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Personal Branding and Visual Identity: A Case Study of Personal Web Portfolio.

Bachelor's Thesis 2016

ABSTRACT

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The goal of this project was to design a web portfolio for a graduating design student and to report on the process. The project is based on the existing personal visual identity of the student. This paper is created as an instruction for the reader describing the process of personal online portfolio design simply by defining and explaining the main terms and methods used for web design and development.

This thesis work consists of six parts, depending on how the design process proceeded. These parts include research, project management, content development, information gathering, design and an overview of the development process and techniques.

The objective of this work is to create guidelines for newcomers in the design industry. By using these guidelines students and amateur designers can create their own design portfolio which will be well balanced, clean and in trend with the times.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This work aims to report the process of designing and developing a web portfolio for a graduating bachelor design student specializing in web design and development. It will define what a portfolio website is, it will also explain the basic theory and elements of an online portfolio design process. Further this work presents different ways and channels through which a design student can create and develop a personal online portfolio. By covering aspects such as: how to integrate personal visual identity and what is required to build an effective portfolio. In order to carry out this process, it is essential to understand various strategies and techniques that are used to today, while acquiring skill full understanding of modern tools and trends.

In the following section, a description of existing web development methods, platforms and reviews of the most popular web design styles have been included. (Adham Dannavay, 2013)

During five years of studies, the writer of this paper, has created a large number of works, which has to be included into a professional design portfolio. The portfolio should be well structured and is to be launched in December 2015. The design of the portfolio will be based on the already existing personal visual identity of the author of this work. The main goal of this project is to create a well-designed portfolio, which will allow a young designer to position himself on a currently competitive market and will assist new designers in finding their ideal work placement. For the writer of this work, the ideal work placement would be a position as a web designer and front-end developer. Additionally the project will result in a infographic poster, with tips and guidelines for young designers, on how to create an outstanding personal portfolio.

2. THE WRITER'S BACKGROUND

This chapter contains the background information of the commissioning individual and the motivation and objectives behind the project. The writer is a graduating student for a Bachelor Degree in Design at Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences. The writer is currently 25 years old and was born in Petrozavodsk, USSR. After graduating from High school and completing one year of engineering studies at Petrozavodsk's University, the writer moved to Kouvola, Finland. After completing the majority of preliminary courses, the writer decided to focus on a web design, specifically front end¹ and back end² development. Since the start of 2013 the writer has been working as a freelancer.

The writer has created a personal visual identity and an online portfolio as a part the studies undertaken at the University of Applied Sciences in Kouvola during the years of 2013 and 2014. During the internship period at Parallines Design Studio, the writer acquired the essential skills and knowledge concerning front end and back end development. The goal was to create a unique web portfolio, that represents the writers personality and to display the writers works in detail.

¹ Front end development, also known as client side development is the practice of producing HTML, CSS and JavaScript for a website or web application so that a user can see and interact with them directly.

² Back end development generally involves developing the core business logic of your application. More specifically, Backend Development is server-side.

During the process of this project, the writer aims not only to create a personal portfolio, but also to instruct those who might lack the skills to create their own works by providing them with essential guidelines for creating their own web portfolios.

3. FRAME OF REFERENCES



Figure 1. Basic sections of a personal web portfolio.

Frame of references describes the keystones of a basic portfolio model, covering vital aspects, such as user interaction. (Figure 1) It is a preliminary guideline for newcomers to the design/development industry what should include a meaningful and future-friendly website-portfolio.

4. ONLINE PORTFOLIO

In simple words, a web portfolio³ is a 24 hours working showcase of the designer's works, professional skills. It has the potential to attract future employers/clients, while it also provides the essential contact information of the designer. For web professionals, creating a web portfolio is crucial. It is one of the key steps in the self branding⁴ process. In order to build a successful portfolio, the designer needs to focus on its simplicity, ease of use, how to reach the main objectives and lastly project management.

The main objective in any design process is to understand the goals which the designer wants to achieve by creating a web portfolio. The web designer and developer should focus on the overall look of the portfolio and to implement many extra features, which graphic or industrial designers might never need, because they don't need to show their coding knowledge and skills. Graphic designers usually focus on illustrations and implementation of personal visual identity to their websites. Industrial designers would need to concentrate on creating professional detailed presentations of each project, which will describe her/his personal approach and the workflow. Good illustrations of every step of the design process, especially photos of prototypes sketches and well written explanations, are also more important for industrial designers. It is very important to first define your brand and target market before you create a portfolio, in order that the portfolio might appeal to them. (Collis Ta'eed, 2012)

³ Web portfolio is a collection of electronic evidence assembled and managed by a user, usually on the Web.

⁴ Self-branding is the practice of people marketing themselves and their careers as brands.

Often designers try to accomplish more than one goal in their portfolios, which has to be clearly described in the project brief. The right web-portfolio type can be defined based on its purpose.

- The Hire Me Portfolio focuses on getting you a job. If you are actively searching for a job then the current goal of your portfolio is to get hired. In this type of portfolio you can target the work you show to the type of company you want to work for.
 - The Sales Generation Portfolio focuses on keeping a flow of work always coming in the door. The goal here is to generate leads. And move potential customers through your sales channel.
 - The Reputation Building Portfolio focuses on building your name in the industry and online. This may take the form of an artist's showcase. Or tie your work together with a blog on your portfolio site.
 - The Networking Portfolio focuses on building relationships. There are many networks that have excellent portfolio building tools. They have some advantages to placing your portfolio on their website. Chiefly among them is to leverage the site space for networking.
- (Sean Hodge, 2008)

Nowadays designers strive to create a multi functioning portfolio which will be gibbered out of several portfolio types. It helps them to cover a wider target market and therefor brings more possibilities.

In any portfolio design process, would it be a printed version or online portfolio, it is good to remember to present not only your works and professional skills, but also to express your personality. In other words portfolio is not only the way to document the design works, it also needs to show who you are and who you want to be in the future. These values will be illustrated through the style, colors, typography, layout, photography, texts, and so on. To accomplish it the creator needs to analyze personal values and understand her/himself from the client's point of view in order show own strengths and weaknesses, which will help in the future to evaluate how professionally and personally the designer was growing from project to project.

It is one of the hardest tasks for a designer to play two roles in the design process, namely “client” and “implementer”. Most people are very critical to the own work making harder to finalise a decision. At the same time nobody knows you better than yourself, therefore nobody can implement your personality into a portfolio design better than you. Subconsciously, people implement their personalities into everything that they do. It can be clearly seen in the similarity of the works of artists and designers.

When a designer comes to the step of managing the design process, the initial idea is to divide the client’s role and the designer’s role, by separating various responsibilities right from the beginning. It should work similarly to designing a portfolio for somebody else. To avoid misunderstanding within the designer’s own mind, it is very easy to take a paper and pen and to write down everything what the designer likes as a client and what needs to be implemented into the design. When the designer tries to think as a client, he/she should try to switch off their design thinking⁵. Designers often think in visual ways. This is a common mistake. While being a client to yourself try not to visualize or sketch how the work will look like in the end. The task for a designer is to stay open/minded and explained ideas in words.

Concluding, the design portfolio is an ongoing process which continues to grow and change just as the designer continues to develop and grow.

The main goal of any website is to provide the best user experience. There are many opinions about what is better for the user, for example multiple or a single page websites. Here there is no right answer, because it always depends on the case and the purpose of the website. The most important aspect to consider, is the objectives of the website, especially when it comes to the stage of online marketing⁶.

⁵ Design thinking refers to design-specific cognitive activities that designers apply during the process of designing.

⁶ Online marketing is a form of marketing and advertising which uses the Internet to deliver promotional marketing messages to consumers.

