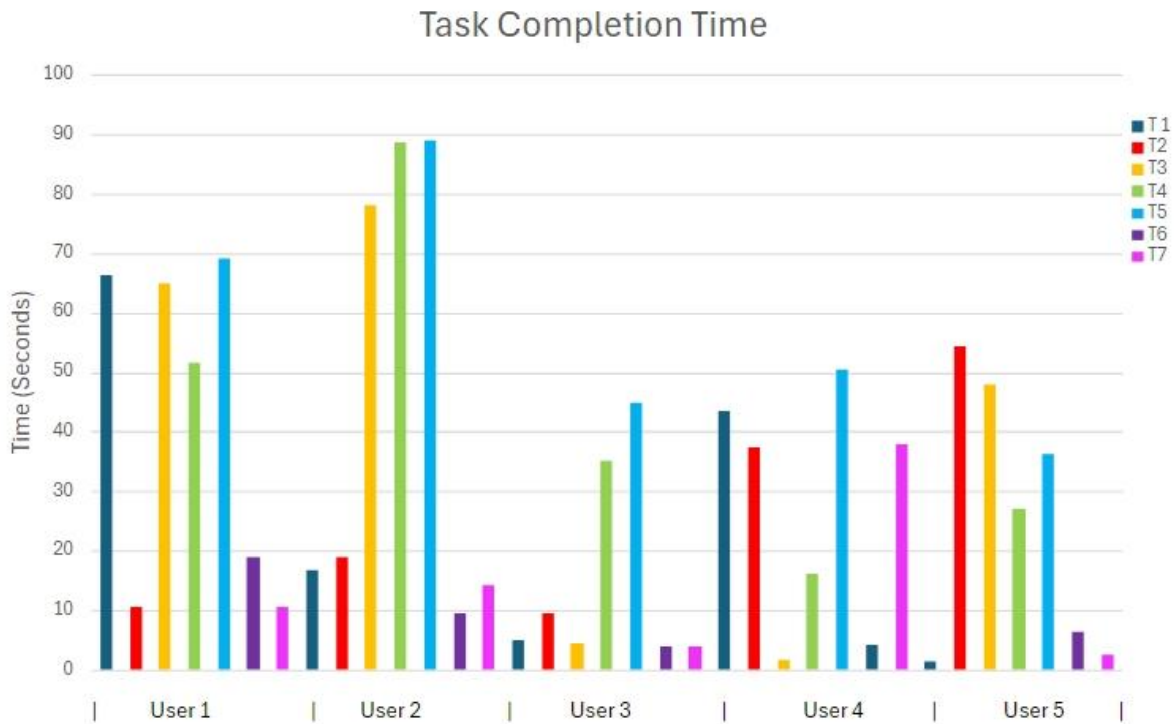
Qualitative Data Test Results

Positive Results

Interest in Human Connection:

Many users reported that they would feel motivated to use Martiniere Landscape & Design if the website promoted an emphasis on One user explained "I am a person that picks humans not businesses."

"Clickable" Expanders:

Regarding the different services within the services tabs, users felt like the design should include an expander. "This feels like I should be able to click here, but nothing happens."

Home page:

Many users liked the flow of the home page. Its design allowed users to find multiple paths to fulfill their task. The inclusion of a phone number in the top banner of a homepage is not that common, but users liked that the number was easily accessible.

Design:

100% of users commented on the website's visual appeal. They liked the overall design and thought it was a beautiful website. Users enjoyed the addition of the gallery.

Contact:

Users appreciated the multiple modes of contact displayed clearly on the contact page – phone number, email, mailing address, and "request a quote" feature.

Negative Results

Organization – Services Pages

Users relied on signifiers to find data. Some of the signifiers were misinterpreted.

Symbols

The image below displays the words "pool landscaping" along with symbols or bullets to the left displaying arrows. In our test, most users believed these bullets were clickable and tried to click on them for more information.

