



Redesigning a Corporate Website for an Audio Book Publishing Company

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ABSTRACT

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The aim of this thesis was to redesign the website of the German audio book publisher Lausch. With the website redesign, the company aimed to improve the overall user-experience of the website to attract more clients. Theoretical information was provided to understand the relevancy of web usability, homepage design and user research in a redesign process.

As preparation for the redesign project, user interviews were conducted to understand the users' expectation for the company's website. The research findings were summarized in two user personas which served as a guide throughout the design process. In the design phase, the current website was evaluated and a short competitive benchmarking was performed to inspect competitors' websites.

The client's expectations and the users' needs were considered when designing the mid-fidelity mock-up of the website. Overall, the website's user-experience was successfully improved as the website combines the users' needs with the client's expectations and pays attention to usability standards.

Before the implementation, a high-fidelity prototype should be created that then could be used to conduct a final usability test. The test would show how users interact with the website and it would be possible to make final adjustments.

Key words: website redesign, user interview, mock-up

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1 INTRODUCTION

A UX designer understands the importance of creating visually pleasing and functional websites. A website is a useful tool for a company to attract new clients and it feels frustrating to see a website that does not fit modern standards, or that is not maintained properly. Most websites that have not been designed with care do not have a good user experience. In some cases, users even tend to leave the website due to an unpleasant user-experience.

There are several reasons why users leave a website. If the homepage of a website does not give enough information about the content of the website or the content provided is difficult to read users leave the website. (Nielsen 2012.) It is therefore most important to create a user-centered website that fits the needs of the target audience and is structured in a way that users can easily navigate the website. To adjust minor flaws of a website, a designer sometimes only needs to make slight changes, but if a website's user experience needs to be improved, it is beneficial to redesign the full website. A redesign helps to adjust the website's contents, navigation architecture and visual presentation.

When redesigning a website or building a new website, it is beneficial to start the process by investigating the users' needs. Understanding the users' expectations will help to decide which contents to display and how to structure the website. At the start of a redesign phase, a designer should invest into researching the company's target group and choose suitable research methods.

The main purpose of this thesis is to redesign the company website of the German audio book publisher Lausch and to improve the website's usability by adjusting the structure of the website and present contents that suit the users' needs. Working on a client project helps to create a realistic setting, where the designer needs to understand the users' needs and communicate the design decisions to the client. The thesis focuses on understanding the users' expectation of an audio book publisher's website by conducting user research. The thesis author incorporates the users' needs in the mock-up of the new website.

2 WEB USABILITY

It is important for a website to have a good user experience. According to Krug's laws of usability, a usable website is comprehensible and intuitive to use, each click on the website leads the users to find the information they are searching for, and the website contains only texts with the most relevant information (Krug 2014, 11, 43, 49). If the website is cluttered with irrelevant information, it can cause users to get overwhelmed and leave the website.

The structure of a website and the visual complexity influences how the user navigates the website, but first and foremost it is important that the user quickly realises that the website provides information they are looking for. Therefore, a usable website should be easy to navigate but should also consider the website's utility and provide relevant features and information for the users. (Nielsen 2012.)

Due to their lack of time, users do not care about comprehending the website and its structure, but they instead navigate and browse the content intuitively until they found what they came looking for (Krug 2014, 22-27). A well-designed and usable website should be self-evident and make it understandable for the user where they are currently located on the website, where to start looking for information and what to find on the website (Krug 2014, 17-18).

2.1 Usability heuristics

To create a usable website, it is important to understand usability heuristics which can be used to evaluate the user interface of a website to look for usability flaws. It is important to understand that those heuristics are not a fixed set of instructions but rather an unwritten rule (Nielsen 2020). According to Nielsen (2020) there are ten heuristics for user interface design:

Visibility of system status: Visibility of the user's current system status and predictable interactions allow the user to build trust in the product.

Match between system and the real world: Real-world conventions and familiar words, phrases and concepts create an intuitive design and help the user to memorize how the user interface works.

User control and freedom: Reversible processes and actions make it possible for the user to stay in control and feel less frustrated.

Consistency and standards: Users interface standards and industry conventions make a website consistent and improve learnability.

Error prevention: Providing helpful constraints and warning users helps to prevent conscious and unconscious errors and helps to minimise the user's frustration.

Recognition rather than recall: Reducing the amount of available information and making the available information visible reduces the user's cognitive effort.

Flexibility and efficiency of use: Personalization, customization and acceleration allow the user to flexibly and efficiently use the design.

Aesthetic and minimalist design: The design displays only relevant information that supports the user's goals.

Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors: Error messages are clearly visible and help users to understand the error and how to solve it.

Help and documentation: Documentation and help are easy to find and if needed, guidance steps can be provided.

One expert only finds about a third of the existing usability issues which is why it is recommended for at least three to five designers to independently conduct a heuristic analysis to find a good amount of usability issues (Ritter & Winterbottom 2017). In case only one designer is working on a project, a designer can also do a heuristic analysis with only a few project-specific heuristics (Ritter & Winterbottom 2017)

2.2 Design thinking

Design-Thinking as a 5-step iterative and human-centred method to re-evaluate the user needs and problems. The first two steps of the design thinking process focus on evaluating the product's target group and exploring their needs and pain points when engaging with the product. The last three steps of the process focus on creating ideas to solve the identified issues of the users, as well as prototyping and testing the website.

It is crucial for the designer to focus on empathising with the user and to understand the users' needs already at the beginning of the process, since all further evaluation and creation will evolve from understanding the users' perspective (Dam 2022).

2.3 Homepage design

The homepage of a website is important as it offers the user a first visual impression of the brand and establishes trust and credibility in the company. A homepage functions as the entrance point of a website and contains a brief overview on the content and navigation of the website (Krug 2017, 85-87).

According to Geissler, Zinkhan and Watson (2001, 31-32), the consumer perception of homepage complexity is affected by the homepage's length, the number of graphics and links, as well as the use of motion on the homepage. Those elements must be chosen and combined carefully to create a simple and usable website. Furthermore, the more links the homepage displays, the more complex the website appears to consumers (Geissler et al. 2001, 31). It is therefore useful to keep the number of links on the homepage to a minimum as it effects the homepages complexity. Overall, an effectively communicating homepage, does not exceed the length of three pages, contains at least one image other than the company's logo and provides one link that leads users to the contact information of the company (Geissler et al. 2001, 16-17).

