U08054: Web Design

Semester 2 2012

Coursework Part 1: Usability Evaluation and Technical Evaluation

In this part of the coursework, you should select two websites on a subject you are interested in to evaluate. At least one should be poorly designed. You can get your choice of website approved by your practical tutor or by the module leader. You will then carry out a usability evaluation using this form. This form contains two sets of tables to fill in, one for each site. Before starting to fill in the tables, you should first insert a screenshot of the site and state the date that you accessed it. Websites change over time and the screenshot and date help us to see any differences in the site when we come to mark it. The usability evaluation should address the heuristics in the tables and you should fill in your answers electronically so the boxes can expand to fit. You should then submit this document.

Note: there are numerous resources linked to from the Week 4 lecture slides and practical sheet, as well as many books on web design and usability in the library. Further reading on the subject will help you to a more thoughtful evaluation of your chosen website.

Marking criteria

A markscheme is given on the main assignment brief. Marks will be given for appropriate and thoughtful evaluation (both positive and negative) of your chosen website. Don't just simply state what you think of aspects of the website, but also give *reasons* and *evidence* for why you have evaluated an aspect the way you have, referring to usability guidelines where possible.

U08054 Coursework Web Site Evaluation
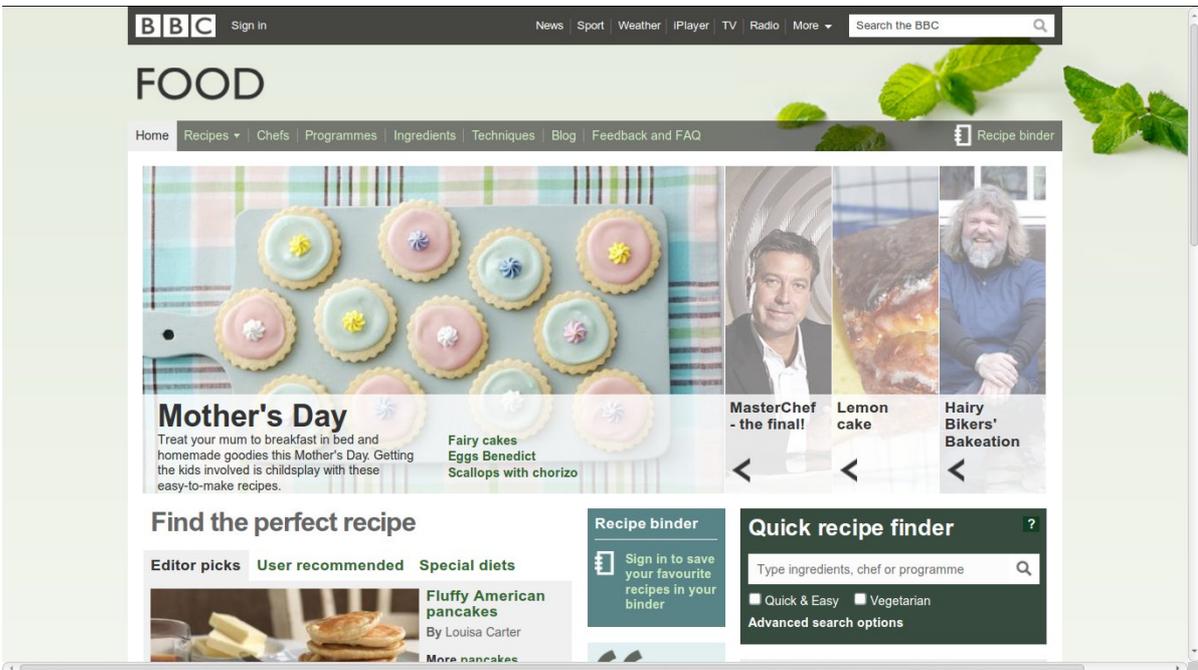
Student Name: Ben Linsey-Bloom

Student Id Number: 10071202

Both sites accessed: 16/03/12

Section 1 - Site Details & Purpose

First Site name	BBC Food
Home page URL	http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/

