



THE GHANAIAAN NETWORK

PHASE 6 – FINAL REPORT

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Major Project, MA Web Design & Content Planning

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INTRODUCTION

To be honest, when discussing the subject for my thesis project I thought I would design a youth website for my church or better yet promote my music. Doing something on Ghana never occurred to me, I guess that's because I felt I didn't know much about it and didn't feel confident to carry a whole project on that subject.

As we progressed through the Major Project, the idea of a website on Ghana kept gnawing away at me. When I tried to pull together a concept presentation for the Crit, nothing seemed to work. It became such a struggle that I gave up for a while and considered a website redesign. Not that there is anything wrong with a redesign project, I just envisioned creating something from scratch.

Rather than think about what I didn't want to do or focus on what was difficult; I decided to answer some of the questions the Major Project posed such as an account of the problem, the solution and the Twitter handle. Ideas kept bubbling to the surface when I thought about Ghana. Now I no longer 'put Ghana off' instead I decided to give it a chance.

I guess what attracted me to this Ghana project was the idea that I could find out more about Ghana, embark on a heritage quest (Henley, 2015). The clincher for me was creating the Twitter handle, it gave me scope and purpose all rolled into one.

The Ghanaian Network

Helping the discerning user
discover, taste and enjoy the
variety of Ghanaian culture on
offer in London

It's interesting to note I arrived at this juncture by first addressing 'the problem'.

If I asked someone in London: what is Ghanaian culture? They'd probably scratch their head and mention something African. One or two in the know would refer to Kente cloth and hint at something tribal (Wikipedia, 2018). I would forgive both

answers because, I guess to an outsider it would be difficult to define Ghanaian culture.

Ghanaian culture is very proud and regal in nature, lots of gold and colour, tribal influences with a lot of craft and entrepreneurship thrown in for good measure! It's a culture that's hidden unto itself, even the language (a mix of tribal dialects) is rarely written down but often spoken.

Seeing Ghanaian culture 'die out' frightens me and for this very reason, I want to record some of its essence. I'm aware some of that culture is even dying out in me, especially as I am surrounded less and less by Ghanaians in my every day. At least if someone like me wants to seek out Ghanaian culture, my site will give them a place to look and hopefully answer a few questions.

When deciding how to pitch this idea, the following thoughts came to mind.

I felt that Ghanaian culture largely went unnoticed in London and therefore needed promoting. Compared to Asian and West Indian cultures, Ghanaian culture was relatively new. The majority of Ghanaians didn't arrive in the UK till the late 80's early 90's (Adi, 2007) and more or less assimilated into British culture.

I see myself acting as a tour guide, introducing Ghanaian culture to my audience, helping them to discover what it is and what they're missing out on.

I say 'lead' with a little bit of trepidation as I want this website to be a network of ideas. The website would become the solution as it would negate the need to visit 4-5 websites to get the information required. My hope is that it would allow users to transfer and exchange ideas between each other. I want to facilitate discussions, debates and even encourage learning.

The two cultures British and Ghanaian, are very different but what can they learn from each other? What does each one do better and how can they co-exist?

When it came to the value I would glean from this project, these points came to mind.

Acting as tour guide, I can learn too. My vision is to reach out to like-minded individuals, it would be foolish of me to assume I know all there is to know about Ghanaian culture.

Draw attention to Ghanaian culture. It has always been a dream of mine to highlight Ghanaian culture, correctly. 'Putting Ghana on the map' means I can give something back, pay it forward.

Create a community or strengthen a current one. There is no doubt a budding Ghanaian community already exists in London, you only have to attend a function to realise this. But there's a sense to me that it's underground, hidden except to those who know how to find it. This project would be a wonderful opportunity to give this community a voice.

Facilitate a learning, entrepreneurial environment. Ghanaians love to learn, they enjoy crafting things and being independent. It would be an honor to boost ideas to generate business and fulfill a need.

Be part of the group forging a digital footprint for Ghana. The current buzz in Ghana is they are strengthening their telecom networks and increasing their mobile usage to pave the way for internet use (Okyere-Fosu, 2018). It's only a matter of time before they achieve this and more.

Build a great website. By now I'm sure my excitement for this project is palpable. It isn't just a project it's an ethos, a passion.

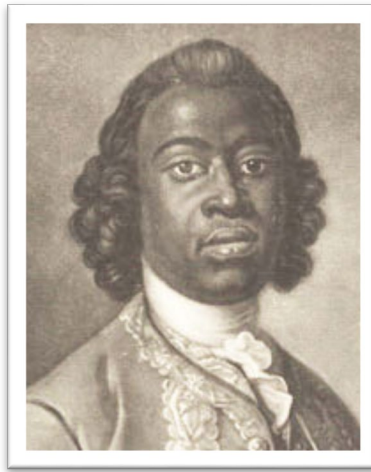
It took me a little while to think about what I could uniquely 'bring to the table'. Then it occurred to me, I am British of Ghanaian descent surely that's unique in itself? So my voice would be my experience, I literally grew up enjoying the best of both worlds.

My distinct position could help share personal insight, clarify, update and attempt a balanced view if I engaged in any discussions. I guess this is the edge I was looking for, an advantage over my competitors.

The general business environment is culture, lifestyle and entrepreneurship. Ghana is a country 'on the up' and thankfully the most stable out of the African nations. (BBC, 2018)

At this point, I'd like to look at the historical and cultural environment of my topic.

Ghanaians have been arriving and living in Britain since the mid-16th century (Wikipedia, 2016).



(Adi, 2007)

If I was in any doubt whether or not this was true, my trip to the British Library soon put an end to that. The exhibition *West Africa – Word, Symbol, Song* (The British Library, 2015), held letters and books written by my ancestors. They even featured drawings of Ghanaians dressed in British/European clothes, not a Kente cloth in sight. Freed and educated men not slaves. Fascinating.

Having said this, Ghanaian culture is still relatively new in London. My parents were among the first to arrive in modern Britain during the mid-1960s. I always wondered why, seeing as Ghana gained independence from British colloquial rule in 1957. My parents' response: "Ghana was just like here, only hotter." So many more Ghanaians arrived in the late 1970s and early 1980s, to explore the land where 'the streets are paved in gold' (Parents, 2018).

Sadly by the 1980s and early 1990s, 10% to 20% of all Ghanaians were living outside Ghana due to the economic conditions Ghana faced at the time (Wikipedia, 2016). Economic conditions such as an unstable economy, civil unrest and a corrupt government, drove them far afield.

Ghanaian households often sent a family member to a wide range of destinations in Africa, the US, the Middle East and Europe with their migration tending to be temporary and with the aim of supporting their family and diasporic communities. They worked hard to improve their standard of living and ultimately acquire enough capital to establish a business in Ghana (Herbert, 2006).

Growing up in 80s London, all I learnt about Ghanaian culture was what I saw in BBC documentaries. A reporter would be in a village, somewhere near Kumasi or

further away; talking to residents, sampling the cuisine, partaking in their rituals and trying to speak the lingo.

It often had me in stiches and surprisingly ever so slightly jealous. In the back of my mind I thought, at least he got to be there and enjoy the wonderful motherland. I could only make wise cracks with my sister in our living-room while my parents' critiqued in the background. When I asked my mother why we didn't get to go too? She'd snap at me 'there's no money' or 'you have school - focus on that!'

So I'd sort out other ways to satisfy my curiosity about Ghana. My mother often bought magazines similar to 'Hello' featuring Ghanaian peers and celebrities at parties, fundraisers and funerals. I saw them in all their regalia (Kente cloth and gold, lots of it); Nana (Chief) this and Nana that Orahene (V.I.P) etc. Titles with names that I couldn't possibly pronounce. I could barely pronounce my own name.



(Flickr Hive Mind, 2011)

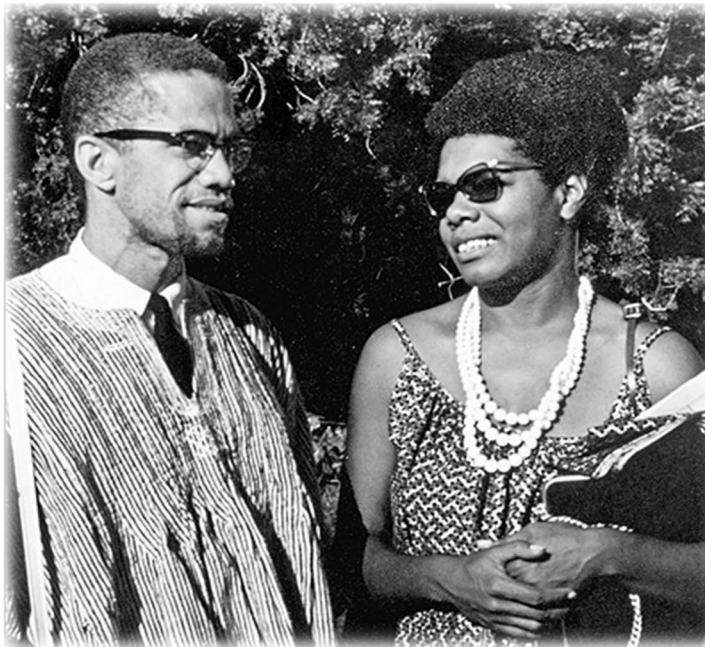


(Ayim, 2006)

What really caught my eye were celebrity endorsements, celebrities and dignitaries I admired were taking long-haul trips to Ghana seeking out their ancestral home. This time as I watched the news with interest, I beamed with pride and thought 'Ghana's cool!' Despite what I thought about celebrity endorsements, I felt this could only be a good thing for Ghana.



(Kwekudee, 2012)



(Winston-Salem Journal, 2014)

So let's step into the existing web landscape, my initial thoughts were not good. I suppose I was surprised at how little quality control existed out there.



(Afum, 2018)

My concerns were raised by the perpetual lack of current up-to-date information, giving websites an abandoned look. Sadly, as if in response to my disapproval this site below (Adinkra.org) has since been taken down.



(Arthur, 2007)

The list goes on: poor grammar, dire colour choices, the awful pictures used seemed to describe a Ghana of yesteryear and one that I didn't recognise. In the majority of cases page rendering was extremely slow, some sites failed to load or open altogether triggering security warnings on my laptop!

Where was the 'good' in all this? Delving deeper, I felt encouraged that web technologies such as WordPress were slowly being introduced.

So the question is what would I do differently? Here's what I plan to do:

- **Use of colour** - unless I'm displaying the Ghanaian flag I would avoid using red, gold and green. It reeks of a lack of creativity and I know that's definitely not true of Ghanaians, they are the most skillful people that I know.

- **Use of text** – less is definitely more and most definitely spell checked.
- **Pictures** – Optimisation! Optimisation! Optimisation! Enough said.
- **Layout** – is key in my fight to ‘redesign this area’. I want to invite the user to visit my website, not put them off.
- **Performance** – I’m willing to put my knowledge and skills to the test and prepared to research appropriate applications and software.
- **Visuals** – in general this has to be broadened to include all of my stakeholders (more on this later), especially non-Ghanaians (Watson, 2015). Again video/audio quality has to be improved and appropriate translations provided.