Image 1 "landscaping" bullets from Martiniere's site
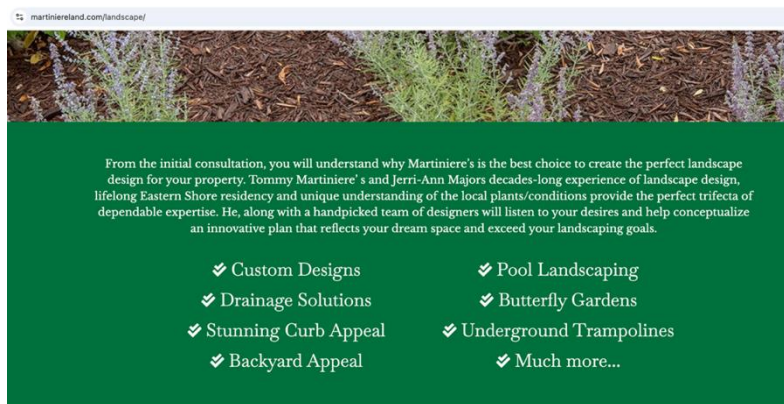
The design of this section also caused some users to skip past this section entirely and scroll to the photos. This topic will be further explored within the recommendations section of this report.

Photos and Gallery:

Each participant struggled to find photos of specific examples when asked. User 3 finished each task except for the tasks in which we asked her to find a photo within 10 seconds. She looked for the lighting and water wall photos for over 30 seconds. While she was able to find an example of tree lighting in 35 seconds, she was unsure if her example counted towards the task completion. User 3 did not find an example of a water wall and stopped looking for it after about 45 seconds.

Recommendations

Service Pages:

Users found services with ease but struggled to pick out the individual services offered.

When initially asked to complete task number three, "What landscaping designs do Martiniere Landscaping and Design offer", 40% of users scrolled past the green box that held the information about specific design options down to the photo section.

To make this important information stand out, and help users locate photographic examples of work easier, we recommend making each individual bullets expand to include photographic examples. For example, users could click on "Pool Landscaping" to reveal examples of Martiniere's work in Pool Landscaping. Reorganizing these pages also allows Martiniere to include descriptions of services of users who are not familiar with landscaping terms.

Tabs on Banner:

Image 2 "Banner" of the home page

Home Button:

20% of users struggled when asked to return to the home page. On their third attempt, they were able to recognize the logo was clickable and directed them to the home page. You may consider adding a home button to the navigation banner.

About Us Tab:

Consider replacing the vision tab with an about us tab. Then it can be further segmented into Employer Profiles, Vision, and Request a Quote sections.

Employee Profiles tab can include images of employees and staff to allow the site to give users more of a "human feel."

Searchable Gallery:

Consider making the gallery searchable, so users can find information better. On each of the tasks related to finding image examples, the task completion was below average.

Photo Cropping:

A few photos within the gallery had cropping issues. 80% of participants commented on the following photos. The first image is a screenshot from the water features gallery. The photo's cropping doesn't allow users to see the full image, and almost all the users tested said the same. The second image depicts the actual photograph without cropping.

Image 3 "water fountain cropped" on the gallery page

Interpretation of Results

The usability testing for Martiniere Landscape and Design's website revealed that, despite its technical strengths like quick load times and smooth navigation, the site has critical gaps in content organization and clarity that hinder user experience. Participants frequently struggled to locate specific services and found tabs that led to text-heavy pages rather than the visual content they expected. Users expressed a strong desire for more detailed explanations of services—such as custom design work, retaining walls, and water walls—accompanied by before-and-after project photos to help envision transformations. They also noted a need for a more personal connection to the company, suggesting that employee profiles and photos of staff at work would enhance trust and relatability.

To address these findings and remain competitive, Martiniere Landscape and Design should focus on refining navigation, enriching service descriptions, and visually showcasing their team and completed projects. Structuring navigation intuitively, with clearly labeled tabs, would make each service easy to locate and understand. Providing clear definitions and context for services, alongside project visuals, would allow potential clients to envision the value Martiniere offers. Finally, incorporating team profiles and action shots of staff in the field would build a relatable and trustworthy image, highlighting Martiniere as a team of skilled professionals. Together, these improvements in navigation, service information, and a human-centered approach would enhance user engagement and satisfaction.

