

FINAL WEB DESIGN REPORT

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Introduction

Web design is not just about aesthetics. It involves a whole collection of different skills — from critical and logical thinking to copywriting and layout — all comes together to create an interface that not only features a pleasant aesthetic but also communicates function, facilitates easy access to its content and achieve the objectives. There are many websites out there that look fantastic, which is useful for me to see what I can learn from and what I should avoid on my website. I am trying to design an interface that will help me accomplish my objectives. In this report, I will explain the process of how and why I decide to design my personal portfolio website by using design thinking to construct the five planes of website design (see Figure 1).

Strategy and Scope

Establish My Goal

One of the first things I did before starting work on my web design project was to be clear about my goals or my objectives. I was thinking and asked myself questions like “what am I trying to achieve with this personal website? what is my website’s main purpose?” For the web design project, I have come with an objective, which is get my

dream job—to become a foodie or a food editor. Although I dream job is different from my other classmates, who mostly want to become product manager or something related to new media. Food editor can also use new media to produce content for the audience. The most important thing is that a clear direction is essential if I want my web design to have a purpose. And I always try to remember that a website is not a piece of art, while it is an interface that serves a function—to help to promote myself and get hired.

Besides, I did some research online to study some similar applications (other personal portfolios) and to find recurring themes and patterns. At this stage, I need to figure out what is my users' needs by using user/customer journey mapping to find out what kinds of function and content and information that I need throughout the whole journey.

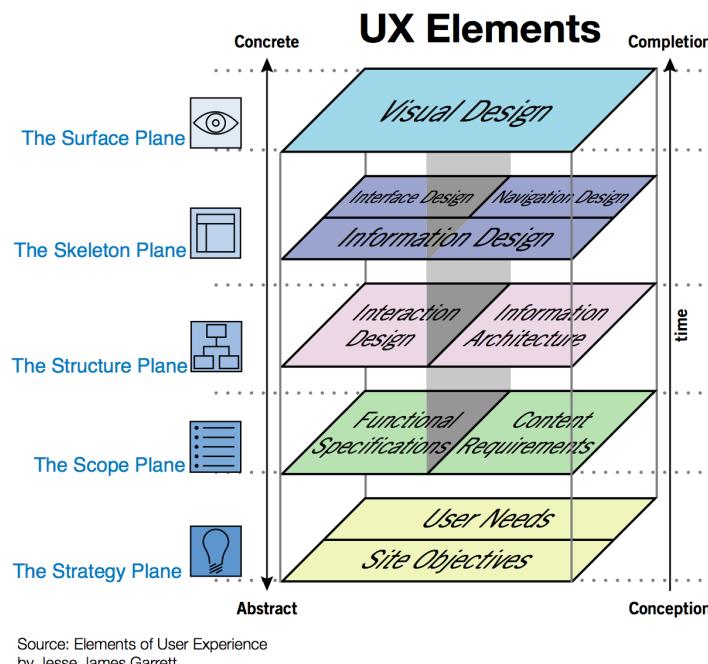


Figure 1. Five UX Elements

Identify My User

Professor Bernard always mentions that “who your audience is will play a big role in how your website should look and function.” In this project, my website’s target users should be recruiters who are related to food editing. I asked four of my friends who are currently working and have some experience related to food editor or at least familiar with what is a foodie. I also interviewed an HR (Miss. Wu) from “深圳潮生活” to figure out the user journey of my target user (see Figure 2). According to five of the interviewees, recruiters usually do not ask for an e-portfolio website, all they want is just CV/resume. However, they all mention that it is a “plus” to have your own website with visual works and send it to them through email. Miss Wu said as a recruiters or HR, she is very busy, so people like her will not have much time to look at the website in detail, so it is essential to impress the viewers within 10 seconds.

