



INTRODUCTION

The medium I have chosen to showcase my assignment is a website format as this allows me to express my ideas and be playful with style in an area of design I am passionate about. Evidencing the knowledge I have gained about simplicity in navigation and theory of colour, I have designed this interface in contemporary colours, taking into account modern fashion for vibrant colours against a dark background. Pattern, reflections and subtle glows have been used to enhance the reader experience and the logo is continued on each page and on coursework documents to identify the work as distinctively belonging to me.

The site is split into three key areas; the use of colour to create emotional impact, design and critical evaluation of an interface and, critique of the design process, within this the relationship between designer and client is highlighted. The portfolio will also include the reflection of what I have learnt throughout the module and how this could be applied to the development of interactive systems, in this case websites.

Colour plays a key role in providing atmosphere and evoking emotional response within websites. I will begin by providing a brief account of how colour is formed and perceived. I will evidence the importance of considered selection of colour by referencing studies and looking into the psychological theory of colour and how it is perceived.

The interface I have selected to evaluate is a website I am currently working on with a client starting an e-commerce business called Impoindo. This interface has developed over several months and has not yet reached completion so this evaluation has acted as an important tool in assessing the progress and future plans for the site. I will look at the importance of colour, style, brand identity and coherence of navigation with relevance to the target client.

The third area I have critiqued is the design process, in particular, the relationship between the designer and client throughout this process. I have marked out the key steps in the design process beginning with formulating a design strategy based on interviews with the client and market research, following this through to draft layouts, identity and logo. I have evidenced how planning and organisation are vital elements for both the client and designer and expectations need to be clearly established from the beginning. To end, I have identified lessons learnt and mistakes made during my first professional experience with a client and how these have influenced my current practice.

The entire assignment is available online at http://www.taniainteractive.co.uk/exp_design, although a link to the PDF documents can also be found on the footer of every page of the website. Additionally, the assignment has been saved to CD.

When designing for the web, one fundamental aspect of the design is colour. Choosing colours without thought could discourage users from the site whereas picking the right colours can benefit design and determine how the user responds and interacts.

Colour theory

Colour theory is based on the idea that objects have no colour but gain the appearance by absorbing or reflecting parts of the visible spectrum. How the eye works is also vital to the understanding of how colour exists and is perceived.

We perceive colour through receptors at the back of our eyes. They translate the different wavelengths of light reflected from surfaces into distinctive stimuli that our brain converts into red, green, blue and other colours. So the eye sees light and the brain interprets it and identifies the colour. But it does more than just identify: it makes some judgements based upon basic human instincts, and other learned information, including culture, human experience, fashion and nature amongst other sources. Colours produce different reactions depending on how it is perceived by the eye and translated by the brain.

Sight is the most valuable sense in an online setting and colour used in Web design can influence brand recognition as well as engage and inform visitors. Over 80% of visual information is related to colour. (Morton, J. n.d.)

"Colours also convey messages that go beyond ethnic, racial, or gender boundaries." (Morton, J. n.d.)

Different people and different demographics have different emotional responses to colour depending on the age of the user and context of the colour. In simple terms, a target audience of young teenagers will generally respond more positively to a web site with vibrant and energetic colours. On the other hand, an older audience will respond better to a web site with calm colours.

According to a survey made by Cooper Marketing Group, Oak Park, IL, "Power is represented by the color red for 25% of respondents, black for 17% and blue for 13%. More than 55% of those surveyed chose one of these three colours out of 100 colours. Fragility was most represented by pale pink (27%), white (9%), and pale lavender (9%)." (Lamancusa, K. 2003)

Colour Wheel



Image 1 - Colour Wheel

Colour wheel is a visual representation of colours arranged according to their chromatic relationship. There are primary colours: red, yellow and blue, mixing others cannot create these colours. Secondary colours: orange, green and violet, these colours are achieved by a mixture of two primaries. Mixing a primary colour with the secondary colour nearest to it on the colour wheel produces a tertiary colour: red-orange, yellow-orange, blue-green, blue-violet, and red-violet.

Colour combination

The psychology of colour plays a significant role in creating a successful web site. It is not just to make the website look pleasing, but also used to deliberately evoke certain emotions from the user.

Selecting colours cleverly ie. taking into account the audience and purpose of the website, may mean that the web site provides a more meaningful experience to the user. Adding textures can alter colours - a roughly textured surface makes a colour seem darker, while a smooth surface lightens the same colour.

Knowledge of colour, its psychology and symbolism, is fundamental in the design of colour scheme. There are different types of colour combinations:



Image 2 - Monochromatic colour scheme

Monochromatic colour schemes use only one colour. Different values of the respective colour can be used to create the impression of different colours. Monochromatic colour schemes are harmonious and peaceful. Using only one colour creates unity and can help to join elements together.



Image 3 - Analogous colour scheme

Analogous colour combinations use colours that are related, but not the same, to create visually appealing schemes. A selection of blues and purples, or reds and oranges create an analogous colour scheme. Two or more colours can be used in an analogous colour scheme, however, one colour is often used as a dominant colour while others are used to highlight.



Image 4 - Complementary colour scheme

Complimentary colours or contrasting colours are colours that are located on opposite sides of the colour wheel. Using complementary colours helps to ensure that the user doesn't have to work too hard to read or find what they are looking for. For example, yellow and purple or red and green are complementary colours. Many web sites use white colour as a default background and black as readable colour text. Other backgrounds that work well for web sites are dark blue, dark grey and black, with white being the most readable text colour. Orange text on a blue background is very difficult for the user to read. A lighter orange, almost cream, and dark blue background is much more readable and still a contrasting combination.