After discovering and painting a pretty bleak picture of the web landscape, continued research led me to these cognate sites:

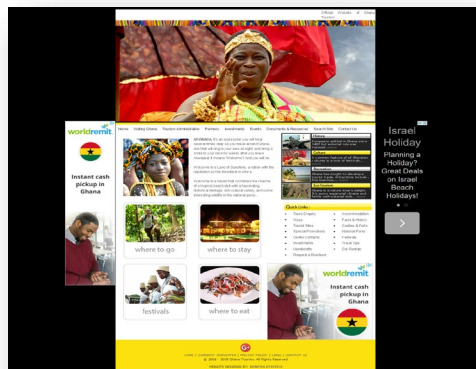
www.adanwomase.com

www.adinkra.org

www.touringghana.com

www.afumnathan.wordpress.com

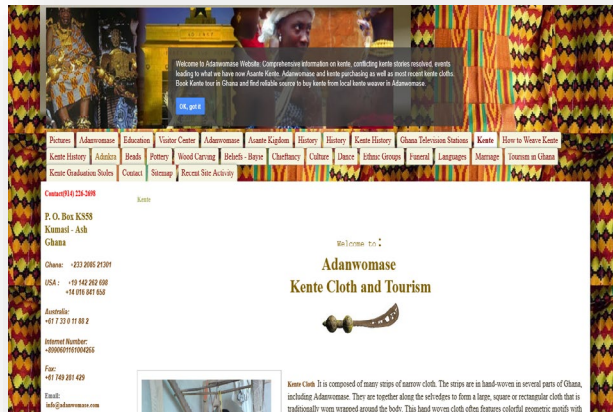
I discovered that these sites were mainly curated by Ghanaians for Ghanaians who were mostly based in Ghana or outside the UK.



(Touring Ghana, 2016)

A lot tended to offer one-stop solutions to travellers seeking a brief rundown of the country. I'm sad to say the same information kept popping up as if nothing new happens in Ghana.

As the user is assumed to be Ghanaian hardly any custom details were explained.



(Adanwomase, 2016)

Adanwomase focused on Kente cloth and the town from which it hails from. Kente cloth was used a lot in the design of the site, giving it a very dated feel. It falls prey to all the 'ugly' I mentioned before so it desperately needs a revamp, could benefit from SEO and most importantly stronger information architecture. It crams way too much onto its homepage which can be overwhelming for the user.

Delving deeper into non-cognate sites, I studied the following:

www.thepennnetwork.org.uk

www.proskillconsulting.com

www.ibdesignsvi.com

www.ghanaemberlin.de

Now, it gets interesting.

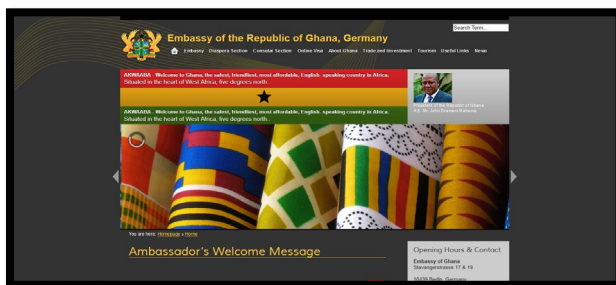


(The Pen Network, 2015)

These sites tended to be created by individuals or organisations outside of Ghana. They involve: learning, business, charities, community and health sectors.

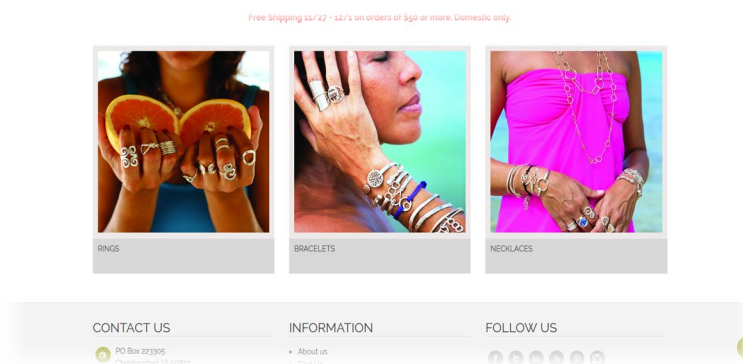
The sites generally come across better, clean fresh images and different colour schemes were used. I guess my third stakeholder (Non-Ghanaians) are taking matters into their own hands.

Taking a brief look at embassy websites and the 'bad' rears its head again. Have a look at the Ghanaian Embassy In Berlin's website.



(Embassy of the Republic of Ghana, 2018)

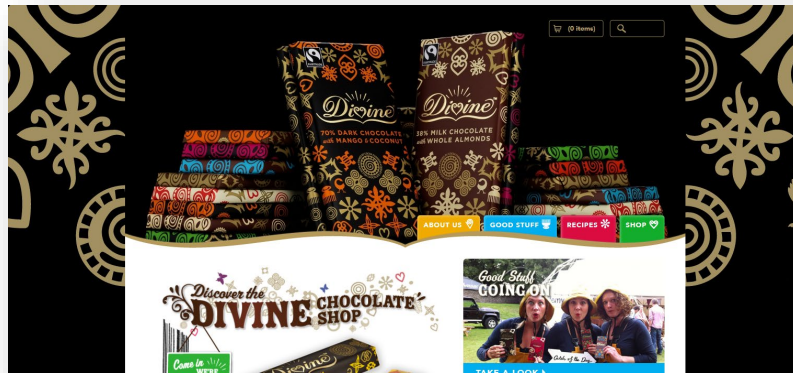
One site in particular, ibdesigns, branches into tribal fashion jewellery and has a great e-commerce site to boot.



(ibdesigns, 2018)

Talking of e-commerce leads nicely to my Case Study on Divine Chocolate.

www.divinechocolate.com/uk



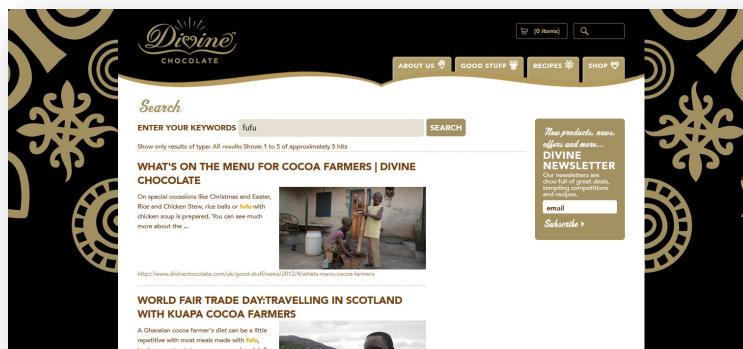
(Divine Chocolate Ltd, 2011)

- Business** – clearly the aim of this website is to entice the user to buy chocolate. Its real purpose I believe, is to provide economic power to those who would have gone without, involving them in the whole creation and marketing side of the business as well as giving them a share in the profits. In my opinion this is a great business model. Not only does it allow, in this case, farmers the opportunity to showcase their produce, it gives Divine Chocolate opportunities to branch out into linked areas such as charity work, fundraising, politics and merchandising to name but a few.
- Cultural Context** – the Divine Chocolate website is immediately set in Ghana's cocoa farms. However, the website has far outreaching ambitions, after all "it is the only Fairtrade chocolate company which is 44% owned by cocoa farmers." (Divine Chocolate Ltd, 2011) The farmers use these precious profits to improve their community so it's a win-win situation all round.



(Divine Chocolate Ltd, 2011)

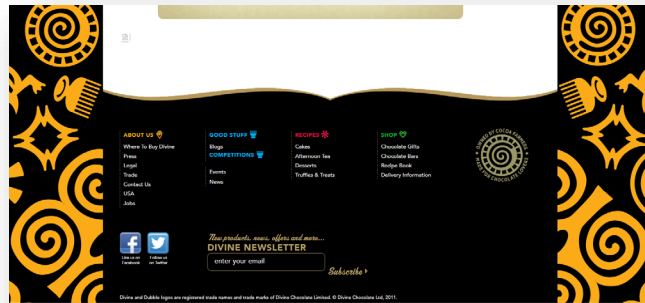
- **Commodity** – the site is well structured, information is where I would expect it and the search engine is excellent too. Constantly educating the user along the way during their visit. I noticed too the lack of ads and felt very encouraged as I would have no ‘distractions’.



(Divine Chocolate Ltd, 2011)

- **Firmness** – the site has been put together well. Three things caught my attention: a short YouTube video on Divine’s story, an interactive screen describing what the symbols on the packaging means and an interactive historic timeline. Not only do they keep the user entertained during their visit but they prove that solid coding such as JavaScript is at work.

- **Delight** – I seriously can't rave enough about this site. They have cleverly used colour not only to invite the user to their website but to organise their information as well.

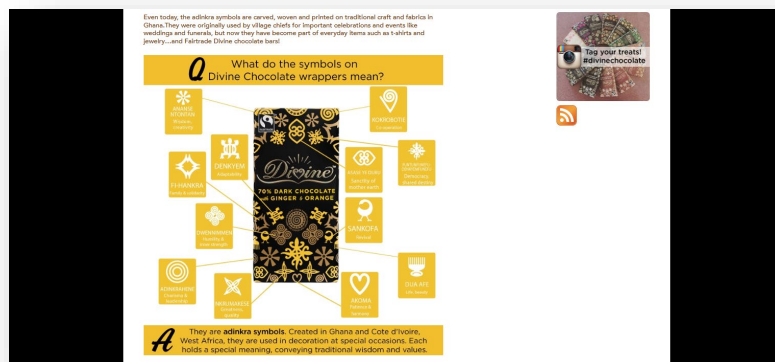


(Divine Chocolate Ltd, 2011)

Fonts are nicely balanced and I can only imagine they used the colour of chocolate as well as Ghanaian design for their inspiration.

Their carefully considered use of CSS assists the user experience. The colour selected for each subject matter is also reflected in the background so the user knows immediately what part of the site they are on and the kind of information they would expect to find there.

Finally, a personal touch is added which I have come to admire from Divine Chocolate. As they continue to engage with and educate the user, they include an infographic detailing what the symbols on their packaging (which resembles luxurious fabric) mean in their FAQs.



