

Corporate Event Planner's Marketing Strategy:  
An Assessment of Effective Website Design

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## ABSTRACT

CORPORATE EVENT PLANNER'S MARKETING STRATEGY:

AN ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTIVE WEBSITE DESIGN

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Marketing is a key element in a company's development. Remaining in the public eye helps ensure business as well as generate new clients. A continuous marketing tool companies use to remain visible is a website. In order to be effective, a website needs to engage and encourage users to connect with a company. The purpose of this study was to analyze the visual appeal and aesthetic design of websites for selected corporate event planning companies. The researcher studied certain components that reflect a successful website and then created a matrix based off research to collect data. The data helped to formulate results and conclusions regarding the success of each of the three websites selected. Major findings for each company were recorded and recommendations were made by the researcher to enhance each of the selected websites and to further develop the study.

Keywords: corporate event planning, website, design, marketing

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Background of Study

In today's society the Internet enables every question to be answered by a simple click of a button. This is particularly true in the corporate sector of special event management, where an effective website can serve as a marketing tool used to boost attendance as well as company reputations. A website's ability to relay information creatively and effectively can ultimately decide an event's success. The amount of time it takes to find information online is a contributor to a potential attendee's perception of the event. Lingaard, Fernandes, Dudek, and Brown (2006) found that websites have "about 50 milliseconds to make a good first impression on the users" (p. 1). The idea that a successful event springs from an efficient website can also be applied to the idea that a successful company arises from a website that is able to recruit and retain clients. In the San Francisco Bay Area three event management companies called M Factor, White Rain Productions, and Samantha Smith Productions are emerging corporate event companies in close proximity trying to achieve partnership loyalty. All three are competing for large-scale corporations who wish to outsource an event planner. An up-to-date and user friendly website can be the first step to why a corporation decides to partner with a specific event planning company. The purpose of this study was to analyze the visual appeal and aesthetic design of websites for selected corporate event planning companies.

## Review of Literature

Research for this review of literature was conducted at Robert E. Kennedy Library on the campus of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. In addition to books and other resources, the following online databases were utilized: Academic Search Elite, Hospitality and Tourism Complete, Google Scholar, and Business Source Premiere.

Websites are created to provide easily accessible information to consumers. Searching the Internet is the first step for most people to gain knowledge on a certain subject. Once a website has been accepted as credible by the user, that website has just acquired business for a company. It is important to realize, however, that “the memory is durable and positive or negative associations are highly enduring,” (Lowry, Vance, Moody, Beckman, & Read, 2008, p. 201). Once a positive or negative association has been made, that association is difficult to sway especially when competitors are a click away. A company’s website needs to leave that lasting impression. To do this, companies need to first get web-users to stay on their page long enough to read on and then create a positive connection with the company. Aesthetic design, Gestalt Principles of grouping, and source credibility are specific ways a company can achieve a web-users consideration and are crucial in determining a websites success.

Within the first few moments of opening a webpage users notice the aesthetic design before anything else, creating their aesthetic impression. An aesthetic impression is defined as “the sensation that results from the perception of attractiveness in products” (Cheng, Wu, & Yen, 2007, p. 607). For this paper, the product is the website and the goal of the website’s first impression is to persuade users to stay on the webpage and read the

information presented to them. Before any cognitive action takes place judgments based on non-verbal interaction and visual design elements are made (Robins & Holmes, 2007; Everard & Galletta, 2006). Two things that affect a company's aesthetic impression are: color scheme and social presence. Color surrounds everyday actions and is so pervasive that it tends to be taken for granted (Crowely, 1993). As such an ever-present part of life, color contributes to a person's mood. "It is widely accepted that people's feelings are affected by color" (Gorn, Chattopadhyay, Yi, & Dahl, 1997, p. 1389). For example, blue has long been associated with feelings of sorrow – feeling blue, would be recognized as being upset or sad. Feelings associated with colors, like blue and sorrow, are suggested to exist in consumer behavior as well. When persuading a consumer to pursue a company or purchase a service, companies are ultimately trying to reflect activation-related behaviors with their branding. Activation-related behaviors can be heightened or triggered with certain colors. "Specifically, some colors are more activating while other colors tend to be more deactivating" (Crowely, p. 59). This theory has been tested particularly with red and blue. "These colors engender higher activation during the processing of an advertising message and thus result in higher recall of the message" (Crowely, p. 68). Crowely's study concluded that colors on the blue end of the color spectrum lead to a positive evaluation where as colors on the red end of the spectrum lead to greater activation. Therefore "the inference for online stores would be the predominant use of blue for positive effect, perhaps with red highlights to generate purchase activity" (Parsons & Conroy, 2006, p. 71).

