design trampoline

designtrampoline.org
Major project report

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01.Concept

Twitter description

The trampoline website for the newbies in design that presents fundamentals of design theory in a simple and fun way. (117 characters)

Inspiration

One of the major inspiration sources, when I was looking for an idea for the Major Project, was the typelab.co.uk website – one of the previous years' examples of major projects. The unique visual style combined with the quality of content presented on the typelab made me think that I'd love to create a learning resource of this kind but in a different domain. For me, it was the design theory basics.

I have a graphic design background and love creating visual content myself, so for me, it will be both sharing my experience and pleasure working on content creation while learning all of the aspects of website development. That was my second project idea, which was chosen to be developed further. And my journey has begun.

Elevator pitch

What does the phrase Design theory make you think about? Is it something boring? Or is it something important, interesting, exciting, and inspiring? Is it even important to learn design theory? With the endless amount of blogs, articles, multiple YouTube videos and online tutorials on different aspects of design is it still necessary to learn?

And how can the knowledge of basics be helpful for those who are new to design, and who have just started their journey?

Lots of questions. My main point in answering all of them would be that it's always great to learn the rules before you start breaking them. Knowing the rules of design basics will make a designer's work meaningful. It will help justify the design decisions and choices you make. I'm sure that in such a subjective industry as design it is extremely important.

That's where the idea of an online source that covers theoretical design basics for those who are new to design came from.

If you are a beginner in some theme, the very first source of information will be the search engine. But what will you look for? How do you know where to start? The variety of choices often is even more overwhelming that not having a choice at all.

The idea behind my project is to create a portal that is a starting point to learn fundamentals. After learning this, it will be easier to jump to the details.

Problem

There is a vast number of resources available for those who are learning design. However, many of them cover just specific aspects of the industry, without giving an overview of the basics. That might be considered as the Curse of knowledge problem – the basics of the theory are so basic that the importance of learning them isn't considered as something significant. In the world during and after COVID-19 when the whole lives of people moved from offline to online, and learning was not an exception. The industry of online learning has started to boom and it continues to do so. Online learning giants like udemy.com or Lynda.com provide

well-structured design courses, but for most of them, the access isn't free.

Since design became a spot-on profession that can be done remotely, a profession combining both creative and technical aspects, it attracts a lot of newbies who want to start their journey as designers. And the creation economy demands constant new content creation, no matter what the media is – presentations, social media content or online advertising. All this content needs to be designed to stand out.

When you are new to the domain, you find it difficult where to start. The main point in a situation where there are lots of sources of information is to give people a starting point. Without overwhelming them with lots of information.

Value proposition

Considering life-long learning is one of the main professional trends these days, I aim to create a design theory trampoline that will help people who have just started learning design to jump easily into design theory.

Design is a fast-paced industry full of various opportunities. There always will be someone new learning it. That leads me to think that this project will be helpful and useful for multiple years. I have an assumption that many people who start their path in design or maybe touch some aspects of design during their work routine consider design theory to be something boring, too boring, and unnecessary to learn. That's why content creation in the case of my project will be one of the key points. Will I be able to create something groundbreaking? I think I won't, and that is not my goal. What I want to do is to combine the information that beginners will find helpful, in one portal, easy to use and navigate, approachable and visually engaging.

Manifesto

The goal of the project is to create a useful online tool for newbies in design covering the basics of design theory. The side will cover the basics of composition, and design principles, as well as the basics of colour theory, typography, and grid. The completed website will be easy to use and navigate, have a well-organised structure and be accessible. In terms of content, it will be well-thought and designed, and use an appropriate tone of voice aiming to help people, and not to teach them. In case I manage to put a tick next to all these main points, I may consider that my goal for this project is achieved.

02. Cultural and business context

Cultural and business context

Design training is becoming more popular as the popularity of remote professions grows. Moreover, many specialists in related fields are increasingly faced with design tasks in their work. The learning path can be arbitrarily long, but one thing is clear - you need to start it with the simplest tasks and gradually complicate them as you gain experience.

One of the most effective and common learning techniques is the path from "simple to complex". That is why it is so important to lay the basic knowledge based on which the entire further learning process will be built. Therefore, work with students of design specialities in universities usually begins with

simple tasks on the basics of composition. Starting from the 20s of the 20th century, when the system of design education began to take shape in German Bauhaus, a very important role was assigned to acquaintance with the basic laws of composition. Propaedeutic courses have become part of the curriculum of many design schools in the 20th century, and the situation in the 21st century does not change.

In an age where information is being consumed at an ever-increasing pace, having an educational tool that explains the basics of design in a concise and accessible way can be helpful for those who want to get a general idea and then deepen their knowledge if necessary.

SWOT analysis

As a part of the business and cultural context presentation of the project, I performed a SWOT analysis.

Strengths

Combining and synthesizing design basics in one place, made by the designer for designers. As a design student in the past, I was in my learner's shoes. I was teaching design basics (even though in a different language) at the start of my career and will be glad if I can share my personal experience and give some advice.

My graphic design background will allow me to create unique illustrations in a consistent visual style. All the visual content will be done specifically for this website, which will differ from various articles compilating content from different authors.

Weaknesses

A lot of information needs to be reworked and presented in a playful way to

make it relevant to today's visual and presentational expectations of the audience.

If I want to illustrate the content myself, this will take time to develop the idea, find the proper visual style and create the illustrations. Content creation in this case may be quite time-consuming.

Considering the fact, that my experience in web development is not big enough, there will be technical and programming challenges. The interactivity of the website will be limited by the technical skills I'll manage to develop.

Opportunities

One of the opportunities includes making not just a compilation of existing content but creating a resource with a personal touch and style. As the general interest in the design industry is growing, there might be also a good opportunity to widen the scope of the project in the nearest future. Considering the popularity of the design sphere, the content on web design and UX|UI design basics and presentation design could be added as additional modules that aim to cover "classical" design basics.

Threats
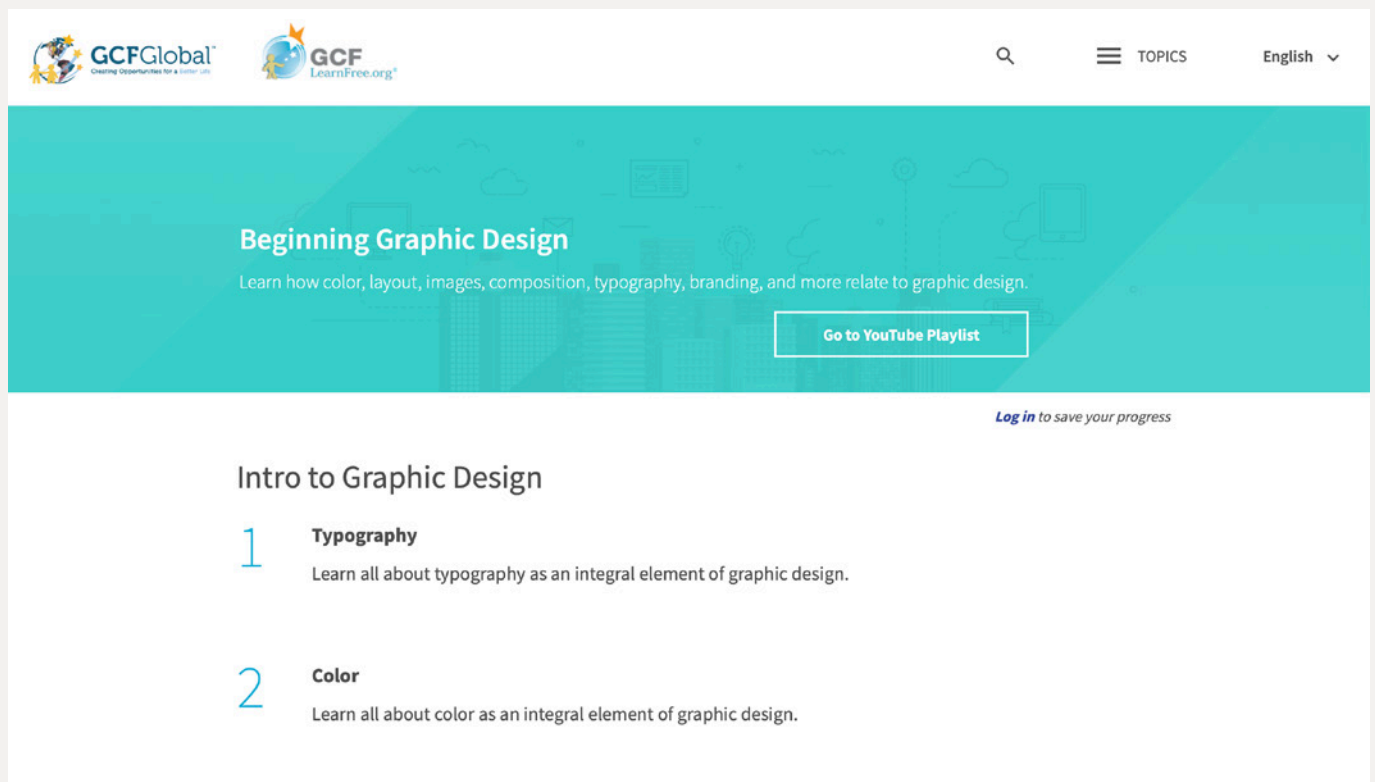
The biggest threat will be the overwhelming number of resources that have already been published on the theme as it's not something relatively new to the industry. A lot of online courses and articles that already exist on the web may bring some difficulties to the promotion of the website. It's difficult to play on the same field with such learning giants as Coursera, skillshare.com or Lynda.com. But all people learn differently. Someone will find a video format more entertaining, but there will always be someone who prefers reading. These will be the users I'm targeting. More than that, access to these major platforms requires payment or subscription, while my project will be free for all.

I assume that it might be difficult to generate awareness or initial interest in the website, as there are no resources to advertise it and only free tools will be used to promote the project.

Revenue generation

The website will be free for all of the users and self-funded with no advertising included. The project aims to help new members of the wide design community to have an easy and fun starting point. For now, it may cover just theory basics, but in the future, it may grow into a learning resource with more detailed information, useful links and book recommendations so the users could deepen their knowledge. But the aim is to keep it free for all users.

03. Research

Cognate websites analysis

https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/beginning-graphic-design/

Short summary:

The GCFGlobal.org program exists for already 20 years and offers a variety of courses, including one in design basics. Their Beginning Graphic Design course covers such themes as colour, layout, images, composition, typography, branding, and more related to graphic design.

Strengths:

• The structure of the course: it's split into 6 chapters, each of which contains short text articles, illustrations and animated videos.

• Quality of the content: the tone of voice is friendly, approachable and easy to read. The videos are fun and engaging, the illustrations are all using a consistent colour scheme to support the overall idea. I found it as a very strong competitor and a perfect example of what kind of content I should aim for.