Screenshot

Purpose Describe the main business of the website	To provide visitors with cooking recipes and ideas; encouraging visitors to try a wider variety of food. Promote food-related BBC programmes.
Users Describe characteristics of the expected users of the site	User characteristics will be wide-ranging. The BBC programmes have a large audience and their website probably has a large number of visitors. Having said that, I expect the technically competent users to be in the minority. I hate to fall into stereotyping but I expect the largest demographic group to be middle-aged women. The majority of users will not have advanced computer skills or experience, they will want a simple, easy design without too many advanced options or confusing extras added.

Tasks	1	Learn how to finely dice and onion
Give examples of three different tasks (goals) that you expect users to commonly want to do on the site.	2	Find a recipe that is suitable for vegetarians.
	3	Find out what time *Hairy Bikers' Bakeation* is on TV next week.

Section 2 – Navigation and Clarity

Structure	For tasks 1 & 2 the site is well structured. The designers have considered how users think in relation to the website and the tasks that it can be used for. They have thought about the contexts in which users would actually want to access the site's information.
Is the site structured so as to enable users to easily accomplish their goals? (make specific reference to the example tasks you chose above)	For **task 1** the information is structured in a logical, clear way. The *Learning to chop: dicing an onion* page is under:
	Top navigation> Techniques > Preparing fruit and vegetables
	The use of categories (like *Preparing fruit and vegetables*) keeps the *Techniques* structure clearly organised.
	It is possible that the user knows of a particular chef that did some instruction on how to slice an onion so they might expect the page to come under the *chef* category. However if content was organised like that, the structure would get very messy. This is a relatively unlikely scenario so I think the existing structure is a good one. This is the kind of scenario where a site-wide search would be far more appropriate because a search query can "join up" meta data to search for 'how to chop an onion' and '[chef's name here]' and return the desired link without needing to complicate the site map.
	For **task 2** the Structure is as follows:
	Top navigation > Recipes > Catering for other diets > Vegetarian
	I think this is probably the most logical place for this section because the user is looking for a *type* of recipe rather than anything that would be under any other category. The section wouldn't make any sense if placed under the *Chefs* section for example, because almost all chefs will have cooked something vegetarian at some point, and probably no chefs will cook only vegetarian. Put simply, it wouldn't be useful if the site structure tried to categorise chefs under 'vegetarian' and 'not vegetarian'.
	For **task 3** the structure is:
	Top navigation > Programmes > Hairy Biker's Bakeathon
	Logical structure; The information is *about a programme* so the information should be under the *Programmes* section. It is very hard to accomplish task 3, see **Navigation** section.

Labelling How clearly labelled are the pages? How easy is it for a user to figure out where he/she is within the site? How easy is it to figure out from a page which site the user is visiting?	It is easy for the user to determine where they are at any time. The user knows they're on a BBC site because of the effective top-bar that shows on all BBC sites across their domain. The user can see that they're on the FOOD site because of the header below the BBC top-bar. They can see which section of the FOOD site they are one because the section name is shown on the 'banner' next to the word 'FOOD' and the appropriate navigation "button" will be highlighted. Occasionally when deep within the *Food* site the top navigation fails to highlight the appropriate link but overall the site is very consistent and predictable (this is good!) in its navigation and presentation. **Task 1** The *Techniques* label in the top navigation could be considered to be a little vague if it was placed somewhere else. However in this location the user knows that the site is about food, the label *Techniques* has a context and so the user will know that it is referring to culinary techniques. **Tasks 2 & 3** Very clear, no complaints. Short and to the point but not at all vague.
Navigation How easy is it for users to find what they are looking for? ? (make specific reference to the example tasks you chose above) How clearly-labelled and obvious are the links?	**Task 1** User may attempt to use (BBC-wide) search box in top-right (if they notice that it exists and what it is) – fail. The top navigation doesn't have an overwhelming number of otions so it's quite likely that the user will click on 'Techniques'. As noted in **Structure**, the categories on the *Techniques* page are clearly visible, then it's easy find the *Learning to chop: dicing an onion* under *Preparing fruit and vegetables* – success. If the user happens to scroll to the bottom of the home page (unlikely) to the *Cooking techniques* section, they might see the link at the bottom (also a little unlikely for novice users) and click *All cooking techniques*. They then can find the link they need in the Techniques page as described above - success, unlikely route. Overall fairly easy because the top navigation is so prominent and clear so users will probably attempt the "correct" route. However some users who think 'Google' is a synonym for 'the web' may attempt to use the BBC search in the top right and fail to find what they're looking for.