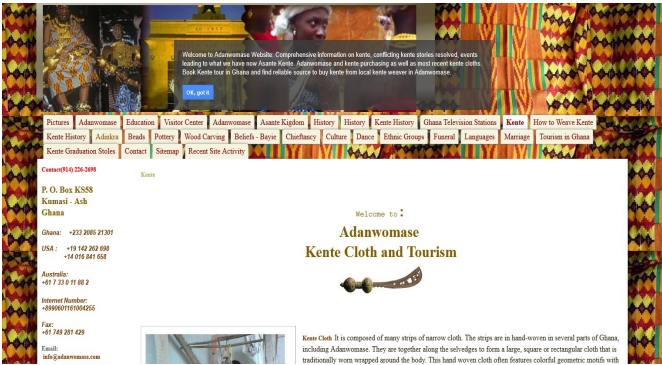
(Divine Chocolate Ltd, 2011)

Just in case the user missed it the first time round and lest we forget the bigger picture. Pure genius.

Here's a brief look at my competitors:

Adanwomase

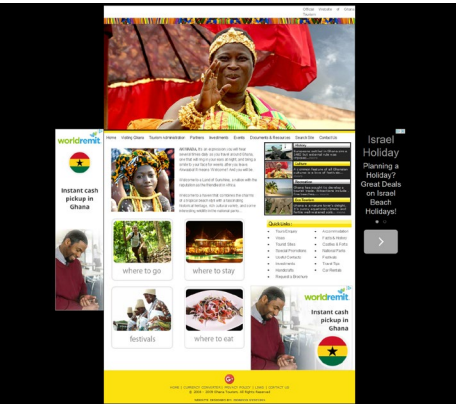
This is probably my least successful competitor. Started by a bunch of Afro and Asian American students, they have all the ingredients that I hope to add to my site but the look and feel is wrong.



(Adanwomase, 2016)

Touring Ghana

This competitor probably falls somewhere in the middle. Their overall look and feel isn't too bad, they have avoided the obvious red, yellow and green. What I find interesting is their ad placement design, I shall probably take a leaf out their book.



(Touring Ghana, 2016)

My Ghana Roots

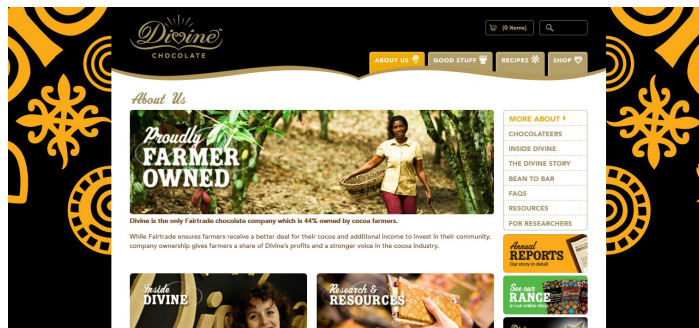
This is probably my closest competitor, using a similar colour palette and an Adinkra symbol as a logo. Unfortunately, this falls woefully short on up-to-date information and has a couple of spelling errors through in for good measure!



(My Ghana Roots, 2015)

Divine Chocolate

This is the most successful of my competitors. Their ethos is something that I really value. They seem to drive Ghanaian entrepreneurship and combine the best of both (British and Ghanaian) worlds.



(Divine Chocolate Ltd, 2011)

So now I have a clearer I idea of what my niche is – diaspora, or more exactly ‘My London’/Black British.

When it comes to revenue generation, I can see this project going in one of two ways:

- a) **I could develop the site in such a way as to encourage ads (use Google ads) and gain a steady income from them.** Particularly if the ads are on the same subject matter. The plus side is that I could build networks, 'return the favour' which could be beneficial for users. The downside, they could have an impact on the design and layout of the site. I am keen to use this project to learn as much as I can and so I'm not sure that I want to compromise in such a crucial area.
- b) **I could create an alternative value project,** like an entrepreneurship community something similar to what Divine Chocolate has achieved. I've come to realise that self-sufficiency is really important to me.

At present, I have no plans for site revenue as it is more of a passion project, I'm gaining value just by finding out about my heritage and building awareness. However, I am slowly opening up to the possibility as discussed during my Crit feedback. I will work hard on building site traffic then introduce ads later. (Watson, 2015) I will also have to consider ad design aspects especially if the site is a long-term goal. (Henley, 2015)

I kept my SWOT analysis brief but it was invaluable at providing me with a snapshot of what I was to be mindful of and especially what weaknesses I had to improve on. What it did do that I wasn't anticipating was highlight how this project could pave the way for unique opportunities to create events, build community, merchandising and interactive material that I had barely imagined. Exciting times were ahead.



(Microsoft, 2018)

My manifesto has had various revisions and I'm still not sure that I have captured it correctly but this is what I have come up with so far:

THE GHANAIAN NETWORK MANIFESTO

- * Provide information on Ghanaian culture
- * Create relevant and engaging content
- * Foster a growing Ghanaian community
- * Sign post Ghanaian events in London
- * Highlight current affairs that affect Ghana and London
- * Encourage a creative and entrepreneurial spirit
- * Celebrate the cornerstones of great culture

THE PROCESS

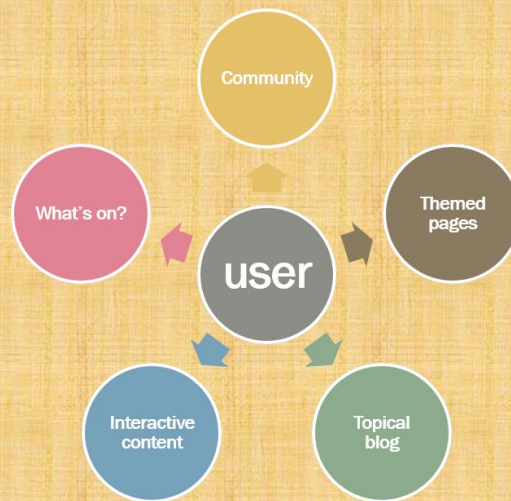
Now the foundation had been set, I was looking forward to fleshing this concept out in detail. For the first time in this project I was beginning to think about my audience and what they would want to discover about Ghana. I had already identified one group – second generation like myself, but what about the others namely, Ex-pats like my parents and non-Ghanaians like my friends?

It was during the early Crits that the discovery of these groups came to the surface. Now armed with the three key groups: 2nd Generation, Ex-pats and Non-Ghanaians, I set about creating lives for them.



Three main areas were brought to my attention: travel/lifestyle, hospitality and current affairs. I knew the majority of my visitors would be interested in those areas but the Ex-pats were a little tricky. They were not looking to satisfy travel curiosities they were already living out their adventure. They needed something a little different and I felt that lifestyle and current affairs would quench their thirsts. Lifestyle as they were reminded of what they had to look forward to. Many Ghanaians still want to retire in Ghana and live out the rest of their years in the sun. Current affairs because there will always be subjects of topical debate that will capture their curiosity.

Content Strategy: user-centred design



I admit the bulk of my content was centred on 2nd Generations and my Non-Ghanaian friends. I kept thinking about how to relay Ghanaian culture to them, in a way that they would understand and appreciate. I also thought about what Ghanaian culture means to me. Looking for inspiration and searching for answers, I thought about what culture looked like in other countries. For the sake of trying to ‘package it’, I came up with these four cornerstones: food, sports, arts and customs. I believe great culture comprises of these four key areas, the bulk of my content.

This was all fine and dandy, I thought but what about my voice, my USP, the best of both worlds? How was this to come across? Suddenly, I was filled with panic as I felt that my site would be very ‘flat’ with only this content. I was about to come across a web communication style that would dramatically change all that for me.

The humble blog started off in 1997 as a weblog, the phrase was coined by Jorn Barger. He created the term to reflect the process of “logging the web” as he browsed. In 1999 programmer, Peter Merholz shortened it to ‘blog’. Traditionally blogs were linked to journalism and lived on traditional news sites. Unless you were a programmer and could create your own blogging platform. Later that year the platform that would become Blogger was started by Evan Williams and Meg Hourihan at Pyra Labs. Blogger is largely responsible for bringing blogging to the mainstream. (Cameron Chapman, 2011)

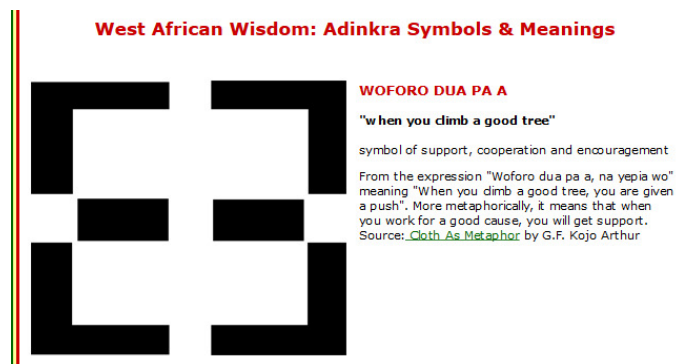
It never occurred to me that I would write blogs; my plan was to create a site, develop it, update it regularly and well, leave it alone. Becoming a blogger meant much more

involvement than I had originally anticipated. Also I wasn't sure if I would be much of a blogger. I thought only journalists or people with lots of followers on social media did that sort of thing. Then I reminded myself of why I started this project with the objective of learning and developing my skills. If acquiring a new skill such as blogging was required then it's time I rolled up my sleeves.

Blogs have popped up often during my research into travel, lifestyle and culture. Now this communication style seemed to be an excellent way to capture my audience. I discovered there are a lot of things you can do with blogs, they also informed design choices. For instance as this is a passion project the blogs could take on an exploratory tone as I discovered Ghana for myself and shared my experiences with others. It also led me to consider another medium - YouTube. Becoming a 'Vlogger', content creator, creating videos seemed like great tools to add to my growing toolbox but more on that later.

It was time for me to address how this content was going to look and come across to my audience. I knew categorically that I wanted to avoid the red, gold and green that followed most content on Ghana on the web and Africa for that matter. It felt tired to me and lacked imagination. Basically it was a cop out, a quick fix and I wanted to avoid that trap. A lot of content on culture on the web looked fresh, used lots of colour and some in particular stuck to a few tonal colours to give it depth and warmth.

My visit to the British Library not only provided me with an enthralling storyline into Ghana's fascinating history, it armed me with knowledge of the Adinkra Family of Symbols from which I was to source my logo. A fitting homage to my tribal ancestors who often used no words at all but these wonderful symbols. Symbols that conveyed so much were to become a way of life for them and even an identity. (Wikipedia, 2018)

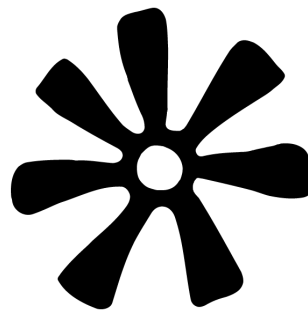


(Arthur, 2007)

I loved this because it meant co-operation, a symbol of support. A person developed their full potential via support from their community. Also it seemed unique and unusual. However, after the first round of Crits it did not survive. Prisca suggested I find something friendlier, open and would embody the idea of a ‘network’.

I didn’t have to look far thankfully, there are over 100 Adinkra symbols to date and were first discovered by Thomas Edward Bowdich. (Wikipedia, 2018) He travelled to Kumasi (the capital of the Ashanti Empire), Ghana and obtained a piece of cloth in 1817. It remains in the British Museum till this day.