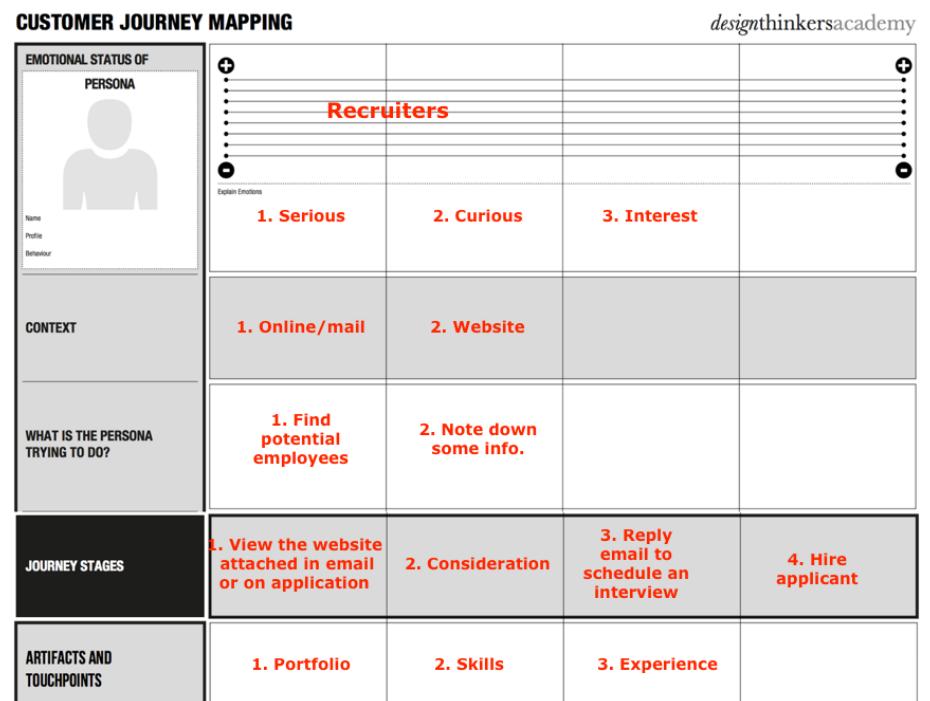


Figure 2. User Journey Mapping

Structure

Although I used multiple pages for my website, my website is still using simple information architecture that combines the art and science of structuring, organizing, labeling, navigating, and searching information space. At this stage, I tried to detail the content and organization of my website, which is also called the information architecture. In addition, I built a simple site map for my website (see Figure 3).

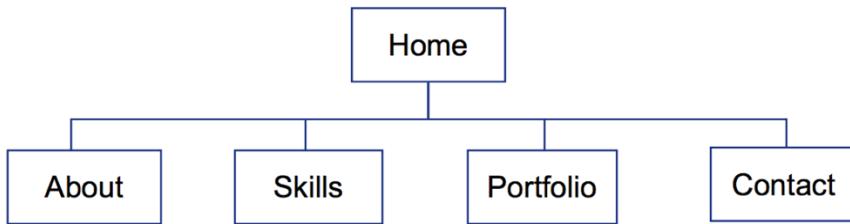


Figure 3. Site Map

Skeleton

Once a site map has been sketched out, I tried to build small prototypes of parts of the site to test whether the design works or not. Low fidelity wireframe prototypes are useful because they are the best way to test the navigation and develop the user interface. The wireframe should also incorporate enough pages to assess what it likes to move from menus to content pages. Moreover, creating a prototype allows me to develop relations between how the site looks and how the navigation interface supports the information design (see Figure 4-8).