	Task 2
	
	The user might use the BBC search bar in the top right; it returns several relevant pages with vegetarian recipes – easy success.
	
	Recipes is easy to see in the top menu. From the *recipes* page the user has two choices:
	
	    — Type 'vegetarian recipes' into the recipe search bar, a list of vegetarian recipes is returned – easy success.
	
	    — Scroll down at least one screen height (unlikely, time-consuming), read the list titled 'Catering for other diets' and click on *Vegetarian.* - success, not so easy.
	
	Overall it is very likely that the user will succeed quickly and without difficulty.
	
	Task 3
	
	This task can be very difficult to accomplish because of inconsistent navigation.
	
	If the user notices the *Hairy Bikers' Bakeation* entry in the shiny animated slideshow thing on the home page, they can find what they want in only one mouse click. - success, very easy.
	
	If they click on *Top navigation > Programmes*, hopefully they will see the *Hairy Bikers Bakeation* thumnail under the large image. If they click on the thumbnail they're presented with a link to watch the latest episode on BBC iPlayer, but no information about the programme that they want to know about. - fail.

Section 3 – Visual Design and Layout

Visuals Is the design aesthetically pleasing, to suit what the website provides? Does it look suitably professional and well-designed? Are the visual aspects consistent from page to page?	Use of a single, randomly selected background image in the top right is very tasteful. It gives some colour, "freshness" and interest to the design while still not causing distraction. When combined with subtle translucency (pretty but still readable!) in various areas, the site is very attractive to me. The design has different elements on different pages to display content effectively, but this, along with the headers, are implemented very consistently.
Style Suitable choice of colours (including suitable contrast)? Suitable font style and size choices?	Some people might find the amount of grey to be unpleasant but I think it is good because it is simple, doesn't clash, and doesn't distract from the content. A bold use of font-size variation puts emphasis on all the important elements (headings etc.) but the body text isn't too small. Helvetica Neue (falling back to Arial followed by system sans-serif default) is a very sensible, easy to read, widely available choice of font fallback options. True black is never used in text or page design which gives a "light subtlety" to the site, but text still seems to have enough contrast with backgrounds to be readable for people with poor eyesight.