Single paged design is appropriate for the following cases, if you:

- don't consider online marketing a priority
- need a relatively simple solution
- don't have a lot of content

In most other cases, multiple pages might be a better choice, including

- intend to invest in online marketing
- a lot of content to add to your site
- will be publishing blog content regularly
- consider search engine rankings a priority

(Tom Ewer, 2015)

For an individual designer's portfolio the single page layout is becoming more and more popular, because all the essential information can be presented there. It is much like a visual resumé or a brochure about the designer and the works he/she has done.

At the same time web designers and developers consider a lot of problems come hand to hand with a single paged websites. The first most common problem is search engine optimization. The one page design website can be supported by a low number of primary keywords that can be targeted. That means that it will be more difficult for a user to find your website though the search systems⁷. The total keyword set will need to be minimized to around ten high-value keywords.

⁷ A Search system is a software system that is designed to search for information on the World Wide Web.

Another issue related to SEO⁸ is the landing page. For a single paged website, this means opening the top of the page. For example: if the user is looking for some specific topic which can be find in the bottom of the page on your website, by clicking on your link in the search results, the website will automatically open at the top of the website. It may create confusion for the user and force him/her to go back to the search results and chose another link to another website. It is also very difficult to share specific page sections on social media. The second most important problem is that loading time depends on the length of the page. By increasing the length of the page the loading time will be increased proportionally.

5. PORTFOLIO DESIGN PROCESS

In this section I will discuss best practices in modern Web design and go through the entire design and development workflow that I followed to create my website, from the initial planning stage to the final website design, also covering the aspect of future coding methods and techniques. The process of creating online portfolio can be divided to three main stages, such as project planning, designing and development.

6. PROJECT PLANNING

As it was mentioned in the previous chapter the most significant part of any design project is defining ultimate project goal and its objectives. Clarifying the purpose of the project as well as describing what problem needs to solve, also have to be included into the brief. On the later stages this data will be used to ensure that the provided solutions are accurate.

⁸ Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of affecting the visibility of a website or a web page in a search engine's unpaid results - often referred to as "natural," "organic," or "earned" results.

7. BRIEF

What is brief? How to create a brief for an online portfolio project?

Brief is a type of educational or business document including desires and requirements. An effective design brief should include minimum required information, covering such key aspects as:

7.1 Objectives and goals of new design

This section needs to answer the following questions:

The purpose/goals of the portfolio? What problems are you solving with your portfolio? What kinds of portfolio I would like to have?

What are the key things which will affect on future design?

The objective is to find a web design and front-end developer job by creating a personal online portfolio that will be send to potential employers in Finland. The goal was to create a website to promote my design work and show my professional skills of a designer and developer in best possible way. The online portfolio needs to be unique and memorable, while representing my personality.

A maximum of three colors should be used such as white, dark grey and bright blue according clients personal visual identity.

Responsive design also needs to be implemented.

7.2 Budget and schedule

Budget calculation aimed to analyse and calculate the total expenses of the portfolio design and development, including the costs of typefaces, photography, domain name, hosting, and other expenses. Creating the schedule of the project will help to define the needed total amount of time for each step and will keep the workflow on track by following stated deadlines.

The total budget of the project can vary from 50 to 200 euros. The budget covers the expenses for buying web fonts, domain name⁹ and hosting¹⁰, and also to special plug-ins which can be used in the development process to save time. The required photography or graphics for layout design can be found on different free to use online sources. Designer has planned to use a popular font called Garamond or use a Galano Grotesque font family which client has both for another project previously. Buying a domain name and hosting will cost in total about 20 euros per year.

7.3 Target audience¹¹

Defining the target market or target audience is one of the most important tasks which will affect on how successful your portfolio will be in the future and who will be interested in checking it out. It is helpful if the designer can specify the target and collect critical data about it, but in some cases it can be hard to define it specifically especially for a multifunctional portfolio (multi-objective). But even in this case some overall demographic information needs to be collected.

⁹ A domain name is an identification string that defines a realm of administrative autonomy, authority or control within the Internet.

¹⁰ A Hosting is a type of Internet hosting service that allows individuals and organizations to make their website accessible via the World Wide Web.

¹¹ A target audience is the intended audience or readership of a publication, advertisement, or other message.

The main target auditory is a small and medium enterprise focusing on graphic design and web design in Southern Finland. Any other companies or start-up in the same region who is looking for a junior web designer and front end developer. Additionally the secondary target group is small and medium enterprises, start-ups and individuals who needs a freelancer, part-time or in-home designer and developer in Europe.

7.4 Scope of the project

In this section the main content of the website has to be presented, highlighting what are the sections of the website needs to be there and what technical solutions/functions should be implemented.

The portfolio website should consists of our main parts such as personal information, including short cv and professional skills, portfolio showcase, and contact information including feedback form.

The Parallax effect possible can be implemented in order to bring the visual depth and dynamics to graphical objects. Parallax is a web design technique that allows components of a web page to move at varying speeds when a user scrolls. In particular, the effect is created when the background of a web page moves at a different speed from the rest of the elements when you scroll.

(Brenda Barron, 2015)

7.5 Available materials/required materials

All the prepared or required materials such as texts, photography, graphics, videos, etc. should be listed and clearly described.

Texts

One paragraph text about client is required and needs to be custom written with sustain tone of voice - edgy and masculine. Also some cool taglines can be generated. Project brief and description need to be written.

Professional photography



Figure 2. Writers' professional photography

Project presentation materials

Renders/sitemaps/graphics

Client prefers to use professional templates for better and clear presentations of the projects. Some of the projects writer is planning to present require more visualization.

CV (Figure 3)

Client has created a designer's resume which will be shortly presented on the website but will be possible to download a full version.



Figure 3. Writers CV.

Overall style/look

Present a personal visual identity which will affect on the design style or any other visual or written inspirations. It can be presented in mood board, mind map, keywords format or as a plane text. Different samples of websites also can be enclosed. A clear explanation what client likes about certain things from samples creates detailed guidelines for a designer.

For the creative process the following adjectives were used as key references: clean, simple, unique, and accurate. Also used Visual Identity of the writer (Figure 4).

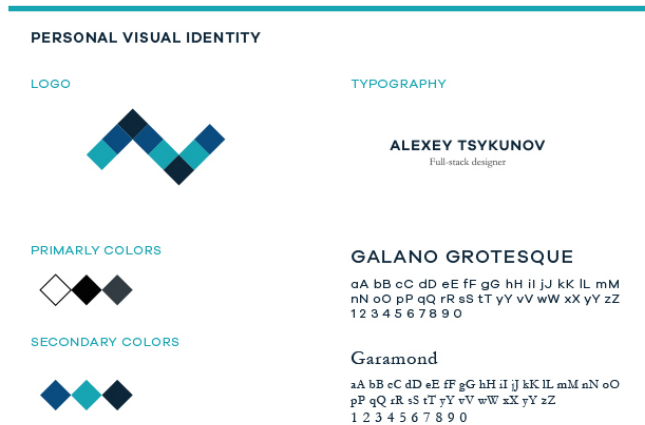


Figure 4. Writers Visual Identity

Any definite “Do nots”

List of things which should not be presented on the client’s portfolio and explanation why!

- No girly or artistic elements - Strong and masculine
- No more than 3 colors - It should be clean and according personal visual identity
- No unnecessary graphics - Keep it simple
- No too much of written texts - People hate reading

(Cameron Chapman, 2011)

8. RESEARCH AND IDEA GENERATION

The practical part of design process starts from research and ideas generation. In this section the designer needs to discover him/herself and answer the following questions who you are and what you do? What is differentiating you from other designers? Which field of design you find most beneficial for yourself? Do you have personal visual style which you would like to implement into the design of your future portfolio?

Get inspired. Every creative have own way to get inspired. It can be music, nature, dreams, books, and so on. The most common way for designer is to get inspired from others works. There are different online sources such as Behance¹² or Pinterest¹³ where designers share their work all around the world. For some people it is a positive experience, but some can't avoid copying things, so it that case it is better to avoid looking at others works and focus on own thoughts or to get another source of inspirations, such as music or painting.

