

Viewing visual web site design in context

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What is GIST?

A Graphical Identity Support Tool

GIST is a tool designed to support the assessment of the visual design of websites. This is to help manage the appearance of websites that have a strong visual identity.

What is the problem addressed by GIST?

Understanding the actuality of visual design for a website can be difficult. Particular difficulty comes from: the gap between a design and its implementation; and rapidly implemented design revisions.

Example problems

Staff may follow their own design.

Standards may be unclear or misread.

Scripts and styles may not be adequately tested.

Content scale and form may differ in from that envisaged during development.

What GIST does

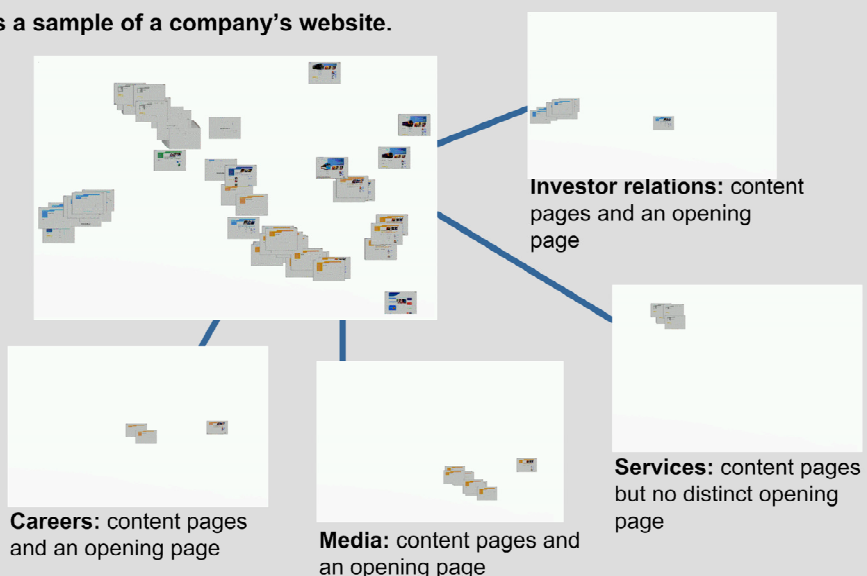
GIST supports the assessment of visual design. It gathers test data in the form of screenshots of available web-pages. The gathered images are then visualised based upon their graphical features.

E.g. This GIST analysis visualizes a sample of a company's website.

Each cluster or group can be examined to see how it matches sections of the site.

Filtering the visualization based upon the sections from the website's map helps with assessing the consistency of the visual design. The filtered views shown are "careers", "media", "investor relations" and "services".

It can be seen that each section has a distinct opening page and its other pages closely clustered. However, the design for "services" may need to be examined, as it does not show the same pattern.



GIST's operation

GIST crawls a site gathering a small training set of page images. A simple genetic algorithm analyses the images, identifying visual features that are common to them. GIST continues to crawl the web gathering page images. This process stops when visual features differ from those it derived from the training set.

The images are analysed independently of any of the "code" defining them.

GIST's output

GIST's visualisation shows the images it has analysed. Images are positioned so that those with similar features are close to one another.

The visualisation can be interactively explored - by zooming and filtering. Filtering allows the view to be limited to specific url patterns or page keywords. This allows the user to get a better feel for whether the visual design matches the implementation.

How GIST is used

For good visual design we assume there is a correlation between the visual character pages and their purpose or role within a site.

By clustering pages with a similar appearance, the GIST visualisation helps the designers recognise possible correlations as well as exceptional cases. Lack of correlation and exceptional cases can provide a focus for design reviews and improved implementation

Interested in GIST as a service, using GIST or finding out more?

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