Focusing attention to color to help generate client action is not the only aesthetic characteristic companies can use to enhance their webpage. Social presence or the

websites ability for users to “establish a contact with the company” is another (Moller, Brezing, & Unz, 2012, p. 739). This is as simple as adding a company photograph or self-portrait of each employee. Moller et al. revealed “a visualization as simple as a photograph of a company representative can significantly increase the perceived social presence” (p. 749). A good place to add photos of employees is on the contact tab. In an article discussing website redesign, Wisniewski (2008) suggested that adding photos to the contact information is quick and helps reassure users that there are real people connected to a company. Connection such as face-to-face communication (eye contact, hand movement, facial gestures, etc.) has greatly decreased due to advances in computer technology. This advance in technology has contributed to the lack of human warmth people get from in-person meetings. Song, Hollenbeck, and Zinkhan (2008) suggest that people need this warmth in order to make psychological connections. Psychological connections have a positive impact on purchase intention and a picture can be a way to exuberate some of this warmth. Through the use of pictures, companies can increase a web-users feeling of warmth and in doing so increase their chances of establishing a connection.

Color and social presence are key characteristics used to create a positive first impression. However, once the initial connection has been made with the user, there are other elements to consider. The race against time to win over a web-user continues. As the user proceeds they expect to see “clarity and purpose, consistency across pages, easily navigable pages, updated information, and so forth” (Everard & Galletta, 2006, p. 58). One way to meet these expectations is to apply the Gestalt Principles to a website’s overall design. “Gestalt refers to a structure, configuration or layout that is unified and



has specific properties that are greater than the simple sum of its individual parts” (Moller et al., 2012, p. 740). This suggests for companies to group parts of the information in text boxes, bold certain words, and add visual cues where needed. Being consistent on which words are bolded, which information is grouped, and so on can help users retain the information and locate it in their memory later on. Chou (2011) states that information will be meaningfully broken down into “unified wholes when certain principles such as proximity, similarity, continuity, symmetry, and closure are applied” (p. 608). These grouping styles will help decrease the chances of web-users feeling overwhelmed by the information presented on the webpage. Users will easily be able to navigate through information leading to efficient and simpler perceptions of a webpage. They will be able to directly locate and answer basic questions about a company: who they are, what they do, how they do it, and whom they do it for. Using Gestalt Principles simplistic manner while also taking into account the websites aesthetic design elements, color and social presence, affects the company’s perceived surface credibility. Lowry, Wilson, and Haig (2014) explain that surface credibility is one of the components of the Source Credibility Theory, which determines the persuasiveness of communication determined by the perceived credibility of the source of the communication. The more credibility “the communicator is perceived to have, the more likely the receiver is to accept the transmitted information” (p. 66). Any characteristic of a website that is noticed before cognitive processing takes place is called surface credibility and is noticed within first few moments of discovering a website.

However, another form of credibility in the Source Credibility Theory, known as perceived credibility, is based on trust and expertise and ultimately decides whether the

web user accepts the content of the website (Lowry et al., 2014). The most successful way to increase perceived credibility is by incorporating well-known brands (other clients, sponsors, etc.) within the webpage. Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz (2001) have found that perceived credibility is the most influential in determining a source's credibility and if the source has substantial knowledge in the area of the message. Any company that has worked or partnered with popular brands should be sure to incorporate that brand into their webpage. In doing this, company's can "almost immediately gain an increase in trusting beliefs and intentions from website visitors" (Lowry et al., 2008, p. 215). The proxy of a company's sponsors or clients can be the final push needed before a web browser reaches out to a company.

Ultimately, websites play a vital role in a company's overall impression on consumers. As technology increases, websites will continue to be the quickest way for clients and/or consumers to learn about businesses. "A site that looks sloppily built, with poor visual design and low editorial standards will not inspire confidence" (Lynch & Horton, 1999, p.25). Confidence is key in developing credibility from web users. In order to gain credibility a website must be aesthetically pleasing, well unified, and show connections to other businesses in the industry. These components are crucial in determining a websites success for a company.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the visual appeal and aesthetic design of websites for selected corporate event planning companies.

## Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. With no cognitive processing, does a websites visual appearance affect a users mood and want to keep reading?
2. By avoiding long lists with overwhelming material, do consistent grouping, bolding, and symmetry help to find and retain information?
3. If the website is incorporating previous clientele, projects, and reviews, does the company behind the website seem more credible?

## Chapter 2

### METHODS

The purpose of this study was to analyze the visual appeal and aesthetic design of websites for selected corporate event planning companies. This chapter includes the following sections: description of context, description of instrument, and description of procedures.

#### Description of Context

A best practices analysis was conducted on M Factor, White Rain Productions, and Samantha Smith Productions. All three are corporate event management startup companies located in San Francisco. These startups are competing for the attention and business of large corporations who host brand launches, board retreats, conventions, and meetings. Startups in San Francisco have raised the most money of any city in the Bay Area coming in at \$1.6 billion being invested in 141 deals (Schubarth, 2014). They are continually developing in the Bay Area and creating a new competitive market. The region remains the envy of anybody else in the country that wants to establish their own innovation centers (“San Francisco,” 2014).

#### Description of Instrument

The instrument utilized in this study was a best practices matrix developed by the researcher (see Appendix A). Information from the Review of Literature was used to create the instrument to help the researcher better understand successful website design.

The instrument consisted of a list of questions which allowed the researcher to determine effective website use by each of the selected corporate event planning companies. The instrument was used in a pilot study on October 27, 2014. The researcher examined two different corporate event planning company websites in San Francisco to determine the strength of the instrument. Minor changes were made to the instrument that included incorporating a notes section at the bottom, putting the questions into sections that relate to the review of literature topics, and a small change of wording to some questions. The final instrument consisted of nine questions each categorized into sections labeled color scheme, social presence, Gestalt Principles, and Source Credibility with a notes section at the end.

### Description of Procedures

A best practices analysis was conducted on three corporate event management companies located in San Francisco, including MFactor, White Rain Productions, and Samantha Smith Productions. The instrument utilized in this study was a best practices matrix developed by the researcher. The researcher Google searched each company to get to their webpage. Once on the website the researcher spent the most time on the designated first page of each website, also known as the home page. After initial impressions were recorded, the researcher proceeded to click onto every tab the webpage offered. Although every page was accessed, viewed, and considered, the researcher spent extended time analyzing the about and contact pages. Data collected from each website was qualitative and further notes were taken to improve the strength of the data. Research for collecting data began on October 28, 2014 and ended on November 10, 2014. After

documenting the data, the researcher organized the data into a comprehensive analysis where the strengths and weaknesses of each website were determined.

## Chapter 3

### PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to analyze the visual appeal and aesthetic design of websites for selected corporate event planning companies. A best practices approach was utilized to examine MFactor, White Rain Productions, and Samantha Smith Productions websites. This chapter includes the following sections: overview of selected companies, color scheme, social presence, Gestalt Principles, and Source Credibility Theory.

#### Overview of Selected Companies

The Bay Area is home to many developed and start-up corporate headquarters, which have contributed to the emerging industry of corporate event management. MFactor, White Rain Productions, and Samantha Smith Productions are all a part of this evolving industry. MFactor is a twenty-year-old company located just thirty minutes outside of San Francisco. The focus of the company is to create corporate meetings that are one of a kind, memorable, and cost effective for their clients. Although the company has worked on a number of different event types, their main focus is in full-service meetings and incentives management. They handle initial site selection, full registration management, onsite program operation, and final reconciliation.

White Rain Productions is a new division of a thirty-year old event planning company called Winslow & Associates. In 2013 the transition from Winslow & Associates to White Rain Productions began and is still in process. Located in Hayes Valley, San Francisco, White Rain Productions full-time staff of nine works to create

experiences that both inspire their clients vision as well as cultivate the community. Their services include budget and financial management, décor design and implementation, marketing and public relations, food and beverage coordination, and entertainment and speaker coordination. Clients of White Rain Productions include such names as American Airlines, American Red Cross Bay Area, Macy's, and Twitter.

Samantha Smith Productions was created in 2003 and has executed over 500 events in its short time as a company. Located in the up and coming district of Dog Patch San Francisco, Samantha Smith Productions is a team of eight full time employees. The company largely focuses on marrying content with logistics to achieve that “wow” experience in corporate events. Their client base is largely based on both start-up and well-established corporations whose headquarters are located in the San Francisco Bay Area. These clients include Airbnb, Blue Shield of California, DSW, TubeMogul, and University of California San Francisco.