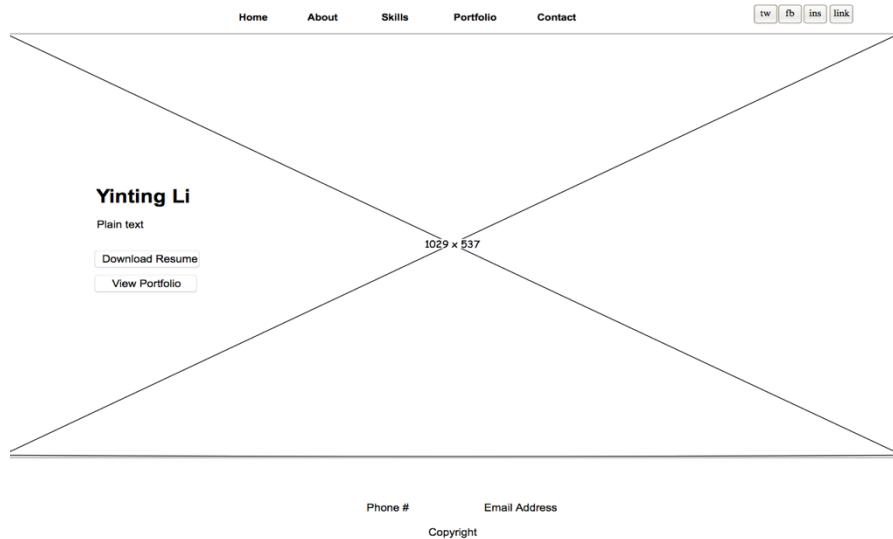


Figure 4. Wireframe—Homepage

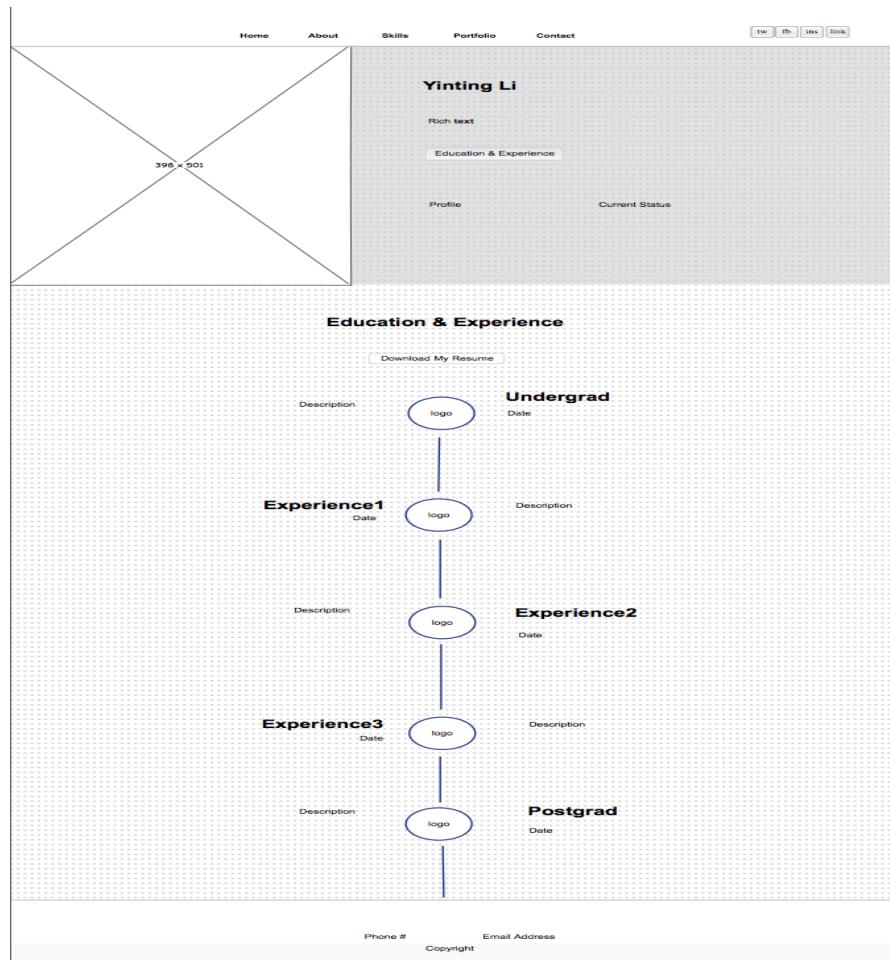


Figure 5. Wireframe—About Page

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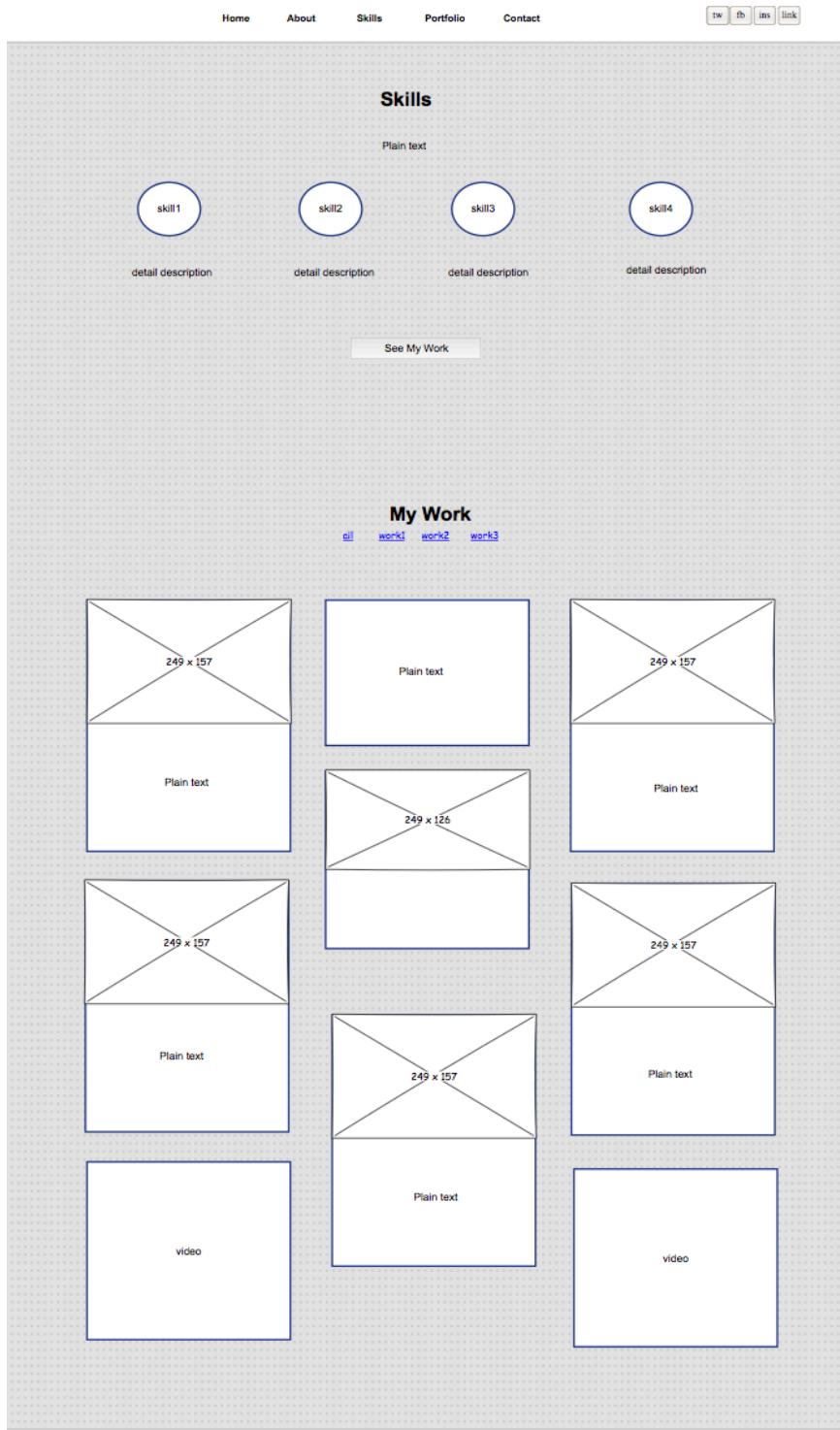