Image 5 - Triadic colour scheme

Triadic colour combinations consist of three opposite colours. Red, yellow, and blue is a triadic colour scheme. Like complementary colour combinations it is not necessary to use a strong value. Using a low value of one or more colours can help create a more harmonious and accessible web site.

Emotional Impact

These are some main points of what emotional impact colours can have on users.

WARM COLOURS:



Image 6 - Warm colours

Yellow is the colour of comfort, liveliness, stamina and happiness. It is a vibrant colour that could be used to highlight desired spheres on a web page. Yellow can also be linked to hazard, hope, friendliness and finances. Yellow can be used to highlight sections on a webpage and, combined with black, can create a warning feeling.

Red is associated with passion, desire, courage and strength. The colour red is also a very evocative colour and conjures up images of hell, fire and warning. Red is a strong colour that attracts the user's attention to a certain area.

Orange is the colour of vibrancy, heat, fire and efficacy. As a warm colour, orange is a friendly and young colour that is often used to target youth audience. Orange is also related to spirituality and healing. It's the colour that represents Buddhism and is believed to have a calming energy. It's a confident colour that is not as lively as yellow or as fiery as red.

NEUTRAL COLOURS:



Image 7 - Neutral colours

White is a minimalist colour. It's associated with simplicity, cleanliness and purity, and can be used effectively to highlight images. White is extremely popular in design web sites like interior design and graphic design. It can create a feeling of space and balance and is linked to peace and light. White conveys an impression of style and indicates that the content of the site is strong enough to stand alone without any strong visual aid.

Black is a strong colour and is associated with sexiness, intensity and elegance. It is also associated with power and mystery. It is a very famous colour on photography web sites, as black creates contrast with colours in photos. The colour black is an extremely popular colour for backgrounds because it contrasts and shows off other colours very well. Black can be also related to death and mourning. Heavy metal music web sites often use black as their main colour due to its connections with death and evil.

Grey can be an unusual colour choice as it is not as strong as black or white and used alone is associated with dullness, although it can be used to create stylish and calm web sites. It is used in fashion, design and technology web sites. Grey is mainly used to compose shiny gradients to give a professional, elegant feel to a web site. Grey can be also associated with elegance, innovation and the future.

Brown is similar to green in the fact that it is also related to trees, mother earth and calm. Particularly the lighter tone of brown can be very soothing. The colour brown is also associated with tradition, stability, depth and character.

Beige is also a popular colour in web design as it provides an earthy and relaxed feel. It can also mean tradition, poverty and nature.

COOL COLOURS



Image 8 - Cool colours

Green is related to the environment. It is also a good colour to create a calm and relaxed website. It is associated with nature, envy and wealth.

Blue is linked to strength, water and harmony. It is also associated with depression, coldness and confidence. Blue can be used in web design to create a cool and clinical effect.

Purple is a combination of blue and red. It has the highlights of red, but holds more vibrant properties of blue. Purple is not a very well known colour in web design, as it is seen as quite feminine and can give the impression of arrogance, wealth, luxury and indulgence. It is also linked to royalty, romance and wisdom.

Note: Web design consists of only 216 colours. This is because Mac and PC computers use different colour palettes but have 216 colours that are common to both. These colours are considered 'web safe'. Using these 'web safe' colours means that the web site will look quite consistent on different computers.

EVALUATION

Colour has both a positive and negative emotional impact on viewers and there are no rules regarding "good" or "bad" colours since the response to colour is personal. Choosing the colours that will best motivate and engage your target audience is key to increasing the traffic of a web site. Given the general emotional responses to different colours, as described in some detail above, it is essential that colour combinations are considered when looking at the purpose and audience of a website. Colour, like most mediums, is also influenced by fashion. For example, contemporary combinations such as vibrant pink/black have become increasingly fashionable in popular media whereas combinations of yellow/orange/brown hues make reference to fashions of the seventies and used in a contemporary setting can convey a retro feel.

Colour cannot however be considered without considering other visual aspects such as typography, line, form and pattern concurrently. Together, these form a coherent and considered approach to user response and can make or break the success of a website.

REFERENCES:

- Arruda, W. August 3, 2004, *TRUE COLORS - Using Color to Build your Brand* [online], Available from: <http://www.marketingprofs.com/4/arruda13.asp?sp=1> [Accessed: 18.12.2008]
- Hallock, J. 2003, *COLOR ASSIGNMENT - Psychology - Colour Psychology* [online], Available from: <http://joehallock.com/edu/COM498/psychology.html> [Accessed: 18.12.2008]
- Lamancusa, K. 2003, *CREATIVE LATITUDE - Emotional Reactions to Color* [online], Available from: http://www.creativelatitude.com/articles/articles_lamacusa_color.html [Accessed: 11.12.2008]
- Morton, J. n.d, *COLOR MATTERS - Business, Marketing and Trends - Who Owns Hue?* [online], Available from: http://www.colormatters.com/color_trademark.html [Accessed: 18.12.2008]
- Morton, J. 2000, *COLOR MATTERS - Business, Marketing and Trends - Quirks of the Color Quest* [online], Available from: <http://www.colormatters.com/chatquest.html> [Accessed: 18.12.2008]
- Morton, J. 2005, *COLOR MATTERS - Business, Marketing and Trends - Why Color Matters* [online], Available from: http://www.colormatters.com/market_why_color.html#psych_research [Accessed: 18.12.2008]
- Varey, A. Smyth, M. 2008, *IMD090108 EXPERIENTIAL DESIGN - Unit 7: Colour* [online], Available from: <http://vista.napier.ac.uk/webct/cobaltMainFrame.dowebct> [Accessed: 18.12.2008]

In this assessment I will evaluate the use of visual elements on a website interface. In particular, I want to show how elements such as line, shape, colour, contrast, images, and graphics are used to impact the experience of the user. Following further exploration and research of ideas introduced in lectures and tutorial classes, I have chosen to illustrate the role of visual elements in an interface via a website which I'm currently designing for a client.