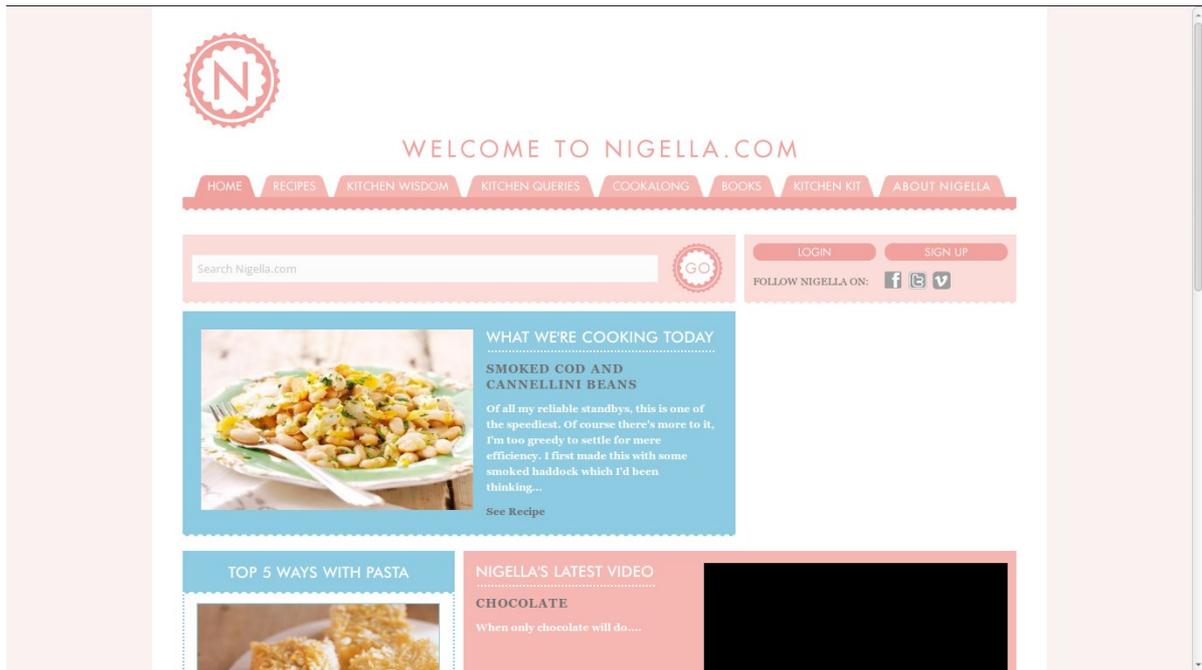|	
Layout Is the layout cluttered or spacious? Suitable use made of whitespace? Neat and tidy layout?	The main pages are very busy but I feel that because content is strictly contained with the 3-column grid, and there is a lot of white space around content, it works well. A lot of content needs to be displayed so it is difficult to do a lot better than this. The use of 3 columns with an unusual combination of widths makes the layout feel modern and unconventional but not confusing or cluttered. When viewing a recipe however I found the layout to be quite unhelpful. The left column is very readable and isn't too crowded by anything. However when I went to find the cooking/prep time and the number of servings that the recipe provides, I couldn't find it. I believe this is because it is place in the middle column, to the right of the main content, where adverts normally are (the areas normally "blocked out" by my brain) and because of the darker colour, and proximity of the 'recipe finder'.
Clarity How easy is it for users to find what they are looking for? How clear and obvious are the links?	Clear use of a combination of colour, bold and underlining to denote links (it varies from place to place, so not consistent, but always clear in my opinion)
Media Is there suitable use made of graphics, icons and other media?	Lots of images and colour on almost every page give the site colour and interest. Good use of videos for instruction purposes such as 'How to chop an onion'. Links to BBC iPlayer for watching full programme episodes.

Section 4 – Accessibility

Accessibility Does the site conform to legislation and good practice?	Videos such as 'How to chop an onion' summarised transcripts to make it easy for people to still access the content if they: have low bandwidth, no flash plugin or poor hearing. Menus (eg top navigation) use CSS to be visually attractive but because HTML list elements are used instead of images, it is still accessible for screen readers. Some sites might use Flash for interactivity but this site has used Javascript to make content "dynamic" (like the shiny slidehow flippy thing on the front page) so all content is still plain text so it is accessible for a screen reader.

Section 1 - Site Details & Purpose

Second Site name	Nigella Lawson
Home page URL	http://www.nigella.com/

Screenshot:

Purpose Describe the main business of the website		Provide visitors with recipes and help on cooking; Promote Nigella Lawson's cooking programmes; sell her merchandise, books etc.
Users Describe characteristics of the expected users of the site		Similar to **site 1** but probably a little less wide-ranging. This site is probably slightly more niche compared to the BBC one.
Tasks Give examples of three different tasks (goals) that you expect users to commonly want to do on the site.	1	Find a vegetarian recipe
	2	Learn the technique for caramelising onions
	3	Find out where to buy a Melamine double-ended spoon rest