Keep focused. Separate ideas which suitable and not suitable for yourself, don't try to implement any idea you have seen and liked, it will make a mess and you will get lost. Use only things which reach you initial idea and your brief. Use your own creativity¹⁴ to develop your ideas further.

Creativity can be defined as the production of useful ideas in any domain. It is a function of three components: expertise, motivation and creative-thinking skills where expertise and creative thinking skills are individuals' natural resources. (Figure 5)

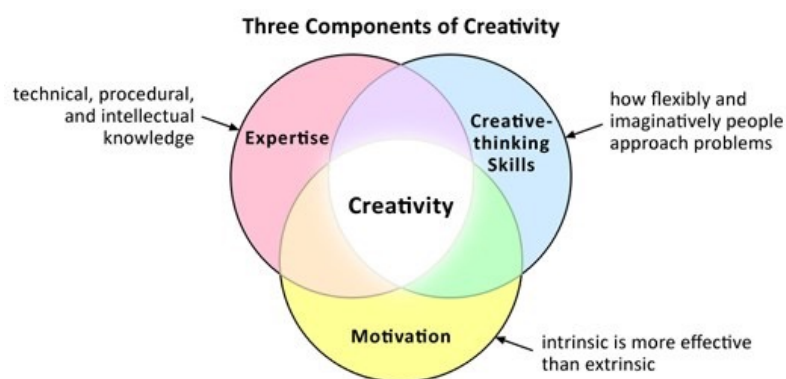


Figure 5. The components of creativity

¹² Behance is a network of sites and services specializing in self-promotion, including consulting and online portfolio sites.

¹³ Pinterest is a web and mobile application company, which operates an eponymous photo sharing website.

¹⁴ Creativity is a phenomenon whereby something new and somehow valuable is formed.

Expertise means the acquired knowledge, skills and talent in a certain field. Use of expertise allows designers to realize ideas by using design thinking, which is also called creative thinking. In 2010 Ambrose and Harris described it as an approach to a design process which is presented in each stage of journey from client brief to finished work.

Creative thinking is the ability to generate new ideas based on a clear understanding of the problem. In other words it is a personal ability to define the problem, analyze the opportunities, solutions and finally develop the most potential one.

Motivation is rewarded by the completion of a certain work in order to achieve the needed results. There are two types of motivation – internal and external.

An external motivation is external factors which affect on a person that he/she can't really change it. Most common external motivation factors are money or/and career growth, or others. The external motivation for this project was to find a desired workplace.

Internal motivation is more dependent on personality and character. It is mostly what personal goals will be achieved after completing the project. The internal motivation could be for professional growth or fun.

The process of generating new design ideas is becoming quite hard nowadays. It looks like everything was created already and people just keep copying things from each other or renewing old ones. That can cause young designer think that only the most talented person can create a good and successful personal portfolio, but it is a misconception. Anyone can create a new idea. Another common mistake is that people try to avoid looking at other works, in order not to copy it. While copying other works is the same as stealing, designers can be inspired by other's work. Through inspiration and by combining these different ideas into a brand new genius idea can be generated. This is the main method for idea generation nowadays. By analyzing what was good and what was wrong or problematic in others works and bringing a new sustainable solution.

In this work the same approach to generating ideas was used. Hundreds of different portfolios and websites were seen and analyzed, as well as many different topics and articles about portfolio design were read. Generating ideas for this portfolio was based on the three most interesting references (Figure 6).

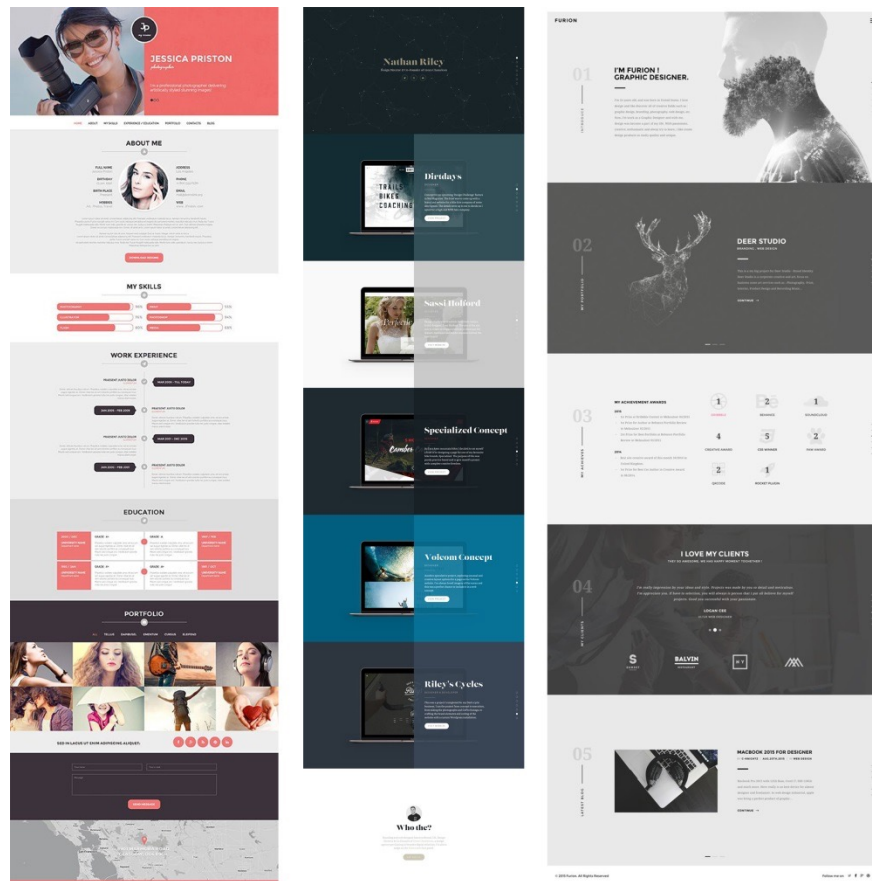


Figure 6. Three most interesting references.

Analyzing the first inspirational work, have to admit that the layout is fulfilled with quite big amount of information which is well structured. The color harmony and a clear composition make this idea simple and user-friendly. It is easy to focus on the content highlighted by the bright color.

The benefit of the second inspiration is the focus on the work presentation, which is clean and simple. Big size of the work pictures helps the user to understand what it is about without even opening the work. The overlay text

does not cover the picture. It provides a short overview of the most important project information.

The third work is most unusual has very modern and clean look. It stands out by its exceptional graphics and photography. The layout has a good rhythm, a lot of free space around content which has the Scandinavian influence. An interesting combination of different typography - a mixture of serif¹⁵ and sans-serif¹⁶ fonts, brings the elegance to the finishing touchpoint. The monochromatic use of colors differentiates the website from others but on the other hand it also makes it a little bit poor and hard to read. At the same time it is just a subjective point of view which can not be taken as a rule.

First of all carefully looking at the brief and a list of content, it was decided that the needed information can be squeezed into one paged portfolio. At this stage the designer does not need to try visualising the idea or creating exact structure of a portfolio. This stage requires a rough sketch of a raw idea of how it might look in the end (Figure 7).

As it was mentioned earlier the website will include three sections about the designer of this work, portfolio showcase and contact information. The first section should include a photo of a client, listed personal information such as age, nationality, languages, etc. and two or three sentences about me in the first-person form. The second section is a gallery of my works, where each picture is linked to a project and by clicking on the will resend the user to a project profile. The last section includes my contact information, such as phone, e-mail, address and also includes the feedback form.

¹⁵ Serif font is a font with decorative elements on its letterforms.