Points of difference:

• My project will cover design and composition basics only, for now, it will be more of a niche project while GCFGlobal.org is a whole learning platform that offers courses not only about design

• No video content which will make the website faster to load

• Clearer navigation through the modules

https://www.figma.com/resources/learn-design/

Short summary:

A learning resource from a giant software tool company offers an overview of the industry and consists of articles on the basics of design, accessibility, and usability. I wouldn't name it a completely cognate example, as they focus on web design. But the approach they use, combining well-written articles with stylish illustrations is worth taking into account.

Strengths:

• Quality of content: articles, useful links for further reading, stylish illustrations

• Well-structured course and lessons

Points of difference:

• Text content in general, while I will focus on visual examples keeping
the texts short and less detailed

• Focus on web design

• A lot of attention to promoting their tool, which is understandable

https://eyelearn.org/typelab-by-hannahBoom/index.html

Short summary:

One of the major inspirations for my project came from typelab website. It's well-written content that is presented in a very stylish way. Lots of terminologies, useful links and insights about typography on the web – that was a treasure for me as a newbie in web design. So I thought it might be great to create something that inspiring on the theme that I admire to talk about – design theory.

Strengths:

• Quality of content: well-written and structured articles

• Well-thought and stylistically consistent illustrations

Points of difference:

• Different theme

• Level of detail – typelab shows a much deeper level of detail in a certain domain, while I will focus on a broader range of themes without going into details

https://99designs.co.uk/blog/tips/principles-of-design/

Short summary:

As with any other design blog like medium.com or 99 designs with short articles, this one cover a specific theme. While the content is good and useful, it is not that consistent. And it shouldn't be as it is an article and not a learning resource. I consider articles like this as an inspiration for themes to cover and how I might be able to illustrate some design aspects in a simple way.
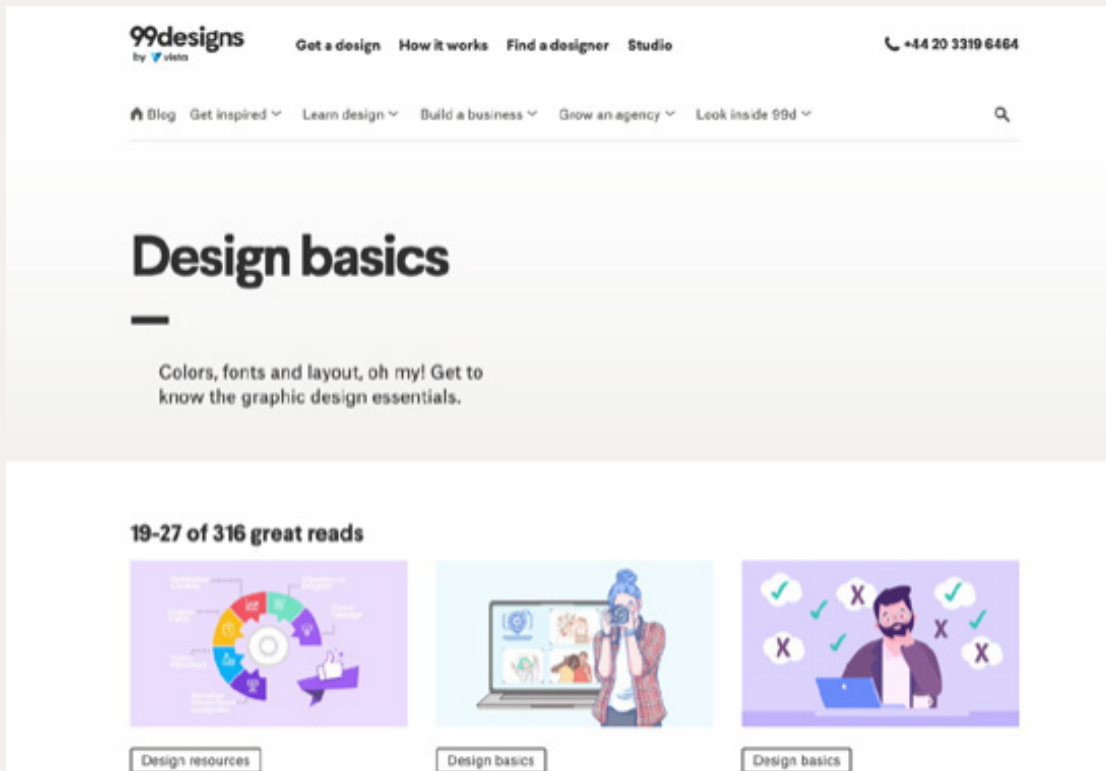
Strengths:

- Quality of content

- Tone of voice

Points of difference:

- Covers a specific theme and doesn't provide a full learning journey, but might be a perfect next step after learning some basics

04. Planning

Commodity

Target audience

Thinking about the target audience of this project my initial thought were design students as the main audience, front-end developers as people who work with designers and need to be aware of design basics, and some other unspecified learners who may be interested in the subject. The crit session and the comments I got there made me think about another big group of the audience – professionals who need to create some design for their work tasks. These people are marketing managers of SMM who have to create some slides, and social media materials and may feel the lack of design knowledge. At the point they feel that they need to know some design basics about how to use colours and fonts, how to combine elements or how to create visually balanced slides for their project, they may find my project quite helpful.

While front-end developers are quite tech-savvy and have their own conventions to look for information and learn. So, after consideration I divided the target audience of the website into three major groups:

PROFESSIONALS who face some specific design problems in their work tasks and need to know the design basics to present their work more efficiently. There might be marketing managers who are working with designers and need a better understanding of the subject.

DESIGN STUDENTS who look for a starting point to dive into the subject, examples of themes and resources to continue learning.

SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS who tend to do most of the tasks themselves in the early stages of the business and need some basic knowledge on the subject.

User research

During the user research module, we were introduced to several techniques on how to identify the needs of the audience. One of the methods was creating User personas.

"A persona is a fictional, yet realistic, description of a typical or target user of the product. A persona is an archetype instead of an actual living human, but personas should be described as if they were real people. "(Nielsen Group https://www.nngroup.com/articles/persona/)

They are created to visualise the future users of the website, analyse their needs and adjust the content and design of the product (in our case – the website) to match these users' needs. Once we can easily picture our users, we can create better designs for them.

I came up with three personas covering representatives of each of the target audience groups.

**SARAH,
SMM MANAGER**
26 y.o., works for a professional hair cosmetics brand as SMM manager

**CHARLIE,
DESIGN STUDENT**
19 y.o., an undergraduate student at visual communications, interested in design

**MYRA,
SMALL BUSINESS OWNER**
47 y.o., ex-account manager at the event agency, now runs a small store of handmade bags on Etsy

For each of them, I created a detailed profile covering their reasons to use the product, their current knowledge of the subject and design-related skills framing them as answers to the questions What do I know? What am I good and bad at in terms of design tasks?

I also tended to find their frustrations considering their background and experience so I could adjust the content of the future website and make it valuable for these user groups.

PERSONA PROFILE 1

PERSONA PROFILE 2

PERSONA PROFILE 3

Content strategy

Taking into account target audience groups, I started thinking about content strategy for the website, as most of the content, we supposed to be text articles and images. My main point in content creation was to find a tone of voice for the articles. I want them to be short, concise, and straight to the point, focusing on the core message. I also want it to sound friendly and approachable – as it's not a textbook, it is a conversation with my reader and learner and sharing experience with them. I've been working with the students of the art course in the past and my goal is to explain the subject in a simple language and arise interest. Those who will be interested in the theme will be able to

deepen their knowledge, but my website should give them confidence about what to look for.

Analysing my target audiences' needs, I decided to unite the first (young professionals) and the third group (small business owners) together as they might face similar problems in design-related tasks.

Problems Group 1 and Group 3 face:

- want to step up from using ready-to-use templates which need to be adapted to real business needs

- lack of knowledge to create a design from scratch

- be more confident with design terminology in case of working in pairs with a designer

What will they find on the website?

Relevant examples with an explanation, of how the theoretical knowledge can help them in common design tasks. How to balance the colour on the slide, how to create a visually captivating composition with only one font etc.

I consider building confidence as one of the top priorities for these two user groups, which is their main driver on the learning journey. Knowledge builds confidence.

USER GROUP NUMBER TWO – STUDENTS OF DESIGN FACULTIES – will be different in terms of their motivation. They are completely new to the topic and want to find a simple and easy-to-use resource to start their learning journey in design.

What will they find on the website?

For them the website will be a glossary of main terms, creating a semantic core of design theory basics. They will be able to get familiar with the main concepts and terms quickly and easily. For them, the website will be a starting point from where they may continue learning about other resources, and knowing what to look for.

Started thinking about the content, and I set a plan that would guide my content creation at the next steps of the project development. In terms of media, I aim to combine both illustrations and short animated videos. In the process of content creation, I decided to avoid using videos – they didn't add much value to the content presentation but are more demanding in terms of load speed and bandwidth. As a result, I decided to focus on illustrations. To make the learning process more fun I decided to split the main flow of the articles that explain the design terms using some bright accents and interesting facts with names, and dates and giving a general introduction and context to the subject.

For the start I decided to focus on five main aspects of design theory, presented in five modules, each of them consisting of a different number of articles explaining the subject and a module quiz at the end. It should make learning more fun and add an element of interactivity, as the rest of the content will be static. From an educational point of view, it's a nice way to summarise the knowledge of the module and test how well the content was understood.

Information architecture

After figuring out the main pieces of content I wanted to include, I created an initial site map that shows the information architecture. The home page will contain a short intro about the project and will include cards with names and brief descriptions of the module content. Each of the cards will lead to the module flow consisting of several single pages and will be ended with a quiz. An additional About

page will contain a project description and contact details on how to get in touch.
with the author.

