



Website Design 6

Introduction

Websites should not be developed on an ad hoc basis, prior to starting the website development there should be a clear idea of what is to be produced. In particular the website should address the specific needs of the target audience and cater for any special requirements. This section contains a sample checklist of items and a list of the website assets that need to be collated before coding starts.

Website layout

Many websites are developed without a clear understanding of how they should look. They tend to evolve as the development moves forward and they also tend to be abandoned and the design restarted using this interim design point as the new start point for development.

Initial Design

Professional web designers will not start coding or developing the site until the basic design is agreed and accepted by the client, often known as the scope of work. Normally a product such as Photoshop will be used to produce a professional design prototype. But in many cases a good quality pen and paper sketch can be used.

Below is a sample design by the author.



Item Checklist

1. How many columns, one, two, three or four?
2. Number of web pages?
3. Where will the logo and contact details be placed?
4. What type of menu system will be used?
5. Has the copy for the page been produced?
6. Are there images that need to be included with the copy?
7. Do the images complement the copy?



8. Has a colour scheme been chosen?
9. What information if any needs to go into the footer?
10. Are there any specific requirements for the site?

Applying the checklist to the featured example above:

1. Basic four-column design that can also become a two-column design.
2. A limited number of web pages are required and so the menu system can have one level, be positioned horizontal and placed at the top of the page.
3. Added Option. Current Page indicator in the menu.
4. The top of the page is the same on every page and contains
5. The Company Logo with a link back to the home page.
6. The contact email address and telephone number.
7. A search facility for the site and for the web powered by Google.
8. There is a *You are Here* indicator – known as a ‘breadcrumb’.
9. There is a JavaScript driven email link that allows the traveller to easily update their family and friends with the address of where they will be staying. Quite specific but very important security function for a location such as this which will attract many students and travellers.
10. The menu system for selecting different pages.
11. Text size can be changed and screen readers are supported.
12. The rest of the page contains specific information related to the page that has been selected.
13. The footer (not shown in the above) contains a link to the Home Page, a repeat of the email and telephone links together with the postal address and a link to some *Travel Tips for Kenya* in the form of a pdf.
14. Colour scheme is light yellow and green with some brown to indicate this as an African safari and nature conservation site.

Assets required for the featured website and web page.

1. Gif logo (KaribuniKitale.com) as most computers will not be able to display the specialist font that has been used.
2. More gif files for the North, South, East and West labels, again a special font has been used to complement the overall design.
3. Links to Google for the search facility.
4. Email links.
5. JavaScript for the email page link.
6. Copy for the North, South, East and West sections of the page.
7. Images that are the correct size with the right quality to illustrate the copy.

Summary

When designing a website it is essential to gather together all of the content before you start and have an understanding of who will benefit from accessing the website. To be effective the website needs to be well structured and organised in a logical way and this will only be achieved by careful pre-planning.

About the author

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