¹⁶ Sans-serif font is a font without decorative elements on terminals of its letterforms. (Samara, 2011, p. 22)

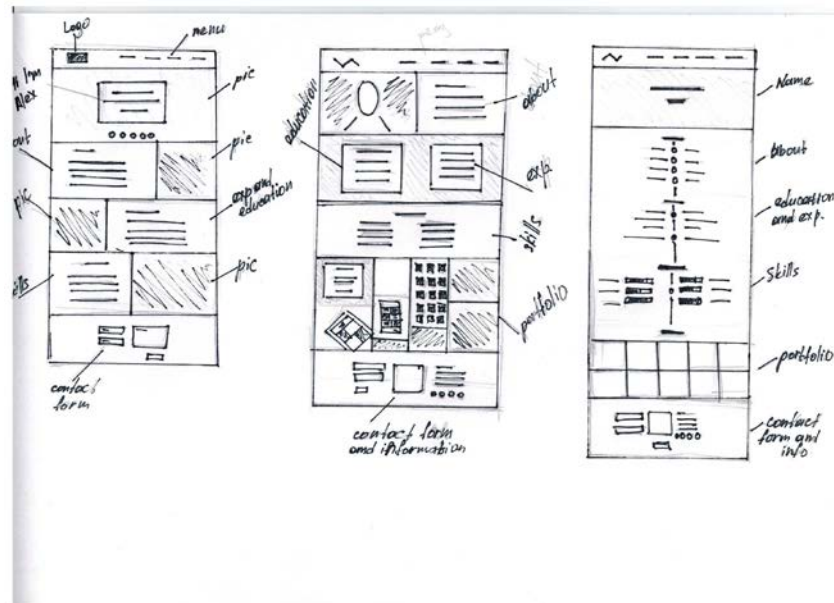


Figure 7. A rough sketches of a raw ideas.

9. CREATE TIMELINE

When a preparation stage is completed and the rough idea of the future website is defined it is important to create a project timeline. Creating timeline is not only about stating streaked deadlines for designer, which is also good for creative people who can easily get lost in their dream. The main purpose of a timeline is to identify how much time the designer will have for a certain part of the project.

There are a lot of external factors which affected on the project management. Because of this reason the approximate plan for the project and a schedule was generated. The project was divided to four main stages, which is presented in (Figure 7), and for each stage the approximate time was calculated. In the real practice the time for each step may vary. In this paper only free first stages are presented, such as research and idea generation, sketching, UX design¹⁷ and UI design¹⁸, and creating layout and applying grid. The last fourth step will not be considered in this paper but only briefly overviewed, because it is very time-consuming task which should be taken widely as a separate thesis work.

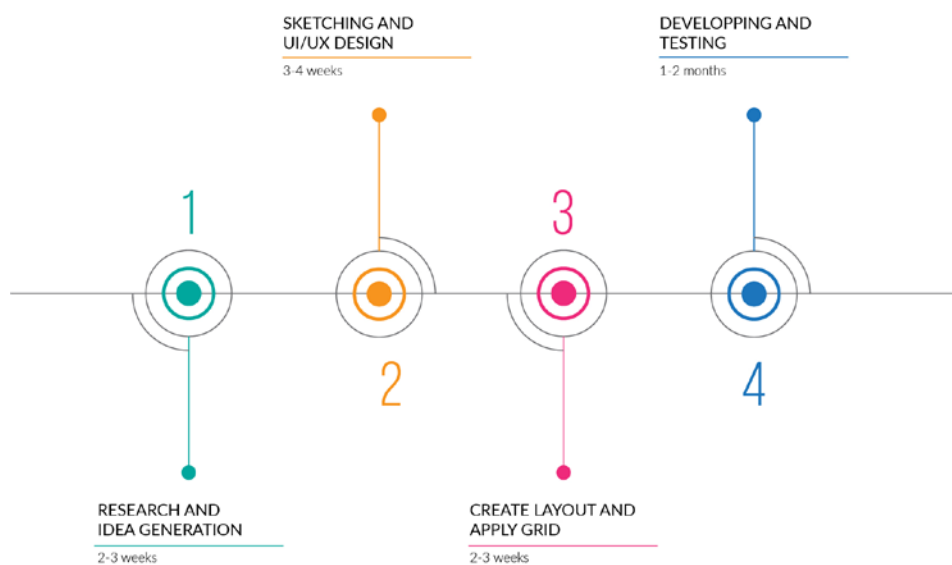


Figure 7. Time line of the design and development process.

¹⁷ UX (user experience) design is the process of enhancing user satisfaction by improving the usability, accessibility, and pleasure provided in the interaction between the user and the product.

¹⁸ UI (user interface) design is the design of user interfaces for machines and software, such as computers, home appliances, mobile devices, and other electronic devices, with the focus on maximizing the user experience.

10. DESIGN

10.1 Design your brand

Brand building is one of the most difficult and time consuming design tasks. The process of portfolio design has a structural similarity to brand building process. The portfolio design also can be described as part of personal branding. Self-branding consists of naming process, visual identity design, logo design, picking colors and typography. Many people believe that brand consists only of a few elements listed below, but it is much more than that. It is a 'personality' that is shaped by the perceptions of the audience. But for a newcomer to the industry it is important to start from something and the above mentioned process includes the basics.

The writer of this work has started creating a personal visual style in the year 2013, and since then it was changed several times (Figure 8). In the following figure you can see the latest versions and visual styles which have been applied to the web portfolio.

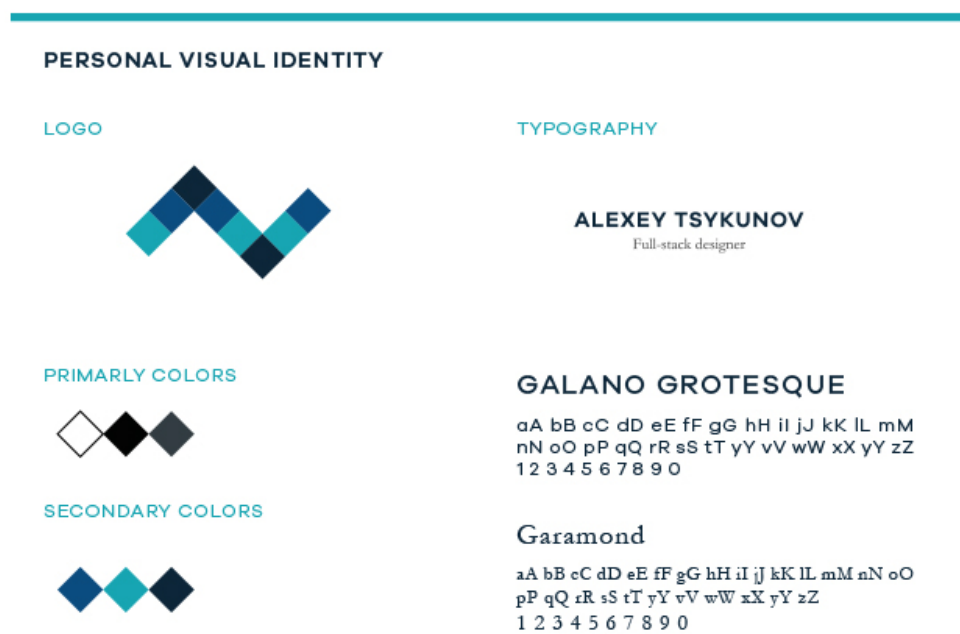


Figure 8. Personal Visual Identity.

10.2 Content

This stage is the most interesting one for the designer because it is the time to start visualizing the idea. The designer already got the understanding how to structure the content from the rough sketch (Figure 9), but it needs to be taken further and a personal visual style needs to be applied.