The goal was to create a structure that would allow users to get from one
module to another quickly. But they might also skip some of the modules and
jump to the themes and terms they are most interested in. A simple and clear
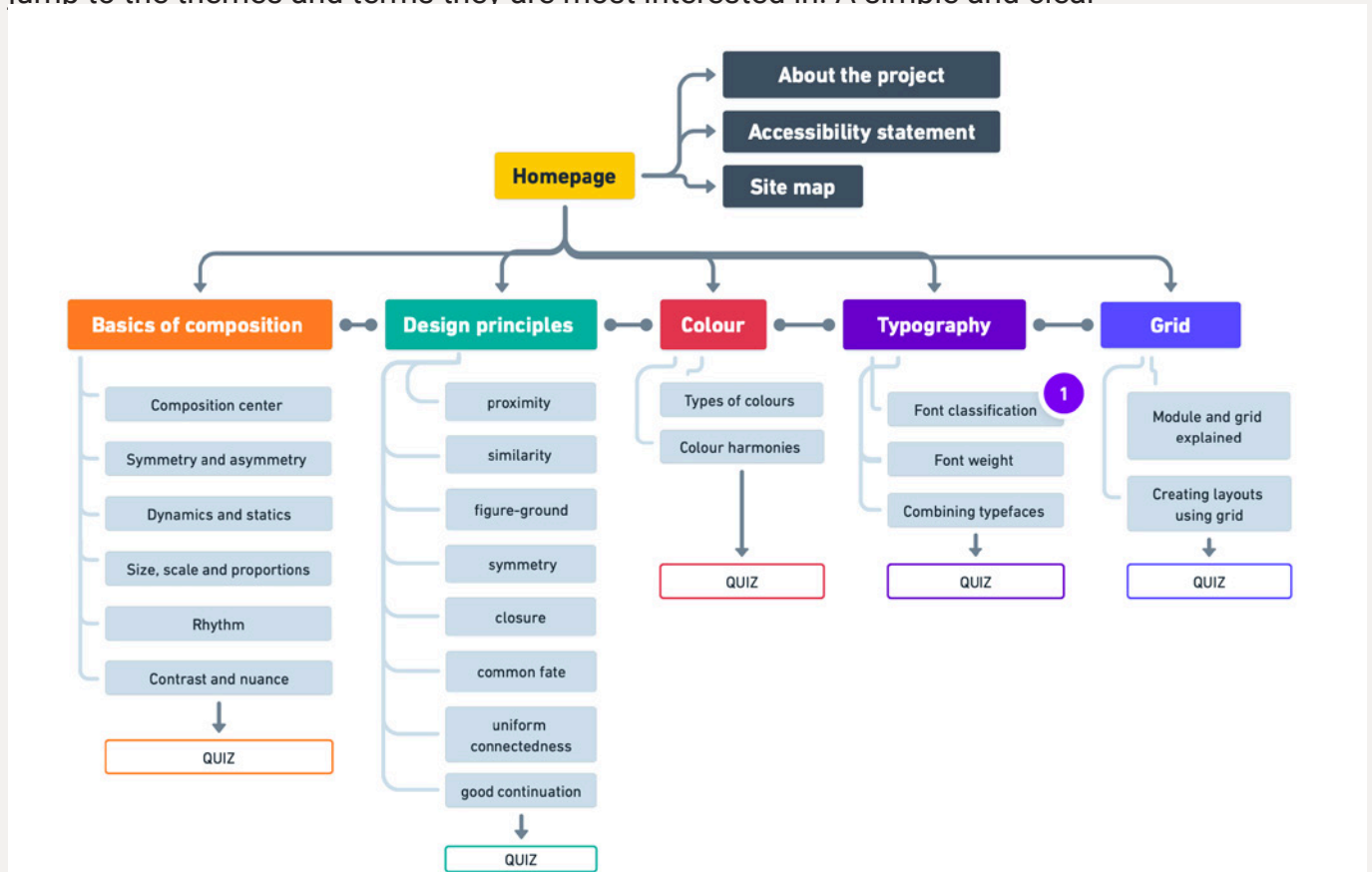
top navigation and additional navigation through each of the modules will help
them to reach the content easily.

Content creation

Writing

The major part of the work in creating the content would be on writing the
short articles on each of the terms from the design theory I wanted to include.

I plan to use my own knowledge and write these articles in a simple and concise format tending to show it from a personal perspective, highlighting the most important aspects.

Illustrations

To illustrate all of the terms I plan to use illustrations that will be my own and I will describe the process of their creation and style choice further in the report. I plan it to be vector-style illustrations showing the basics of composition via simple geometric shapes. I plan to use Adobe Illustrator to create the visuals. One of the main points of difference of my website will be the stylistic connectedness through all of the content.

Firmness

Domain name

In one of the first presentations when I was describing the idea of the project I mentioned what I want my website to be – I want to let my users jump into the design and show how easy and fun the learning could be. That led to the word "trampoline". So when during the preparation for the firmness presentations we were asked to propose a site name, I was almost 100% sure it would be a design trampoline.

I've checked the availability of the domain names and decided to use designtrampoline.org as it was affordable for me, and matches my project name perfectly. Domain names ending with .org .org are primarily used for nonprofit websites such as charities, NGOs, open-source projects, and educational platforms. That fit the purposes of my project as well.

Hosting

In terms of choosing a hosting provider, I didn't have that much experience

and by that moment was familiar with only Clook which I used for my university coursework website. It is a shared hosting that provides free SSL certificates. Even though there were some cheaper options available on the market, I decided to upgrade my existing contract with Clook and have both of my websites with them. By that moment I was familiar with the interface of the control panel which would save the time that I probably would need if I'd decided to choose any other provider.

CMS review and choice

At this stage of the project, I already had an understanding that the content of the website will be static and will consist of text articles and images. So the usage of the CMS seemed a sensible solution even though I didn't have enough experience in designing for CMS and used it before only for publishing my university blog. At the same time, it will be an opportunity to develop a new skill that may be profitable for my future professional career.

I've made brief research on the existing options of the CMS and compared WordPress as one the most popular and widespread CMS on the web with two relatively new platforms – Webflow and Kirby.

WordPress as a traditional CMS seems like a rational choice with lots of advantages in it's favour:

- A lot of learning resources available on the web to learn it

- A big variety of plugins and SEO tools the t might be useful to automate the process of site creation and promotion

- It's open-source and free

While going for it meant a big challenge as coding needed to customise the templates, and that will require a lot of additional learning.

Webflow is a visual CMS and website builder that became very popular within the design community due to the similarity of its interface with the programs used by designers (e.g. Adobe or Affinity designer). There were some good reasons to try this new tool such as

• The platform provides a Webflow university to learn the technology

• Ability to customize templates with almost no code

• Design and CMS in one product, build-in SEO tools

But further digging into the details revealed that it's more a site builder than a CMS. It is quite an expensive platform that works on the subscription scheme. I realised that making my choice towards will make me dependent on the prices they propose and in case of an increase I will have no choice but to accept them to keep my site live.

Kirby CMS positions itself as a flat-file CMS created by designers and for designers. The interface looks modern, friendly, and welcoming and provides its own learning resources. It is promised on their website that they have good integration with Figma, and that is the instrument I use to create the layouts and prototypes. In terms of the price, they are quite expensive - 103,20 £ in one payment. But the fact that it's very niche and less known will lead to limited learning resources, so probably it is more suitable for a more experienced developer.
After the firm presentations and consultation with our tutors, I've decided to choose the WordPress CMS.

Front-end technologies and back-end technologies

During preparation for the firmness presentations, I was already familiar with HTML and CSS, which I need to continue to learn and improve. The theme

creation will require creating a prototype in HTML and CSS. At this stage of the project, I was uncertain if I will need to add JavaScript. In the process, I decided to add interactivities to the website. This includes creating a hamburger menu for the mobile version, navigation through the image sliders and adding a Jump to the top button on each of the pages as most of the articles turned out to be quite long. These are the instances where the usage of JavaScript libraries was needed.

After I decided to go for a WordPress CMS it became clear that additional learning from PHP will be required as it is the back-end language used by WordPress.

Delight

Logo design

As soon as I got my domain name bought, I started thinking about how I wanted the branding of the project looks. One of the cool exercises we did during the branding course was to imagine if the brand you are working on is a person. And I listed 6 main characters I'd like my project to represent. Designtrapoline's personality is curious, open-minded, a lifelong learner, enthusiastic, friendly and experimental. After that, I started to build a kind of brief for myself so I could evaluate the options and visual language I create mapping them against these points. I want my website to look modern and trendy as it covers a design-related subject and the brand should reflect that. I want it to be stylistically well-thought and balanced and visually captivating for the learners. At the same time, I want the content to shine as it's more important, so the brand elements should not be disturbing and too distracting for the user. I want it to be bright in a good way – stand out and be memorable with moderate and wise use of colour. And, finally, I want to look fun and be playful and easy to interact with, but without going too childish.

I've done several versions of the logo. To make it look and be friendly, I decided not to use capital letters and was trying to find a perfect typeface that would reflect the mood of the project. I wanted a round logo and could imagine it being animated on the website. At the same time, round logos are not easy to work with – to make the text readable I might need to scale it, but I didn't want the logo too much header space. So after the first crit, I decided to further develop a two-lines version with a circle as a sign.

At the next stage, I continued looking for a perfect typeface that will look both informal, fun and dynamic. I wanted to use geometric grotesque to outline it with the geometry of the icon and after several iterations, finally, choose the one that ticked all the boxes. It's a simple geometric sans-serif font, that reads well and looks nice and fun, and is very modern.

FINALISED LOGO

Visual concept: colour, type, graphic elements

I began the development of the visual concept of the project with the same steps as I did in the beginning with the idea of the project. My aim is to make an overview of the learning/teaching design websites and find the stylistic and visual elements and common UX/UI patterns that are used on them. One of the funniest discoveries was the many giant learning platforms use a lot of blue in their colour scheme or in their identity. Among other similarities, I found them all have a simple interface, and a light or white background which all helped to focus on the content and not on the design of the webpage. To easily navigate through the content, most of the big platforms use vertical menus and or submenus and most of them have a search bar. That was good and bad at the same time as most of the websites lack a personality. And my aim for the design trampoline was to show the project's personality through design.

In terms of the visual language, I was inspired by the Intercom Academy website academy.intercom.com. It uses lovely hand-drawn illustrations with pops of bright colours that stand out from a mild soft beige background. It's functional and easy to use, without looking boring - it's fun, playful and user-friendly. That was exactly the mood I wanted to incorporate into my project: soft and light background to make the content easy to read and a nicely balanced palette of bright colours that would complement the background.
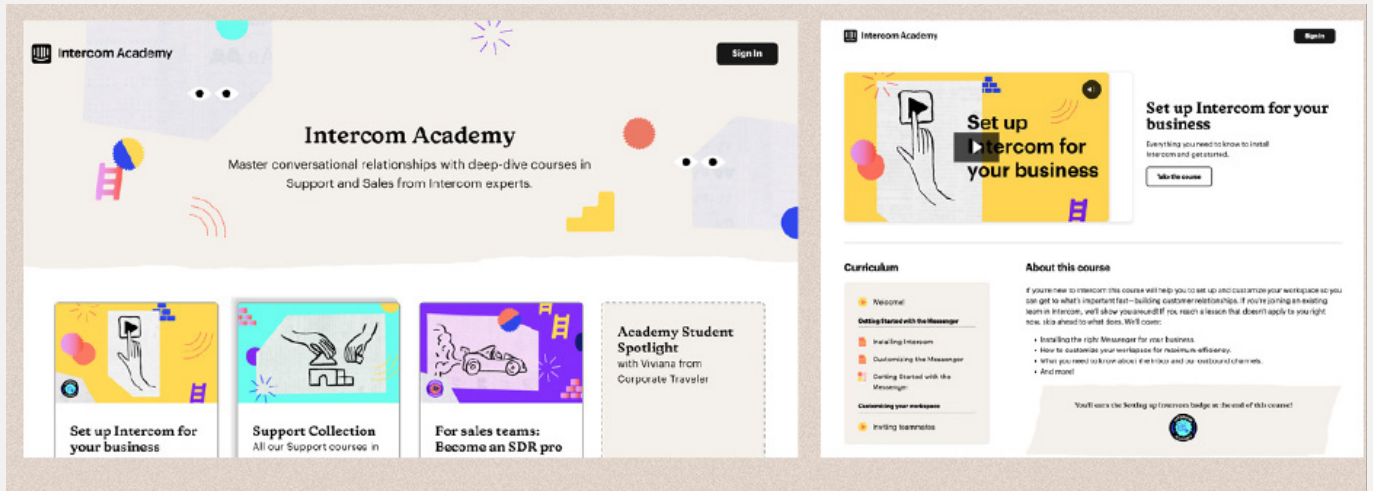
Style tyles and initial wireframes