After quite a bit of deliberation and encouragement from Prisca, I settled on Ananse (creativity). I tried not to let its somewhat other negative meaning (cunning) sway me but focus on its aesthetic. It really was quite beautiful and fitted in quite nicely with what I was trying to do.



Ananse - creativity

I knew that I wanted the user to find the following information in one place, so the homepage would consist of a menu, calendar, a blog, social media and Call To Action (CTA) buttons for information requests. I wanted the user to be able to see all that was going on with Ghanaian culture in London, at one glance.

Refining the layouts took time, more time than I had planned for and I think I struggled partly due to the break in my studies and also because I was so fearful of making a hash of things. I was desperate not to make the same mistakes I had seen on the much underrepresented landscape and become ‘just another WordPress site’.

I had to let the fear go and refocus my mind on what was important – the user. What did they want to see? What would they want to know? How can I make access to the information as simple and as clear as possible? How can I present the information in an interesting and rare way?

Armed with a strong logo and Twitter handle to match, I felt ready to on take the challenge of designing the site. Through the Crits I realised I wasn't paying much attention to how all this was going to be built. As I was anxious about the backend side of things, I secured my hosting option early on and went with David's recommendation of Clook.

With the desire to add to my burgeoning arsenal, I picked WordPress as my CMS. I fell for the hype: "30 % of all websites are built with WordPress" (WordPress, 2018) and believed it would be a 'softer' option. I didn't rate my chances as a developer and hoped the little that I picked up from class would pay dividends in the end. Now suited and booted with a great CMS, I allowed it to dictate a lot of the CSS strategy and even the Information Architecture. I rushed on ahead to continue working on the designs where I felt the most comfortable.

Discovering the Adinkra symbols would come in handier than I would ever realise. I thought of the four main areas of content: food, sports, arts and customs. I became aware that each of them had a character, a different flavour as well as a different colour. But depicting their variance through colour alone wasn't enough, I needed something extra.

I remember I kept staring at the table of symbols for quite some time one evening, it just occurred to me that the symbol for freedom looked like a bowl. The kind of wooden ornamental bowl that I often found as décor in the houses of my parents' friends. I caught my breath and looked carefully at the rest of the symbols and tried to look for one that would depict sports, arts and so forth. I'm pretty sure I didn't breath for a minute as I realised I had stumbled on something golden.



Fawohodie – 'food'

The next thought that crossed my mind was: how was I going to display this new discovery on the website? Immediately I thought of the tags on WordPress but as I would later discover it's quite tricky to turn tags into symbols. This is a head scratcher and one I'm still working on. I didn't give up, I came up with a novel way to display this 'up, front and centre' as the main navigation.



I admired the Adinkra symbols I had chosen but they were always black, which is in fact how they are supposed to be depicted. The dye created for the symbols is made from bark found in Kumasi and is a brown/red, almost black in colour. I knew that I didn't want a black and white menu. I wanted to incorporate the colours for the cornerstones to assist with user journeys and the user interface. In my original menu bar, I had drawn the symbols in black but it emerged from the Crits that the other students found this quite confusing. Initially, I was averse to changing the colour but decided the students were right and went back to the drawing board.

I was very worried at this point, I had already spent too much time on the designs and layouts. Redoing the menu bar would put a spanner in the works. Prisca pointed out that it didn't need redoing as such: "did I consider changing the symbol colour to reflect its background?" She suggested, no I hadn't. To this day that simple twist has been my favourite light bulb moment throughout the project.



Designing the colour palette truly was a joy for me. I simply cast mind back to when I first arrived in Ghana, certain colours, smells and the heat stuck in my mind. Not able to transport the user there or travel back in time myself, I had to find an alternative way to bring those characteristics to the user. I had kept some pictures that I discovered during my research and used a few of them as inspiration.



Gold dust and chocolate were my first two colours, the others seem to flow from there. I really wanted colours to mean something tangible and relatable and I think that I achieved that. It's interesting that although I have desperately tried to stay away from the red, gold and green; I have somehow incorporated them in my palette!



Typefaces were a real struggle for me, looking back now I can see the woeful choices I was making. The Crits really helped me to see the woods from the trees, Cole's suggestion of finding a simple geometric body font to offset colour, layout and not detract from the symbols, gave me a solid guide. Once I settled on the logo type finding a suitable body type would I hope, fall into place. I had tried to assign different fonts to different tasks but the idea of keeping things simple kept coming up in my Crits. One heading, one body type should suffice.

THE GHANAIAN NETWORK

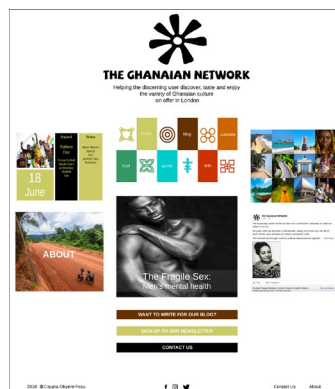
Helping the discerning user discover, taste and enjoy
the variety of Ghanaian culture
on offer in London

Now I could happily move onto brand design, pondering these questions: what brand was I creating and how did I want it to look? These forced me to think hard about what it is I was trying to do. I knew that I wanted to foster and air of craftsmanship, entrepreneurship and community. I knew that I wanted to introduce people to a different Ghana to the one they are used to seeing (or not all for that matter).



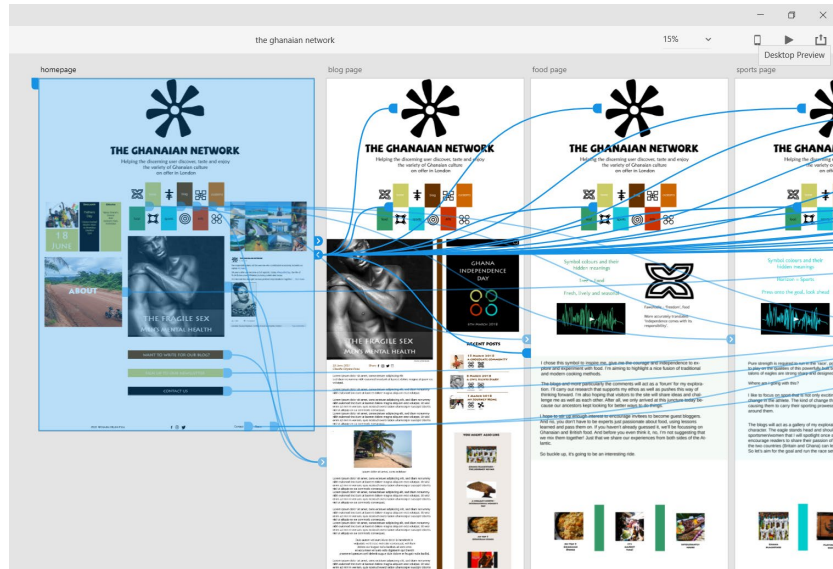
But I kept changing my mind about the layouts which meant the final designs for the prototype were delayed. Even up to the penultimate Crit my designs lacked emotion and seemed 'cold'. Something was missing, in an effort to appeal to the masses I had taken away the very things that made the site idiosyncratic. Rather than go back to the proverbial drawing board, I instead had to search my heart. What did I want to show audiences? When I speak or think of Ghana what comes to mind? How can you relay the sights, sounds and smells of a place on a website?

Once I had settled on a couple of layouts, I went about building the website from scratch, using HTML and CMS.



Static homepage

Even at this stage my visual hierarchy was off, I seemed to have too much white space and somehow the balance was off too. It was when I created a prototype with Adobe's Experience Design (XD) that I was faced with these problems and user journeys that didn't quite make sense so I thought of ways to combat this.



XD was able to show me user journeys an aspect of the software which I loved. I could see firsthand if my thought processes would work in practice and I'm pleased to say that most of them could. Visually I added some stunning images of Ghana that I hoped would add warmth and pull the pages together, making them consistent and balanced.



My schedule of works of course had to be adjusted to take into account a break in my studies, but despite the short turnaround I think I made it work. The final crit gave me the confirmation that my design choices were leading me in the right direction.

Transferring my designs onto WordPress proved to be more problematic than I was expecting. In fact David's quick thinking allowed me to save face for the day of the final Crit. With a child theme of Twenty Seventeen in place, I was able to implement my designs without breaking the site entirely as I could always revert back to the original theme. Not quite what I had envisioned but as time was against me there was no way that I would be able to implement Prisca's Vanilla theme in time to substitute it with my code.

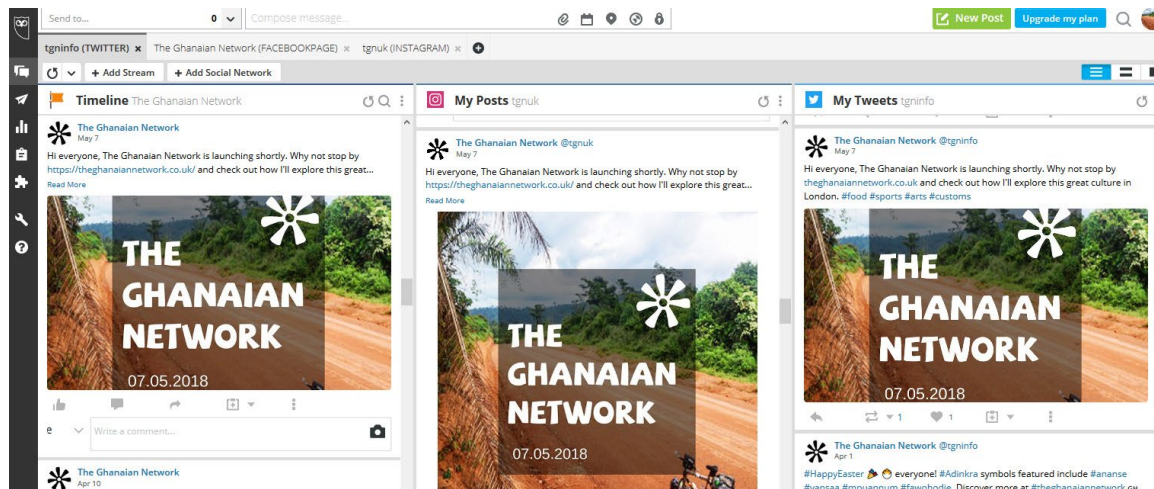
As plan B's go it was pretty solid, the theme generally fulfilled most of what I was after. The main issue for me was trying to convert the site into my original design. I clearly hadn't left enough time to familiarise myself with WordPress and now that plan A (Vanilla) was off the cards, I had been advised by a friend to look into page builders to develop my site. I settled on Elementor this allowed me to focus more on frontend development which I have to say I felt more comfortable with. Even so I had had a couple of near misses with my site that got me running to David's office.

