Slide 1 - Designing Accessible Media Part 1: Specific & Consistent Design

Designing Accessible Media
Part 1: Specific & Consistent Design

ASU Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering
Arizona State University

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Through past lectures, we discussed cross media accessibility issues and how to increase inclusion in your designs.

There are some issues that are specific to the type of media, so we'll briefly cover those in this part of the lecture.

In addition, we'll talk about something we haven't discussed before: the importance of keeping a consistent design across the different media.

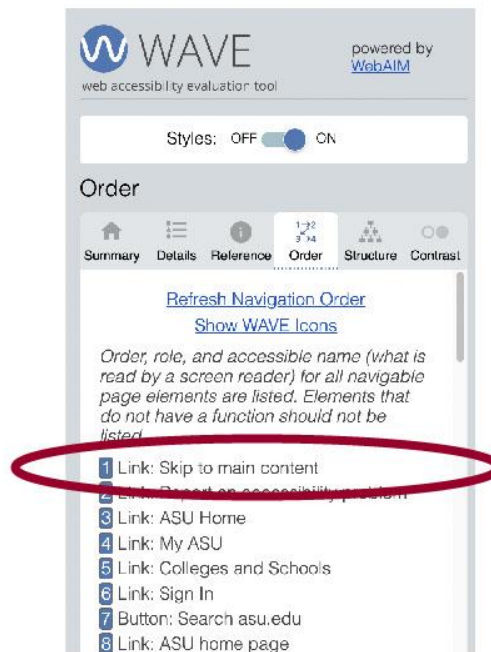This does make a difference in accessibility.

In part two of this lecture, we'll talk about the POUR principles and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, or WCAG.

And in part three, I'll go over what is expected in assignment five, some of which will cross over into the next assignment, the audit assignment.

Slide 2 - Accessible web design

In addition to the overarching guidelines covered in module two, there are some web specific best practices.

The first is to use semantic HTML, including header, article, nav, section, and footer tags.

These provide structure and meaning to the content.

A screen reader will convey the importance of these tags to the user.

Properly label buttons, forms, and input areas with a label tag, and also use the ARIA, which are the accessible rich Internet applications attributes when needed.

Use flexible layouts that adapt to different screen sizes and assistive technologies.

Make sure font sizes and button sizes are large enough for users with limited dexterity or vision impairments. This is a curb-cut effect. Not everyone's fingers are thin, so making the target area for buttons and call to actions bigger can help everyone.

Also, make sure that all interactive elements, like links, buttons, and forms can be navigated using a keyboard.

Also, include skip links such as the 'skip to main content' to allow users to bypass repetitive navigation.

On the slide is a screenshot. I ran the ASU homepage through WAVE and chose the Order tab. It shows the first link is 'skip to main content'.

If someone is using a screen reader and is a frequent visitor and they don't want to tab through or listen to the screen reader speak each main navigation item, they can click on the 'skip to main content' to get to the new information.

As mentioned in an earlier lecture, widgets are a place where keyboard traps can hide. The same can be said for overlays, which are also called modals, pop-ups, or lightboxes. These are the annoying things that pop up on the screen when you least expect it. Ha!

Seriously, these can be major keyboard traps. Is the user able to get out of the overlay? Is the way out intuitive?

Slide 3 - Accessible print (PDF) design

Accessible print (PDF) design

- PDF tagging and structure

- Table accessibility

- Avoid images of text

Source Application	Good tags structure	No/poor tags structure
Adobe Illustrator		✓
Adobe InDesign	✓	
Canva		✓
Google Docs		✓
Google Slides		✓
Microsoft PowerPoint	✓	
Microsoft Word	✓	

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With print design and working with PDFs, you want to use tagged PDFs with the proper reading order so that assistive technologies can navigate the document easily.

On the screen is a table that shows the different types of software and whether they have good tag structure or poor tag structure. I expected Canva and Illustrator to be poor; I did not expect that the Google Suite to have poor tag structure.

That's why it's so important when you're converting any... anything from a native software to a PDF that you run it through Adobe Acrobat to make sure if there are no tags that you do tag them. And if there are poor tags, you can fix them. Also, use headers and tables to help assistive technologies interpret the data and avoid merging cells in ways that confuse screen readers.