Suggestions for Improvement

Based on the usability evaluation findings for Martiniere Landscape and Design's website, here are specific short-term and long-term recommendations to enhance user experience, improve navigation, and build a stronger connection with potential clients.

Short-Term Recommendations

- **Revise the Navigation Structure**
  - Simplify and clarify service labels by grouping related services (e.g., "Custom Design," "Retaining Walls," "Water Walls") under a single "Services" section.

- o This change addresses user confusion and creates a more intuitive browsing experience.
- **Add Service Descriptions**
  - o Use tooltips or expandable sections for definitions of specialized terms like "custom design work" and "water walls."
  - o This provides immediate clarity and helps users understand the company's offerings.
- **Incorporate Visual Content**
  - o Add before-and-after project photos to visually illustrate each service's impact.
  - o This responds to user feedback about wanting to imagine the results of the project.

Long-Term Recommendations

- **Develop an Employee Profile Section**
  - o Include photos, short bios, and action shots of staff members working on projects.
  - o This helps establish a more personal connection with potential clients, who show interest in seeing the people behind the company.
- **Enhance Visual Content and Layout**
  - o Redesign key pages to feature service-specific galleries and interactive elements, like sliders for before-and-after images, making the site more engaging.
- **Create a Resource/FAQ Section**
  - o Add a section for common questions about services like "retaining walls" and "custom design work."
  - o This would give users detailed information in an accessible format, reducing potential confusion.

Together, these changes address user concerns and position Martiniere as a transparent and trustworthy choice in the landscape and design market.

Ongoing Test Recommendations

To ensure continuous improvement, future testing should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of implemented changes and gathering insights into user preferences.

- **Navigation and Labeling**
  - o Use A/B testing on navigation and labeling updates to identify the most intuitive structure for users seeking specific services.
- **Visual Content**
  - o Test new visual elements like before-and-after photos, employee profiles, and action shots to gauge their impact on user trust and engagement.
- **Usability Testing on Key Pages**
  - o Conduct usability testing on pages dedicated to specific services (e.g., "Custom Design Work" or "Water Walls") to see if users find the previously missing information and examples.

- **Mobile Usability**
  - Test for mobile optimization, as many users may access the site from mobile devices. A seamless mobile experience could enhance accessibility and satisfaction.
- **User Feedback on FAQ/Resources Section**
  - Gather feedback on the FAQ or resources section to identify needs for definitions, service details, or examples, ensuring Martiniere meets evolving client expectations.

Summary of Key Findings

Our experience revealed several strengths and weaknesses. The homepage had a clear flow and a visually pleasing design, and our overall task completion rate was strong for specific goals, such as finding contact information (100%) and navigating to the request-a-quote page (100%). Users also had no difficulty identifying the general services offered by Martiniere Landscaping and Design, achieving a 100% completion rate on this task. However, there were noticeable challenges with tasks involving more detailed service information and visual examples. For instance, only 40% of users could locate specific landscaping designs offered, and just 60% found an example of tree lighting. Notably, no users (0%) were able to find an example of a water wall, highlighting an area where content visibility and accessibility could be improved. Additionally, 80% of users were able to determine the areas served by the company, but the process was not as seamless as it could be. These results emphasize the need for clearer organization, better visual representation of services, and more intuitive labeling to support users in successfully finding specific service details and visual examples on the website.

Based on these findings, we strongly encourage Martiniere Landscape and Design to consider implementing the recommended changes to enhance usability, foster a stronger user connection, and increase client engagement. By refining navigation, clarifying service details, and adding visual content, the website can deliver a more intuitive and engaging experience, making it easier for users to understand the full scope of services and imagine their property's potential transformation. Adding team profiles and action photos would also create a personal connection, aligning with users' desire to see the people behind the brand.

Investing in these improvements will not only address the immediate usability issues highlighted in our evaluation but will also position Martiniere as a more trustworthy and relatable choice within a competitive market. The potential for increased client satisfaction, higher conversion rates, and a stronger brand connection underscores the value of making these changes. These adjustments would help Martiniere Landscape and Design transform an already promising website into an exceptional user-centered experience.