### Color Scheme

The aesthetic design of a company's website generates a users initial impression. The first element of aesthetic design relates to how color scheme affects a consumers activation related behaviors. MFactor's website was largely black and white with red as their highlighting color. All clickable links that lead to another page were either red or turned from black to red when a mouse rolled over the word or phrase. MFactor's home page displayed a very faint, light grey rendition of the Golden Gate Bridge as the background, with an opaque light blue world and the words *it's not just an event*, in black



and *it's an experience* in red over the faint Golden Gate Bridge background. This was the only place where there was a color other than red, black or white on the entire website.

White Rain Productions had a mostly black, white, and blue website. Black and white were used for the background color, black on the top half and white on the bottom half. Blue was used only for certain sentences and words, but was nevertheless a dominant color throughout the page. There were also hints of red from a few pictures located on the home page.

Samantha Smith Productions home page was predominantly pastel green with a large square in the center that resembled dark brown stained wood floor. Wording was only over the “wood floor” portion of the website with small white writing at the top and the bottom listing the companies address, phone number and other basic information. The only other colors located on that page were in the words *We do the work, you take the credit*. Each word consistently changed color in a different order, only using the colors white, orange, and pastel green. When the mouse was pointed to any word in *We do the work, you take the credit*, the degree of the word’s color would darken and the surrounding words would become more faint.

### Social Presence

As learned through previous research, in order to increase the amount of social presence on a website, companies should incorporate photos of employees on certain pages. When the researcher clicked on the *Team* tab off of MFactor’s home page a colored picture of the entire team appeared at the top of that page. All team members were sitting and standing together wearing black tops. Below the team photograph was

each company member's name accompanied by a paragraph long professional biography and personal photograph. The photos all resembled formal headshots taken against the same neutral background.

White Rain Productions had no company photos on the home page. Once the researcher clicked on the *About Us* tab, large, oval, black and white photographs of each employee were presented. Underneath each photo was the employee's name and favorite quote. The website also incorporated a group black and white company photo on the *Contact Us* page.

Samantha Smith Productions home page only presented the words *We Do the Work, You Take the Credit*. The researcher clicked on *We* and below was an *Our Team* section. The page incorporated each employee's name in a moveable circle. The researcher clicked left or right within the circle to move onto the next team member. Each team member had a photograph or drawing of themselves, or a photo of a famous person underneath their name. Along with the picture, a nickname, link to their Pinterest page, and biography was included for the employee.

### Gestalt Principles

Gestalt Principles suggest that proximity, similarity, continuity and symmetry help to easily break down information. This refers to how the information is presented on a webpage. MFactor had seven different links located across the top right of the page including *Home, About Us, Team, Expertise, Event Types, Testimonials, Contact*, and a search bar. Each link had different sections and information available. The information was split up into groups with representative icons and titles. Web users click on the

different icons to learn more about that particular section. For example, under *Event Types* MFactor listed three event types they specialize in: (1) incentive programs, (2) meetings, launches, and roadshows, and (3) user conferences. Each event type was bolded in black with a related icon and a sentence description as well as a *read more* link. The event types were grouped side-by-side and stretched along the page so all three event types were in view without scrolling up or down. If the user clicked on one of the three *read more* tabs, the website automatically scrolled down to the section clicked on with more detailed information on that topic.

White Rain Productions took a different approach to presenting information throughout the website. There were six links located on the top right corner that navigate through the site including *Home*, *About Us*, *Events*, *News*, *Services*, *Contact Us*, and a search bar. These links were the only tabs to click on to get to a new section. On each page there were also visual cues. Photographs were the most dominant type of visual cue within the website. If a mouse rolled over a photograph, a sentence appeared describing what the picture represented. Once a picture was clicked on, a user would be directed to another page with the same photograph accompanied by a short description of how it related to the company. For example, on the *Events* tab, White Rain Productions grouped the events they had coordinated into different sections including: (1) Community and Civic, (2) Conferences and Meetings, (3) Fairs, Galas and Celebrations, (4) Openings and Launches, and (5) Shows and Concerts. Once a section was chosen, another set of photos was presented. When the mouse was pointed at a photograph the photograph tinted blue with the event title and company in white writing. Clicking on a photograph directed the user to another page that incorporated a short specific description of the

event. Every title on a page was in blue writing with the description in black. A link to the hosting company website was also incorporated on the page in blue.