There's still a lot of development to do on the site but it is slowly becoming the site I envisioned. I'm also glad that I stuck to WordPress because remembering some of what I was taught is coming in handy. Again I have to say that the interruption to my studies took some of the momentum away from me and allowed fear to build up to irrational levels in my head. Having said all this, I managed to launch the site on Bank Holiday Monday 7 May 2018.



THE SITE AS IT STANDS

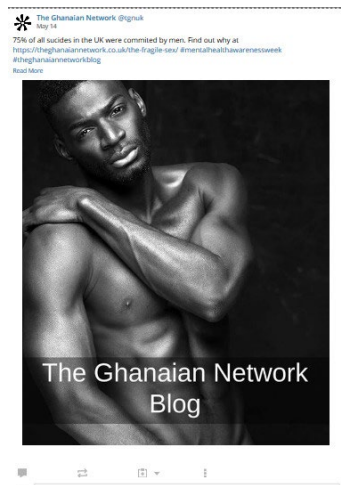
I was so grateful that some of the students had recommended the Trello app which helped me in general to run a smooth ship, more importantly put things in place for the pre-launch. Now that the site had launched I was able to hop onto Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to advertise it.



Hootsuite, the social media management platform, became my ‘assistant’, organising my social media accounts so that I could carry out simultaneous posts and even schedule them in advance. This tool has been invaluable to me as, especially due to security restrictions, I’m not able to access my phone during my working day.

Things are picking up traction and falling into place, I was eagerly ticking off tasks on my To Do list. Slowly I slipped into a routine: advertise – post – development – advertise – write post – development – advertise and eventually archive posts.

I also conducted marketing and awareness campaigns to attract interest in my site. For instance the month of May is Skin Cancer Awareness. I intend to do a post on skin bleaching in Ghana, a practice that has existed for many years in Ghana. Highlight it on social media, using hashtags and linking to similar topics. I’m hoping to not only build up site traffic but the aim is that I will foster discussions via comments. This could lead to other health issues and concerns that I could blog about, even highlight related events via social media.



I'm relying fully on WordPress for layouts which now makes the agony I went through before seem pointless. Apart from a few tweaks the homepage is very close to my original design. As for the blog page, I had given up entirely trying to reinvent the wheel and stuck with the two column layout. It seemed the right thing to do as it's familiar to users, I'm already introducing them to an unusual navigation I didn't want to bombard them with too many changes.

Perhaps the one thing that bugs me about the homepage, it the huge banner image. This is quite on trend so I don't want to lose it entirely but modify it somewhat. If I can reduce it in size then the whole homepage will sit on one screen, there would be no need to scroll down to get to the content. The header is smaller on all the other pages so I wanted it repeated for a consistent, balanced feel. I attempted to do this via the code but ended up breaking the site. I'm currently using Chrome and Firefox developer tools to help me identify the exact elements that I want to alter. This should help me to develop more effectively.

I was aware that I would require plug-ins and quite surprised that I didn't use as many as I had initially planned. Here's a few that I'm using. Header and Footer Scripts to enable me to insert the snippet code for Google Analytics. I needed a plug-in to create forms so chose WP Forms Lite. I wanted social media feeds to have a key position on my blog sidebar/widget so I installed Feed Them Social. Its typography is so similar to my theme's that its inauguration has been seamless. In the same vein, I wanted users to be able to share my content with relative ease and flexibility so selecting Sassy Social Share felt right.

When it comes to SEO, I'm afraid that I've fallen prey to the numerous myths floating out there. I was under the impression that if you build great content links will automatically follow (Moogan, 2018). I fully intend to create great content but

it still needs to be pushed out there so I will continue to work on email outreach (once I get subscribers), PR and advertising.

SEO began much earlier in the game for me, particularly for my IA and UX, and when I started figuring out what content I wanted to include. For instance in my homepage I have used very little content only keywords as I wanted the homepage to have a simple UI, the great thing about WordPress is that it includes keywords in title of the page. This means that when a user looks at the hits for The Ghanaian Network, they know instantly what the site has to offer. To be honest, the burden of my content falls on the blog page. When I write a post I take care to have a read more tag that sums up what the blog is about adding a many keywords to that section as possible. Naturally, I try to include as many keywords throughout the post too.

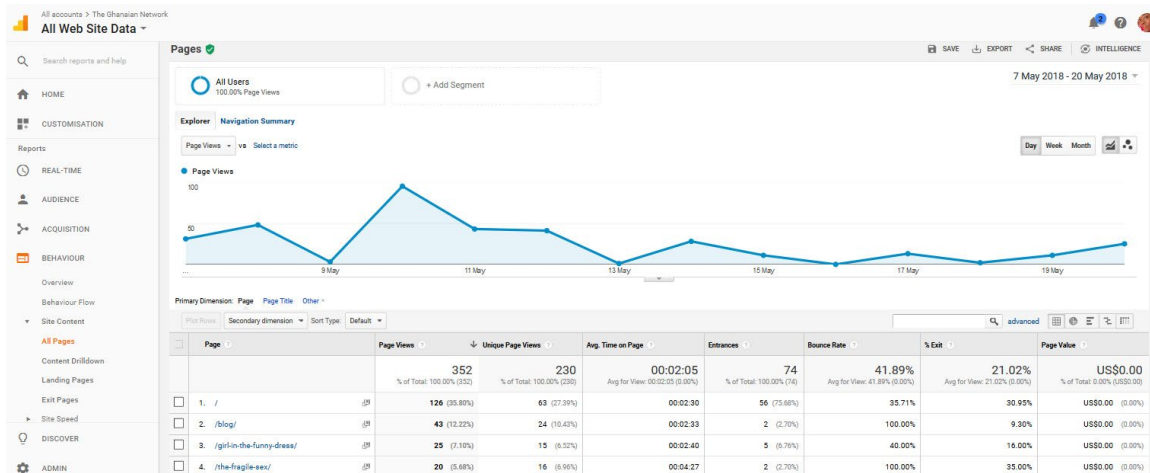
Facebook and Instagram have attached an insights tool to each post, similar to Google Analytics, to give you an idea how your post is doing. They offer the boost button which at a small cost of say \$2 can promise to highlight your post to the right users. Although it's tempting to do this and in turn see the numbers increase as your post is liked, I feel it's a little deceptive. I want to see how my post is doing naturally, if I'm hitting my targets and if not, I want to be able to discover what I have to do to change that.

I still find it fascinating which social media posts my audience will be drawn to and which blogs they gravitate towards. Inviting friends to like my page on Facebook made me realise they were engaging with my content but were a little shy to leave comments despite my coaxing. Some of my friends not only complimented my work but suggested my content is on par with a lot of what's out there. One conversation with a friend lead me to look at AfroKanist Magazine and read their similar content on mental health and nutrition. I have since subscribed to their email. Recently, I carried out a search on afro funk and was amazed to find that images used on my website were being indexed and linked back to my site. My content is really out there.

Something else that didn't work out was email sign up, I had hoped to engage with my 'subscribers' and invite one or two of them to become guest bloggers. Encouraging them to spread the word and invite their friends along to explore. I imaged this would lead to engaging debates online and would trip across into linked social media platforms. I will keep pushing through, with that said, I'm considering MailChimp and Exit Intent pop ups to manage my email subscriptions.

Now I'd like to turn my attention to Google Analytics and in no particular order, break down into bitesize pieces what I was able to glean from it.

Site traffic



It's interesting that a couple of days after the launch date (7 May) I received the highest number of page views of 95. I imagine that people were getting back into their routine after the Bank Holiday, perhaps too the fact that it takes a couple of days for information to be picked up on the web. So it might be worth my while to leave it a bit longer between posts to highlight new content. At the moment I'm trying to post every two days so perhaps I will wait for three days, possibly four to take advantage of the spike.

The stats are even more encouraging when I study the page views, many visitors were landing on the home page and staying for an average of 2 ½ minutes, not bad. The blog page followed next with a slightly higher average time spent on the page and this is exactly what I was after. This tells me that my layouts are working and influencing viewers' choices.

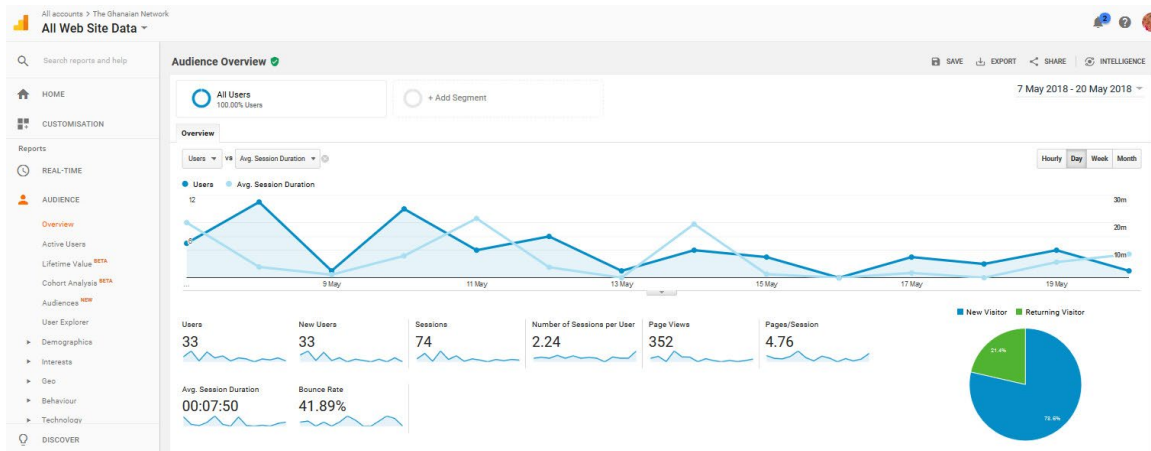
Page ?	Page Views ?	Unique Page Views ?	Avg. Time on Page ?	Entrances ?	Bounce Rate ?	% Exit ?	Page Value ?
	352 % of Total: 100.00% (352)	230 % of Total: 100.00% (230)	00:02:05 Avg for View: 00:02:05 (0.00%)	74 % of Total: 100.00% (74)	41.89% Avg for View: 41.89% (0.00%)	21.02% Avg for View: 21.02% (0.00%)	US\$0.00 % of Total: 0.00% (US\$0.00)
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. /	126 (35.80%)	63 (27.39%)	00:02:30	56 (75.68%)	35.71%	30.95%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. /blog/	43 (12.22%)	24 (10.43%)	00:02:33	2 (2.70%)	100.00%	9.30%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. /girl-in-the-funny-dress/	25 (7.10%)	15 (6.52%)	00:02:40	5 (6.76%)	40.00%	16.00%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. /the-fragile-sex/	20 (5.68%)	16 (6.96%)	00:04:27	2 (2.70%)	100.00%	35.00%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. /a-brief-intro-to-high-life/	19 (5.40%)	14 (6.09%)	00:01:38	0 (0.00%)	0.00%	10.53%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)
<input type="checkbox"/> 6. /Blog/	18 (5.11%)	14 (6.09%)	00:00:44	1 (1.35%)	0.00%	16.67%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)
<input type="checkbox"/> 7. /customs/	14 (3.98%)	11 (4.78%)	00:00:22	2 (2.70%)	50.00%	21.43%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)
<input type="checkbox"/> 8. /food/	14 (3.98%)	11 (4.78%)	00:00:25	0 (0.00%)	0.00%	0.00%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)
<input type="checkbox"/> 9. /my-top-5-ghanaian-dishes/	14 (3.98%)	12 (5.22%)	00:01:44	2 (2.70%)	100.00%	21.43%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)
<input type="checkbox"/> 10. /arts/	13 (3.69%)	8 (3.48%)	00:00:24	0 (0.00%)	0.00%	7.69%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)

Show rows: 10 Go to: 1 1-10 of 30

Taking a closer look at the blog posts and I'm a little surprised that 'Girl In The Funny Dress' beat 'The Fragile Sex' in numbers but not for duration. It rings true that the anecdotal, personal experiences are popular with readers. I am very happy that 'The Fragile Sex' is amongst the top 3, I know mental health is a tough subject to bring up so I'm really glad that users engaged with the topic. They spent an average of nearly 4 ½ minutes on the post. All I need to do now is encourage them to comment.

I noted 'My Top 5 Ghanaian Dishes' just managed to make the top ten. I tried something a little different with that post, talking to the reader as if they were right there in the room with me. This has galvanized me to keep trying new, different approaches and not be afraid to fail. A couple of my theme pages managed to make the mark, namely customs and food. Confirming my number one reason why people would want to visit a site like this, to learn more about customs.

Bounce rates



My bounce rate overall sits just in the average bracket at 41.89% so I'm quite pleased with that. My homepage bounce rate is 35.71% which apparently is excellent (Peyton, 2014), it's receiving the attention it deserves and easing my fears over my design choices. Those sleepless nights really were worth it.

I was shocked at the 100% bounce rate for my blog page (apparently that's normal), people tend to scan for new posts so seeing as I hadn't posted something new in the last few days they bounced right off the page. I'm disappointed that 'The Fragile Sex' received a 100% bounce rate, I intend to address that topic again at a later date so I shall keep a close eye on those figures.

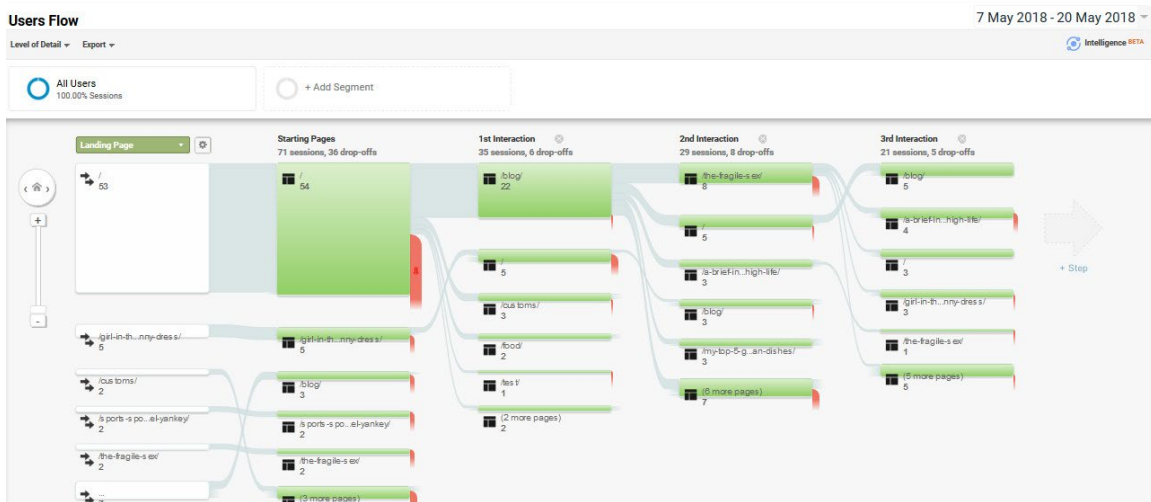
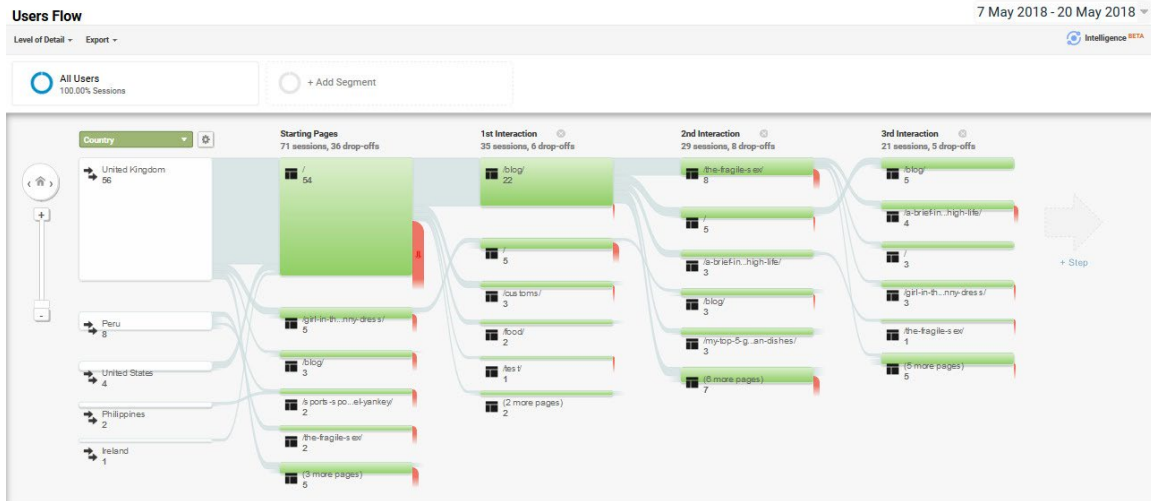
Demographics

Unfortunately, I do not have any stats at present, I tried resetting this with GA so I'm not sure what happened there. I'll continue to look into this as part of the site development.

User journeys

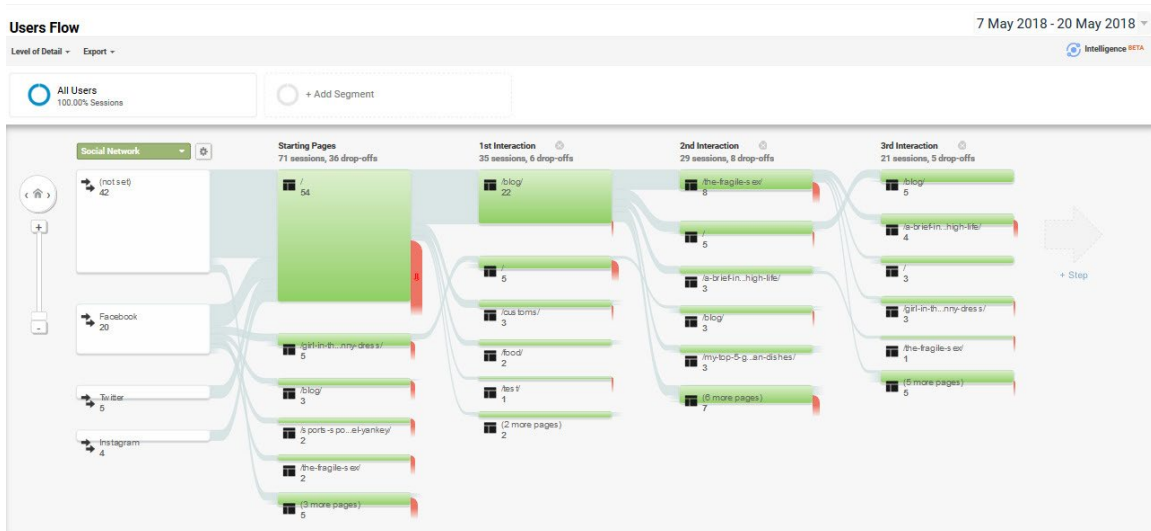
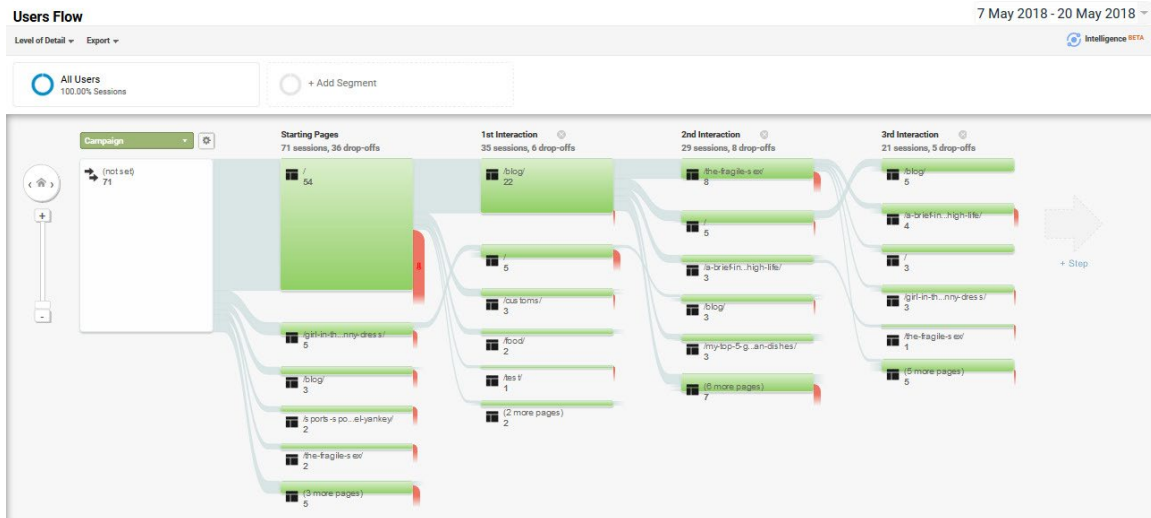
I decided to probe this area a bit further and looked at three main areas: campaign, landing page and social network together with user flows overview to see if I could ascertain any patterns.

THE GHANAIAN NETWORK



There is a consistent pattern of users moving from the homepage to the blog which as I designed the pages that way is encouraging. I'm surprised to see 'The Fragile Sex' kept popping up on the top of the second interaction which leads me to believe this post was a lot more popular than the stats originally allowed me to think. Even through traffic attached to this was at 62.5% with the drops offs averaging at 37.5%, very interesting.