Each table should have what we call a table heading. It's usually the bolded part at the top and/or the left side of the table to denote what is represented in each column or row, which is shown in the source application and tags screenshot on the slide.

Also, use real text rather than images of text wherever possible to make sure screen readers can interpret the content.

If it's not possible, then at least make sure there is descriptive alt text.

Slide 4 - Accessible video design

Accessible video design

- Avoid flashing content

- Audio descriptions

- Accessible media player

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For video, we've covered the importance of captions and transcripts, but video accessibility is much more than that.

Flashing content can trigger seizures in individuals with photosensitive epilepsy. I'm not including an example of this on the slide, just in case. Video should not contain flashes that are too bright or too frequent. The WCAG guidelines state there should be no more than three flashes in a second.

Provide audio descriptions for videos to narrate essential visual elements for users who are blind or have low vision. In cases where visuals are crucial for understanding, you need to include a descriptive version of the video.

And there are accessible media players. Many of the big ones do pretty well with accessibility, but there are ones that are focused just on accessibility.

They support keyboard navigation and screen readers, and they offer playback controls that are clearly labeled and easy to operate. Able Player, Oz Player, and Acorn are a few. Most are for displaying videos on the web, and they're either powered by HTML five or JavaScript or both.

Slide 5 - Consistent design across media

Even though this course is focused on keeping accessibility in mind when designing, keeping consistency in mind while designing cross-media products is equally beneficial for users and designers. Integrated content delivered through multiple media types such as web, mobile, print, video...

This helps build a brand. Inconsistent messaging, design, and inaccessibility can kill a brand.

On the screen, it says 'company equals brand', and this is true.

When I say 'company', I'm talking about businesses, organizations, governmental entities, social media identities, etcetera. The word 'brand' is most associated with companies.

Think about Apple, which one of you mentioned is having good accessibility. A large part of that is due to their commitment to inclusion in staying true to their brand.

So, benefits include a seamless user experience, brand trust and recognition, clear communication, cohesive storytelling, and increased accessibility. I'm going to talk more about these in the next few slides.

For designers, having a consistent brand makes creating new products much easier, as there is a consistent design from which to build. Most companies have a brand guide or a design system that lays out how certain design components should look. Cross-media design consistency ties well with the Morville principles because the honeycomb serves as a guiding framework to ensure cohesive, high-quality interactions across the various platforms.

Slide 6 - Consistent design > user experience

Cross-media consistency ensures that users have a seamless experience when moving from one platform to another. For example, a user interacting with a brand's website should feel a sense of continuity when they switch to the mobile app or viewing a video produced by the company. This familiarity reduces confusion and frustration, which enhances the overall user experience.

For providing a seamless and smooth user experience, all of the honeycomb pieces apply.

Kind of. I'll explain.

Across all media, the content and functionality must provide value to users. Each platform should serve a purpose and be tailored to the strengths of that medium, such as responsive web design. Or print materials; these offer a different value from digital.

The transitions between media should be intuitive and easy to navigate and locate. For example, if a user starts an online order on a mobile app and decides they want to continue it on a desktop... on the desktop website, they shouldn't need to learn a new system.

The design and interactions should be similar. Amazon is a good example of that. Visual and emotional consistency across media is key to creating that seamless experience.

Branding, the tone of the text, the messages, and the design elements like color schemes, typography, and imagery should align, making the user feel like they are interacting with the same entity no matter what platform they're accessing. Consistent presentation across media can build trust as well. Discrepancies between experiences such as different information on a website versus an app... That's... this can erode credibility.
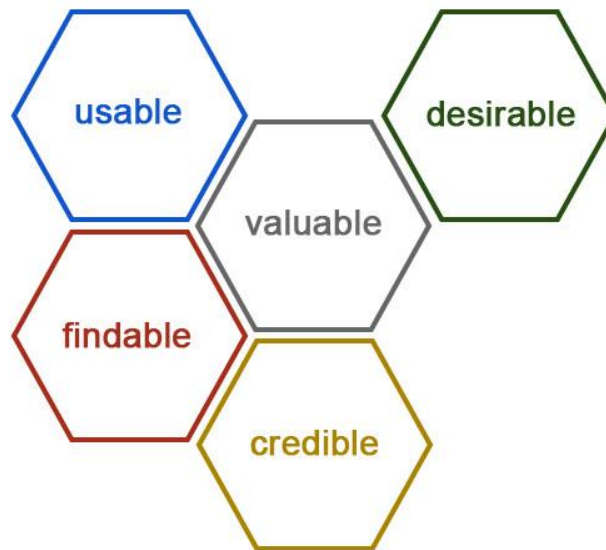
A seamless experience reinforces the perception of a reliable, credible brand.