The visual interface I have chosen is for [Impoindo](#). [Impoindo](#) will be an online shop offering high quality architectural exterior and interior products imported from Indonesia.

The client initially made attempts to create a layout design but struggled to encompass all the elements required to make a coherent and stylish website. I was able to identify their ideas and follow these through by combining elements of successful e-commerce business and design. I applied some of the recommendations learnt in this module to see if the principles I had researched would make any visible improvement. One such example is the comparative use of colour between an early draft (*Image 3*) and the later version (*Image 5*). Initially, the colour palette used a variation of earthy tones against a white background. This combination gave the appearance of being dull and lifeless. To combat this, more contrast was required so instead of a variety of block-shaped earthy tones, I contrasted the images of the products with grey gradient, which picked out the earthy tones of the images.

Upon first meeting with the client, I grasped an understanding of the clients' goals and purpose for the website. The purpose of the website is to provide a user-friendly and stimulating shopping experience to visitors, allowing easy navigation, product selection and online checkout. The website's visual design should be aesthetically pleasing, contemporary, stimulating and uncomplicated, enticing the visitor to browse the site and invite purchases based on product range and information. The look of the site should reflect the high-quality and craftsmanship of the product and meet the expectation of customer's buying products in the intended price category.

The client also clarified that the main target audience for this site is middle class professionals earning around 40k-60k year with a high level of disposable income.

As this site is an e-commerce website, and the only business root of the client, it is important to make a lasting impression that will entice the viewer to explore the website, regularly return to browse and shop at Impoindo and pass on positive information about their shopping experience to family, friends and colleagues. Therefore, the site will have to be extremely attractive to engage and motivate potential clients to interact with the interface in an efficient, effective and enjoyable way.

The visual design for this interface covers three fundamental aspects:

- Branding
- Layout
- Controls or icons

Branding

Branding is much more than visual design and plays a fundamental part in creating immediate visual recognition of an e-commerce business. Branding and identity of a business is vital to determining the website look and feel. A successful brand identity will provoke an emotional response from the viewer and usually involves the use of colour, shape, type, texture, space, images and logos.

Taking into account the target audience, the ethnic origins of the product and identity of the company I designed several prototype logos, these were then refined and given to the client for approval. I am currently awaiting the client's approval and for this reason have chosen not to display the logo.

As one of the purposes of this e-commerce website is to provide a stimulating shopping experience, I recommended integrating elements of animation and sound into the site, enabling users to have a fuller and more engaging experience with Impoindo's brand.

In this interface I have chosen to use sufficient white space and low-toned visuals, contrasting with animation and simple interface elements, which enhance and build on the brand's sophisticated appeal.

Layout

Layout involves the organisation of elements on the page, the use of balance, proportion, hierarchy and emphasis.

The layout and hierarchy of this interface focus on the relationship between all the elements on the page, making use of the white space, using the same fonts but different font sizes, colour and position of objects on the page.

I have chosen large text at the top of the page, where the menu section will be located, to immediately capture the user's attention and define the navigation so that it is clear and uncomplicated.

The middle of the screen is another area where users initially focus their attention, so I have chosen to insert vital information into this position.

Studies show where users focus their attention when they look at a screen.

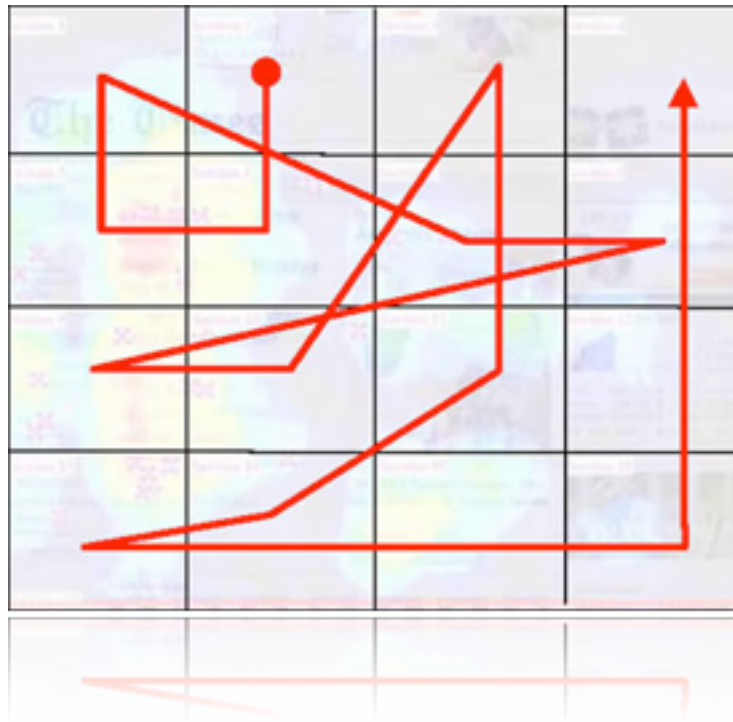


Image 1 - Typical eye tracking movements on a web page
(Outing, S. Ruel, L. 2004)

Initially, I sketched the layout on paper and decided to create a 3-grid layout, with header, main content and footer respectively.