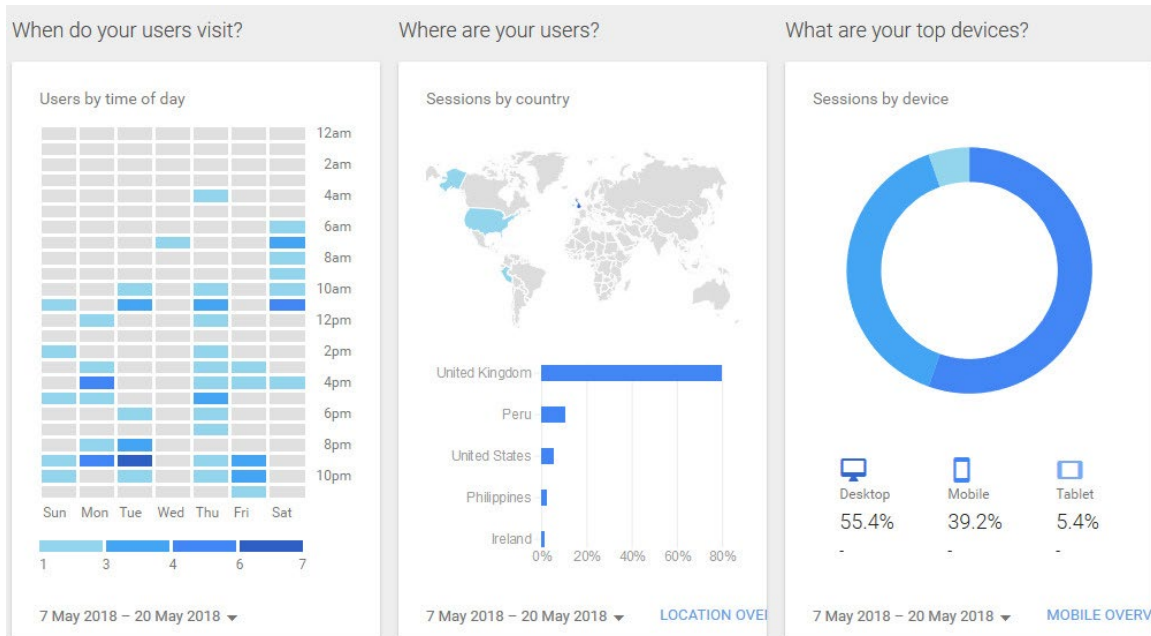
I wasn't expecting to see visitors from Peru, they went straight through to the Sports Spotlight blog post, bypassing the home page and then onto 'The Fragile Sex' which suggests they may have discovered my content via social media.



When it comes to the social networks, the stats weren't what I was expecting at all. I had done lot of work on Twitter, in fact it was the platform I was most comfortable with. But it's Facebook that came out on top, I'm starting to think that I may not be making the most of Twitter and Instagram as I keep ignoring the reminders to link with friends on those networks.

At this stage, I decided to take a closer look at the users' patterns, for instance what day and time are they most likely to visit my website. Thursday afternoon took the

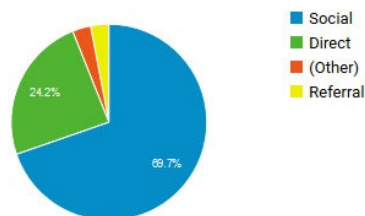
top spot, followed by Saturday morning. It's gratifying to know that the majority of my visitors are from the UK, my main objective is being met.



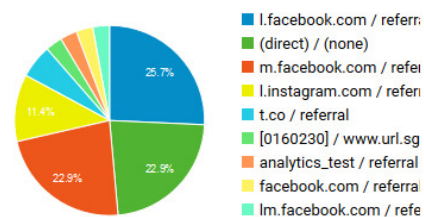
I was glad to see that mobile use was at 39.2%, mobile layout is the one that I struggled with the most and will continue to develop further. At least what I've assembled together isn't putting people off.

So a few thoughts then to sum up this section, when it comes to building site traffic social media is still a force to be reckoned with. Granted I have to do some more work with Twitter and Instagram, I think creating instant videos or video streams will help tremendously here. I'll address how I intend to do this later.

Top Channels



Top Sources/Mediums



I'm coming to the conclusion, it's not so much about how much material I produce but when I put it out there that counts. My users have their patterns and as long as I fit into or accommodate them I should catch their attention. For instance, Thursday afternoons may be a good time to release experimental/new content, they're approaching the end of the week, and feeling in a good mood as the weekend is on the horizon. This leaves Saturday mornings free to reinforce messages over their breakfasts as they have time to pour over them.

The wonder of Google Analytics means that I can keep digging further and further into a 'problem' till I find the solution. Overall, I think my site is performing well a lot better than I was expecting and discovering that has been energising. I believe I have achieved my initial goals and if I make small iterative changes, I can take this site to the next level.

Final touches

One of the minor touches I made to the colour palette was to modify the horizon colour. The original blue just didn't look right or sit well with the other colours in the palette, it may be due to the fact that it bordered on neon. Deepening it slightly made it balance and blend well with the other colours, giving the menu a polished look.

I changed to The Ghanaian Network Blog on the homepage, instead of highlighting one post (previously The Fragile Sex). I wanted to encourage consistency as users arrived from social media platforms to the website. Initially, I thought that I would just switch the picture on the homepage, making it a feature; keeping things fresh but I thought that it might cause confusion as visitors would wonder if they are on the same site. I was also concerned the picture I selected for that particular post might not fit in with the general aesthetic of the homepage. A quick fix seemed to be to change the title from an individual blog post to the general blog.

Not having the Adinkra symbols menu on the blog, about and contact pages doesn't seem to have affected the site's performance but there is always room for improvement.

THE PROTOTYPE ADAPTATION *

A little background

After the rush and stress of trying to complete my site for the deadline in May, I was looking forward to a long awaited holiday to Ghana. Catching up with family and friends, enjoying great weather, some Ghanaian culture and food seemed just what the doctor had ordered.

David got in touch asking me to meet with him to discuss my work on 22 June. Hm, this doesn't sound good, I thought to myself. He informed me that the board were not able to pass my work and asked me how I felt that it all went. The long and short of the conversation was that we agreed that I would have to resubmit my work, unfortunately due to personal and work commitments this date would have to be brought forward to October. I was very grateful for the extension but a part of me was downcast. After mulling it over in my mind, I began to see the positive side of things and set to work to put things right.

Back from my wonderful hols, I was ready for battle. I noticed that I had to straighten up few things in my life, especially if I was ever going to give this project everything I had. Firstly, I had to change my attitude, the negativity had to go. I couldn't tackle and try new things if I constantly felt I wasn't up to par. I had to stop struggling in silence and being afraid to ask for help. I'm a student, I'm learning new things so it's ok to ask questions. Lastly, I had to stop being a perfectionist, it wasn't getting me anywhere. It kept me glued to indecision and dancing with procrastination that I loathed making any decision whatsoever. I had to acknowledge when I was feeling overwhelmed and be willing to step away, take a break and tackle things head on when I was in a better place. Lack of sleep and projects don't mix. A good work life balance was crucial if I was going to get through this project.

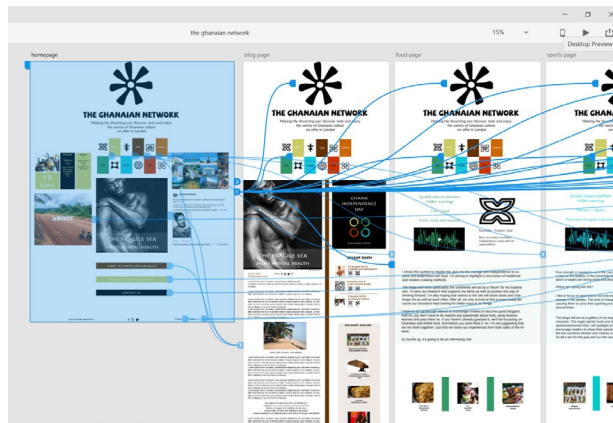
David said the board were really keen on my initial prototype and felt that my project suffered as I transferred it to WordPress. They believed that I had sacrificed what made my project unique just to fit into a bespoke WordPress blog design. To be honest I had to agree with them.

Developing TGN

Armed with this new found focus i.e. sticking to my original vision, I set about working on what I initially called a redesign of The Ghanaian Network static site or TGN for short. As this site was born out of Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop mock

ups, it suggested rather than provided what I wanted to include in my design. This meant there were a lot of gaps that I had to fill, rethink and do away with altogether. In fact, it taught me a big lesson on my thinking processes, sometimes I didn't always 'follow through.' Particularly when it came to my layouts.

Developing TGN got me to experiment with Adobe's XD (Experience design) software. I found myself saying a lot of 'I want this page to go where??' Mapping the pages out like that made me think of the user and exactly what I want them to take away from my site. *How do I explain what Ghana's like to someone?* I still think I have a lot of work to do in answering this question.



My site on Adobe XD

A lot of breaking of the site took place as I explored the best way to display information. I almost look at this site as sort of exhibition and I can see how this kind of thinking informed some of my design choices.



TGN's blog gallery

Watership Down

Crashing my site four times leading up to the final presentation earlier this month, told me I still had lot to learn. For instance, I realised a little too late and to my horror that I had downloaded the wrong Vanilla theme. So trying to customise the theme was getting me nowhere. In fact my whole approach to WordPress had been faulty. I allowed myself to become quite fearful of it, dealing with it only when I had to. And what a struggle it was, if only I had stopped suffering in silence / not wanting to be a burden and just asked Prisca early on: ‘what am I doing wrong?’ would have saved me a lot of grief. I came from the mind-set that I was already behind so ‘just keep your head down and get on with it’. Or as I told Prisca once: I’m stubborn or stupid - don’t answer that question ;)

As life would have it, I was up against that deadline once more. Through further conversations with Prisca, she and David thought it best that I work on just developing (with a focus on UX/UI) the static site rather than ‘battle with WordPress’, Prisca’s words not mine. With only two weeks to go ‘my plate was full.’

Functionality

The feedback I gained from Cole during the final presentation was to fix layout inconsistencies before adding any new features. Focusing on 1 or 2 layouts should do the trick. But what really dawned on me was how they were picking up that I was feeling overwhelmed. Cole advised me to finish things one at a time, complete something first then move onto the next task. Small, manageable chunks of work was the key to tackling this project beast. Unfortunately for me, things took a lot longer so sometimes I had to have a couple of things on the go in order to stick to my schedule.

Prisca led me out of this maze by reminding me to just do what I can handle for this submission, anything non-essential could be carried forward to phase 2. David pointed out, before I got down in the dumps that there was a lot of mileage in this project. Keep your eye on that horizon kid, I told myself, one day it will all make sense ☺.

Keep it simple. I had my functionality list, namely, I wanted my site to display images, store and archive blogs, comments etc. but as this was aimed at my WordPress site I had to discover a simpler way to do things. I also realised that I was beginning to forget a lot of code so I had to refresh my memory. It’s been an interesting learning curve to say the least but it’s taught that I still enjoy being in

this game. As well as affording me with the opportunity to create, well that's just the icing on the cake.

Dot the i's and cross the t's

Thankfully, I feel in a better position to hand in a better site than I did a couple of months ago. Overcoming a lot of self-doubt, fears, scheduling conflicts and family issues in the process.

This project has demonstrated that I'm self-motivated and determined when I set my mind to something to see it through to the end. I discovered things about myself that I didn't like: I'm a perfectionist, a procrastinator; and visionary but that won't work if I don't pay attention to implementation. Things don't always go the way I hope, therefore, I need to build some resilience into my schedule.

I've enjoyed reworking TGN and edging ever so gently to phase 2. I'm looking forward to transferring TGN onto WordPress. Armed with what I know now, it's going to be quite a journey. I'm keen to keep learning about this industry for years to come.

***Please note that this is an addendum to the original report first submitted in May 2018.**

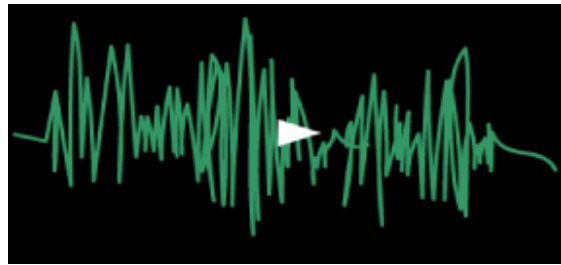
Claudia Okyere-Fosu
19 October 2018

FUTURE PLANS

My future plans for site fall into three areas: interactive content, income generation and merchandising.

If there's one aspect of the project that I'm disappointed in is that of interactive content. I had hoped that it would be the main draw to my site, engaging the user's curiosity and sense of adventure.

The first interactive content I hoped to implement was that of a sound app. The interface would look like that of most media players and would allow the user to hear how the Adinkra symbols (used in the main navigation) are pronounced in *Twi*.



I would code the sound visualisation using HTML and JavaScript in such a way to allow it to be unique to the *Twi* sound and of this website. I have researched various audio visualisations (Weid, 2013) but I had to concede that my coding of JavaScript wouldn't be up to the task in such a short turnaround. It was suggested during the Crits that I focus on the core functions of my site and leave the 'frilly bits' to phase 2. It was as per usual very sage advice as I would have been bogged down by a feature that quite possibly might have gone unnoticed by the user.

Another interactive content I wanted to implement was an interactive calendar. The idea here was to encourage users to upload events or scan for events. I wanted to foster a networking community, eventually creating events myself. I had issues with the layouts of course but I became stuck while pondering how it would sit on the website – should it have a page of its own or should it be included on the homepage? I went back and forth with it and in the end had to abandon it as I was at a loss even to explain its advantages during the Crits.

I guess I was swayed by Divine Chocolate's website so much so that I wanted to include an interactive timeline of Ghana's history and include some key milestones. I saw this as a chance to keep building on my digital illustration skills, include that glorious colour palette and create something quite wonderful. Sadly, it's been moved

to the backburner but remains in the forefront of my mind as part of my frontend development learning.

An area that I've always been fascinated with is video, it really does add life to any site. I'm looking at ways I can film and edit my videos. I may start small with Apple's Moviemaker, then go onto broadcasting myself on YouTube. I might veer towards Vimeo, only because I've heard some negative things about YouTube. It would be intriguing to forge my own path on another platform such as Vimeo, seek the road less travelled and see if I can come up with different results. As I mentioned before whilst discussing stats for the site, I've seen the impact that social media has on site traffic so this is an area I will have to look into. Ideally, I would like to include an introductory video briefly discussing why I created the site and advising users how to get the most out of the site.

I have a love hate relationship with income generation. I know that it's not necessary but can be extremely helpful especially when it comes to site development. It also brings with it a whole burden of responsibility that I'd rather not take on at this stage but I'm increasingly warming up to the idea. The saying 'you get what you pay for' couldn't be truer when it comes to web development. Money generated from the site will give me a chance to explore various plugins, digital software and notably alternative CMSs such as Craft and Perch.

The fact is that when considering income generation, I had to be exactly aware of what I'm letting myself in for. This can take the form of ad placement on my site, making sure that it doesn't 'upset' the design too much. Secondly, sponsored content; acting like one of the characters out of The Truman Show and mention the sponsored products every time I upload new content doesn't feel me with relish. To finally organising fundraising events though can be very rewarding is a lot of stress and effort. However, adding a donation facility on the site might not be too tricky. Obviously, I'll have to include a summary of how the funds are being used across the site. There could even be an opportunity to insert a fundraising progress bar to highlight visitors to the good cause. I'm sure the need to develop my site will eventually outweigh my concerns.

Somewhere between panicking over the site and preparing for the final Crit, I caught a vision of merchandising. While creating branding material I thought to myself: 'this would make a great t-shirt.' That's as far as it went really but I would be keen to explore the different types of fabric and various styles this could encompass. Adinkra go hand in hand with textiles but it would be interesting to see if there are

other ways to show off Ghanaian printing techniques. I would love to see Ananse on a cap or bandana.

As mentioned before, I am dedicated to my development and would welcome the chance to increase my development prowess. This project has been ideal in that regard, I can't think of anything else I have done that has come close to this. Not only has it brought all that I have learnt together but it pushes me to diligently seek better ways to do things, constantly improving my game. During the course, I've often found myself asking why I am doing something and if it's the best way. Research is at the heart of development so I know I will have my nose in a book for a while to come. I've truly learnt to appreciate that design needs development and vice versa.

CONCLUSION

It's so easy with a project of this kind to focus on what went wrong and lose sight of what went well. So on that note I shall highlight what I think worked.

On the whole WordPress was a success, I'm familiar with its interface and just managing to get my head around the admin side of things. I'm able to adjust the code to style the theme and individual elements on the page. Using a child theme as David suggested has been invaluable as I know I have a safety net attached. Developing my site with a child theme means that if I make mistakes I can always copy the theme from the parent and start again. Working in this way has really increased my confidence working with this kind of CMS.

I'm really grateful that I created my social media accounts earlier on so that I could focus on creating content to add and link to my blog. I've kept the content more or less the same across all three platforms, namely Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Over the next few months I will experiment with changing the content slightly to fit each platform more uniquely. I think this will be more interesting for users and give my blog sidebar less needless repetition.

The blog has been a real eye opener for me and I'm more convinced now that it is the best way for me to get my voice/Unique Selling Point across. I like to keep my tone friendly, open and individual. I'm not here to incite or push my ideas across, I just want to highlight some of the ways Ghana does things well and facilitate discussions. The blog will allow me also to address some concerns I have about Ghanaian culture. It's a great platform and I intend to use it wisely.

Google Analytics has been the real hidden gem in all this, the insights that I have picked up so far will help me to forge ahead confidently. It will also encourage me to try new things, safe in the knowledge that if the stats are less favourable I can tweak my content accordingly. Google Analytics has allowed me to see my general design choices are working and the majority of time I'm on the right track. It's the hidden 'survey' that provides unbiased answers and opinions.

I'm still fleshing out layout/menu issues in WordPress. For instance, I need to figure out a way to get my CTA buttons to all be one width, I'm using Elementor for this so it could be a little tricky but I'm sure over time I will adapt to it. As for the menus, I tried falling back to the WordPress editor to fix those – make the symbols menu appear on all pages of the site – but it distorted things. This was a bit disappointing as I was assured the page builder is compatible with my WordPress theme. I get the

impression certain page builders work better with WordPress themes, something to keep my eye on in the future.

My time management hasn't always been ideal, I didn't factor enough time to build the site, I just focussed on the design side of things. But I did notice that having less time meant I only focussed on what was important, splitting tasks into core, non-core and maybes.

I discovered I wasn't able to write a weekly blog as I'd originally envisioned, I've had to concede by moving it to fortnightly. I'm sure this will get moved over to weekly once my crazy schedule has calmed down. Also I have realised that visitors respond well to the social media posts which means that I will have to factor time to let those 'sink in' once they are out there.

I haven't managed to install Google Tag Manager so I will continue to work on this. I'm not too upset about this as Google Analytics is working very well but you can never have too many insights. My understanding is that Tag Manager will give me more insight to keywords and demographics. So eventually making those key changes will be crucial to drive my site traffic up.

As soon as I had the concept for this project solidified in my head, I should have incorporated development early on in the process. In fact I should be designing and developing simultaneously. A process I will adopt for future projects.

If I had the chance to do all this again, I would spend more time on WordPress, practice building pages, and slowly select my plug-ins to ensure I have the right tools for the job. Allow myself the freedom to break pages so that I know what works and what doesn't.

I'm planning to engage in project management (for the day job) as part of my development so this should help with this and future projects.

I've learnt the hard way that stress blocks creativity and if it's not managed appropriately will land you in a dark pit. I will try to manage my time and other things in my life to avoid this.

Stretching the bounds of my creativity will always be at the top of my list. I've come a long way already, learning about content creation, ideation and solidifying my work process. I'll also continue to follow and learn from the best on Twitter. As well as keeping my learning relevant and current by attending a web conference or two.

A lot can be done to 'open up' Ghanaian culture to the rest of the world.

The sites I analysed during this project have two very different authors, creating very different content. This area has to be amalgamated; combined to create a stronger, unified voice and web presence.

I feel inspired to use this project to change people's thinking in this area and if done well, for generations to come.

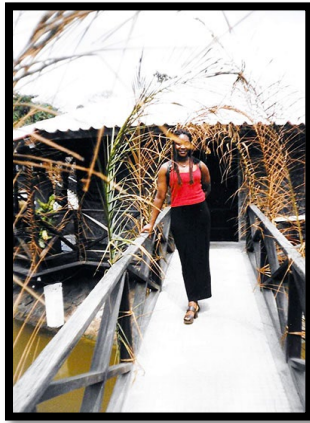
In the 1980s and early 1990s, Ghanaian households often sent a family member to a wide range of destinations including the US and Europe with their migration tending to be temporary. The aim being to return to Ghana with enough capital to finance a business.

However, most Ghanaians stayed in the UK for several years, raising families whilst still committed to supporting their extended families back in Ghana. A tough and often sacrificial role, these 'breadwinner' families had to create a home from home; relying on their traditions and customs to get them through many cold, dark winters.

These hard working Ghanaians seldom ventured outside of their immediate circle of relations so the Ghanaian community existed for many years 'underground'. This also meant that Ghanaian culture was hidden and virtually unknown outside of this community.

Despite my reservations regarding celebrity endorsements, I feel this could only be a good thing as it raises Ghana's profile. Perhaps encouraged by this sudden surge of interest, about 10 years ago, Ghanaian societies and groups in London took courageous steps to reach out to their surrounding communities. A wave of support followed in the form of plays, exhibitions and fashion shows written and organised mainly by young Ghanaians. Finally, here were activities that 2nd Generation kids could enjoy with their Ex-pat parents.

This surge of interest in all things Ghanaian bubbled over into the web landscape so now my beloved ancestral home is only a few clicks away.



(Okyere-Fosu, 1998)

In the picture above, I finally get a chance to visit 'home'.

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