Samantha Smith Productions took a different approach than both MFactor and White Rain Productions. Instead of traditional names for navigation tabs: home, contact us, etc. Samantha Smith Productions entire page was built around the words *We do the work, you take the credit*. The words served as links to more of the website and were split up in the following way; *we, do, the work, you, and take the credit*. Once on a specific link information was further grouped into sub-links. For example, *the work* link led to a page that had a sentence about Samantha Smith Production's work in general terms. Below *Our Work* were a number of other sub-links in white, which turned orange when the mouse rolled over them. For example, some sub-links under *Our Work* were specific types of events: *brand launch, mix mash-up, team meeting, etc.* For each sub-link there were subheadings titled *task, challenge, and outcome* with a gallery full of photographs from the event. Similar sub-link formatting was true for the other tabs: *we, do, you, and take the credit*.

### Source Credibility Theory

The final step in creating a successful company website, as studied by the researcher, is by establishing credibility. Integrating past and current clients will help generate a sense of credibility and trustworthiness from the web user. MFactor did not have a page dedicated to clients. Under the tab *Testimonials*, MFactor had six individual paragraphs from different clients providing feedback on their relationship, quality of service, and success while working with the MFactor team. The quote was not

personalized, instead a non-specific job title and company was included at the end of each quote. For example, *Senior Vice President, Wireless Enterprise Network Company* followed a quote.

White Rain Productions listed past and present clients under a tab titled *Our Partners*. A paragraph description of their clients and a list of their partners with a hyperlink to that partner's website were incorporated on the *Our Partners* tab. Along with a list of clients, White Rain Productions also had an *Events* tab that gave a quick look into different events the company had coordinated with each partner. The website did not incorporate any feedback from clients.

Samantha Smith Productions listed past and present clients. Under the *You* tab there was a title *Cheers to YOU – our clients* with a short paragraph explaining the importance of their clients. The page continued with a *Meet our Clients* subtitle and listed in alphabetical order nineteen clients they have worked with. The website also included a section with direct quotes from clients complimenting Samantha Smith Productions team and services. Under *take the credit*, a paragraph of words and phrases in different sizes, boldness, and fonts were displayed on the page. Users could click a word or phrase to open a pop up window. Displayed in the pop up window was a direct quote from a client with the initially clicked on word or phrase included.

## Chapter 4

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

With the growth of technology, websites have become a consistent source of publicity and marketing for companies. In particular for corporate event planners, websites are an invested effort to aid in the recruitment of potential clients. In order to successfully spark a clients interest via the Internet, a website needs to be visually appealing and easily navigable to make a positive impression on corporations. This concluding chapter will include the following: a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings, limitations, conclusions based on research questions, and implications of the findings, and recommendations for future research.

#### Summary

Websites are a tool for companies to continuously market themselves to the public. To be an effective type of marketing collateral, a website needs to leave a positive and lasting impression on web users. Aesthetic design, grouping strategies, and the amount of source credibility presented on a website will contribute to a users impression of the company. If successful, a website will create a positive emotional connection and encourage users to invest their time into a company.

In Fall of 2014, a best practices analysis was conducted and the researcher examined three boutique event companies in the San Francisco Bay Area including MFactor, White Rain Productions, and Samantha Smith Productions. Research regarding website design was generated through different search engines, which lead to the creation of a matrix. The matrix highlighted key components of successful website design and was

used to collect data as the researcher examined each of the three websites. The researcher studied each website separately with the matrix and gathered data to form the results. The results showed that each company took a different approach to website design, even though all three aimed to reach the same type of client.

### Discussion

MFactor, White Rain Productions, and Samantha Smith Productions all employ different strategies when it comes to website design. This is especially true regarding aesthetic design: both color and social presence. The researcher discovered that two out of three companies are not aware of how color scheme within a website affects the desire to learn about a company. However, all three of the companies are aware of the importance of social presence. White Rain Productions has the most color effective website with blue as their dominant color and hints of red throughout the different pages. MFactor has the most social presence by incorporating both company group photographs and individual photographs on the website. These findings support previous research that a predominantly blue website with red components will convey positive emotion and activation behaviors, while also incorporating photographs helps establish a user connection with the company (Parsons & Conroy, 2006; Moller, Brezing, & Unz, 2012). The researcher has contributed to the notion that if aesthetic design is carefully constructed, the website will generate a greater chance of web user engagement by creating positive evaluation before any cognitive processing takes place. It is recommend that companies pay close attention to how colors will contribute to website effectiveness

when branding. It is also suggested companies make time to photograph employees for professional use.