Figure 6. Wireframe—Skills Page

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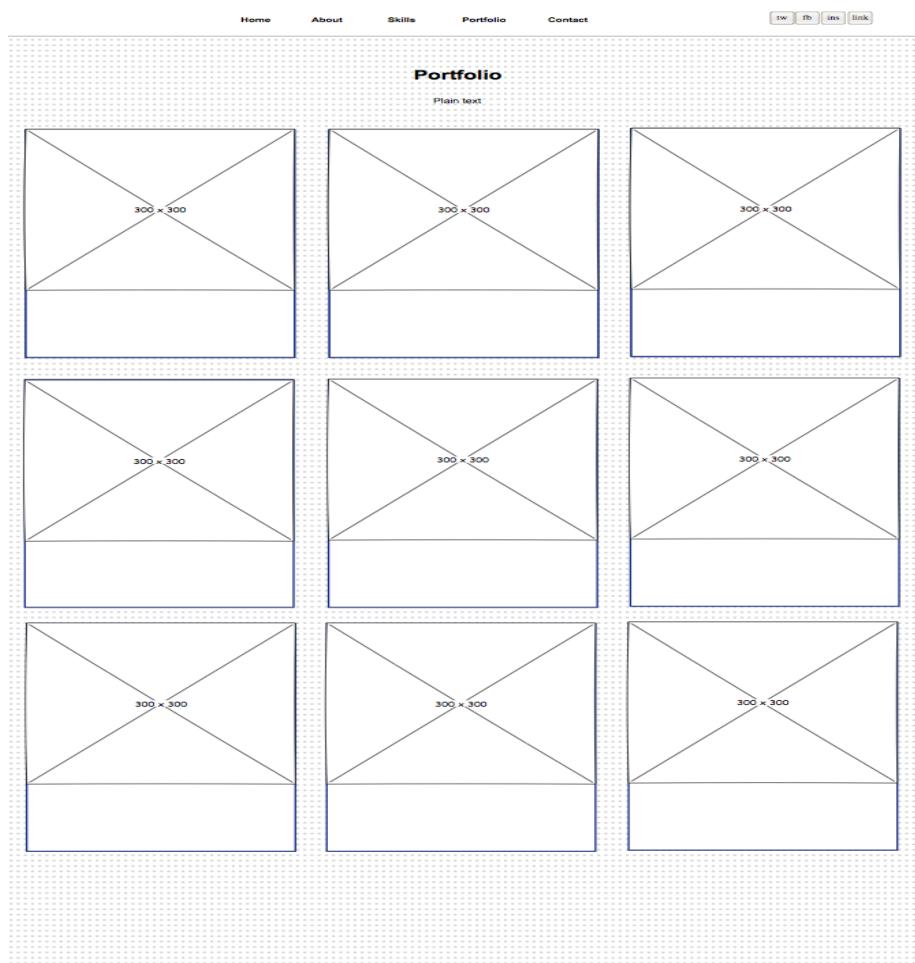


Figure 7. Wireframe—Portfolio Page

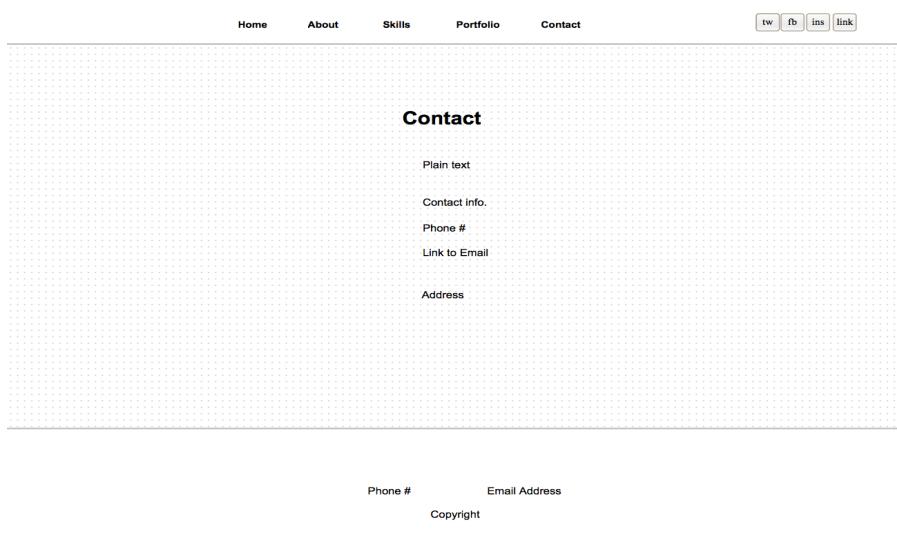


Figure 8. Wireframe—Contact Page

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Although it is hard to build what I expect to be shown on my own website by myself in a short period of time, I tried to apply different templates to my website in order to meet my expectation. In addition, I did not forget about optimizing my site for mobile because according to the internet an impressive 80.5% of website visitors are accessing websites through mobile phones. I also include this metric on my Google analytics dashboard to testify.

After I made the wireframes, I asked some of my friends to look at it and test it. I asked them questions like “Is it clear enough for you to find any information that you want to see if you are a HR?” “What else should I include into my website?” “How do you think of this information architecture?” They said it was a good idea to put the “View My Portfolio” and “Download Resume” on the home page to let the people who are interested in me go the right page immediately. They also gave me feedbacks to add a download resume link at the navigation bar, which would make them easier to see and download if the recruiters are browsing other pages.

Surface

In this stage, after I had established the purpose of my website, set some goals that I want to achieve, identified my audience and determined what content and information should be placed on my website. Now I could proceed to implement it. Here are two example screenshots of my website that I built with sublime and some templates. For more details, please click <http://dev-ytingli.pantheonsite.io/Final>. I took my friends and Miss. Wu’s suggestions into account. If I want to become a food editor, I need to have excellent photography skills of taking good pictures of the food, and good writing and communicating skills. Hence, I try to emphasize my portfolio and resume on my

website. I put education and experience under “About” page and added a call-to-action button on “About” page, and put my recent work in a masonry grid under “Skills.”

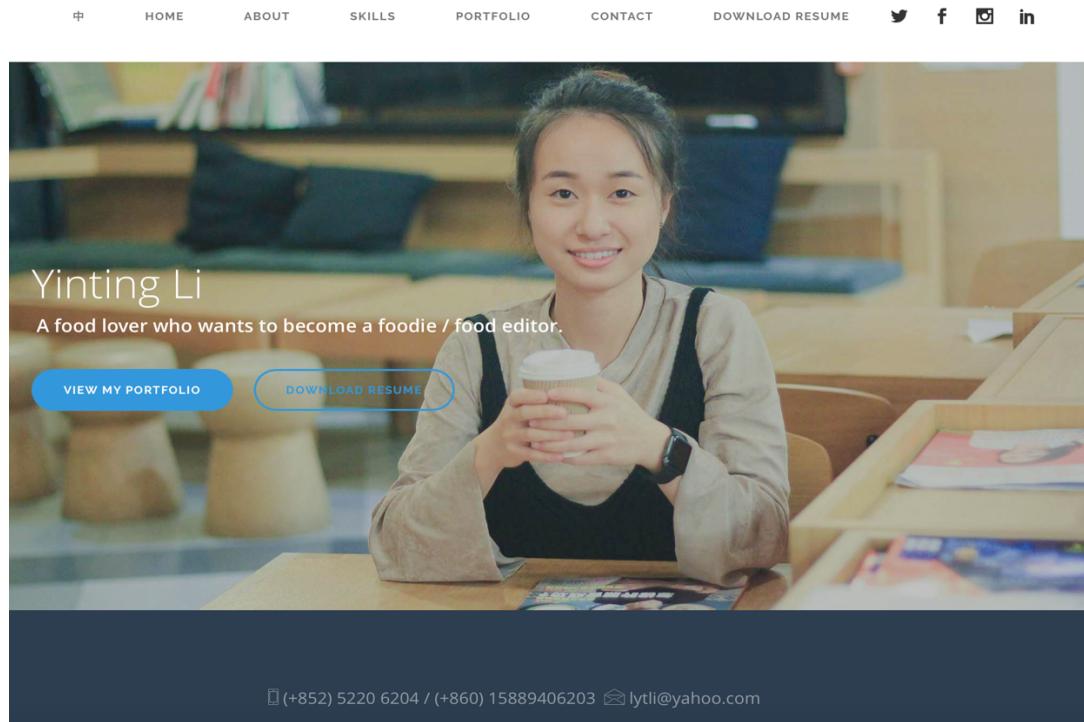


Figure 9. My Homepage

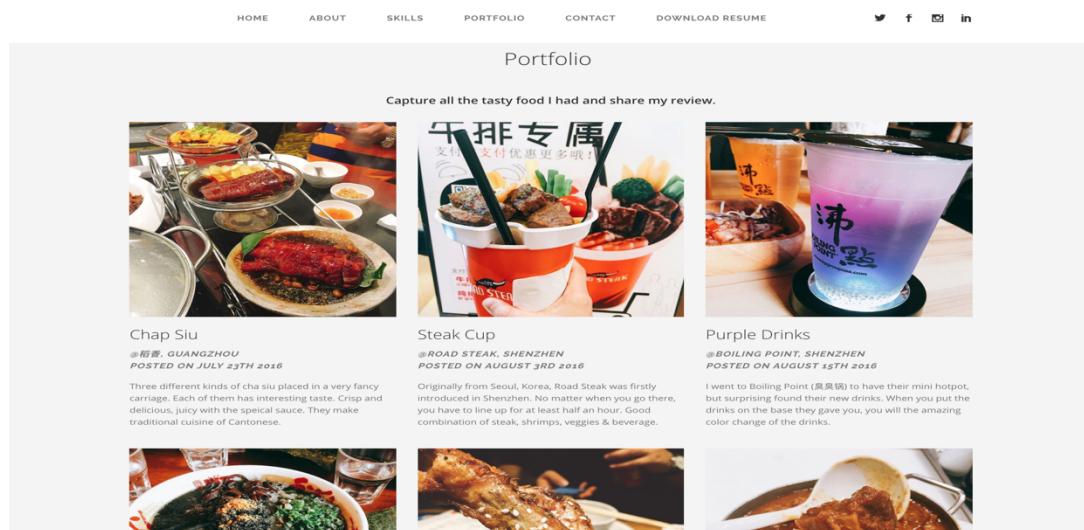


Figure 10. Portfolio Page

Recalled what Miss. Wu said, HR or recruiters would not have much time to click through your images to find out some detail, so I only included some of the food pictures that I took and where and when I had them followed by a short description. I was thinking to use Drupal or other CMS to make my portfolio a dynamic page instead of only static images and texts in the future if needed.

Usability Test (Qualitative)

Research shows that testing 5 participants reveals 80% of the problems, while 9 participants reveal 95% of the problems. For the qualitative usability test, I still invited 4 of my friends and the HR that I interviewed at the very beginning because they are familiar with my project. To respect the interviewees, I would not show any of their information here. But I would briefly demonstrate the whole process of usability test with these 5 participants. I applied the simplified “thinking aloud” approach that involves gauging test users’ interactions with my website. However, in this approach the test is not focusing on testing the time to complete a task but just trying the interface out. The interviewees were encouraged to use “think out loud,” vocalizing their thoughts as they navigated my website. The participants explained why they performed each action, what they were looking for, etc. Anything confusing or frustrating to the user should be remarked upon as well. During this process, I tried to take notes based on the participants’ comments and what they were currently doing. However, one of the limitations of this usability test is that I forgot to record the session.

Here are the 6 questions that I asked while the participants were surfing my website (see Figure 11). After the session, I tried to conclude and report where users had trouble, where they were confused, what they like or dislike, etc. “Thinking aloud”

usability test method can give a better explanation to user confusion and discover the underlying problems for me to fix the problems of my website.

Q1: What do you think the purpose of this site is?
Q2: Could you find what you were looking for?
Q3: Could you tell what this page was about?
Q4: Easy to read (both font style and size)?
Q5: Did you notice the download my resume button and view my portfolio button?
Q6: If you could change one thing on the site, what would be at the top of the to-do list?

Figure 11. Usability Test Question List

All the interviewees answered this is a “personal CV type of website” to the question “what do you think the purpose of this site is” because they saw the navigation my resume button on the landing page. One of the participants could not find contact form on the contact page when I asked him “could you find what you were looking for” While others just tried to click my email on the contact page because they think it is more direct. The question like “could you tell what this page was about” was easy for them because each page has a heading and short description. Participants thought the font style was okay and the font was easy to read for most of the pages as well.

Last but the not the least, for the last question “if you could change one thing on the site, what would be at the top of the to do list?” I got all kinds of responses for this question. Their responses are helpful for me to gauge what people see as the most important things that hindered their experience. One of the most common response is to “change a domain that is more stable and get your own domain name that can make you look more professional.” Although, I would love to have my own domain name but it is very expensive to pay for the hosting fee at this point. I may think about it later when I start my career. Another suggestion is to include a Chinese version of my website. Even

though for now, I am not sure where I am going to work after graduation. Mainland China, Hong Kong or U.S.? It is always better to have both Chinese and English version for the potential audience of my website. That is the reason why I created an experiment on Google analytics to see whether a Chinese version or an English version of my website will get attract more people and have more portfolio view that may impress them within 10 seconds.

A/B Test (Quantitative)

Though apparently, A/B Testing is a process that includes an in-depth data analysis and gives essential insights into the way users perceive and interact with my site. Results will appear only if the test is implemented correctly, using the right variable, on relevant pages. To be honest, I think the data that I got from google analytics is not so helpful and somehow meaningless because we are doing this for our final project and sharing our website link to our classmates and friends only. However, the most important thing is to learn how to conduct A/B test for future research.

For the quantitative usability test, I did A/B testing on checking whether a Chinese version has more portfolio page views or the English version of my website has more (see Figure 12-13). At the beginning, I only created the Chinese version for the homepage. At this stage, the experiment is still running, and I still have not figured out which one wins. But from the data of the experiment, the Chinese version has more click to view my portfolio (25%) and 64.7% of outperforming than original (see Figure 14). Therefore, I have created a Chinese version of my whole website for users who are from mainland China to evaluate.



Figure 12. A/B Test-Original



Figure 13. A/B Test-Variant 1

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A/B Test (En vs. 中)

[Running](#) | [Edit settings](#)

Dec 9, 2016 - Dec 12, 2016

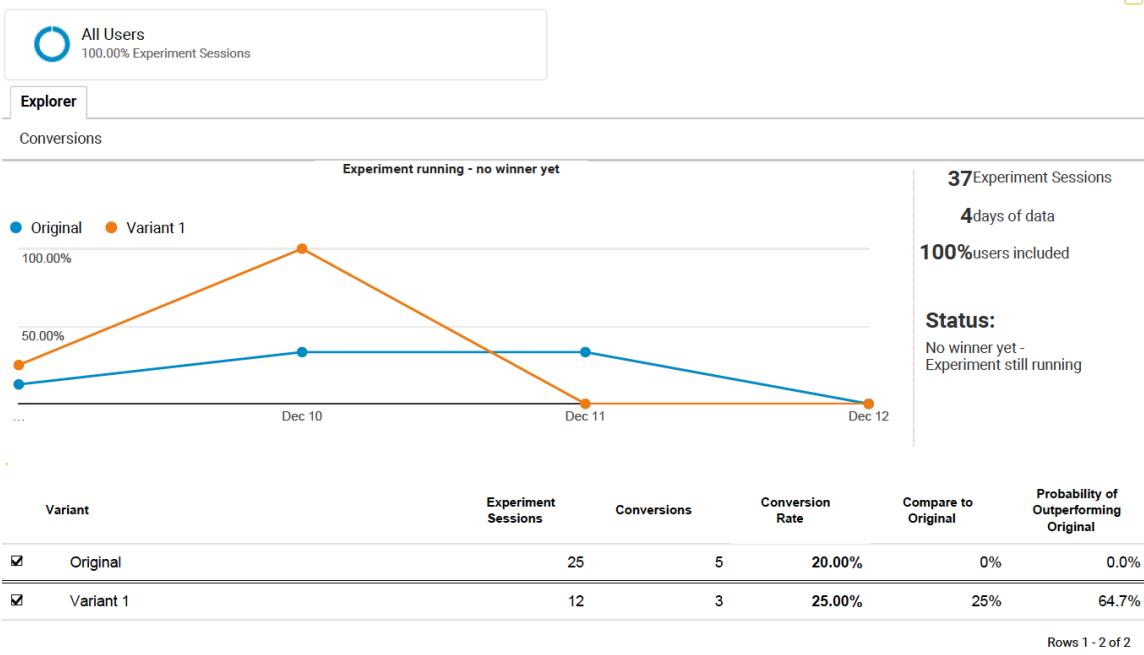


Figure 14. Google Analytics A/B Test Experiment

Dashboard Design

Once I have designed and deployed my website, it is time to measure and analyze the performance of the website. Measuring various website metrics is as important as the first two steps because until I test how well my design performs, I will not know whether it is effective in fulfilling my goals or not. But however in-depth my analytics are at this stage does not really matter; the important thing is that at the very least I have some way of measuring those key objectives that I want to measure. I can use this information to see if I am moving in the right direction with my design and with any future changes.

I created a dashboard on Google Analytics (Under private dashboard of the view “Final Portfolio”) to get enough data on how my website is being used, including overlays of my pages to see what links people click on most, also the ability to track conversion rates.



Figure 15. Google Analytics—dashboard

The dashboard that I created for the final project has 10 metrics, which I think are the most important and useful for analyzing the performance of my website. I am monitoring how many users (new and total) are coming to my website and the average session duration, how long do they stay on each page, also with the bounce rate to see whether people stay on website to get more information about me or just close the window right away. At this point, my website has less than 3% bounce rate and people stay on my website more than 5 minutes. But this number is low may because some of the users are multitasking or just leaving the window open for a few minutes. That is the reason why I also monitored and tracked the page views and conversion rate for “Portfolio,” “About,” “Skills,” “Contact” pages to see how many people click the links and go to which pages most. According to the dashboard, “Portfolio” has the most goal conversion rate, which means the “Portfolio” page is doing well.

Additionally, I added two widgets “Session by Country” and “Session by Devices” because I am interested in knowing where my users come from and what kinds of devices they use. Also this widget help me figure out that most of my users come from mainland China. Hence, it is necessary to create a Chinese portfolio website. I purposefully organized my dashboard in this way to create a clean and neat look. I have also created two events (download pdf resume and click my email address) under goal. However, these two events cannot be tracked as conversion rate on the dashboard. The widget that I created does not show the conversion rate. I can only view them under behavior (see Figure 16). From this screenshot, I can tell that people are more interested in my resume. Therefore, including a resume is very necessary.

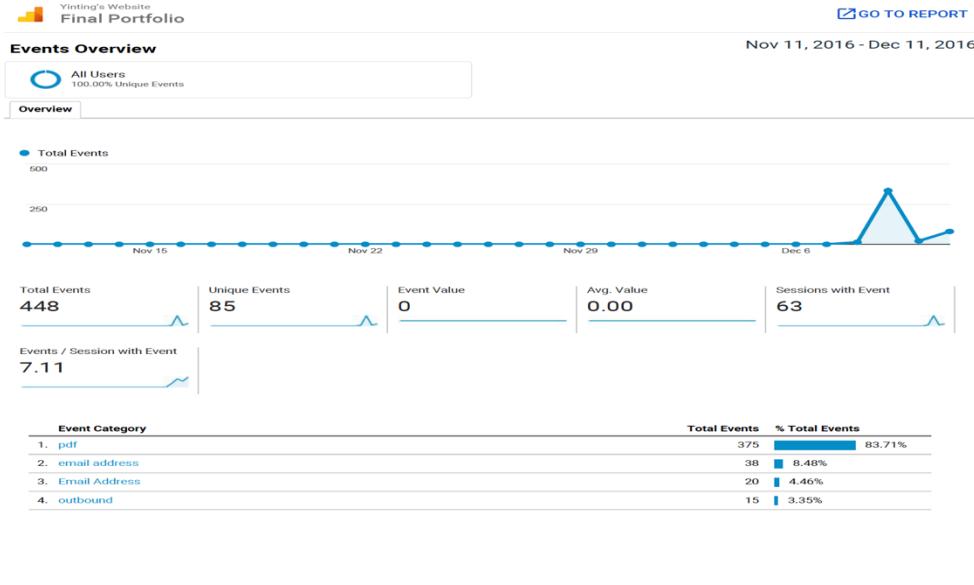


Figure 16. Google Analytics—Event Overview

Conclusion

Although there are still a lot of limitations and imperfection on my website, I will try my best to improve it and make the best use of it for my future career. At least I learned that the ideal website should be immediately clear to the new users. The ideal website should provide the target users with the enough amount of information that they need immediately. Furthermore, my website should be easy to use and provide a pleasant experience for the target users as well.