As soon as I figured out the mood I aim for, I began to look at more specific references, creating a visual mood board https://whimsical.com/visual-mood-board-GPGaoX8rTXDLNpsanf6Jws

The first concept is based on using a soft warm grey or beige background with a pop of soft warm colours and a bold typography:

The second idea was a slightly different version of the first one with the exception of using neon colours as accents.
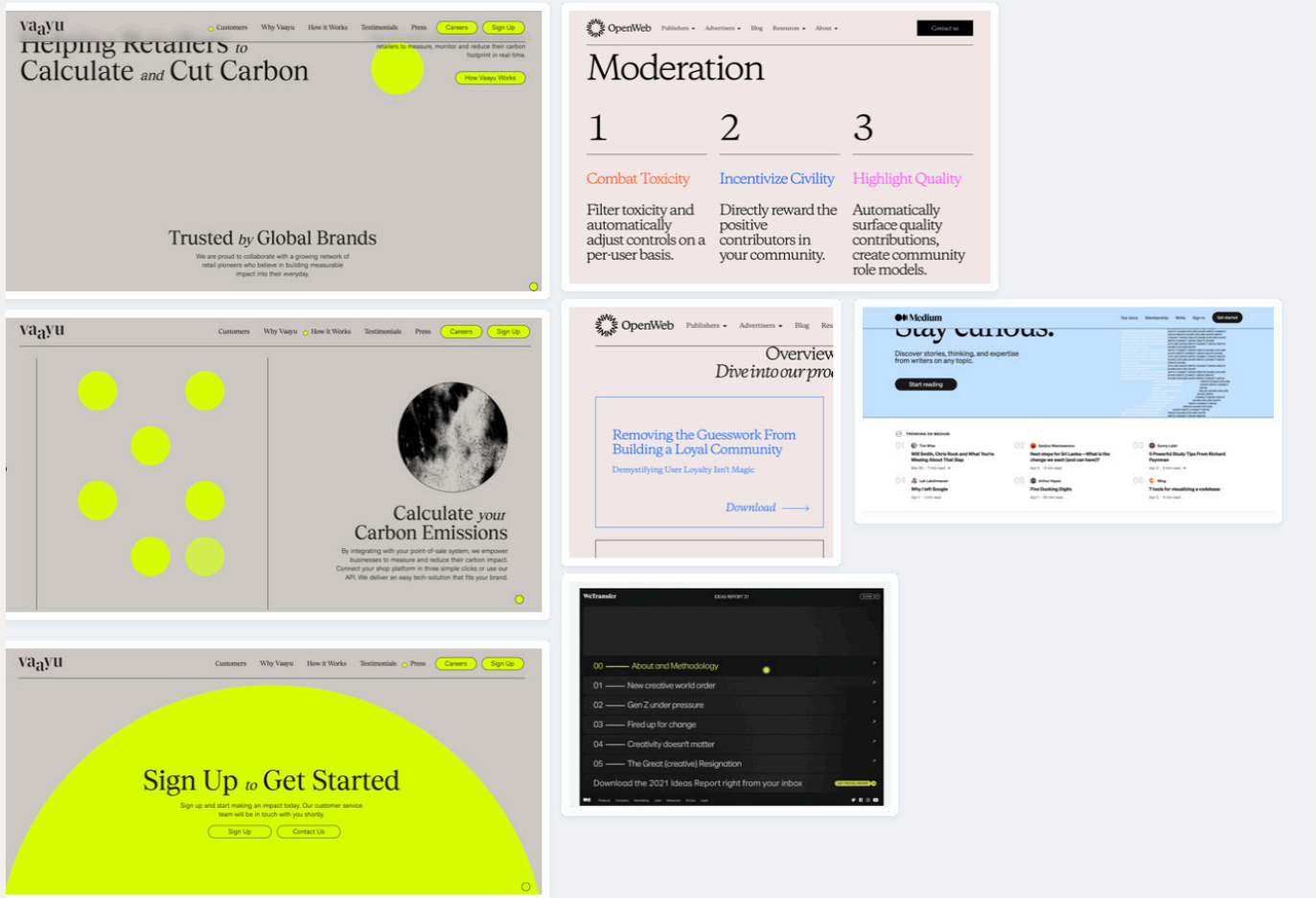
Having planned these two roots I moved to experiments with colour and type. At this stage, it was helpful to write some content that might be used to test the viability of the concepts.
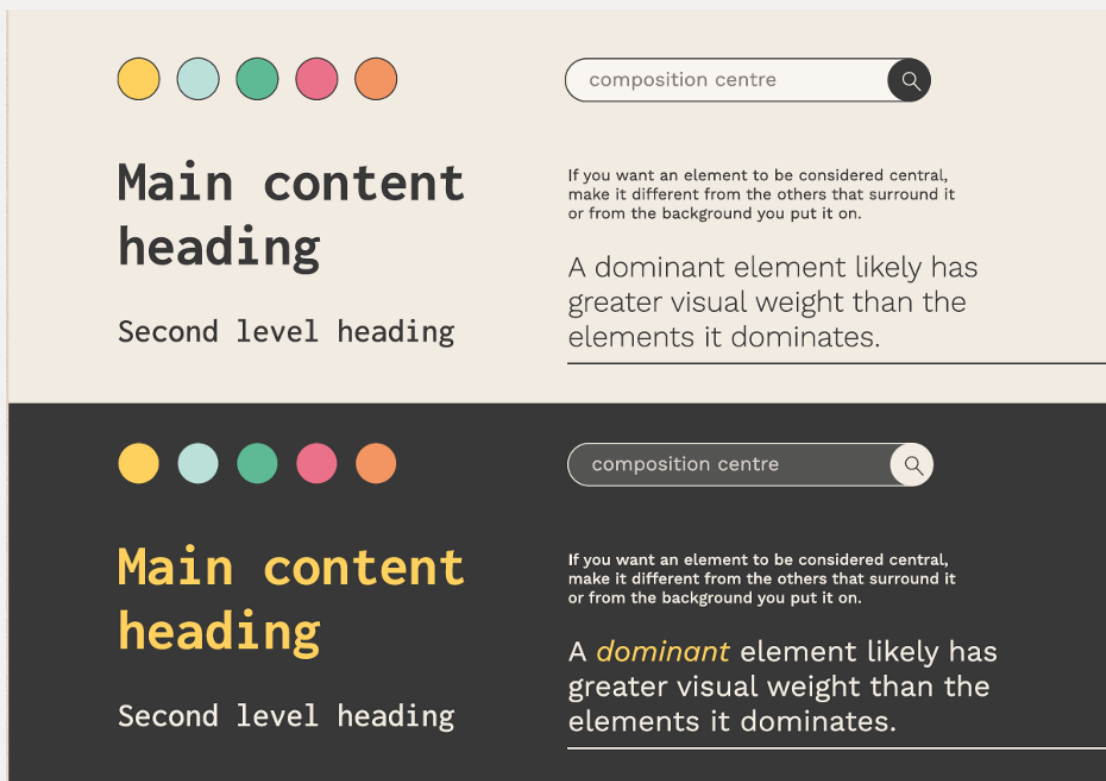
Colour scheme for version 1:

- Warm and colourful palette

- Black and white as main interface colours

- Llight beige as background
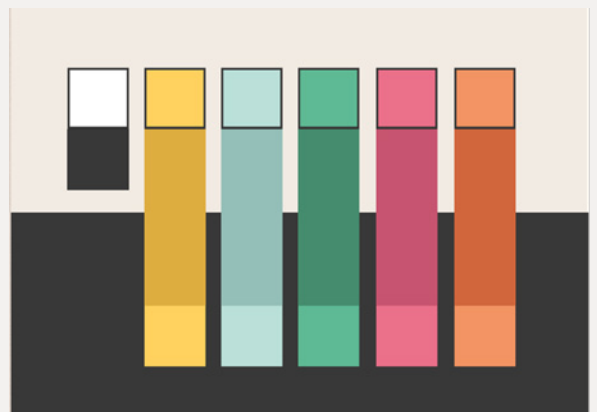
And for the font pair, I decided to try a combination of the monospace font (for headings and accents) and a geometric sans serif Work Sans which is a variable font with lots of weights. That could be a perfect fit for the body copy and navigation.

To test the idea I created a style type showing how the colours and the fonts might work with each other in the context. It was important to put accessibility into account right at the beginning of the project, so I tested the colours against both dark and light backgrounds.

Inconsolata
monospace variable font — Headings

Work Sans
sans serif variable font — Content & interface copy

Main content heading

Second level heading

composition centre

If you want an element to be considered central, make it different from the others that surround it or from the background you put it on.

A dominant element likely has greater visual weight than the elements it dominates.

Main content heading

Second level heading

composition centre

If you want an element to be considered central, make it different from the others that surround it or from the background you put it on.

A *dominant* element likely has greater visual weight than the elements it dominates.

And also test the suggested style, colour palette on some exemplar content.

By that moment I'd written some articles and started thinking about the illustration style, so it was great to test an example of the homepage with style and colours applied.
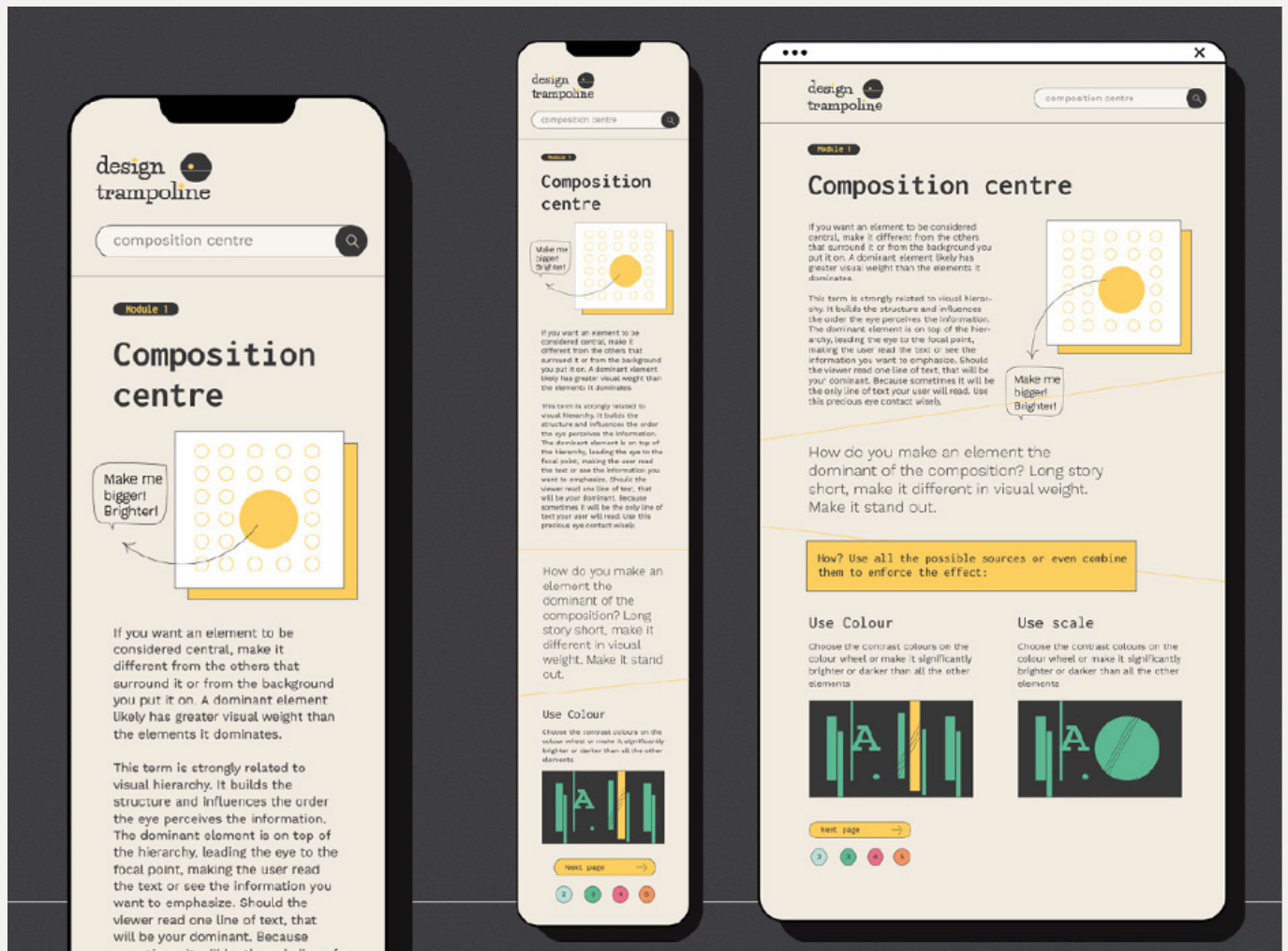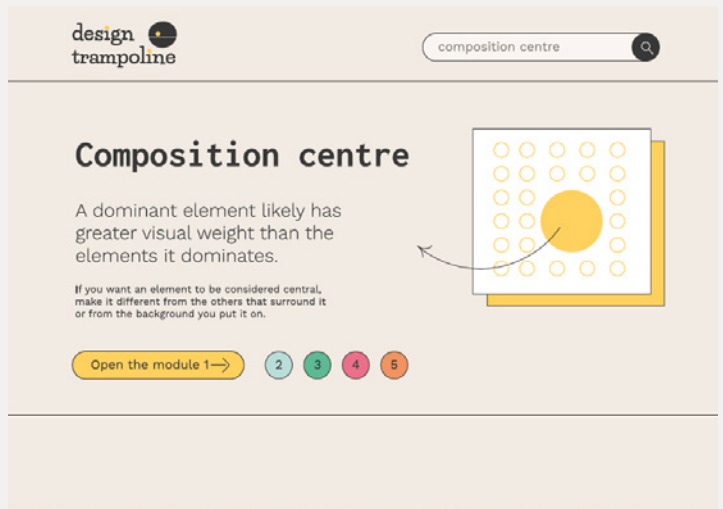
In the second concept, I aimed to make the neon colour scheme work and using the same approach as in the first one I tested all my design decisions on the real content.

This concept is built around a combination of cold and bright neon colours and gradients with black and white as the main interface colours, having light cold grey as the background. I wanted this concept to look more trendy, informal and friendly.

For the type choice in this instance, I opted for a Roboto family which is a font family created to be readable on screens. It has a variety of options, out of which I chose a combination of Roboto Slab for accents and headings and Roboto as the main body copy.
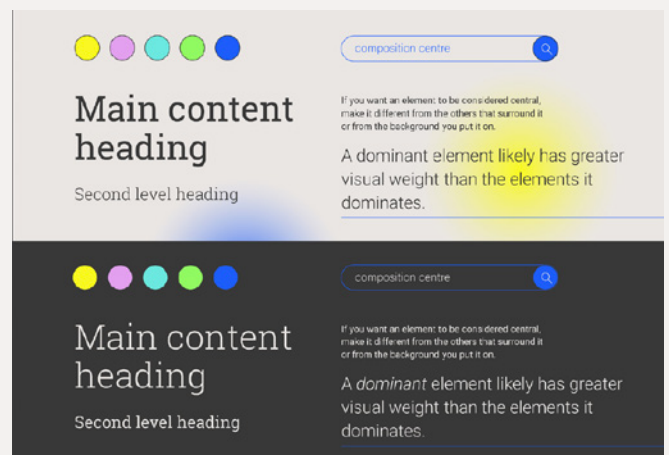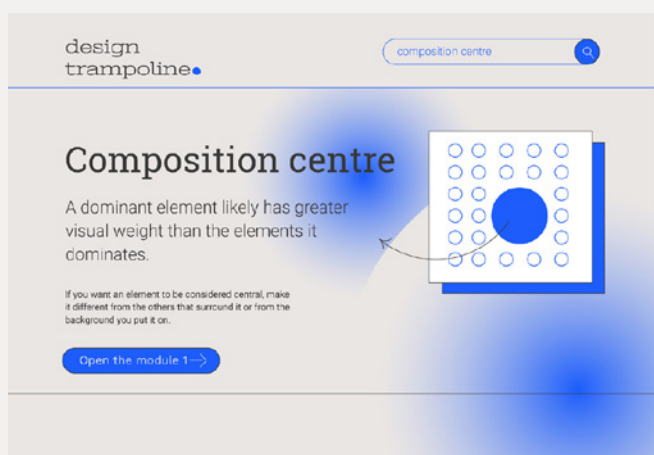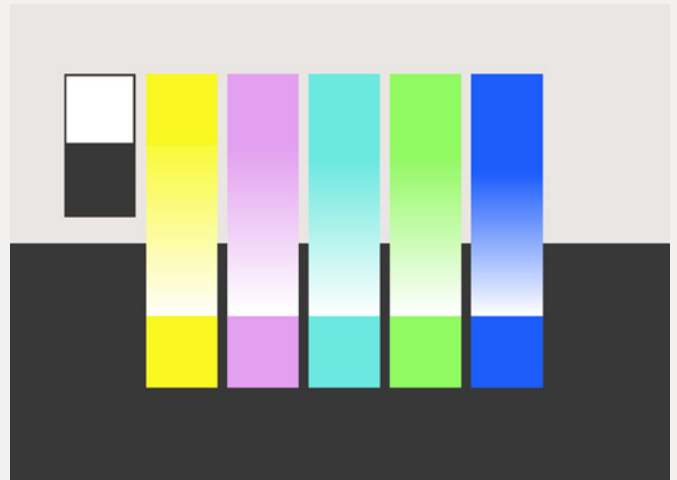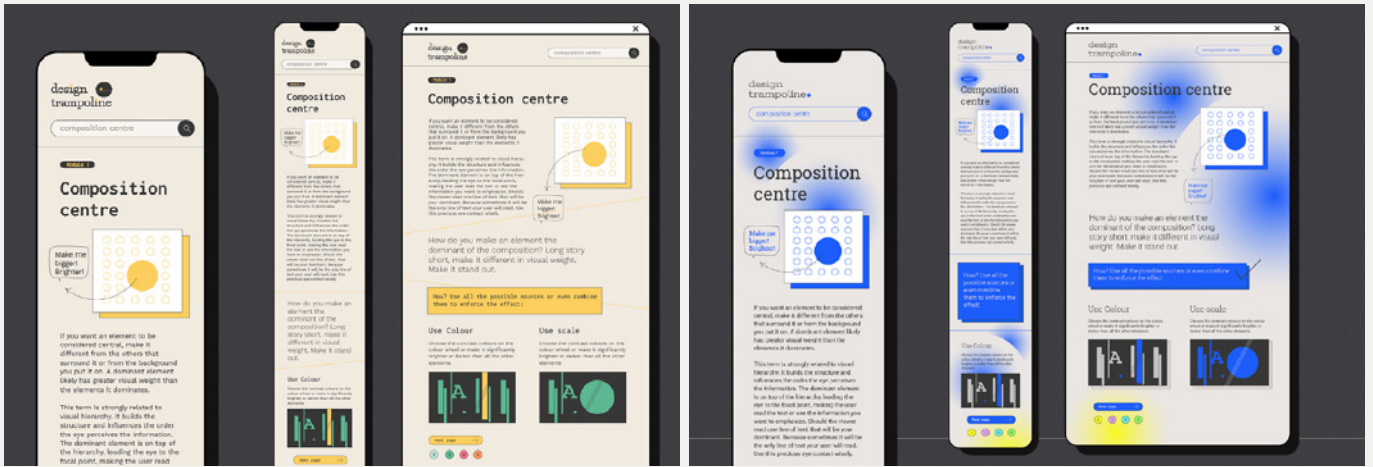
Testing my design decisions on the real content was really helpful to make a choice about which of them I want to develop. As soon as I used the same templates and same content, I could put them side-by-side and pick up the details that work and don't work in both of them.

After the delight presentation, I decided to move to the first concept. Following the advice of the tutors, I took the font combination of Roboto Slab and Roboto from the second concept, and my final concept was confirmed as this:

Prototype

The prototype crit was the last phase of the planning of the project. At this stage, I came up with a logo and visual style I was happy with. The main point was to have enough exemplary content written, as making the prototype with lorem ipsum could hardly help make the right decisions. So I started to iterate the homepage, thinking about main navigation and navigation through the modules. The homepage should be a gateway to inner pages and basically duplicates the navigation. Each of the five module cards uses a unique colour which allows me to visually differentiate the modules and use this colour-coding system in the illustration and in the UI elements of the inner pages. I've also mocked up an example of the module page. To make the learning process clear, I decided to put a module curriculum and a short description of it as well as the sub-menu to navigate through the module easily.

I used Figma as the prototyping and web design tool to show the overall feel of the website. This gives me a chance to test my developed concept both on mobile and desktop devices, and test how the navigation through the modules will work.
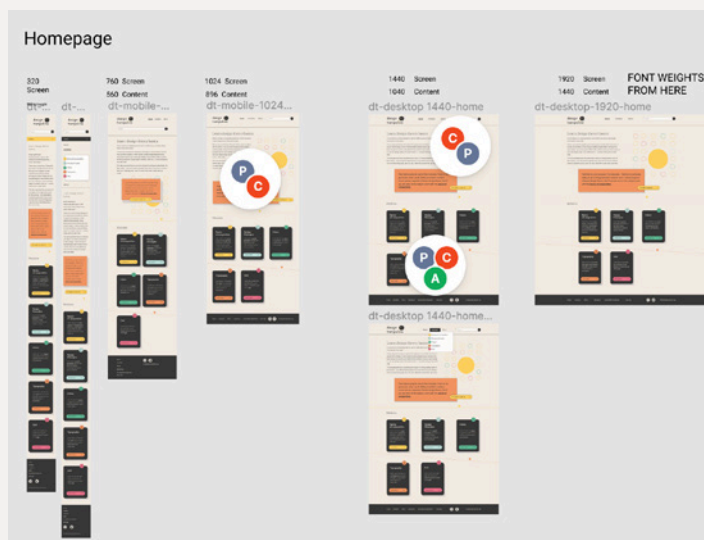
This stage helped me to understand what kind of content and how much of it I will need to write. It was also helpful to determine the dimensions for the illustrations as at the next stage I will need to produce a lot of content that needs to be consistent throughout the website.

05. Development

Content creation

The Development phase started with content creation. Following the principle of the content-out approach, I started planning and writing content. At this point, the website architecture I built at an earlier stage was helpful and guided me in terms of what amount of content I needed. To start the development I need to have all content for at least one of the modules and the homepage.

While writing the content, I was making notes and sketches of what I wanted to illustrate later. As soon as I finished the articles, the illustration work started. I decided to set some limits in terms of colours and graphics and set that most of the compositions and principles I want to illustrate with basic geometric forms: circles, squares, triangles, and lines. In terms of colour, I've had an idea to follow the colour-coding system for each of the modules. But using just one shade would be sometimes not enough, or in some cases just too monotonous. As a result, I set a rule for myself before finalizing all of the images for using the core module colour and two or three other colours of the website palette together. This approach helped me to keep all the content consistent and was versatile enough for the amount of imagery I planned to create.
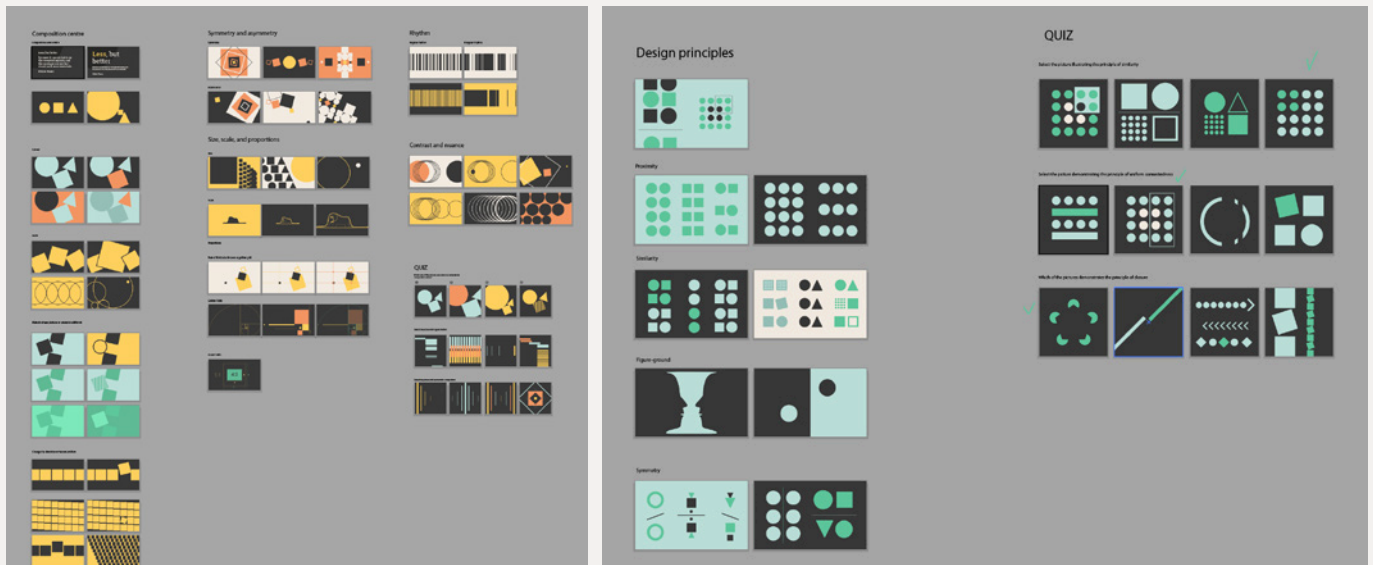
As I already had my prototype done in Figma, I knew the exact dimensions for the illustrations. With articles written, module by module, I created illustrations for all of them using Adobe Illustrator.

I've exported them as .jpegs in the optimized for web format using Assets Export panel, where you can set the quality, file type, file name and this automation saved me a lot of time on renaming and optimizing files later.

Wireframes

As I wanted to work on the design of the website, development and content creation in parallel, as soon as I get the first of the module's content finished, I jumped back to wireframes and decided to slightly change it to adjust it to the content that I've created.

Following the principle of mobile-first I started with the narrowest screen of 320 pixels, going up through breakpoints of 760 px, 1024 px, 1440 px, and 1920 px.

Having created the module single page, the text page and the error page, I was ready to move to the code part of the development as all main design decisions were already made.

Later I continued working on the content and code in parallel, switching between these two tasks. I found this mode of work quite effective for me – in the days when I had enough time and capacity to concentrate on code, I continued working on the HTML and CSS while being in a more creative mood and I continued writing articles and creating illustrations for them.

My source Figma file is available [here.](#)

Site build

Prototype and WordPress theme

I started my preparation by reading. At this point re-reading Prisca's Word-Press tutorial site and going through themes and prototype files was very helpful. Anthony Hortin's book Easy Word Press was a big support in my learning as well. The major source of information is a https://learn.wordpress.org/ page. While working on the prototype I aimed to use the technologies that we were using during the previous coursework projects. I aimed to keep the semantic HTML tags even though I couldn't avoid using classes to achieve the desired effect in the CSS. I still find it easier sometimes to put a class on a dive and know exactly what I target in the CSS.

For the layout, I used a combination of flexbox and grid depending on the nature of the content. On the homepage, for example, in the module cards, I used flexbox for the inner layout of the cards, and a grid for the card's layout within the whole page.

The CSS file is split into four separate files: one with a reset, one with embedded fonts placed vis @import URL

Two other CSS files contain the code from js libraries that I had to use to implement Jump up button appearing at the bottom of each page and Slick that I used to add slider buttons inside the image galleries. That was done to improve the user experience as most of the pages when filled with content were quite long, and adding Jump up button that leads to the top of the page was a needed improvement.
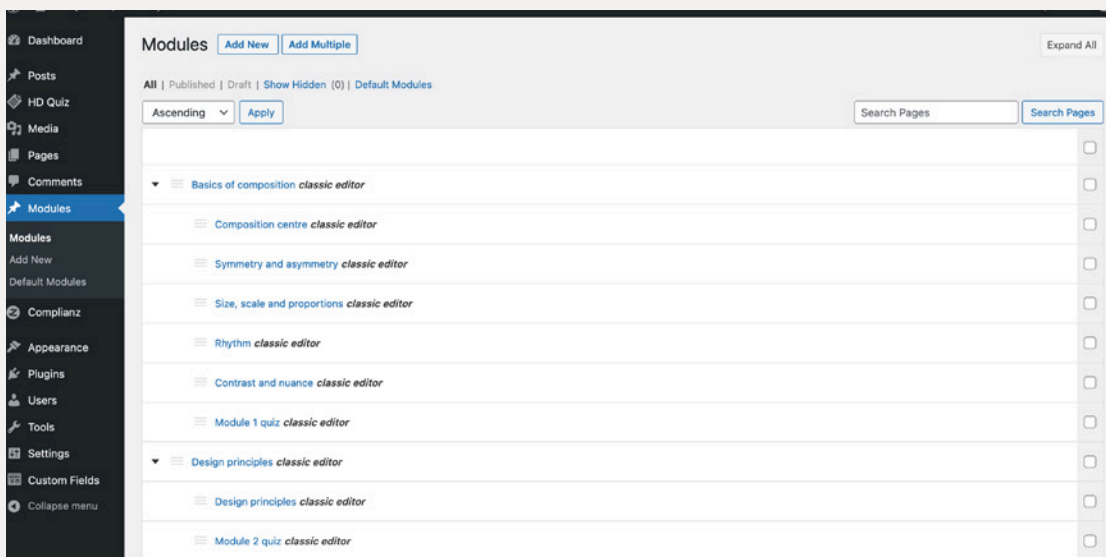
single-quiz.php
single-module.php
single-block.php
screenshot.png
> js
index.php
> img
home.php
header.php
functions.php
footer.php
> css
about.php
404.php

After finalising the core pages locally, I started reorganising them and splitting them into separate PHP files to build a theme.
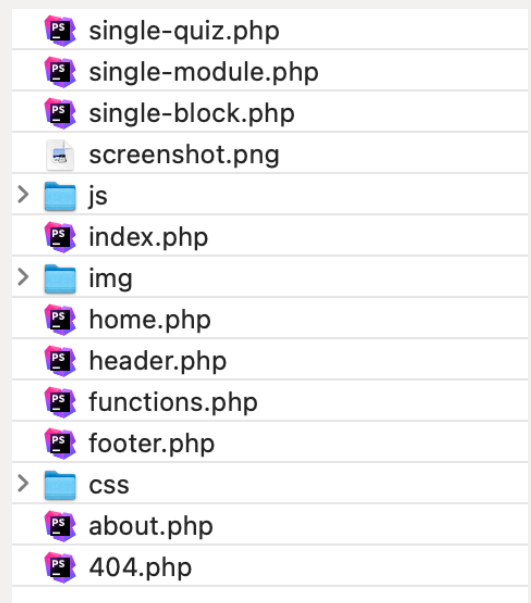
Plugins

During the planning phase, I've already started thinking about the fact that I might need to use plugins in WordPress. I decided not to use the search bar, so no search plugin was needed. But I still wanted to implement a quiz and have a plugin to manage the cookie policy for GDPR.

For the module pages I used the Advanced Custom Fields Pro plugin that I bought and installed that helped me to organise the tree module structure:

While the rest of the pages that are basically text pages were created using Pages.

In terms of quizzes, I've done some research on the available options, tested some of them and chose one to install and use on the website.

Interact

Pros:

- ability to edit fonts and colours, add a logo

- images can be added as answers

Cons:

- results page shows a correlation like in fashion magazines that weren't appropriate for my content

- high price (29$)

Formidable

Pros:

ability to add grades, scores

ability to adjust the design to match the theme

Cons:

- high price (39$)

MemberPress and Learndash

Pros:

- both good for learning websites as it was created specifically for the learning platform

Cons:

- too complicated to implement, and the functionality is more suitable for more complicated learning courses than mine

WP Quiz

Pros:

- popular with high ratings

- easy to use

Cons:

- small choice of templates

- only two types of questions are available

HD Quiz

Pros:

- responsive

- scoring system

- ability to add both text and images to the questions

- flexible design

- free

Cons:

- didn't find any, so after testing with some exemplar quiz content, I chose this one to run the quiz on the designtrampoline.

Testing

After finishing the theme build I run a couple of rounds of testing. One of them I did myself, going through the website on different browsers (I tested it in Mozilla, Chrome and Safari), finding bugs and fixing them. I also asked for some help from my friends, who were not familiar with the project at all to test the pages and give me their feedback based on their experience as fresh user.
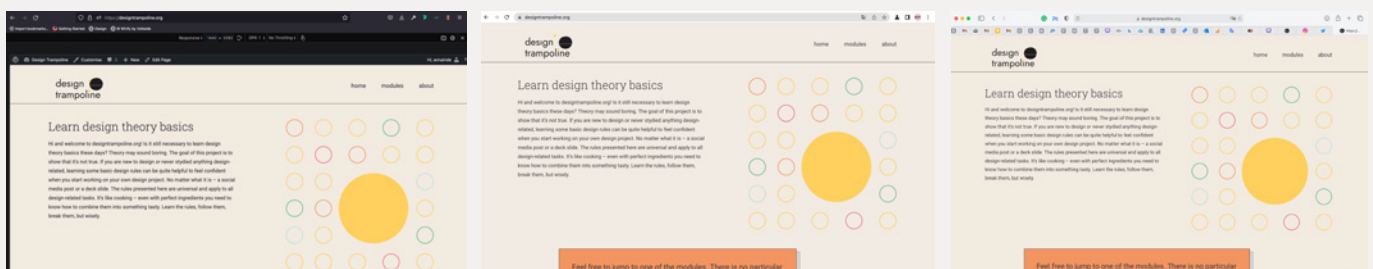
Marketing

In the planning stage, I decided that the main ways to promote the website will be the word of mouth and social media. My choice was to focus on the two of them – Twitter and Instagram. Instagram will allow me to share both the images and the test content, and run the advertising within Instagram if I decide to do that. I could also share the links to the project through my personal Instagram pages and by the word of mouth the project might get its first visitors. I do have high hopes for the future students of our course, as they will be looking through the works of the previous students. That's exactly what we did one year ago starting this MA course. More than that, the students are one of my target audiences, so attracting them to test my project might give me meaningful insights on what to improve.

In August, when I had my content written and illustrations finished, I started posting both on Instagram and Twitter.
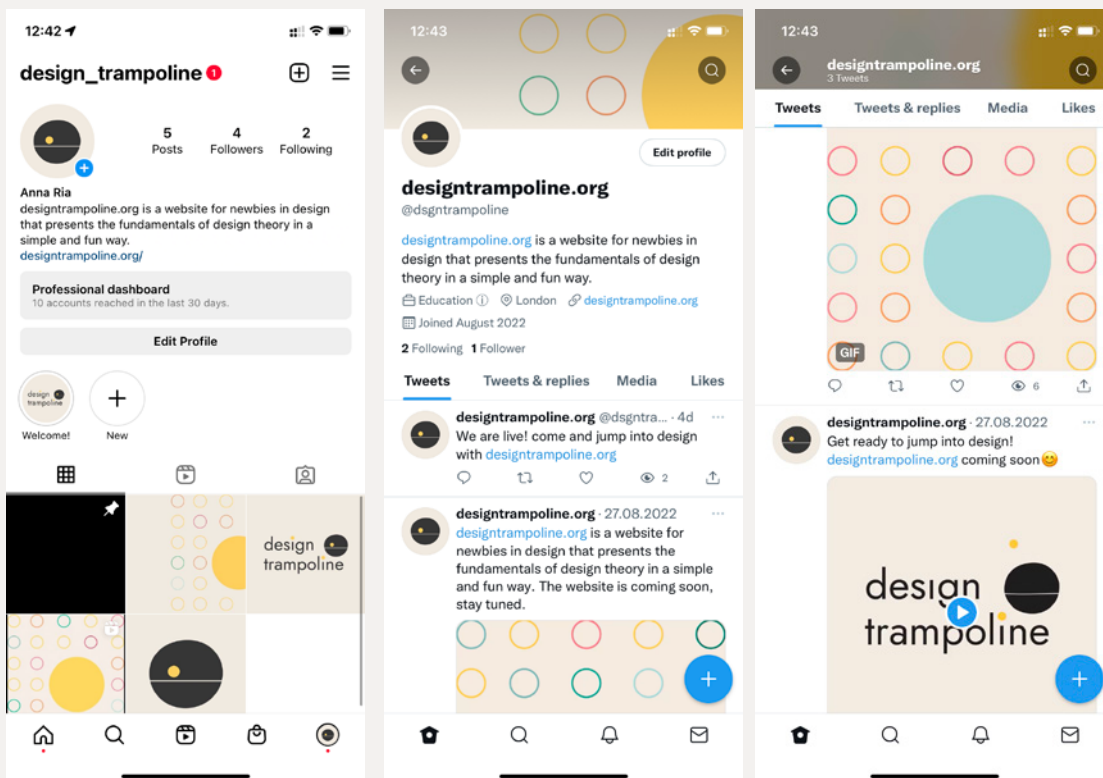
Unfortunately, I didn't manage to put enough time and activity into the promotion of the project, struggling to finish the theme build. So working on social media promotion, probably trying some articles on the platforms like Medium and sharing the link to the website as much as I can be my plans for the future.

06. Analysis

SEO

I've run the SEO site checkup on https://seositecheckup.com/ and got a result of 77% and on https://nibbler.insites.com/ where the result was 7.7. Both of these tools gave me some insights on what could be improved in terms of SEO. For example, adding meta tags and meta descriptions to the head and implement the keywords, which I did straight after. So I've updated the head of the source file to make sure all of them have a meta description. This will improve the indexing of the website by search engines.
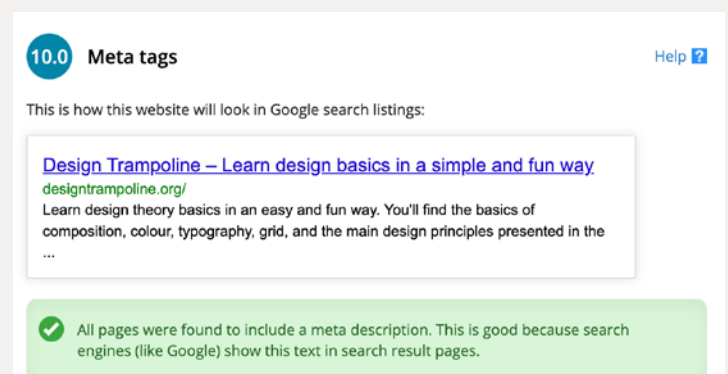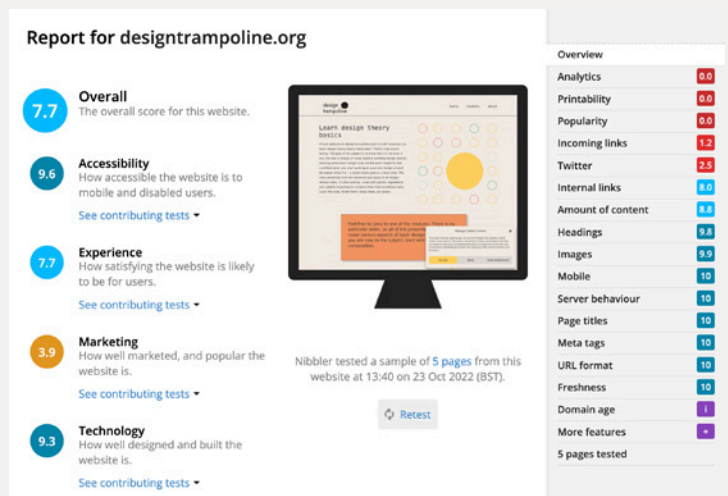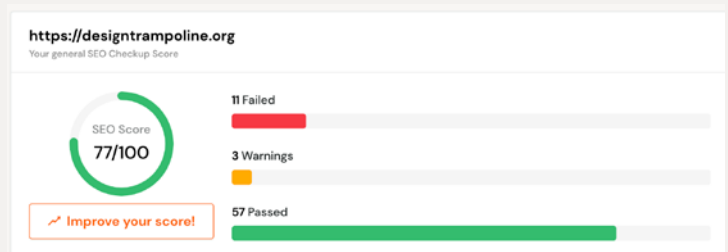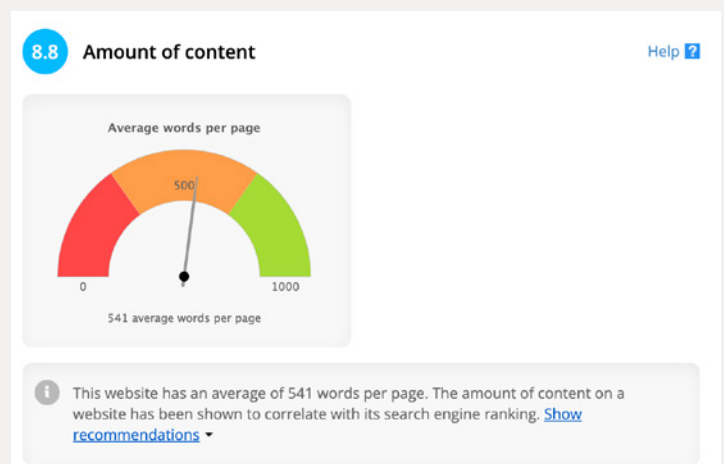
Site performance

The site shows good speed optimization and performance with an average load speed of 2 seconds which is a relatively good result:
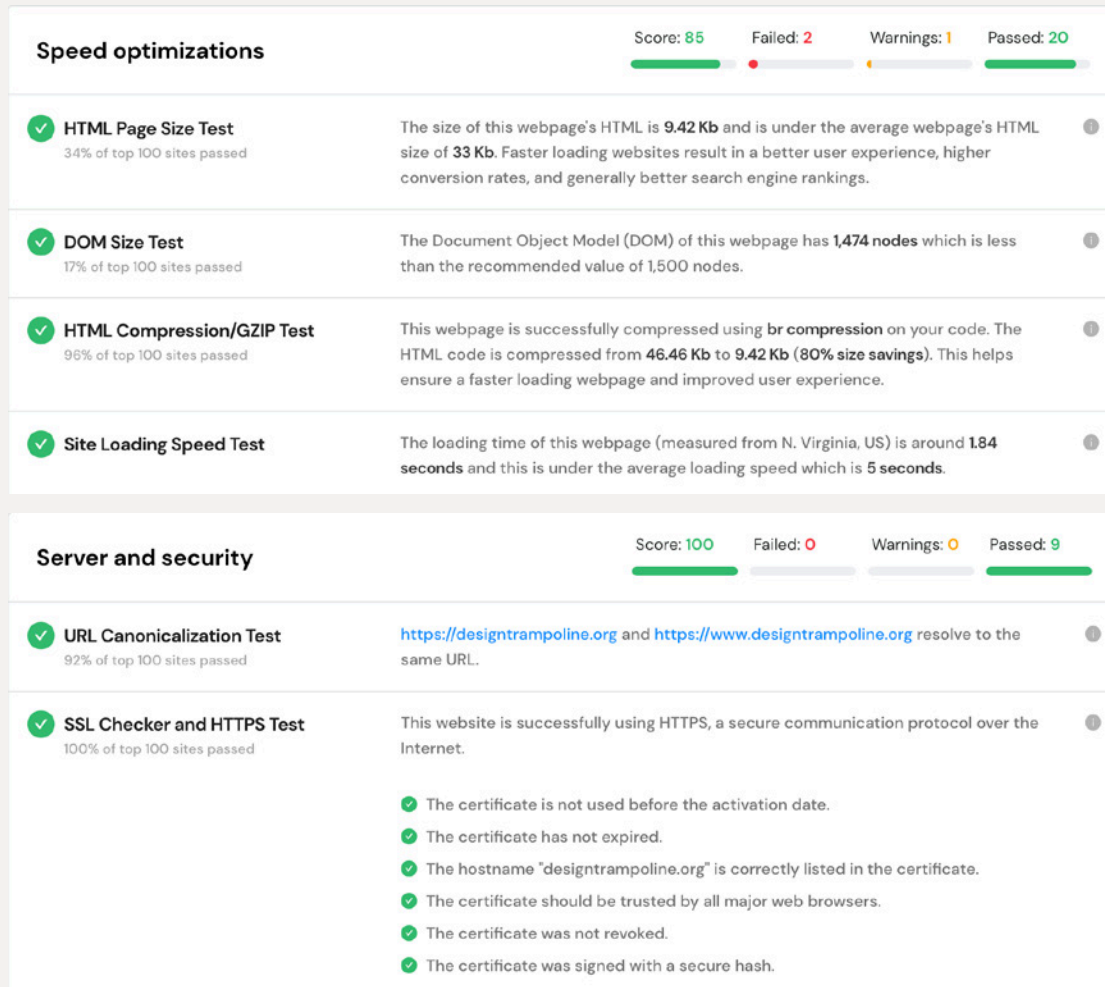
Most of the content of the website is text and images, which was confirmed to be enough by the nibbler.

There is room for improvement in terms of marketing, and it was clear through the report as well. The popularity of the page is low, there are no external links that lead to the designtrampoline, the google analytics isn't seen yet, even though it is installed.

Accessibility check

Nibbler gave me a 9.6 mark in the accessibility check, even though I still think that there are parameters that still could be improved. The https://wave.webaim.org/ tool showed some contrast errors that I will need to fix by adjusting the colours of the buttons as the most problematic one is the red colour used in one of the modules. Different contrast checker tools gave me different results in terms of passing AA and even AAA criteria, but there are still minor changes I need to make.

Analytics

Most of the users come to the website via a direct link, as most of them are my testers and friends whom I shared a direct link with. The aim is to switch it more to the situation when the users will come to the website through the search results.
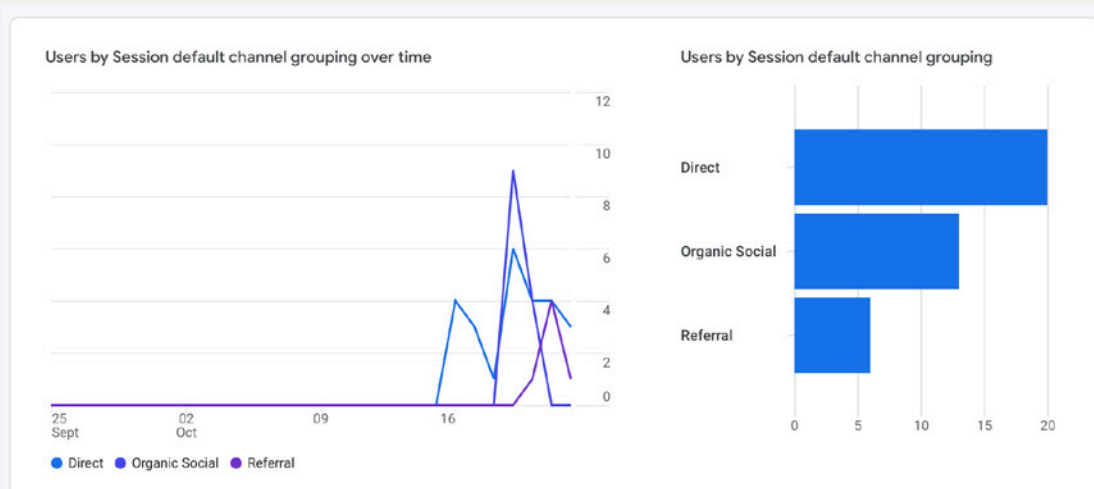
Google analytics also showed that most of the users are looking through the website on mobile, even though the difference between mobile and desktop is not dramatical.
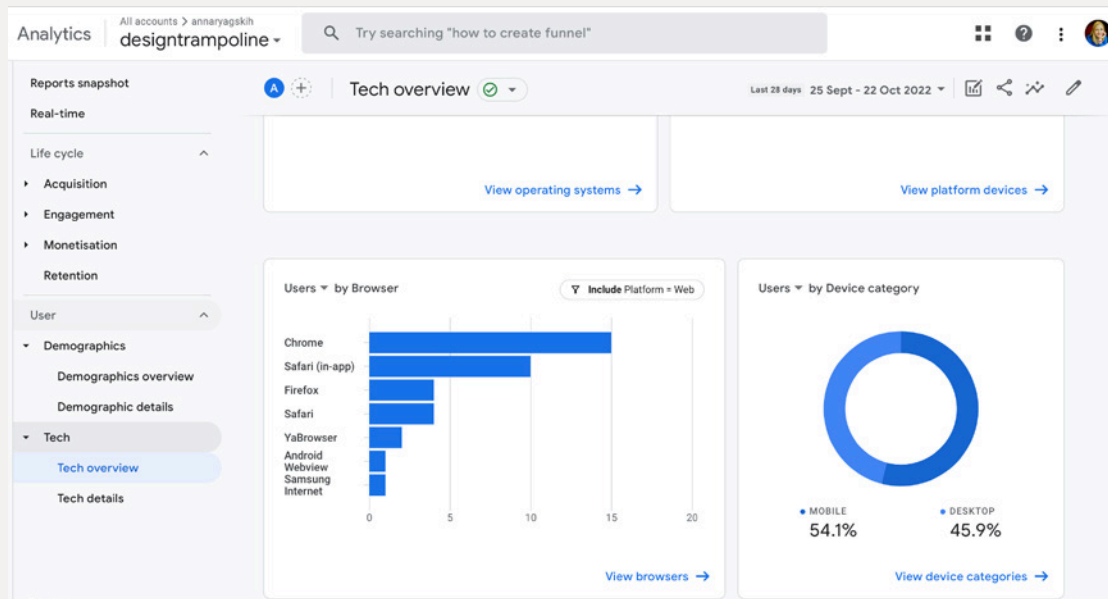
Most of the users spend quite a decent amount of time with an average engagement of approximately 3 minutes.

Although I do understand that it's not enough time has passed since the website launch gets credible insights on the usage, journeys and time spent.

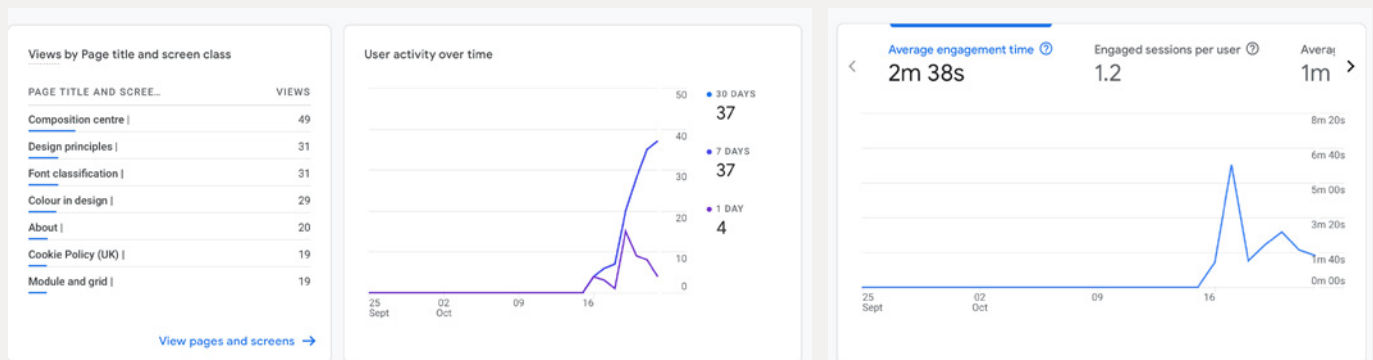The detailed analysis showed that there are still some aspects that could be improved for SEO but that will be my focus at the next stages of the project, I'll mention that further in the conclusion.

07. Conclusion

Working on the designtrampoline project became one of the most challenging and educating projects in my experience. I'm grateful that by doing it I managed to see the project development from idea generation to building a brand and visual concept, planning and creating content, doing the prototype and web development, publishing, editing and analysing the results.

Coming to the MA program I set a personal goal to learn more about how the web works. I chose it because of the combination of technical and creative aspects of building websites. And that year was a big journey for me personally, as I started learning code with 0 experience in it. The key lessons I learnt during the program and my work on the major project:

• Get feedback as fast as possible. We create the products, not for ourselves, and coming to the community (in my case it was our course student's community) is very important. It's because we learn not only from tutors, books and tutorials but also from each other – discussing, sharing, asking and answering questions.

• Give yourself more time than you planned you may need. That was a major mistake in my case not giving myself enough time for theme creation. Prototyping and theme creation, getting familiar with WordPress took me much longer than I expected, and as a result, I didn't have time left to think about the project promotion.

• I found it particularly difficult to switch between design, content creation and development, as each of these activities demands a certain mode and workflow, and sometimes it wasn't easy to work on all of these tasks simultaneously.

Looking behind, when the project just started, I'm happy with the results I managed to achieve during this year. That was a long journey, with ups and downs and some particularly frustrating moments with WordPress. I feel confident about the process I've come through during the planning phase, I learned a lot while implementing the technical features during the build phase. And I truly enjoyed the process of content creation.

In the nearest future, I'm planning to focus on the promotion of designtrampoline.org via optimizing SEO, posting on social media, and writing articles to generate external links and attract attention to the project. Thinking about the perspective, I might add some new modules, covering some aspects of print design and web design and probably will write some additional articles into the existing modules, as some of them are not proportionally equal in terms of the quantity of the material.

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