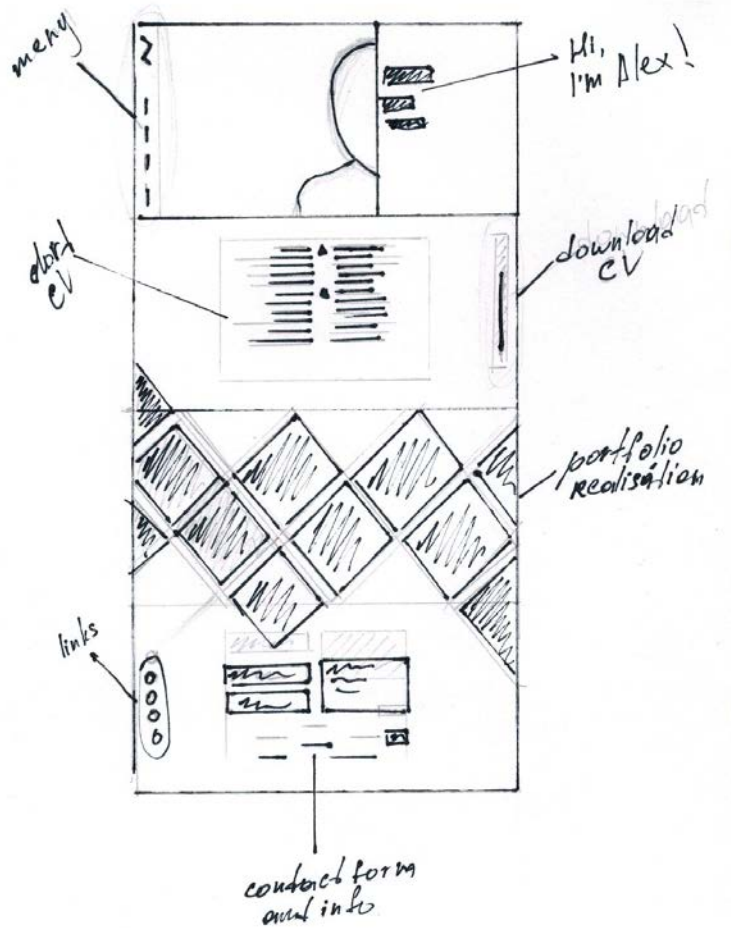


Figure 9. The rough sketch of main idea.

10.3 Sitemap

Site map is a list of pages of a web site accessible to crawlers or users. There are two main usability guidelines for site maps are:

- Call it "Site Map" and use this label to consistently link to the site map throughout the site.
- Use a static design. Don't offer users interactive site map widgets.
The site map should give users a quick visualization without requiring further interaction.

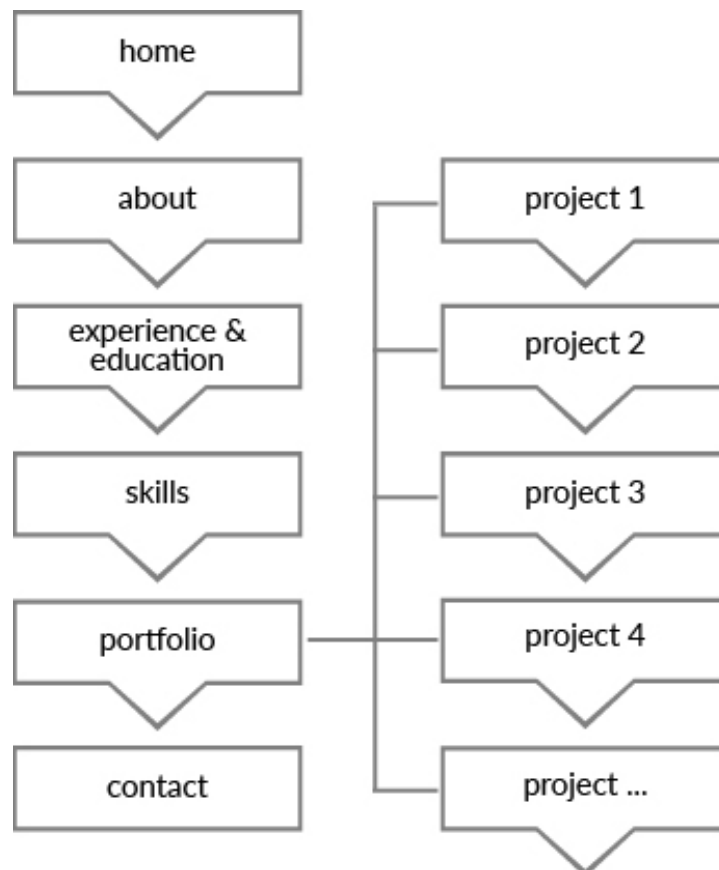


Figure 10. Sitemap of web portfolio.

All websites consist of three main sections: header/top, body and footer. The header/top content box usually includes a logo and a menu of the website. The menu is one of the most important parts of the website. It enables the user to navigate from one page or one section to another. There are different ways how the menu can be presented on a website, the most popular are listed below:

List of names is the most common way to present menu on a desktop version. There are variations to this type of menu – horizontal (Figure 11) and vertical (Figure 12).



Figure 11. Horizontal realization of word menu.

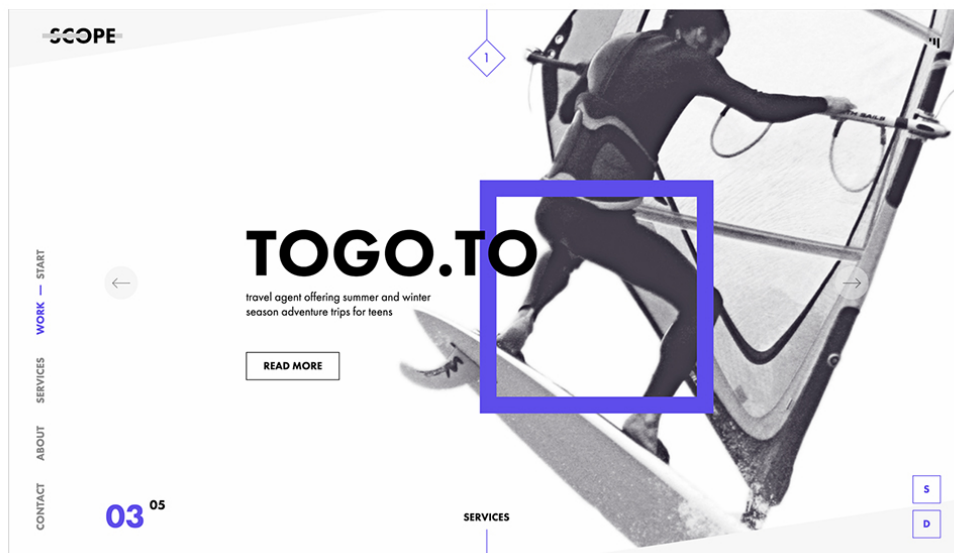


Figure 12. Vertical realization of word menu.

A “fly out” menu is the most commonly used nowadays for a mobile version (Figure 13). It is often informally called a “Hamburger” menu by website developers (Figure 14).

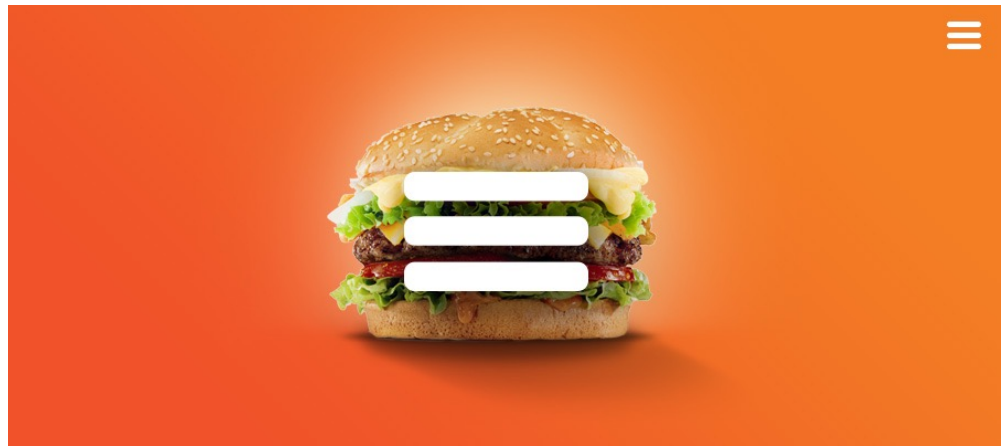


Figure 14. Visual explanation why fly out menu called “Hamburger”.



Figure 13. Practical realization fly out menu.

The “Iconic” menu is a menu where the names of pages or sections are replaced with icons or pictures (Figure 15). Since nowadays web designers use customized icons which are designed for certain styles of websites. They usually put a description underneath to increase the icon’s recognition for the user.

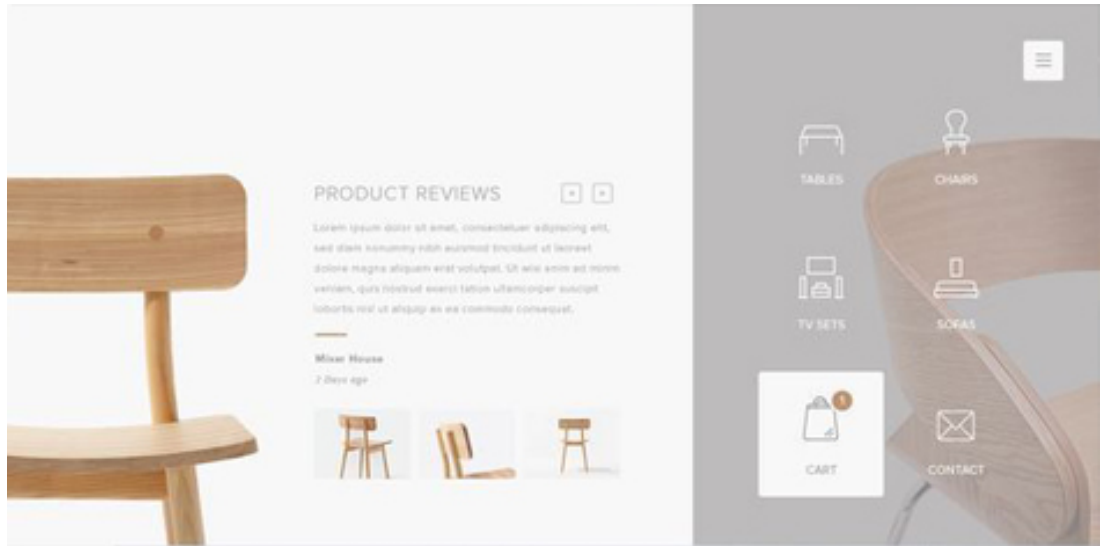


Figure 15. Sample of iconic menu.

List menu is more usual for the users because it was used for a long time before new possibilities of coding were implemented. It provides a possibility to a user easily manage between pages with one mouse click. Unusual positioning of the menu section does not change it’s functionality but will bring a new model fresh look to a website.

(Figure 16).

Fly out menu is a good solution for mobile versions of websites because it takes small amount of space and menu options can be pulled down by clicking on the ‘hamburger’ icon, which works well on screens with small resolutions.



SKILLS ♦ PERSONAL STATEMENT
 Figure 16. Top part of web portfolio.

In the top section of the website will be located menu, logotype, photo of the designer and short introduction. This section is mainly used for providing first impression to the user and somehow starts a dialog with the informal introduction pitch (Figure 16).

10.4 CV

A section about personal and professional skills can be found in almost all web portfolios. It could be just a block or a separate page, where designer presents personal information or a short CV. Usually the full CV version can be downloaded from the same page or section with the provided link or button. In last few years it become very popular to present CV as an infographic (Figure 17).



Figure 17. Sample of infographic CV.

In my design the CV section is also presented but in a more traditional manner instead of infographic poster (Figure 18). All the information is aligned to the center to keep user focused on the written content. The possibility to download the full version of the CV, is provided through the link next to the CV section (Figure 18).



Figure 18. Short CV information and download link aside.

10.5 Presentation of work

The most important part of the portfolio is the portfolio showcase. It is the core of the website and the reason why users are coming to your portfolio page. It is critical to let the works speak for themselves without overloading the page with unnecessary text. To accomplish that, the designer needs to choose the right layout for the work presentation. All the visuals presented on the website – photography, illustrations, graphics, icons, etc., should not be random, it should provide the same aesthetics. The potential clients or employers should get a clear explanation about a project, not only visuals. It should not be a ten page report but it should describe the brief of the project and also the process how you achieved goals and objectives. There are many ways how to present this information. The most common one is the gallery layout, which has many variations.

The writer has decided to use an unusual layout for the presentation of the portfolio section. This layout is much more difficult for coding because of the rhombus shapes, but it is an opportunity to show professional coding skills. This idea comes from a logo shape presented earlier (Figure 18). Several rhombus shapes will be colored into corporate colors and will work just as graphical elements which support the style. The short description of the project is displayed in a central right rhombus, by putting a cursor on a project picture it will show up there. A Parallax effect will be applied to three rhombuses and the rest will be active elements – real projects, from which the user can open a single project presentation page (Figure 19). The portfolio section presents only the latest featured projects. All the projects will be found at separate portfolio pages for more detailed review.

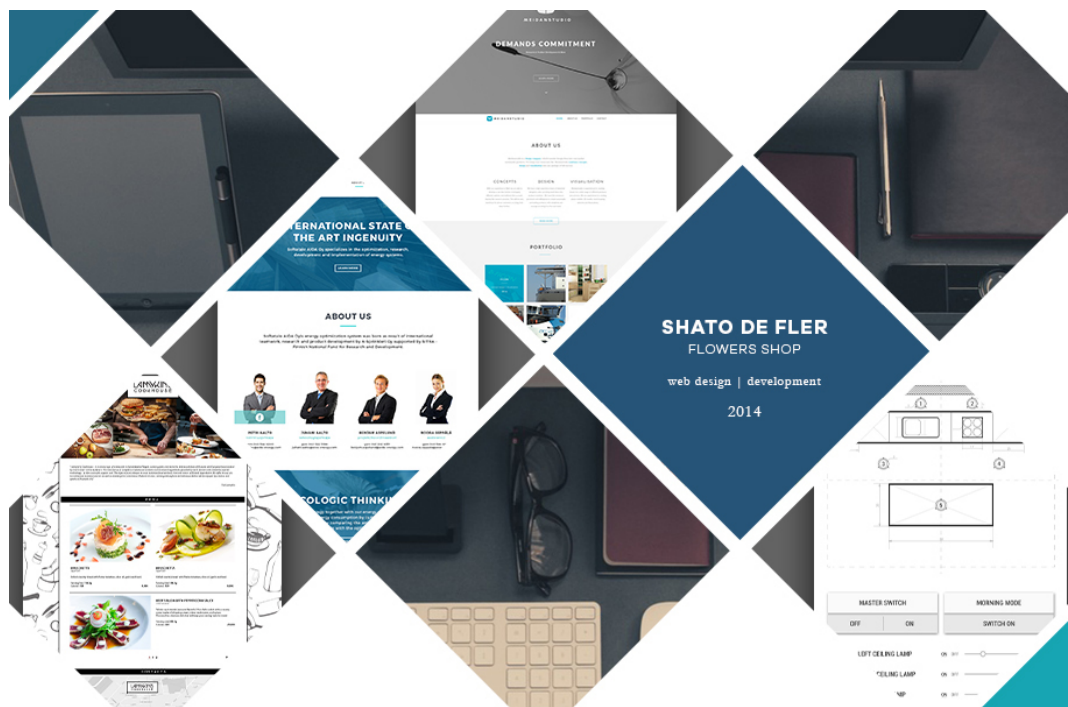


Figure 19. Realization of the portfolio section.