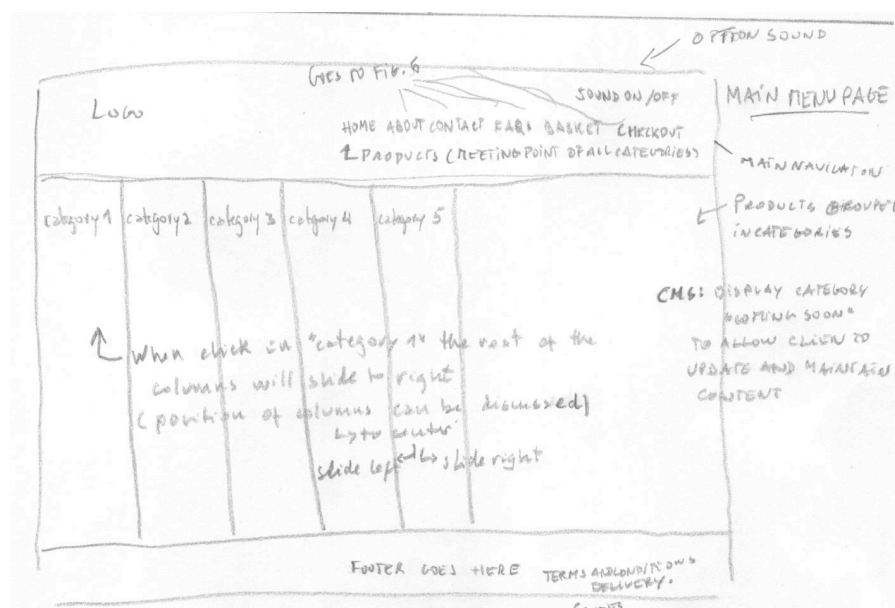


Image 2 - Sketches

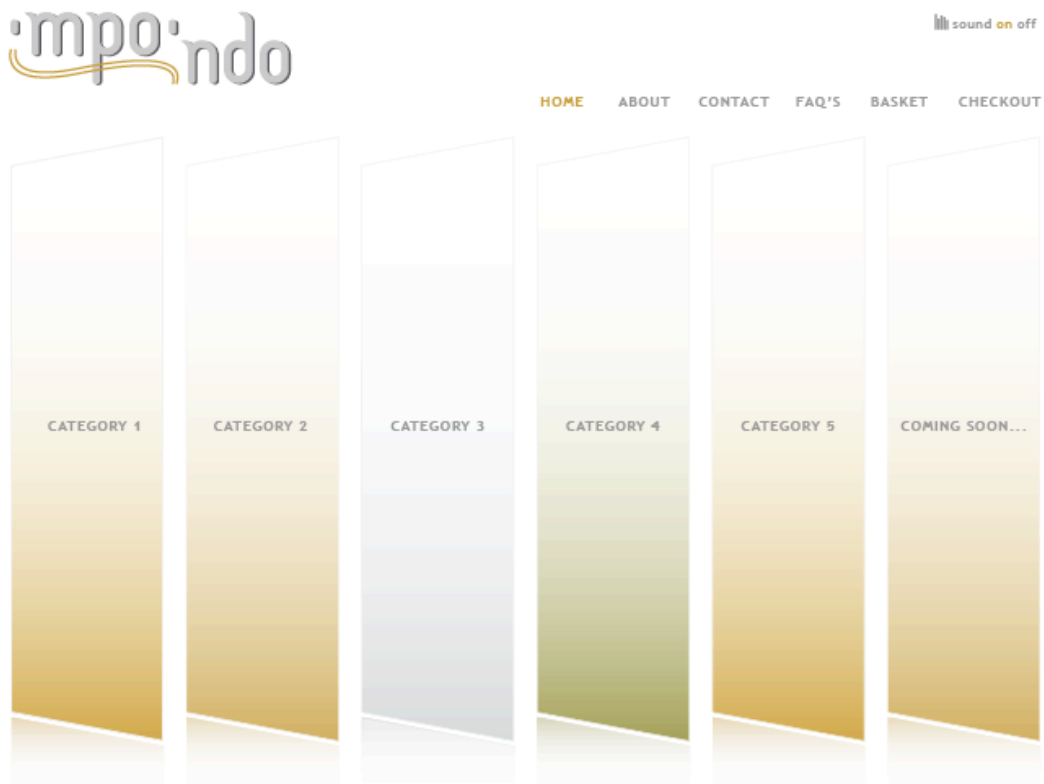


Image 3 - First draft

The header contains the Impoindo logo on the left side, and the main menu on the centre/right, located above the main content. This header will be consistent throughout the site.

In later layout drafts, I added icons on top of the menu navigation to enable better user recognition of symbols and make it easier to navigate. I also added the sound element on the right side (aligned with the logo) in an easily locatable position, therefore easy to switch on/off.

The main content is broken down into two categories: Description and Products. On the home page, the Description category provides short information about the company. On the other pages it will provide information about the product selected.

The Products category displays a visual representation of the product selection (showroom). The design provides an enriching experience by guiding the user through the product's range whilst enabling the user to actively participate by selecting their product category.

The footer provides information and help for those who need support.

Some reorganisation of the information about product and company was required to offer better definition between the two. For example, I added a vertical sidebar on the left side of each page with a short description of the company's nature, rather than only on the ABOUT US page. This sidebar will contain a description of each product.



09108 - EXPERIENTIAL DESIGN DESIGN AND CRITICAL EVALUATION OF AN INTERFACE

I also replaced the original footer (sub navigation) with Delivery, Contact, and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) links and placed them in the horizontal sidebar at the bottom of each page. The side bar became a series of grey fields separated by yellow line that helped draw attention to information that users may need.

The next step was to determinate a colour scheme.



Image 4 - Colour scheme

I selected these four colours from a palette inspired by ethnic/Eastern earth colours. This was discussed with the client and it was agreed that two colours would be selected for the website.

To distinguish from the grey of the main content, I chose a yellow/orange colour in the logo. The menu will be in grey to contrast to the white background, then will be yellow/orange on the selected page, and highlighted in the same colour when the mouse rolls-over.

I have chosen these two colours since yellow/orange is linked with comfort, happiness and calming energy whereas grey represents elegance and conveys an impression of style. These colours are appealing both to men and women.

For the text, I have chosen a sans serif font type to enable ease of reading. The font is white to contrast with the dark-grey background.

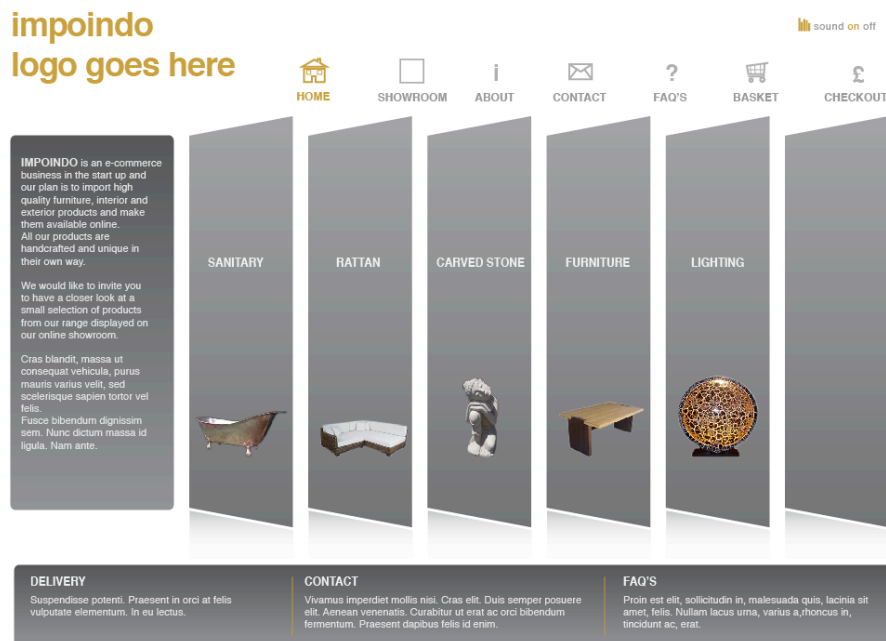


Image 5 - Recent draft

Next, I focused on the images. Most of the images that the client gave me had to be manipulated in Photoshop to give them a fresher and more appealing look. For the main page, I used some of these manipulated images to identify each product category, allowing the user easy to identify the respective product category. Each category/image is exposed in a column which has effects applied to it, like reflections, to maintain the harmony of the website.

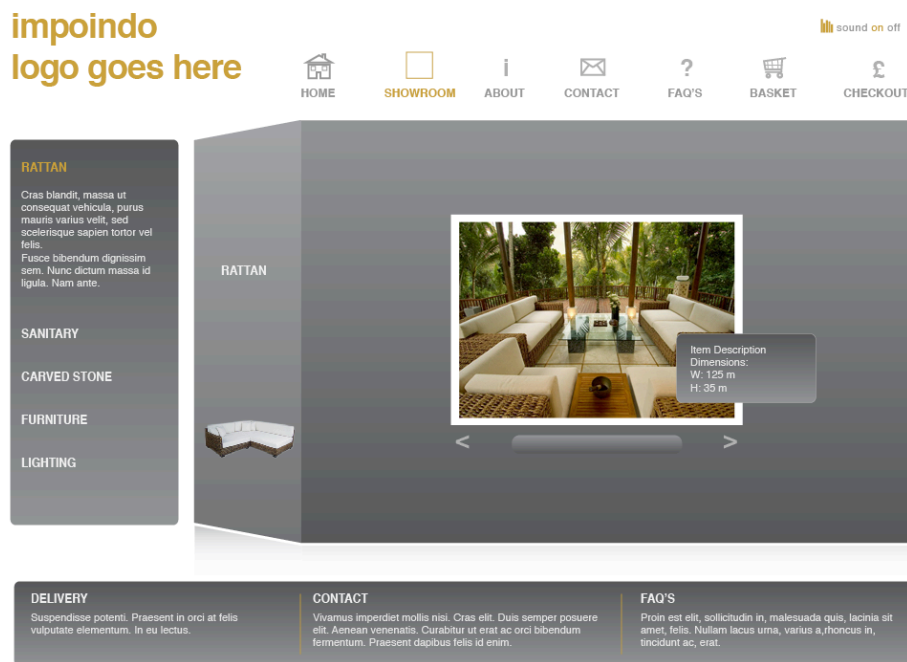


Image 6 - Showroom

Controls and icons

“Graphic user interfaces incorporate visual and functional metaphors drawn from the world of everyday experience to help orient the computer user to the possibilities and functions of the computer system. By emulating the look and behaviour of familiar, concrete screen objects such as file folders, paper documents, tools, or trash cans the functions of the computer system are made visible and placed into a logical, predictable context”. (Lynch, P. 1994)

Icons, buttons and other elements visually suggest how to interact with the system. The interface should respond to the user's actions, visually displaying and giving meaning to the way a user is interacting with the system.

For ease of use, this interface benefits from being predictable - I used standard visual elements so users recognised what they represented and would not need to spend hours trying to work out how to use the system.



Image 7 - Icons

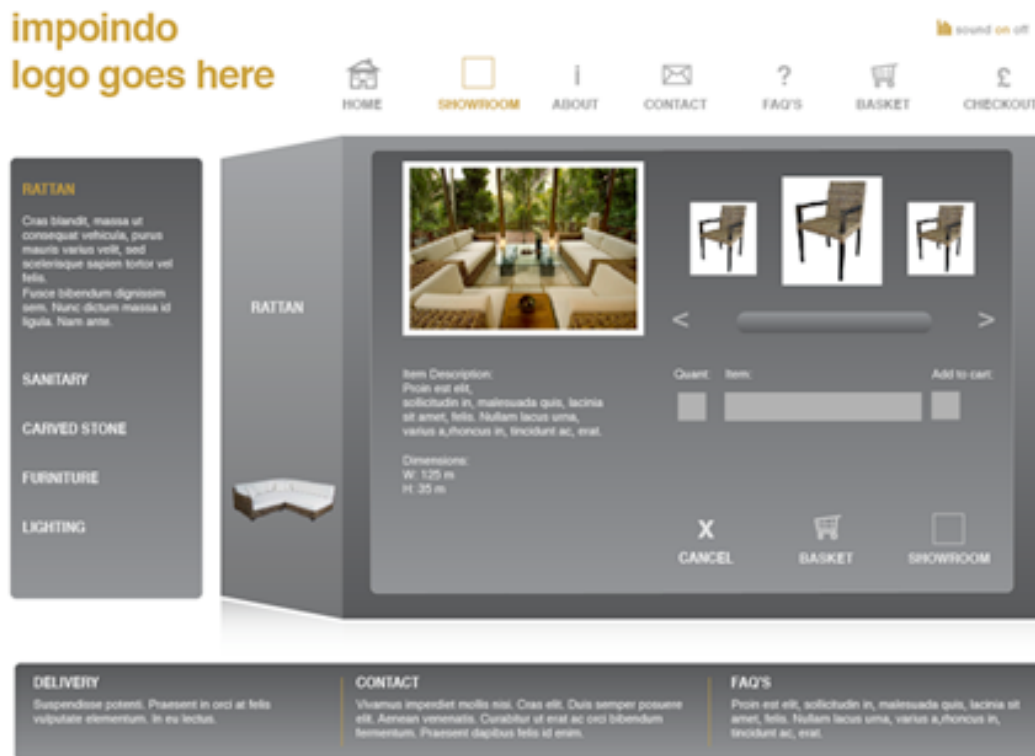


Image 8 - Product Description

Evaluation

Design is the communication of concepts and ideas. On the web, success is often measured by how quickly and effectively ideas are communicated to the user. Development of a commercial website should be driven by content and functionality whilst the look and feel should be intrinsically linked to the brand identity. The content becomes meaningful information when it is related to its environment and purpose of the site.

The development of my knowledge and skills throughout this module has been reflected in the development of this website. Improvements in my design skills have translated to continually improved versions of the website. From a personal design point of view, I am happy with this website and the direction it has gone in. More importantly, the website now better meets the client's needs and specifications.



References:

Lynch, P. 1994, *Visual Design For The User Interface, Part 1: Design Fundamentals* [online], Yale Center for Advanced Instructional Media, Journal of Biocommunications, p.1, Available from: <https://www-rz.uni-hohenheim.de/www/styleguides/manual/papers/gui1.html> [Accessed: 18.12.2008]

Outing, S. Ruel, L. 2004, *EYETRACK III - What we saw when we looked through their eyes* [online], Available from: <http://www.poynterextra.org/eyetrack2004/main.htm> [Accessed: 18.12.2008]

In this assignment I will demonstrate and illustrate the relationship between Designer and Client during the design process of a web site. I have chosen this subject as I am passionate about web design and want to demonstrate how client input and motivations can influence the design process and finished web site. Three years ago when I started my HND at Edinburgh's Telford College, an opportunity arose which would start my career as a web designer. I was commissioned to design and produce a basketball website for a sports journalist. It was my job not only to ensure the web site would look appealing, but would also transmit its message.

Design Strategy

My first step was to plan a strategy for the design. This is a very important task as it ensures the design of the web site will communicate the right message. The strategy consisted of an interview with the client, a questionnaire and background research into competitors. Interviews and questionnaires are tools for the designer to gain essential information from the client regarding the web site's purpose and objectives, and also for the client to express creative ideas. The designer must identify and understand the key messages, functions and style of the web site.

In my first interview with the client, it was made clear that the name of the web site should be [hoopscotch](#) and the purpose was to provide information about sport news, mainly basketball. Other topics talked about in the interview were related to the target audience and its characteristics, also the site content and design requirements.

Based on the client's questionnaire, there were two main points identified as to how the client wanted the web site to be perceived. First, the web site should be professional, and second, the site should be eye-catching. In addition, we reviewed some key points that best described the tone of the web site and discussed a variety of contrasting tones: casual or formal, energetic or relaxing. With the client's agreement, I decided that the tone should be a combination of fresh and friendly, yet professional. Combining a variety of adjectives and striking the right balance is the one of the challenges I most enjoy about web design.

Once the client completed the questionnaire, my next step was to research [hoopscotch](#) competitors. My goal was to understand what message their competitors conveyed through their visuals, and the colours and symbols they used to identify their web sites. This helped me to decide how I was going to differentiate [hoopscotch](#), and create visuals that would be unique and memorable.



Image 1 - Competitors

The results of my research showed that many of the basketball web sites, especially the professional ones, were very corporate looking. My first impression was that whilst their topics were based around specific basketball teams, the tone they employed was conservative and predictable making the various sites samey. It became clear to differentiate [hoopscotch](#) I needed to show it in a fresh and friendly tone as identified in the questionnaire.

