

Introduction

Get Outdoors! is a website promoting environmental activism, outdoor volunteering, outdoor sports and activities, and involvement with local community groups within the Baltimore-Metropolitan corridor. The following survey examines the website from the perspective of a potential user based on a pre-set list of criteria in four categories: design, content, usability, and overall experience. This evaluation checks the website for consistency and makes sure it's meeting the requirements of the target audience. The data presented will discuss how well the Get Outdoors! website did on the evaluation, as well as indicate what changes will be made as a result of the findings.

Result Analysis

The key areas in which Get Outdoors! received lower markings were in content and usability, primarily due to the lack of headers identifying what page the user is presently on. While the navigation menu does indicate this with a bold font weight on the current page, it is not substantial enough for the user to notice, it is not 508 compliant, and it makes the navigation menu shift slightly from page to page, which caught the attention of the reviewers. Furthermore, the font-choices on advertisements were considered hard to read and in some cases the advertisements were not distinguishable from the general content and, with the quiz on the index page, the reviewers thought that the white space where the answers would later appear was distracting. Finally, the "Know What's Happening" banner image was inconsistent with previous images, which were more down to earth. The "Know What's Happening" banner was too loud and too brightly colored compared with other images.

Overall, the Get Outdoors! website received good markings in logo design, general reader content and design form and color and its primary failing was a lack of headers or identifier for which page the user was at presently, thus making it difficult for the user to determine the theme of the content on that particular section.

One recommendation received after the evaluation was to move the month and date onto the same line as the volume number for smoother readability. This would also make room in the banner for the page title identifier, which would make it much easier for users to know which page they were on and what type of content they are reading.

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Methodology

The evaluation was formed by a group of three peers familiar with key usability criteria. This form included questions answered by a rating system of a 1-5 intensity, a comment box on the end of each section for further explanation of why certain numbers were selected, and some short answer questions at the beginning of the survey.

Being unable to locate reviewers that met the exact audience profile, the evaluation was performed by a small focus group of peers who tried to review the website from the mentality of the selected target audience.

Results

DESIGN							
Is the website consistent throughout each page?	Not Consistent	1	2	3	4	5	Very Consistent
Does the logo represent the website?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes it does!
Do the colors represent the website content/mission?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes they do!
Are the images related to the subject?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes!
Are the images clear/high quality?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes!
Does the page load quickly?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes!
Can the page be resized well?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes!
Does the layout vary from page to page?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes!

Table 1.1

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Results Continued

CONTENT							
Is the information unique, fresh, and new?	Not Consistent	1	2	3	4	5	Very Consistent
Can you distinguish the ads from the general content?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes it does!
Is the text readable?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes they do!
Is the content well organized?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes!
Is the content easy to understand?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes!
Are there headers and subheaders?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes!
Does the content reflect the goals of the site?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes!
Does the content of each page have a recognizable theme?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes!
Does the content meet the needs of the audience?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes!
Does the information appear to be researched and well-documented?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes!
Was the footer helpful?	Not helpful at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Very helpful

Table 1.2

Get Outdoors!

Results Continued

USABILITY							
How easy is the primary navigation to use?	Very hard	1	2	3	4	5	Very easy
Is the global navigation consistent?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes!
How easy is it to tell what page you are on?	Very hard	1	2	3	4	5	Very easy
Was the site 508 compliant?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes!
How easy is it to find the content that you are looking for?	Very hard	1	2	3	4	5	Very easy

Table 1.3

OVERALL							
Is the website attractive?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes!
Is the website distracting or uncomfortable?	Very distracting	1	2	3	4	5	Not at all!
Is the website generally well organized?	Not at all!	1	2	3	4	5	Yes!
Would you visit the site again?	Very hard	1	2	3	4	5	Very easy
Is the site lacking anything? Explain below.	Yes	1	2	3	4	5	No

Table 1.4

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Conclusion

Based on the evaluation, headers must be added, ads must be moved and distinguished from general content, the name of the “Know What’s Happening” section must be changed, as well as the banner image. The page header will be placed into the box currently occupied by the month and the month will be bumped up to the top of the green box in the banner. The image in the “Get Involved” banner may be swapped in for the current “Know What’s Happening” banner, if a better photo of volunteers can be located. The “Know What’s Happening” section will be renamed “News & Events” for clarity of the user, in the navigation menu. The ad on the main page will be moved to the right, since the reviewers were initially confused as to whether it was part of the round-up or not. The text in the Saltgrass Marina ad will be larger and less decorative and the kerning will be expanded for the Chessie Group ad to help with readability. The footer will be fixed to have the text align in the center as per recommendation, the horizontal rules on the “Get Involved” page removed, and the image of the crab and the banner of the river on the index page replaced with a less stretched or higher quality image.

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