3 THEORY OF USER RESEARCH

User research is used to analyse how users understand a product and want to interact with it. It can be conducted before or during the design process. Researching users' needs and pain points is a part of the empathising stage in the design thinking process and helps the designer to comprehend the users' perspective. Depending on the project and the product that needs to be designed, the designer chooses suitable research methods.

3.1 Research methods

A designer can make use of qualitative and quantitative methods. The main difference between those methods is the purpose of the research. Quantitative research delivers numeric data and involves a larger number of users. It is mostly used during the evaluation phase to deploy the website. On the other hand, qualitative research is mostly used during the discovery phase of a website as it helps to understand the needs of individual users. Qualitative methods used during the discovery stage do not need a website to test and help the designer to understand the users. (Ritter & Winterbottom 2017.)

Common qualitative research methods that are used during the discovery phase are interviews, focus groups and diary studies. In qualitative research, individual participants can be chosen by criteria to make sure the chosen users are covering different qualities and interests of the target group. (Ritter & Winterbottom 2017.)

3.2 Research preparation

When preparing for the research, it is important to set specific goals and define the outcomes for the research. Creating a problem statement helps to define issues of the website and create successful research (Ritter & Winterbottom 2017). Overall, a research plan helps to summarize the goals of the research and serves as an orientation for the designer. Furthermore, it helps to interpret the final research results. Commonly, a research plan contains, beside other points, the research goal, research objectives, research questions and interview questions (Lo 2022). The research problem answers the overall motivation of the

research, and the research objectives define what the designer hopes to find out during the research. Based on the research objectives it is then possible to create underlining research questions (Lo 2022).

It is important to create simple questions for a user interview and focus on one interview question at a time (Pernice 2018). By structuring the interview in a logical order, users can answer the questions more precisely and follow the interview easily. The designer can investigate the users' motivation easily by asking open-ended and follow-up questions (Pernice 2018). An interview script helps to keep track on the interview questions during the interview.

3.3 Research analysis

Qualitative research, in contrast to quantitative research, cannot be mechanised, and the analysis of qualitative data takes time. To interpret the facts appropriately, the researcher needs to use the understanding of the users' perspective (Ritter & Winterbottom 2017).

A possible method to analyse qualitative research data is to do a thematic analysis. During a thematic analysis, the qualitative data is arranged into themes, which makes it possible for the researcher to identify the relation of the clusters and understand the data in context of the research objective. The benefit of a thematic analysis is that the clusters can easily be rearranged, and the relation of the clusters re-evaluated (Rosala 2022).

After understanding the pain points and the needs of the users, creating a user persona that represents the users' expectation helps to visualize and document the research findings. A persona reflects the real users' habits and attitudes which allows the designer to create a relation with the user group. (Ritter & Winterbottom 2017.)

4 USER RESEARCH FOR LAUSCH

The company Lausch is a German audio book publisher. In the past, the company also produced audio plays, radio spots and synchronisation. Currently, the company focuses on producing and publishing German audio books. The company collaborates with publishing companies, voice actors and authors to create the audio books.

The company mainly uses social media for their marketing purposes where the company displays newly released audio books and teases upcoming audio books. Additionally, the user gains an insight on events and the recordings of their audio books. The current website informs users and potential clients about the company's services and presents the company's contact information. The website consists of a homepage and multiple subpages that focus on displaying the company's services, background information about the company and contact information.

After a first meeting with the client, it was possible to identify outdated contents. With the redesign, the company hoped to improve the website in a way that it helps to attract more clients. The thesis author decided to focus on improving the homepage. Additionally, the aim was to inspect the company's target group and analyse their expectation for an audio book publisher's website. Based on the users' feedback it was possible to build a new website for the company.

4.1 Target group

The company's target groups were book publishing companies and individual authors that were looking to produce and publish their audio books with an experienced audio book publisher. As a lot of newly established self-publishing authors lacked experience of co-operating with an audio book publisher, the new aim of the new website was to satisfy the needs of self-publishing authors.

Most audio books that Lausch produces are in German language. Consequently, the target group for this research were German speaking authors. Within the target group, the thesis author determined two sub-groups; authors who did not

publish an audio book before and authors who already produced audio books with Lausch. By interviewing inexperienced authors, the thesis author understood which additional information and content to display on the website to attract self-publishing authors. Interviewing existing clients helped to understand what kind of support the authors needed when getting in touch with the company. Furthermore, the aim was to gather feedback on the current website from experienced authors.

The client provided the contact information of three collaborating authors. Two of those authors agreed to be interviewed. The thesis author established contact to three self-publishing authors through networking. The criteria for self-publishing authors were that they produced at least one book as self-publishing author and they wished to produce an audio book.

The user interviews allowed the thesis author to directly engage with the users. As the users were located abroad, the remote setting offered to arrange the meetings flexibly. Before the interview, the thesis author collected information about the users. Such as the number of books released as well as the book publisher and if the author released only single works or also book series. This information helped to understand the user's previous experience in the field.

4.2 Research structure

The research structure for this thesis helped to create the research objectives and research questions. The challenge was to understand how users wished to reach out to the company and which content users expected to see on the website. The interviews focused on exploring the purpose of the users' visit on the website and at which point users engaged with the website (Figure 1).

The main assumption was that users visited corporate websites mostly for viewing the company's contact information and services. The research questions aimed to discover specific content users expected to find on the website and if users visited the website for other purposes than reaching out to the company.

Furthermore, the research investigated the users' approach to look for a suitable audio book publisher and in which way they preferred to use a company's website.

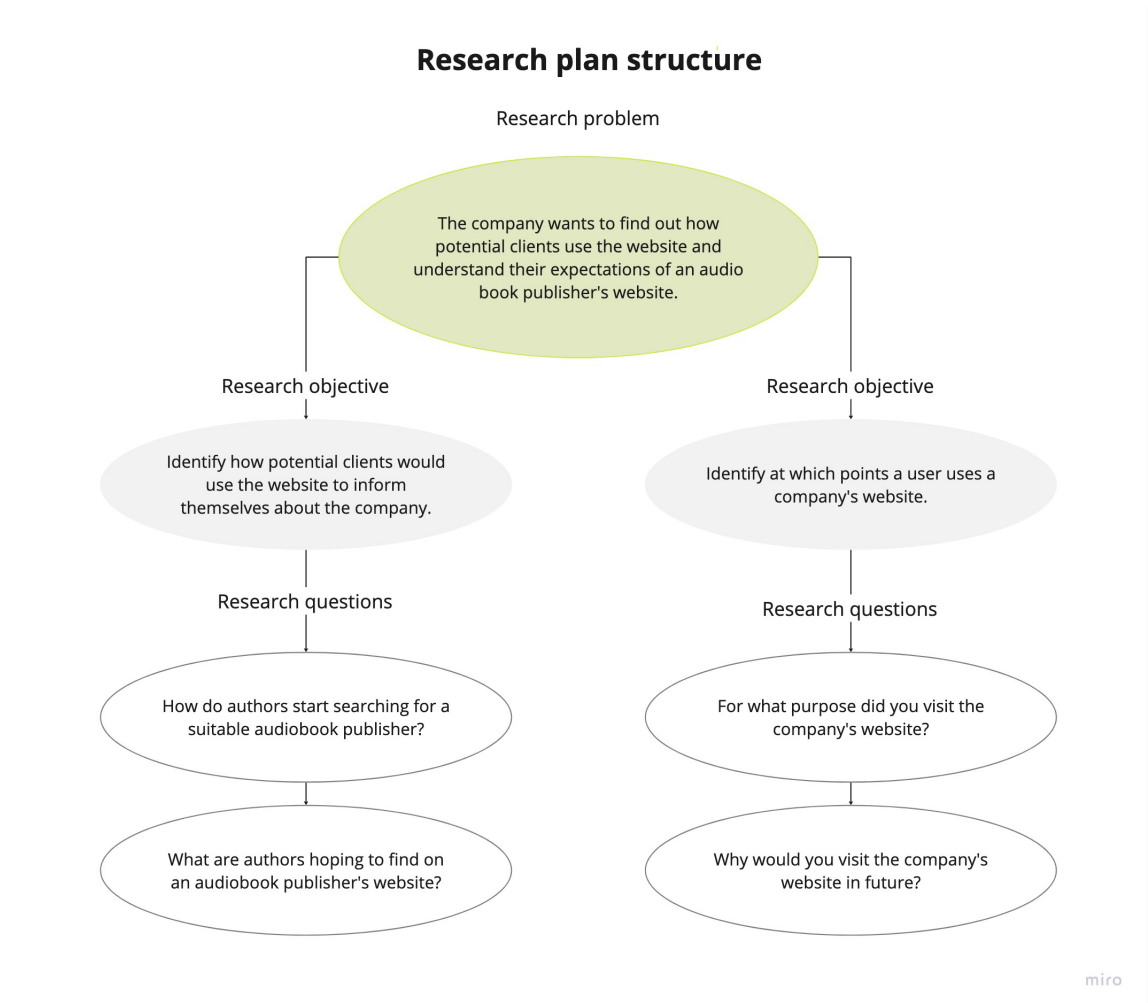


Figure 1. The structure of the user research.

The research questions helped to create detailed interview questions. APPENDIX 1. On request the users received the interview questions in advance.

In case users had previously visited Lausch's website, the thesis author asked about their overall impression of the current website with the aim to identify useful content. Lastly, the thesis author asked experienced authors to describe the collaboration with Lausch to investigate potential strengths of Lausch. After establishing the interview questions the thesis author created a research plan that summed up the research statement, strategy and goals. APPENDIX 2.

4.3 User interviews

The interviews started with a short introduction and a few simple questions to create a comfortable atmosphere. During the interview, the thesis author asked open-ended and retrospective questions to engage with the users. The thesis author did not show the current website in the interviews and the five one-on-one interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Each participant had a different way to communicate. Some users answered the interview questions rather briefly. Others had a very clear imagination on what they expected the website to display and explained their expectations in depth. The more detailed users were able to elaborate on their pain points and expectations for the website, the easier it was to find a solution to their pain point. This way the thesis author recognized important pain points and expectations. During the interviews, the thesis author took notes that captured the users' answers briefly.

4.4 Thematic analysis

The thesis author used the online whiteboard tool Miro to digitalize the handwritten notes and created clusters of the available data in an affinity map. APPENDIX 3. After each interview, new information was added and assigned to the existing clusters.

The analysis showed that most users asked for a recommendation from familiar authors for finding a suitable audio book publisher. Based on the recommendation, users then inspected the company's corporate website for additional information. All users visited the website with the intention to get a first impression of the company and to view how to contact an audio book publisher. The assumption on how users would use the website is thereby confirmed.

Self-publishing authors felt more insecure about contacting an audio book publisher and visited the website to establish trust in the company. Authors unfamiliar with the audio book production wished to be informed about how to

finance an audio book, where the audio book would be released and what documents and information to provide for the audio book production.

Users who already visited Lausch's website commented that they were not satisfied with the design of the current website. They explained that it was hard to understand who the website addresses and which information they could expect to find on the website.

Most users mentioned that they did not see a purpose for visiting the website after finding the contact information, but a few participants mentioned that it would be nice if their audio book would be visible on the website of the audio book publisher, as it can be a marketing possibility for the audio book, as well as for the author itself.

The overall impression was that users visited an audio book publisher's website briefly to develop trust in the company. If the company's website looked professionally designed, showed the company's audio books and provided answers to their questions about the audio book production, the users decided to reach out to the company. Overall, the users preferred a modern and up-to-date website with a simple structure and few navigation options.

Furthermore, it was important for users to see that the company respected authors opinion and considered the authors' preferences when creating the audio book. Users were interested in choosing a suitable voice actor or even reading the book themselves.

The research showed that users preferred different ways to reach out to the company. While some users wished to be in personal touch with the company, such as writing an email or calling, others preferred a contact form that allowed the user to apply efficiently by filling a contact or application form.

The challenge of designing the website was to decide how users would be able to reach out to the company and which information needed to be displayed to create trust in the company.

4.5 Personas

Two personas have been established based on the users' communication preferences and the approach to find a suitable audio book publisher. APPENDIX 4.

The first persona, Marlene, gets to know about a suitable audio book publisher by asking for recommendation from an author friend and therefore, already established a certain amount of trust in the company before visiting the website. She wants to reach out to the company efficiently and prefers to contact the company through an application form.

The second persona, Franz, discovers Lausch's website by browsing different audio book publishers' websites and visits the website to convince himself about the company's credibility. Persona two wants to call somebody at the company to understand the company's services better.

5 REDESIGN STRATEGY

5.1 Content audit

Before redesigning a website, a content audit of the current website helps to identify contents that can be reused in the new website. A designer can inspect the content of the different subpages and understand the overall navigation architecture. In the content audit the designer lists and evaluates the contents relevant to the project.

Another way of inspecting the structure of a website is to create a sitemap. A sitemap illustrates the grouping of related content, and the designer can inspect the hierarchy of a website. It is possible to create a basic diagram, a site map or even a detailed user journey to understand the navigation system of the website (Ritter & Winterbottom 2017).

5.2 Competitive benchmarking

Inspecting competitors' websites helps to understand how other companies present themselves in the digital space. When inspecting the website, by doing a competitor UX analysis it is most important to pay attention to the overall usability of the website and inspect the website's structure, content, aesthetics and interactions (Ritter & Winterbottom 2017).

It is most useful to inspect two to four competitors. The competition can be divided into direct and indirect competitors. Direct competitors have the same product and the same users while indirect competitors have the same product but focus on different users. (Ritter & Winterbottom 2017.)

5.3 Prototyping

Overall, a user interface visualises the content and helps to make the website accessible and appealing. A well-designed user interface expresses a brand visually and creates an emotional connection with the user. (Ritter & Winterbottom 2017.)

A prototype is the visualised solution to the user's pain points. There are several types of prototypes and different approaches to creating prototypes.

A prototype is categorized by how close it resembles the final website. The fidelity of a prototype varies in content and navigation hierarchy, visuality and interactivity. While a low fidelity prototype provides no interactivity and only partially contains visually accurate content, a high-fidelity prototype can be interactive and contain finalised texts and images. (Pernice 2016.)

To arrange the content of the prototype, it is useful to start using a grid when designing a low-fidelity prototype (Ritter & Winterbottom 2017). A designer aligns the content along vertical and horizontal lines of the grid to create a cohesive look. Grids are especially useful to improve the website's readability and allow the user to scan the contents of the website easily (Gordon 2022). Grids are especially important to adjust the layout to fit different screen sizes. Most desktop websites are created by using a 12-column grid or 16-column grid (Ritter & Winterbottom 2017).

6 CREATING THE MOCK-UP

During the mock-up stage the thesis author created multiple mock-ups. The thesis author created the initial wireframe in the collaborative platform Miro and used the user interface tool Figma to create the final mock-up.

6.1 Competitive benchmarking

Based on the results of the interview, the author performed a short competitive benchmarking to view what type of content and information competitors showed on their corporate website. Lausch's competitors were audio book publishers and book publishing companies. In the benchmarking, the thesis author inspected the website of one international and two national competitors.

Especially the homepage of the current website had visual flaws and a user that visited the website mentioned in the interviews that the homepage did not offer information about the overall contents of the website and what services Lausch offered. APPENDIX 5. Therefore, the thesis author decided to focus on improving the website's homepage and concentrated the benchmarking to inspect the hero section and key words on the navigation bar.

All hero sections contained a small amount of text and displayed images of people with headphones or covers of audio books. The introductory sentences of the hero section introduced the company, and a CTA button offered first interaction possibilities for the user. The keywords of the navigation bar provided an overview of the website's contents. APPENDIX 6. All websites used the keywords "Hörbuch" (audio book), "Autor*innen" (authors) and "Verlag" (publishing house) and included information about produced audio books, testimonials of authors, information about the publishing house and contact information of the company. Other interesting contents of the webpages were audio book covers, voice samples of voice actors, carousel animation of companies in collaboration, introduction videos, and links to social media.

Based on the findings of the short benchmarking the thesis author decided that the new homepage of Lausch should contain a slogan in the hero section that

should introduce the company. This way authors could understand the website's content better. The homepage should also show the company's audio books and collaborating companies so users could easily establish trust in the company.

6.2 Content audit

To get an overview of the content of Lausch's current website the thesis author decided to create a site map of the current website to inspect the overall navigation architecture. APPENDIX 7. By going through the web pages for the site map it was possible to examine usable contents and understand which contents to add in the new website.

The site map of the current website showed that the overall number of webpages could be reduced by combining contents of shorter web pages. The production page was quite short and could be combined with information about the audio book production and the contact and job pages could be combined.

As the client wished to have a website that can easily be updated the idea was to create a single-page website that briefly introduces Lausch's services and offers. However, it was relevant to keep in mind that added content might cause a single-page website to be too long. The challenge for creating the website's mock-up was to find out if it was possible to fit all content of the new website onto a single-page website or if the content needed to be separated into multiple pages.

6.3 Wireframe and first mock-up

The hero section and testimonials at the top of the website help users to establish credibility and trust in the company and give an insight into the content of the website. A step-by-step guide introduces users to the process of audio book production. At the bottom of the page the users can find a FAQ section that targets the pain points of self-publishing authors. Furthermore, users can choose how they want to reach out to the company, either by choosing to fill a contact form or by directly contacting a responsible person at Lausch. The thesis author

created three different arrangements in which the contents are arranged differently (Figure 2).



Figure 2. First wireframes.

By making use of the Gestalt principles and aligning the content using a 12-column grid it was possible to create a visual hierarchy. The mock-up was created in the user-interface tool Figma. APPENDIX 8.

Additionally, the thesis author created a multi-page website where the content was separated on multiple shorter subpages instead of one long single-page

website. On each subpage the user could look through all the content easily. APPENDIX 9.

6.4 Client feedback

In the feedback meeting, the client highlighted that the websites looked professional and well-structured. The client approved of the hero section and the opportunity to display testimonies. After discussing the contents of the website, the client mentioned that the company preferred to be in direct contact with users. Furthermore, the client declared that they would like the website to show more audio books produced by the company. A gallery of audio books could be maintained easily and display the experience of Lausch in the audio book market. Overall, the website needed to focus more on establishing credibility. Lausch wanted to emphasize their experience in the field in order to stand out from their competition.

During the meeting, the client expressed doubts about the usage of the application form. With the application form on the website, applications could be filled in a rush as anybody could fill and send an application. This would cause effort for the company to estimate the seriousness of the application. The company preferred to provide additional information about audio book production with the company when a potentially interested user reached out to be in touch with the company. The client highlighted that the company prefers personal interaction with users. At this point, the thesis author decided to proceed to ideate the multi-page website, as the amount of content would increase. The single page website would have become too long by adding more content.

6.5 Final homepage

After ideating the mock-up based on the client's feedback, it was possible to create the final mock-up. APPENDIX 10.

The final website includes an audio book archive (Figure 3). By clicking a button of an audio book genre on the homepage or the "Hörbücher"-button on the navigation bar, the user can access the subpage that showed the full amount of

audio books. If the user decides to inspect a different genre, the user can choose another genre at the top of the audio book gallery. The audio book archive helps users to get an insight into the production of the company and establish trust in the quality of their products.

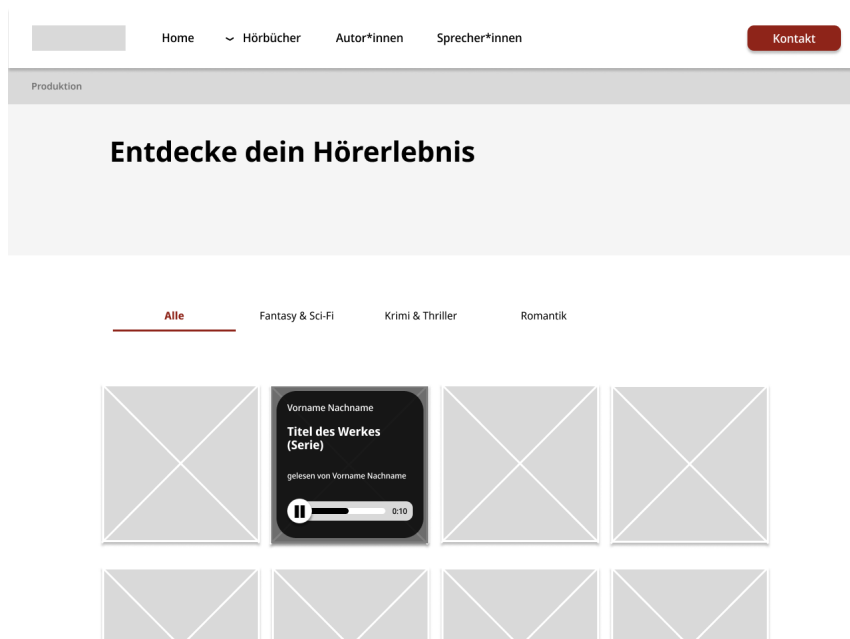


Figure 3. Audio book archive on audio book subpage.

The author and voice actor subpages display profile pictures, a short biography, works of the author and voice samples of the voice actor. The drop-down menu allows the user to access additional information about the author or voice actor (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Drop down sections of voice actors and authors.

Testimonies and the voice actor and author subpages offer the possibility for the user to inspect collaborations and establish further trust in the company. Additionally, the user can inspect which voice actors would be most suitable for their audio book, which was one of the users' expectations for an audio book publisher's website. Choosing a suitable voice actor for their audio book encourages users to engage with the company.

The contact page displays information about the office times, a phone number and email address if the user wants to call or get in touch later. The contact page also contains a short contact form where the user can give his name, email address.

Furthermore, the user must choose a concern from the drop-down menu about why they are reaching out to the company. This way it is possible for the company to filter the urgency of the message. As user mentioned in the interview that it can be frustrating if a company does not reply or does not receive their message. For this reason, the contact page informs the user about the timeframe in which they will get back to the user. The FAQ section is most important for self-publishing authors. The section targets the pain points of the users such as financial advances, rights of authors, information for self-publishers (Figure 5).

Wir sind immer für dich da!

Bei persönlicher Kontaktaufnahme gibt es weitere Anleitungen für deine Bewerbung und der individuellen Hörbuchproduktion. Wir bieten ebenfalls Beratung bei der Wahl der Sprecher deines Hörbuchs.

Mo.-Do. 8:00-18:00 Uhr
Fr. 8:00-17:00 Uhr

01234 567 89
emailadresse@domain.de

Du bist uns wichtig und wir melden uns spätestens nach xyz Werktagen/Wochen bei dir.

Kontaktiere uns!


Name

E-mail Adresse


Thema

Nachricht


Unsere Ansprechpartner



Vorname Nachname
Beruf



Vorname Nachname
Beruf



Vorname Nachname
Beruf

FAQ: Hier findest du Antworten zu den wichtigsten Fragen

Frage/Thema 1 ▼

Frage/Thema 2 ▼

Frage/Thema 3 ▼

Frage/Thema 4 ▼

Frage/Thema 5 ▼

Figure 5. Contact page with FAQ section.

6.6 Heuristic evaluation

To create a match between system and the real world the text of the contact page is supported by icons and the website displays the audio book covers, which are in most cases identical to the covers of the physical books.

The website keeps the user informed about their system status with a scrollbar, a breadcrumb and colour indicators when filtering the audio books. When listening to audio tracks, the play bar helps to keep track of the progress and length of the audio sample.

The user can pause audio samples and before listening to a new sample the user needs to stop the previous audio. This way the user stays in control. Additionally, the drop-down menu hides additional information about authors and voice actors and the user can uncheck the filtering options on the subpage. The arrangement of the subpages allows the user to scan the subpage easily and the user can keep track of the content of the website when scrolling.

As the audio book covers and the play bars draw most of the users' attention the thesis author decided to reuse the colour scheme of the current website. The grey tones create a visually cohesive look and the dark red accentuates buttons, links and interactive components. This way, the user can easily identify interaction possibilities.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In this project, the findings of the user research were used to create a final mock-up. The process of choosing the right contents and adjusting the layout to support the users' needs was challenging. But the created user personas helped to remember the users' needs. The final mock-up was created in the collaborative user-interface tool Figma which could be used in the further design process to create a high-fidelity prototype.

To maintain the website, it is recommended to regularly update the website's content and track the traffic of the website, which can be used as quantitative data for an upcoming redesign. It is recommended to test the website once a month for 15 minutes with three participants (Krug 2014, 114-117). Testing the website regularly will help to adjust the website gradually to the users' needs and prevents a redesign in close future. For further development, it is recommended to create a high-fidelity and responsive prototype of the website that can be tested before the final launch. The responsive prototype will help to test if the website can be easily accessed on mobile devices. After the usability test, usability flaws can be spotted easily and after adjusting the final prototype, the website can be implemented. For the future development of the website, it is important to keep in mind that the users' needs might have to be re-evaluated at some point and the website needs to be updated frequently to present relevant contents for the users.

The thesis project shows the importance of understanding the users' needs before designing the prototype. User research is especially valuable to conduct at the beginning of a website redesign and user interviews are a suitable qualitative research method to empathise with the users and gain an inside into the users' needs and pain points. For conducting user interviews, a designer needs to be patient and have the necessary soft skills to lead the conversation. Additionally, the research project shows that it is not always easy to combine the users' needs with the client expectations. In those situations, it can be time intensive to make bigger changes on the mock-up but in any case, it is necessary to prioritize the users' needs and communicate compromises in the layout with the client.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview questions

Interview questions

Target group 1 (authors who have not yet been in contact with the company)

1. Which way would you find out about an interesting audio book publisher?
2. For what purpose do you visit the corporate websites of an audio book publisher? What do you wish to find out?
3. What would you like to know in advance about an audio book publisher and the production services?
4. For which occasions would you visit the website of an audio book publisher? (At which point of time?)
5. What do you expect from an audio book company's corporate website? Name the three most important aspects.

Target group 2 (authors who are collaborating with the company)

1. How/which way did you find out about the company?
2. Did you visit the website at some point? What for?
3. What would you have liked to know in advance about the company and its service?
4. What do you expect from Lausch's corporate website? (Did the company's website meet your expectations?)
5. Do you see yourself using the website of Lausch in future?
6. Describe the company Lausch in 3 words.
7. Is there anything you specifically expect from the company's website? Name three things.

Appendix 2. Research plan

Research plan

User interview on the use of an audiobook publisher's website

Bachelor's thesis (Nadine Bolduan)

Research statement

I am conducting this user interview to determine German authors' interest and expectations for an audio book publisher's website. Are the interests of existing and potential clients overlapping at some points?

Strategy

I will try to get an insight into the target group's interests. During the interview, I will ask questions that reveal how authors are using the websites of audio book publishers. I will interview existing clients about the use of the company's website in hopes of understanding how clients prefer to contact a company. It will be interesting to see if the current website fulfils the client's expectations and if not, what can be improved. The results of the interview will show if the interests of the two target groups overlap. The results will help to create a new user-centered design of the company's website.

Company goals

How do new clients find the company?

What are the potential benefits of a website redesign?

How to keep the website minimalistic and visually appealing, while fitting the modern standards of a corporate website?

Is it possible to create a website that is easy to maintain (and contains the above-mentioned conditions)?

Research goals & questions

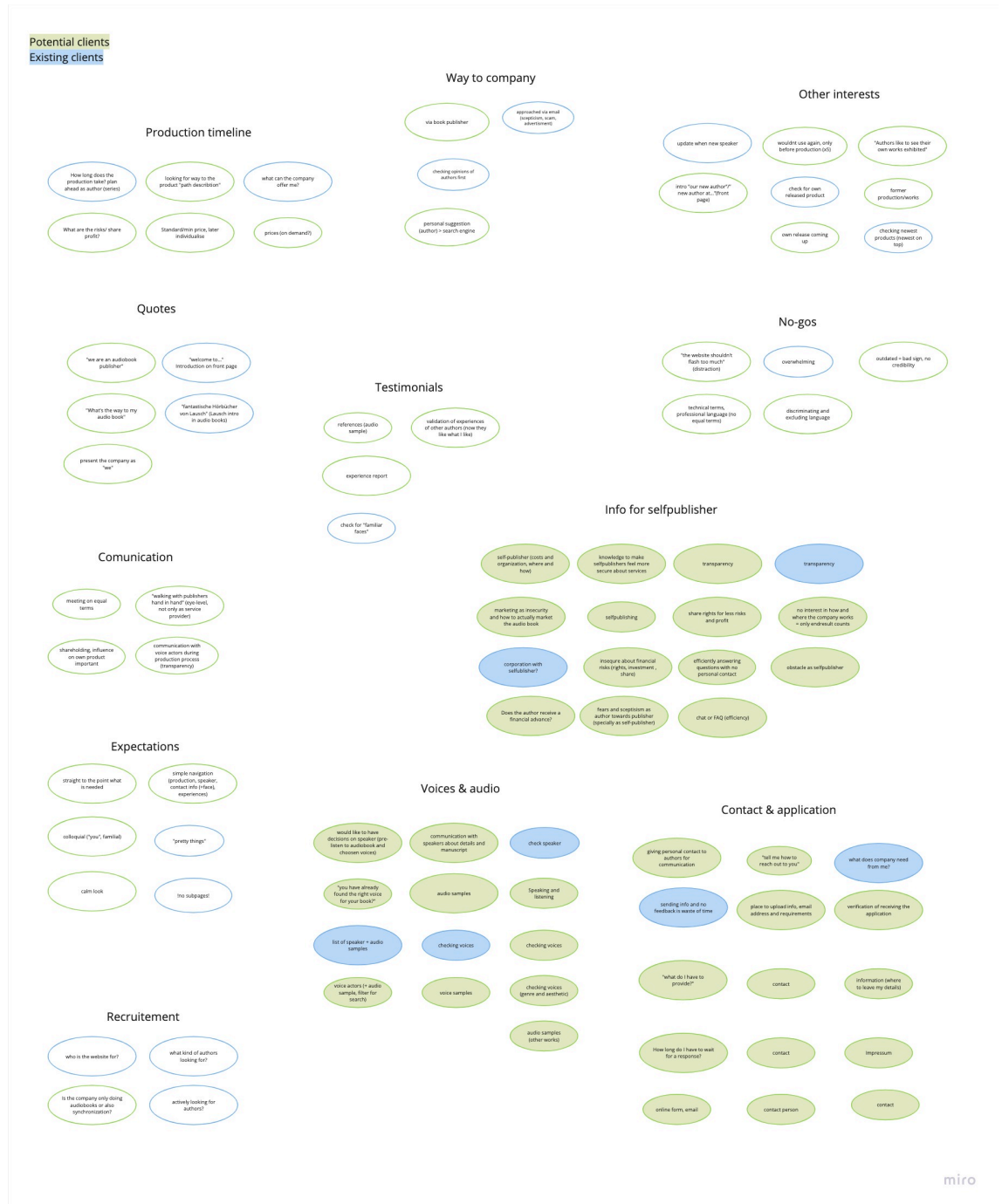
I am especially interested in finding pain points that can be avoided and interests that might be considered:

- What type of content is interesting for Authors to see or interact with on the corporate website of Lausch? What are their expectations of the website?
- In which way does the website need to improve to attract potential new clients?
- In which way might the website be used by existing clients and what features are most valuable to them?

Result

The research will be a possibility to gain insight into the user's expectations for a corporate website of an audiobook publisher. The insights will be used to create a mock-up of the restructured website.

Appendix 3. Affinity map



Appendix 4. User personas

Bio

Name	Marlene Schmidt
Age	38
Job	Part time author
Other	Mother of two children Currently self-publishing Few experiences as author

Background

Due to her responsibilities as mother she has a full schedule and likes to work and communicate efficiently. Her pain points are her insecurities as self-publisher and no former experience with publishing an audio book.

Pain points

At which point do I receive the profit?

What kind of author is the company looking for?

Are they answering my email?

Do I have to provide an advance?

Are they currently looking for authors?

miro

Bio

Name	Franz Platzer
Age	55
Job	Full time author
Other	Collaborating with book publisher Experienced author

Background

He prefers in person contact and explore new ways and mediums of story telling. He decides to start publishing his latest series as audiobooks. He is looking for a company who cares about the story and values the author behind the books. Furthermore, he prefers personal contact to make sure his books are in the right hands.

Pain points

Does the company consider my creative preferences (e.g. personal voice actor)?

I hope they care about my story and do not do any changes on my story!

Can I be in personal contact with a responsible person at the company?

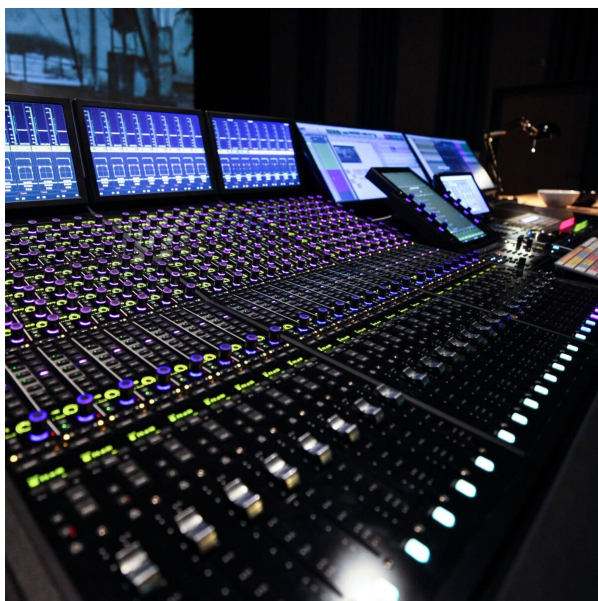
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Appendix 5. Homepage of old website

Screenshot of the old homepage (Merlausch.de)



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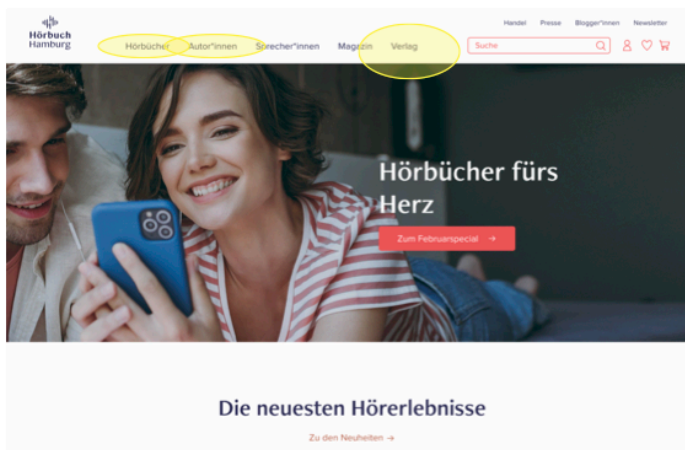
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Appendix 6. Competitive benchmarking

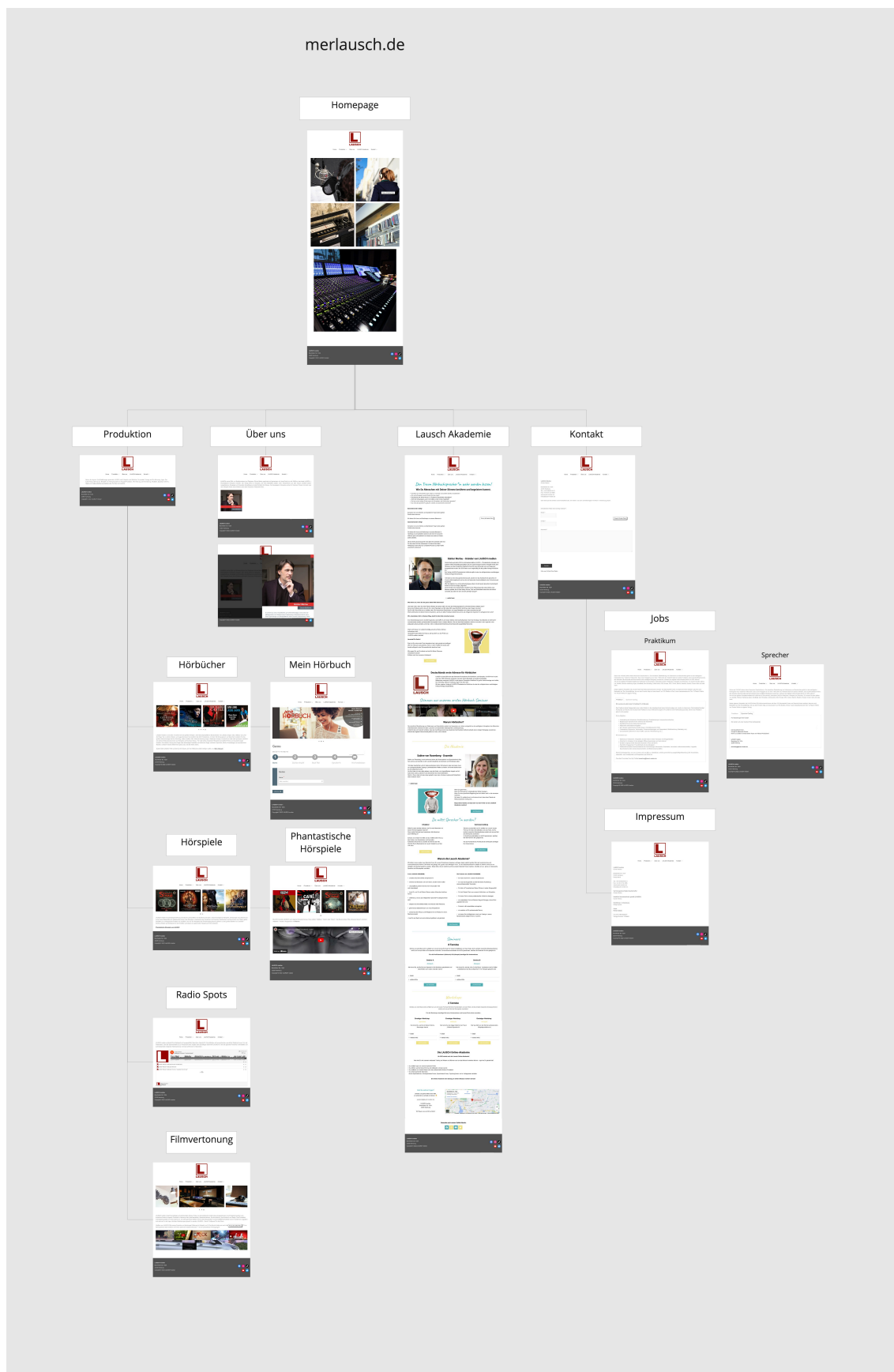
Hero images of competitors' websites (sagastorify.de, hoerbuch-hamburg.de, argon-verlag.de)

Hero & navigation

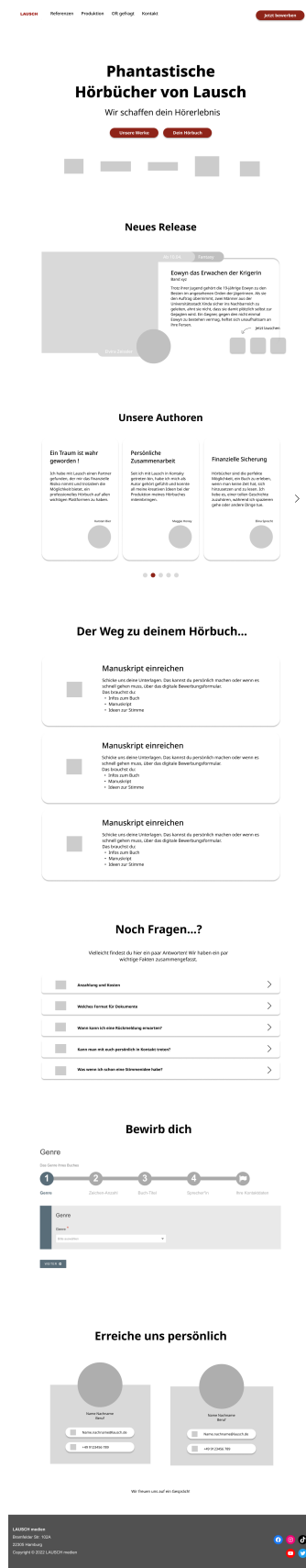


Appendix 7. Sitemap of old website

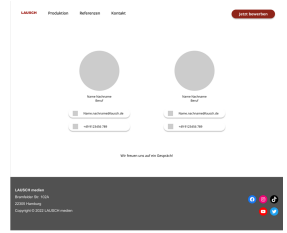
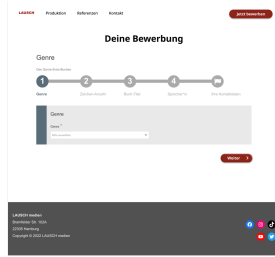
Screenshots of the old webpages (merlausch.de)



Appendix 8. Mock-up of the single-page website



Appendix 9. Mock-up of the multi-page website



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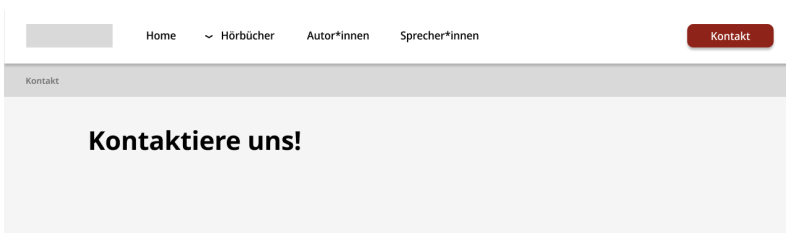
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