Following this research I went to meet the client once again and communicated the results of our meeting, my research results and my recommendations. Providing this information is vital in building client's trust and clarifying design decisions. From this point we both had the same vision of what we were trying to accomplish.

Identity and Color

With a defined direction to focus on, I worked on the concept of the logo and colour palette. I started by creating a few sketches showing some ideas, which I then scanned and sent to the client.



Image 2 - Sketches logo

Some of the logos created were based on the blue and white colours of the Scottish flag and the orange of the basketball. The client replied by requesting that in addition the Sutherland tartan and its colour palette was to be included in the logo. I understood the idea but it was a little bit unsettling initially as in the first meeting the client had not suggested this idea. Eventually we agreed on using the Sutherland tartan as the colour palette and the basketball would be used within the logo.



09108 - EXPERIENTIAL DESIGN DESIGN PROCESS: RELATIONSHIP DESIGNER/ CLIENT

The typeface chosen for the logo matched the typeface used in sport news programmes, reflecting the web site identity, and carrying a stylish and professional feel that matched the design strategy. After some amendments in the digital stage, I had a well balanced logo that worked well when combined with the full name of the web site.



Image 3 - logo

Whilst improving the digital version of the logo, I began to explore the tartan's colour palette. I decided on using an orange/red energetic colour and complimented it with a more traditional green. This would give [hoopscotch](#) a fresh look, while the blue balanced it and keep it energetic.

With a solid strategy in place, the colour palettes picked, and the identity created, the website was about to be born. As this was my first experience as a web designer and my brain was bursting with ideas, it was time to express my design ideas so decided to create a draft layout and send it to the client, thinking that he would be surprised by my quick yet professional response.

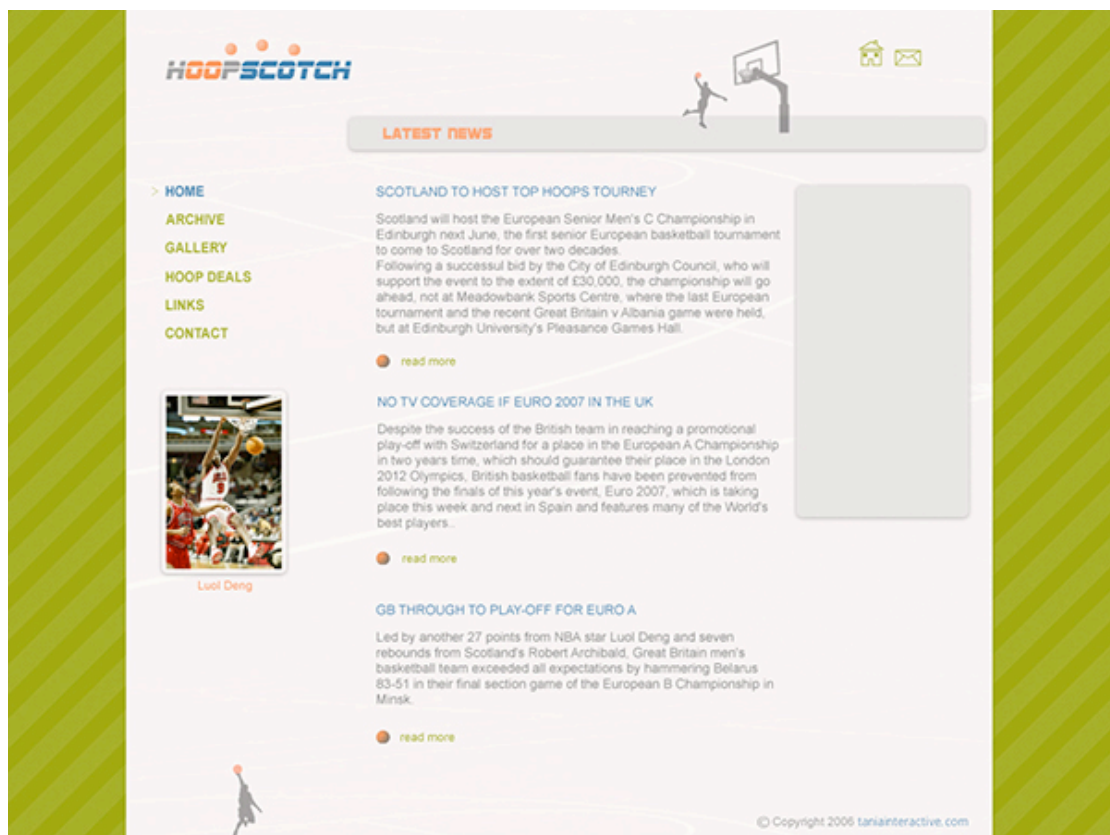


Image 4 - First draft

This draft was declined by the client who was unhappy with the look and expressed a preference for darker tones. This rejection brought into question my understanding of the client's approach and also my assumption that the client was aware of what the general feel of the website would be when completed.

From a design perspective, I advised the client that darker tones would bring a weight to the design and would not transmit the friendly, energetic tone as discussed in our first meetings. I felt the colours that the client suggested were too strong and solid. After some experimenting, I resolved this by using a richer blue to contrast more with the orange colour.

At this stage the client suggested for me to work with him on a regular basis and for us to work together in creating and developing the web site. As this was my first professional web design job, I agreed to this suggestion thinking this could be an opportunity to better grasp the client's expectations on a face to face basis.

During the next meeting, the client requested an area for the game final results to be displayed, which wasn't part of his initial requirements. I decided to locate it aside from the main messaging area with the intention of guiding the user's eye through it.