10.6 Contact information and method

The most common way of get in touch with a user is a feedback form (Figure 20). This method does not require from the user any special software or even an e-mail system, the user only needs is to fill in the required information asked on the page and click the 'send' button. At the same time the owner of the website does not need to do extra work, all the messages from the website can be transferred to their personal e-mail. The main parts of the feedback form are the Name field, Contact information field (phone or e-mail or both) and the Message field. In the same section other contact information of a designer can be found including postal address and/or social media links.

In this work the writer used the same order, because users are used to it and keeping it the same way allows for a better user experience.

The image shows a contact form layout. At the top, there are three decorative icons: a white wing-like shape, a gold downward-pointing triangle, and a teal right-angled triangle. Below these is the heading "SAY HELLO!". To the left of the form are social media icons for Facebook (f), Behance (Bē), Pinterest (p), and LinkedIn (in). The form consists of three input fields: "YOUR NAME" and "YOUR E-MAIL" are side-by-side, and "MESSAGE" is below them. A "SEND" button is located to the right of the message field. Below the form, the word "OR" is centered. At the bottom, there is a phone number "+358 40 176 6603" and an email address "alts@design.com".

Figure 20. Realization of contact form and contact information.

10.7 Landing page layout

The final variant of portfolio concept layout is presented in Figure 21. It shows all the content presented on the page as well as how graphic elements and visual identity was implemented in different sections. The Figure 21 provides only aesthetics of the design portfolio and the functionality will be described below. The headlines and sub-headings are done with the corporate font - Galano Grotesque, the body text is – Garamond. The links are highlighted with a cold blue color. Social media links are realized as icons.



Figure 21. Final landing page layout of web portfolio.

10.8 Project page layout

The final variant of project page layout is presented on Figure 22. The top section is a slideshow of the project provides the picture of the project result and a brief including information about the client, date and a description of the task and a result of the project.

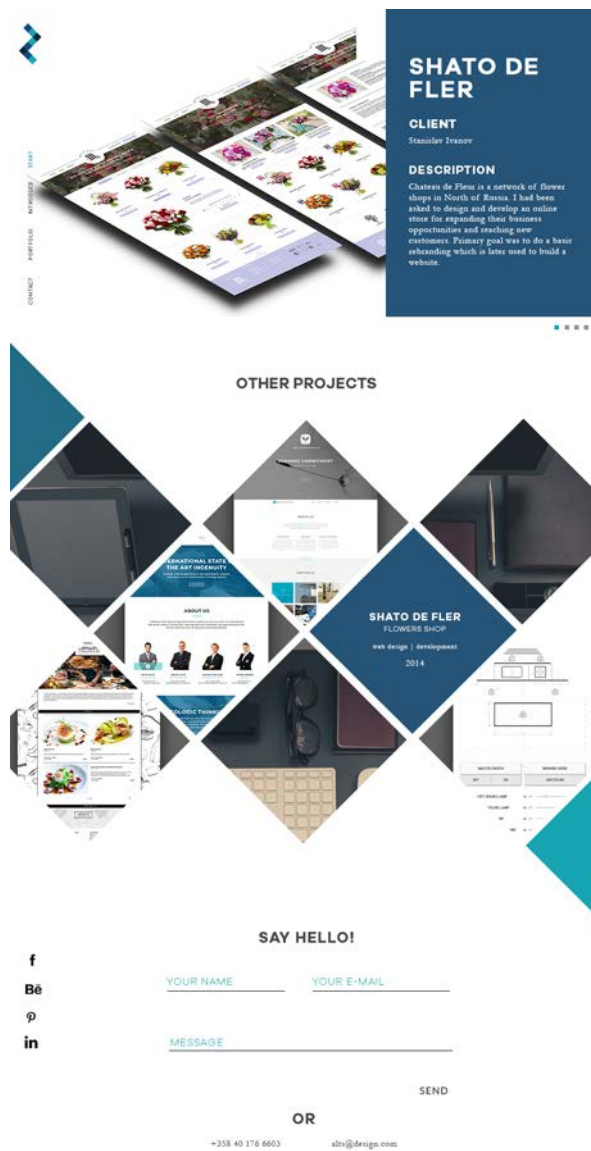


Figure 21. Final layout of portfolio page.

11.DEVELOPMENT

11.1 Wireframe / grid system

When the visual style is generated it is important to measure the size of each element on the page and identify its positioning on the page. This will make the coding/developing part considerably easier. In order to accomplish this, we usually use wireframe¹⁹ or a grid system.

A grid is a structure (usually two-dimensional) made up of a series of intersecting straight (vertical, horizontal, and angular) or curved guide lines used to structure content. It helps to transform the design into a complete structure. It shows the rhythm of the design elements and allows cleaning up some inconvenience in detailed of shapes of elements. The grid can be a customized or use an existing grid system. The grid system can be created with a special Photoshop extension called GuideGrid. In my design idea the 960 Grid System was used (Figure 22).

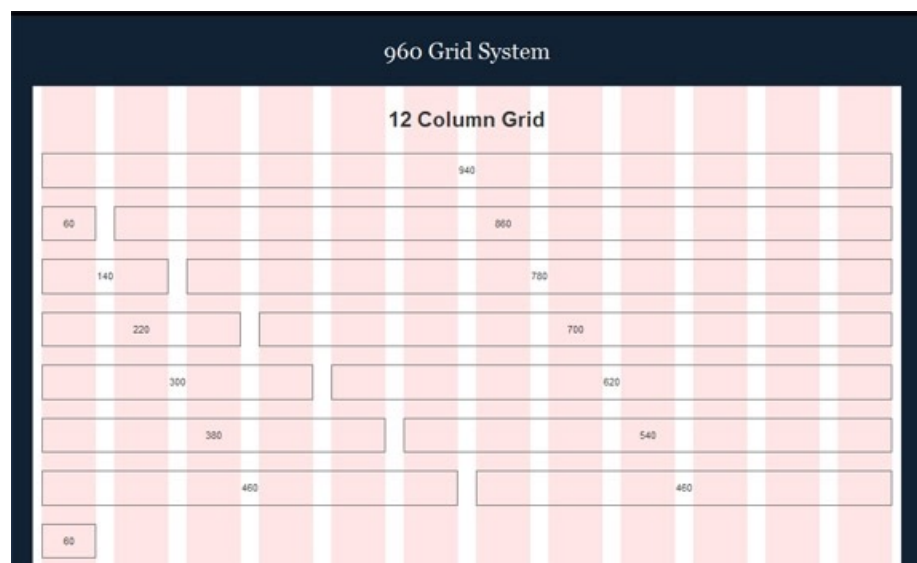


Figure 22. 960 Grid System 12 Column.

¹⁹ A website wireframe, also known as a page schematic or screen blueprint, is a visual guide that represents the skeletal framework of a website.

This system allows easily identify the width of the elements and fix it to a grid, that will help the coder in the development phase (Figure 23).

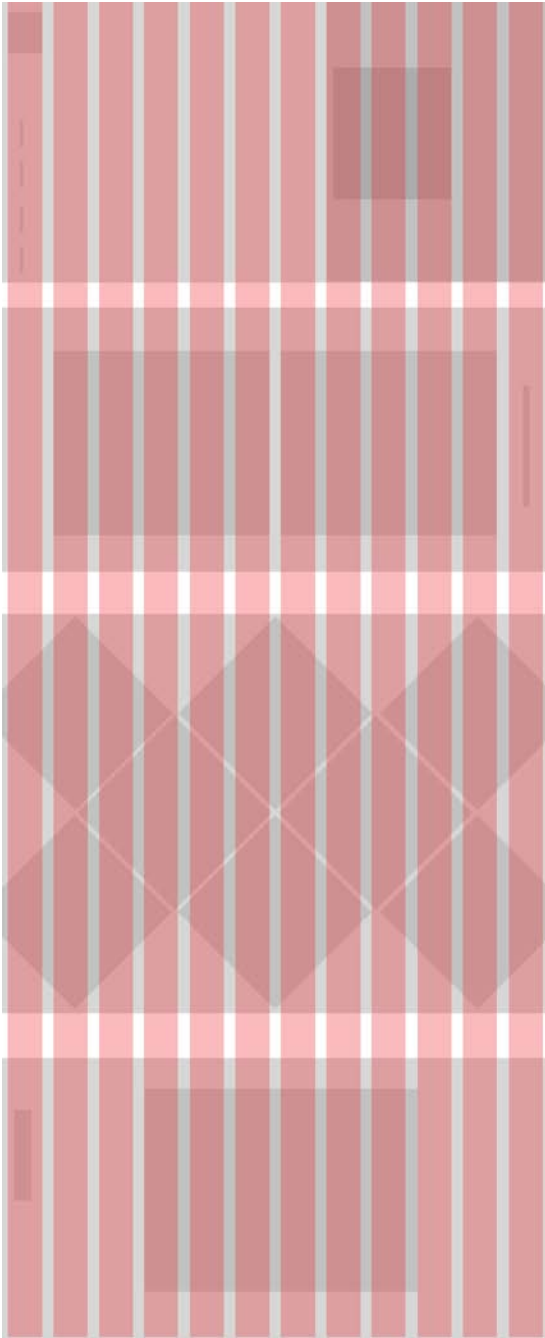


Figure 23. Wireframe and grid for web portfolio.

11.2 Responsive Web design

Responsive design is the approach that suggests that website design and development automatically respond to the user's preferences such as screen size, platform and orientation. It is the system of flexible grids, layouts and images. (Kayla Knight, 2011)

With modern mobile technology, it is often more convenient for people to access the internet pages via their smartphones or tablets. As a result, mobile versions of websites are often becoming more used than desktop versions. From different surveys we can see that users are disappointed if they don't get the mobile version of a responsive website.

There are two ways how to create a website for devices with a smaller resolution than the average desktop. The first option is to create a separate website which will identify the device before loading the page. In case of smartphones and tablets it will redirect the user to a special version of the website. Another way is to use the responsive design which will be a universal solution for all screen resolutions.

Responsive web design (RWD) is an approach to web design aimed at crafting sites to provide an optimal viewing and interaction experience — across a wide range of devices (from desktop computer monitors to mobile phones). (Kayla Knight, 2011)

This is achieved by ensuring easy scrolling, easy reading, fast and simple navigation, with the minimum amount of resizing and panning.

Working with responsive design layouts the designer needs to plan how the same elements of the website will look on different devices. That means that the same content needs to be adapted to certain screen sizes which is (what kinds of sizes) and it is shown on the Figure 24.

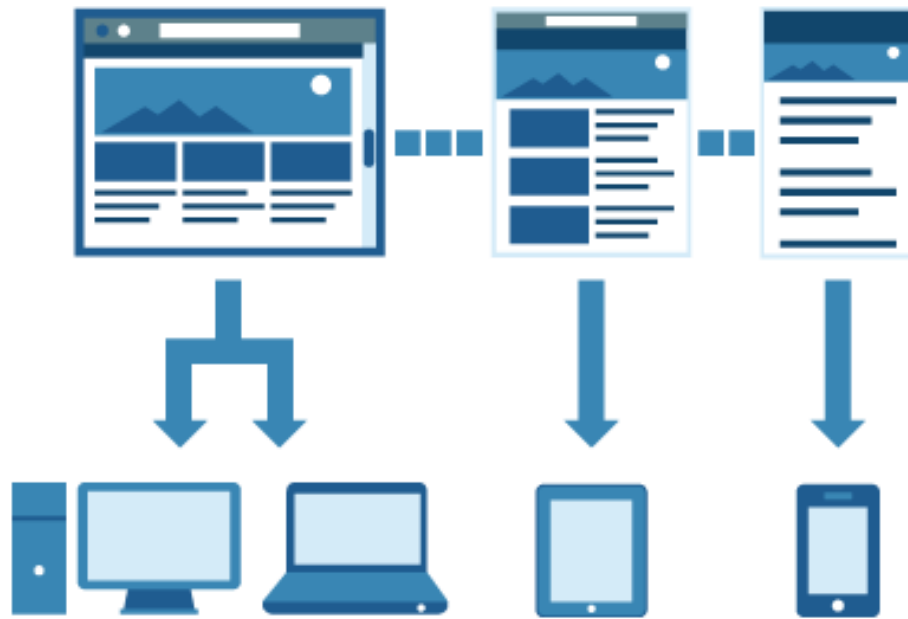


Figure 24. Sample of responsive wireframe.

11.3 Coding

In this section the main web development techniques will be briefly presented and analysed. Some of these methods were used to create the portfolio for this project.

Coding technologies are developing faster and faster. Nowadays there are a lot of different tools how to create a website fast and without learning the coding languages. Young designer can use online website building platforms, such as <http://www.wix.com> or special programs, for example Adobe Muse, or other free templates. It is harder to make personalised designs in these programs because they are quite limited with the resources. Still they are very easy to use. For the purposes of this work these options are not acceptable, since the writer and creator of this project needs to show coding knowledge and their skills as a “full-stuck” designer.

CMS systems are one of the useful tools for a designer to updating a portfolio. CMS platforms are widely used now, and include systems such as Wordpress, Joomla, OpenCart and others. These systems allows the owner to update the content of the website immediately and without changing the code each time.

The main coding languages are HTML, CSS, JavaScript, jQuery, and PHP. Of course there are others which also can be used for loading websites.

HyperText Markup Language, commonly referred to as **HTML**, is the standard markup language used to create web pages (Figure 25).

```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html>
  <head>
    <title>This is a title</title>
  </head>
  <body>
    <p>Hello world!</p>
  </body>
</html>
```

Figure 25. Simple example of HTML code.

Stylizing html code is one by combining it with css styles.

Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) is a style sheet language used for describing the presentation of a document written in a markup language (Figure 26).

```
.col-1 { width: 4.8076923077% }
.col-2 { width: 13.4615384615% }
.col-3 { width: 22.1153846154% }
.col-4 { width: 30.7692307692% }
.col-5 { width: 39.4230769231% }
.col-6 { width: 48.0769230769% }
.col-7 { width: 56.7307692308% }
.col-8 { width: 65.3846153846% }
.col-9 { width: 74.0384615385% }
.col-10 { width: 82.6923076923% }
.col-11 { width: 91.3461538462% }
.col-12 { width: 100%; margin: 0 }
```

Figure 25. Simple example of CSS code.

JavaScript is responsible for all kinds of interactions on the website. JavaScript is more of a programming language than a web development language, but it is also widely used for creating websites. It relates to back end development because it creates the functionality of the website (Figure 27).

```
window.onload = function() {  
    var linkWithAlert =  
document.getElementById("alertLink");  
    linkWithAlert.onclick = function() {  
        return confirm('Are you sure?');  
    };  
};
```

Figure 25. Simple example of JavaScript code.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the personalised design solution had been developed according to all client's requirements including all needed content, and the client was satisfied with the result of this project. The process workflow was clearly described and documented. It will be presented in a printed brochure format at the thesis presentation day.

The reported process included research work, content development, visual design concept, personal visual identity integration, and technical specifications including applying grid system and wireframe development. The future development stage was overviewed providing short explanation of main coding languages and other terms, including examples.

During the project, designer has got new critical, theoretical and practical knowledge which can be used in the future projects. Since he also had a role of a client in portfolio design process he achieved better understanding of a project and a design management, improved his design skills and decision making ability. Summarizing the results of the project he created list of hints for the young designers who are planning to create a portfolio.

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