The fight to keep a web user engaged does not end at aesthetic design. By applying Gestalt Principles of grouping to website design, web users will find a website more consistent and easily navigable. After analyzing each company's use of Gestalt Principles, the researcher discovered that two of three of the websites applied these principles to their design. Grouping similar information, the use of text boxes, and consistent bolding support earlier research that information will be meaningfully broken down (Chou, 2011). These findings show that MFactor and White Rain Production are applying the most current grouping trends to their website design. Samantha Smith Production's should refer to MFactor and White Rain Productions when grouping and presenting information on webpages. The researcher recommends Samantha Smith Productions website to use text boxes with easily identifiable sections to click. Changes suggested by the researcher will create a more reader friendly and efficient website.

The last effort needed to convince a web user of a company's abilities is trust. Previous research suggests that trust will develop based off previous clients and businesses a company has worked with. As found by the researcher, all three websites reflect a credible company by providing evidence of their clients. The amount of detail on each client differed between websites and the more detailed proved to be better. This finding supports (Lowry et al., 2008) previous research that a list of clientele can almost immediately gain an increase in trusting beliefs and intentions from website visitors. Considering this theory, it is interesting that all three websites incorporate their client list on one of the last tabs of the entire website. The researcher suggests that companies make



their list of corporate partners more prevalent on their webpage so confidence in a company can be gained early on from web users.

A few limitations were recognized during the length of this study. A major limitation was that this was an Internet based study where all resources were solely found online. Interaction or in-depth interviews with current experts in the field were not considered. The researcher was limited to company websites to find information regarding each of the three companies studied. Other social media accounts or articles written to provide more detailed information on the selected companies were not utilized. The researcher was a part of the Samantha Smith Productions team as an intern from June 2014 to September 2014, which may increase any chance of bias. Finally, the amount of data analyzed was narrowed because of the short two-week timeline of data collection.

Through this study the researcher was able to conclude that website design is crucial to the recruitment of potential clients. In particular, aesthetic design characteristics, the use of Gestalt Principles, and the Source Credibility Theory are key to a positive web experience. Corporate event planning companies must be aware of how their website affectively relays information to web users, as it can determine the success of their business. MFactor, White Rain Productions, and Samantha Smith Productions all incorporate some of these characteristics into their website, each taking a different approach. Overall, this research supports previous ideas that websites have a large impact on recruiting clients and need to be developed to ensure the best web experience for potential clients.

## Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. White Rain Productions' website is the most successful at aesthetic design and capturing an online audience with no cognitive processing.
2. MFactor incorporates grouping information into smaller parts with consistent bolding and bulleting to create a less overwhelming website.
3. By incorporating both a list of clientele and a dedicate page for client feedback, Samantha Smith Productions establishes the most reputable and positive credibility connection with users.

## Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. MFactor should consider decreasing the amount of red on their website and increasing the amount of a positive evaluation color, like blue.
2. Samantha Smith Productions should consider removing the wood resembling background and instead incorporate only the pastel green with more hints of orange as they are close to the positive evaluation color, blue, and activation color, red, on the color spectrum.
3. Companies should incorporate some sort of employee photo on the first page of their website to translate social presence to users.
4. Samantha Smith Productions should incorporate different text boxes with small descriptions on the home page that will create a more identifiable path for users to click on.

5. For further best practices evaluation, research should be conducted in greater depth using a compare and contrast approach with an effective website that employs successful aesthetic design, grouping principles, and credibility.
6. For further best practices evaluation, further examination regarding how old each website is and any plans to launch a new website in the future should be considered.

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## APPENDIXES



Appendix A

Instrument

Color Scheme:

1. Does the website use majority of relaxation colors with activation colors as highlights on the home page?
2. If not, what colors are used and are they on different ends of the color spectrum?

Social Presence:

3. Before any cognitive process begins, can a user tell what service the company provides?
4. Are photos of company employees on the first page?
5. Are photos included next to employee names on the *About Us* or *Contact Us* tabs?

Gestalt Principles:

6. Is there consistent grouping or tabs within each page? If information is just listed, how long are the lists?
7. Does the website have consistently bolded titles and/or key words?

Source Credibility:

8. Is there a page that lists past/present clients?
9. Does the website dedicate a page that directly quotes the quality of service from a well-known brand or company?

NOTES: