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Website Analysis

All websites have a purpose, a function. Informational websites are websites that are specifically designed to relay information to people. They should generally follow a relatively user-friendly and cookie-cutter format, because in doing so, it makes them more navigational for the people accessing them. For the purpose of this analysis, I will be extensively looking at and critiquing two websites. The first will be the official website of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi – tamucc.edu, and the second will be IMDB's official website, imdb.com. I chose these websites because they both are very reputable and will exemplify some (if not most) of the desired website qualities that are talked about in *Letting Go of the Words*. They both serve very different functions though, so there will be differences between the things I observe on these sites.

Website Analysis and Audience Profiles

Looking at the TAMU-CC website, you can see that it has a relatively specific audience that it is trying to gear itself for–college students. Of course, there are going to be other groups that visit that site, but college students are by far, the largest group of people. For example, staff members at TAMU-CC might visit the site, parents of students might as well, and even just local residents who are

checking out the university in their area. For the most part though, just by looking

at the website you can safely assume that the content is designed to appeal to

students. The main page is full of very visual material–photos of things going on at

the university, links to add the school on social media, and even a section at the

bottom that filters in social media posts about the school from Instagram and

Twitter. All of these qualities are things that are definitely intended to appeal to

college students. The younger generation is, for the most part, the one that spends

the most time on social media and is the most visual. Our world in general is

becoming an increasingly visual place, and this website appeals to that. Once you

navigate away from the home page and in the direction of the information you are

looking for, the site obviously will become less visual and more content-rich.

The IMDB website, on the other hand, appeals to a much different audience;

their audience is broader and less specific than TAMU-CC's is. The content on this

page is still visual, yes, but it definitely contains more information and wordy

material than TAMU-CC's does. The reason for this is because of the audience.

People usually go onto IMDB to learn more about a movie that they are interested

in, and on IMDB.com you can learn almost every thing there is to know about any

given movie. After clicking on a suggested movie or searching for one, you are taken

to a page filled with things relating to the movie–actor lists, articles about the movie,

ratings, interview clips, and so much more. This abundance of material is the reason

people go to this website, and they welcome that information. If TAMUCC.edu were

to have a website where all the information was so heavily concentrated, then

people would have a hard time staying interested and actually following through to

find the information that they are searching for. Their information is broken down

into more bite-sized parts because that is generally what this generation of college

students handles better.

Integration of Design in Both Websites

One quality that both websites seem to demonstrate well is the effective and

appealing integration of design. Upon visiting the home pages on both TAMU-CC's

website and IMDB's website, the user will observe an organized webpage that is

visually pleasing. There are portions of both websites that seem to jump out at the

user more than other areas. As stated in Jasper McChesney's *A Designer's Four*

Lessons on Design, "if everything is important, nothing is important." This

essentially exemplifies that if there is no variation in how things are presented and

it is all presented the same way, then it is not going to be interesting to read. He

says that bolding font is typically used to make things stand out, but if an entire

paper is in bold, then nothing is going to stand out anymore. You have to be

selective in the things that you highlight to the viewers, and both websites that I am

analyzing appear to do that well. There are definite areas that seem to be of higher

importance on both sites, as well as things that are off to the side and not as

important. For example, on TAMU-CC's home page, the most attention grabbing

item on the website is a sliding bar with recent news stories about what is going on

around campus. There are more options above and below that, but they are styled

in a different way that gives them a simpler appearance and as a result, are less

distractingly eye-catching. The same concept is apparent on IMDB's website. There

is different styles for all of the content items on the home screen, and you can tell

what they want you to notice first based on what is designed in a way that pops out

to the visitors of the site. The design in both of these websites is very effective and

not overwhelmingly done. The content is easy to read and comprehend, which is a

very important quality for informational website to have. Sites that are not at this

level of user-friendliness are not going to be frequented as much. Due to the fact

that we are currently living in an "attention economy" people do not have the

attention span to focus on finding something for a long period of time, and making

things quick and easy to find is crucial (Lanham p.7).

Lack of Usability

One feature that both websites seem to completely lack is a little more

accessibility and usability options. One suggestion that Redish has in order to make

a site more "flexible for universal usability" is to integrate an option on the home

page to alter font size (Redish, p. 48). This option helps to ensure the website meets

people's visual needs and is something that should be present, but is not. In fact, I

actually could not locate any sort of disability options for anyone on either website's

homepages. There is not even options to change the language on either website.

This lack of usability is something that I am sure hinders people's ability to fully

benefit from the information provided on these websites. One reason I think that

these websites lack these usability options is because they are primarily geared for

younger generations. Younger generations are not typically associated with having

trouble reading smaller font, despite the fact that disabilities do not discriminate

based on age. The TAMU-CC site is definitely intended more for younger

generations than the IMDB one, but both skew towards appealing to the younger

generations. Despite this, they can and would benefit from having more usability

options available to the visitors of the site. I was somewhat shocked that the TAMU-

CC website did not offer any sort of disability friendly website alteration options. As

a university, you would expect them to consider things like that.

Conclusion

       There really is no such thing as a perfectly designed website with maximum

accessibility and usability (it's impossible to please everyone), but both of these

websites come pretty close. Of course they are missing almost all disability-friendly

options on their sites, but everything else seems to be pretty solid. They organize

their content well, they highlight the important information without overwhelming

the viewer, and they are full of very visual ways to navigate their pages (a definite

perk in our "attention economy"). Other than that, though, these websites make it

very easy for the visitor to find what they are looking for and do a very good job

with maintaining accessibility in every other aspect.

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