You may notice that accessible is in a lighter color and now has a dotted line for the hexagon. That's because a seamless user experience may or may not be accessible. It's up to the designer to build with accessibility in mind.

Slide 7 - Consistent design > brand recognition

Something that businesses and organizations strive for is brand recognition. Consistent design elements such as logos, colors, fonts, and tone of voice help build a brand.

Think about Coca Cola. You can see that Coca Cola Red, and you can see the cursive logo. When users see familiar visuals or messaging across different media, they are more likely to associate them with the brand.

One that comes to mind immediately is Nike. That swoosh, and also Just Do It. That is one of their slogans for quite a while, just do it. So when I see that Nike swoosh, I think, okay. Just do it. Brands that are instantly recognizable through their unique visuals, messaging, and emotional connections foster loyalty and trust, just like Nike.

Visual consistency across media helps build recognition while positive emotional responses from ads or videos deepen that trust.

Consistent branding ensures users can easily recognize and locate the brand across various platforms. A brand that is easy to find across media enhances recognition, which then drives trust by meeting user expectations.

In addition, a strong brand provides value by solving user problems and aligning with their needs and expectations. The more value users perceive, the more they trust the brand and remain loyal to it..

Slide 8 - Consistent design > communication

Consistent design > communication

- Clear communication with users
  - consistent messaging
  - consistent terminology

useful

usable

desirable

valuable

findable

accessible

credible
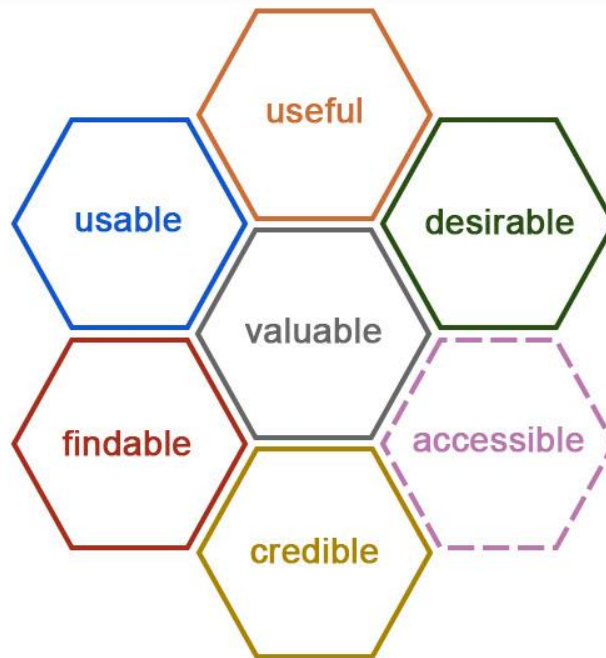
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You want to make sure that there is clear communication with the users, and that includes consistent messaging and consistent terminology. A consistent design will help convey the messages more clearly across different media. If visual and textual cues are aligned, users can better understand the core message without having to adjust to a different design style or a different terminology, and without cognitive overload.

Clear communication ensures that the content presented is relative and meets user needs, and that includes making the content easy to navigate and easy to locate. Whether it's in video, text, or print, content should be helpful and align with the user's goals.