Section 2 – Navigation and Clarity

Structure Is the site structured so as to enable users to easily accomplish their goals? (make	Task 1 Not particularly well structured. Top navigation appears to split recipes into *Nigella's recipes* and *Express recipes* but the *refine* box shown to the left of both recipe pages makes it seem that recipes aren't really structured at all. I think in a way it's good that the

specific reference to the example tasks you chose above)	recipes aren't structured because this is the kind of content that is probably easier to search for. However the 'false structure' imposed on the top nav causes confusion. **Task 2** The desired page for this task is *Top nav > Kitchen queries > Caramelising onions* . This kind of makes sense if 'how do I make caramalised onions?' is a common query, but I don't understand why *Kitchen Wisdom* and *Kitchen Queries* are separate sections. I suppose this has the benefit of presenting a shorter list of options in the top-nav sub menu, but this is at great expense of clarity (see **Labelling**) **Task 3** No complaints here. The *Melamine double-ended spoon rest* page is under the sensible structure: *top nav > Kitchen Kit > …*
Labelling How clearly labelled are the pages? How easy is it for a user to figure out where he/she is within the site? How easy is it to figure out from a page which site the user is visiting?	What does 'express recipe' mean? Vague, confusing. Users made to decide whether they want *Nigella's Recipes* or *Express Recipes* before they're given the option to filter by (more logical) meta data. **Task 2** I looked under *Kitchen Wisdom* and *Kitchen Queries* looking for the link named 'Caramelising onions'. This structure seems pretty arbitrary, vague and unhelpful to me. How does anyone decide which content fall into each category?
Navigation How easy is it for users to find what they are looking for? ? (make specific reference to the example tasks you chose above) How clearly-labelled and obvious are the links?	**Task 1** Go *top-nav > recipes > Nigella's recipes* (If the user notices it and figures it out) Use filter box on left to filter for 'Vegetarian'. - success, moderately easy. **Task 2** Aside from the afore-mentioned ambiguity of the top-nav entries *Kitchen Wisdom* and *Kitchen Queries,* the *Caramelising onions* page is easy to find in the sub menu of the top-nav. - success. **Task 3** Go *top-nav > Kitchen Kit > ??? - fail?* The options displayed under *Kitchen Kit* are generated randomly on each page load, so if there was something specific the user was looking for (or even if there wasn't) the user will get very confused and infuriated! Go *top-nav > Kitchen Kit* Enter a search for the item. - success

Section 3 – Visual Design and Layout

Visuals Is the design aesthetically pleasing, to suit what the website provides? Does it look suitably professional and well-designed? Are the visual aspects consistent from page to page?	Not too complex. Consistent 'frilly' decoration throughout. Various borders and images used.
Style Suitable choice of colours (including suitable contrast)? Suitable font style and size choices?	Choice of colours is terrible. The colour scheme is consistent and it doesn't clash but it is so bright/pale that virtually none of the text is easy to read in bad lighting or with poor eye sight. Headings and links use a light pastel on white background. Main text uses a light grey on white bg. Other headings use white on a patel colour. None of it has high enough contrast.
Layout Is the layout cluttered or spacious? Suitable use made of whitespace? Neat and tidy layout?	Content cleanly separated into blocks of content in a grid. Coloured borders or backgrounds on content blocks make it even easier for the user to "block" content on the page so they know what's what.
Clarity How easy is it for users to find what they are looking for? How clear and obvious are the links?	See **Labelling** Hyperlinks are clearly distinguishable from main text because text is generally light grey and links are coloured.
Media Is there suitable use made of graphics, icons and other media?	Lots of attractive images make things interesting and clear for the user. Instructional videos can be very good for conveying the recipes/techniques more effectively than plain text.

Section 4 – Accessibility

Accessibility Does the site conform to legislation and good practice?	**No:** – Poor text contrast / choice of colours. – No transcripts of videos. Yes: – top navigation uses plain text (hidden with -9999px text indent) as well as images. – There are alt tags on images.