Image 5 - Second draft

After spending time with the client, I felt this project was far away from initial concepts and equally far from completion. On a daily basis, the client introduced different views and ideas for his web site. I began to question my design skills but felt that the client perhaps had a different agenda to my own and was using this professional relationship and daily contact to establish a more social relationship.



Image 6 - Last layout

Mission Completed?

Overall, I wasn't pleased with the results of all the work I did for hoopscotch and felt that my first job as a web designer had not been altogether positive. At the beginning, my design was unique and fresh, especially when compared with competitors. This differentiation would enable the client to build a solid presence in his readers' minds.

The final product, however, left me feeling unhappy with the direction of the identity and look of the website. I realised that although the client would be receiving the website he wanted, this would require continual updating and maintenance, the responsibility of which would fall to me.

After two years of continual updates, I suggested to the client that a good alternative would be to sign up for a blog, which meant the client could update and maintain his own blog in his own time. Knowing the client had limited IT skills, I suggested wordpress.com blog as it is very simple and straight forward to use. The client agreed to this with the condition that I help him to set up and design the blog. At this time I had recently started my degree at Napier University and was excited by the idea of re-designing this long lost web site with better developed design skills and more experience under my belt. I felt more confident in my abilities, not only in design but in my client-designer working relationships.

I re-designed [hoopscotch](http://hoopscotch.net) using elements chosen from the initial sketches of this project. This time I could explain to him, based on my Experiential Design classes, how design is perceived in the eye of the user.



Image 7 - Hoopscotch's blog

Finally, I am happy with the re-design of the project and pleased it has run its course and reached completion. However, I continue to receive regular emails from the client to help him through every situation he encounters on the blog, which professionally I do.

There have been many lessons learned throughout this project. I have learnt the value of planning and organising duties that I need to perform throughout the design process. Equally important is a pre-determined timescale to help prevent the prolonged design process which I encountered. Without this, I had difficulties



09108 - EXPERIENTIAL DESIGN DESIGN PROCESS: RELATIONSHIP DESIGNER/ CLIENT

moving forward with the project, adding to my frustrations and perhaps impacting on the final product. Communication was another key part of my experience. I saw that good communication keeps the project moving forward although it is necessary to have a fixed goal and purpose from the client, albeit with reasonable flexibility dependant on timescale.

Throughout the process, my trust in the client unfortunately waned but this taught me to be more aware of the importance of establishing clear expectations and a more professional relationship with the client. We had to rely on one another to complete a task and in the right manner. The scrutiny that an increased level of face to face client contact brought, resulted in a decrease in my efficiency, motivation and production on this project. The client, not being from a design background, did not have insight into the design process and evolution of ideas. His feedback, at times when it perhaps was not necessary, hindered the progress of the project.

One thing for sure, my experience was a steep learning curve and lessons learnt could not be replaced by any classroom. In my Experiential Design classes I've learnt to be a better designer. From my mistakes I've learnt how to deal with some odd situations with the client and therefore how to become a better professional. Design often depends on individual taste and designing a website that the client will like from the first draft is virtually impossible. The real challenge is evolving ideas on par with the client in an efficient and professional way whilst maintaining one's own design integrity.

My ideas about experiential design have evolved significantly since the beginning of this course. Before the course began, I had basic ideas about design and its process, and knew the basics about aesthetics and step-by-step process of experiential design. On completion of projects, I have performed an informal evaluation of the client and my own techniques and processes in order that I learn and develop my practice. I think of this reflection as a stylistic approach I will carry on as I learn to utilise different design models. The necessity to evaluate one's own performance has been emphasised as I have progressed throughout the course and having projects and experiences that can be compared have been fundamental to my personal development.

The lectures and tutorial classes from the first two weeks of the course have helped me to begin piecing the puzzle together. I've started to form solid opinions of the design process based on a firm grounding of researched theories encompassing a variety of elements eg. psychology and the use of colour. In turn, confidence in my own ability has grown, not only confidence in design but assurance that I am able to solve problems independently and work professionally in a disciplined way. At this stage, I am under no illusions that there is much to learn, but look forward to the challenges. Reflecting on past learning experiences, I definitely think of myself as a practical and creative person, able to communicate ideas and always pushing the limits of what I can achieve.

The other key part of reflecting upon one's own performance is of course honesty when identifying weakness and working to overcome criticism. A habit that sometimes gets the better of me is choosing to complete work that I enjoy doing before that of work I enjoy less ie. practical design over writing of essays and reports. Although researching and learning is exciting, the writing is an area I continue to struggle with but hope that with better planning and more practice at writing reports and essays, these will seem less of a chore.

Linked to this is my burst of enthusiasm at the initial stages of an exciting project and my impatience when a project is not finished within a short timescale. If further research is required or I encounter a problem then my motivation levels decrease and productivity suffers. I must use the planning and organisation tools more effectively in order to pace my progress and have a realistic timescale attached to each project.

The lectures and tutorials from Units 2 - 8 invited me to think more about the analysis phase of the design process. I have enjoyed this part of the course because the analysis phase is very learner-focused and, for me, I enjoy the interaction with other students and lecturers. In this way I gain invaluable feedback and a chance to discuss ideas and concepts with like-minded people. For example, my view of professional relationships has been given more clarity due to the opportunities I've had to discuss this subject with others.

As I throw myself into the study of experiential design, I remain focused on the Interactive Media Design framework on which the course is based. I also keep in mind my future career goal, which is to work as an interactive media or web designer. My intention is to obtain as much from the course as possible in order to become a rounded designer with a variety of experiences to draw from.

To me design is about fun and about self-expression. Design is also my business.