Users trust content that is free from ambiguity or conflicting messages, especially when it's coherent across multiple media. This adds value by making sure the user experience fulfills both user and business goals.
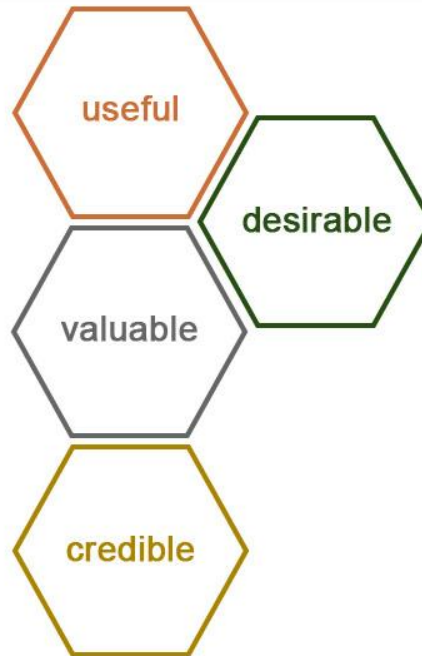
Content that's consistent and easily understood across multiple platforms increases the overall perceived value and desirability of the product or service.

As with the seamless user experience, communication may or may not be accessible. Again, it's up to the designer to build that in..

Slide 9 - Consistent design > storytelling

Many brands use different media to tell a cohesive story. This goes along with clear communication. By making sure you have a consistent design, brands can guide users through different touch points or platforms when maintaining a clear narrative. Each platform complements the other, ensuring the story unfolds smoothly and resonates with the audience.
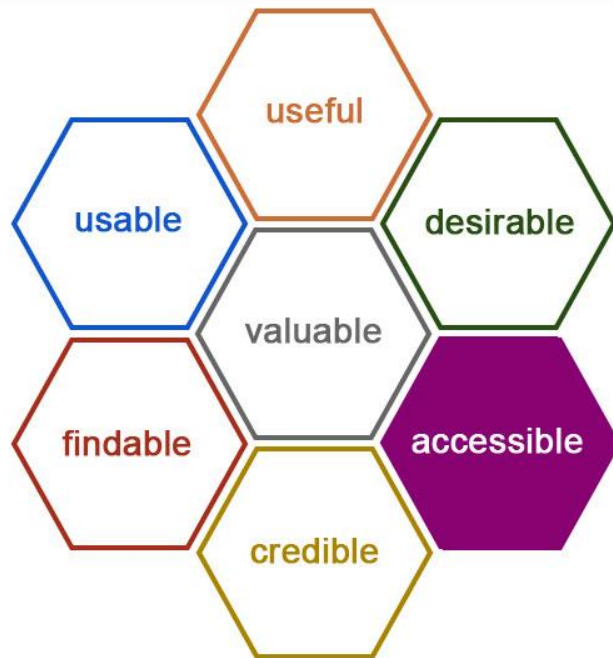
If a story jumps from a mobile app to a website, or from social media to video, it should be intuitive and seamless. You want to make sure you, quote, unquote, connect the dots.

A strong cohesive story creates emotional engagement, making the experience desirable. Good storytelling evokes emotions, which increases the desirability of the product, brand, or service. A cohesive story also builds trust by maintaining consistency across all platforms. Users should believe in the authenticity and the truth of the story, which then enhances credibility and value.

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Slide 10 - Consistent design > accessibility

And finally, consistent design across media helps make experiences more accessible. For example, users with disabilities who rely on assistive technologies benefit from predictable layouts and interfaces. And the curb cut effect is that this consistency positively affects everyone.

Consistent design adds to the usefulness of the content regardless of which platform is being used. It enhances usability by making interactions intuitive and easy to navigate for everyone, which also adds to the findability of information. For example, using properly structured HTML headings improves both accessibility and search engine optimization, making the content more discoverable for users.

Users trust platforms that demonstrate inclusivity and a commitment to providing equal access to information and services. For example, color contrast considerations and typography choices that work well across digital

platforms ensure a visually appealing and inclusive experience. Users also find this desirable because it's more inclusive.

Accessibility is not just a legal compliance, but it's about creating a user experience that is inclusive and meaningful. Providing accessible content across different media types ensures a more valuable and lasting user experience for everyone.

Slide 11 - View part 2 of the lecture

Thanks for watching the first part of the designing accessible media lecture. Please watch part two, which will cover the POUR principles and WCAG standards in-depth, which you'll be using in a few future assignments.