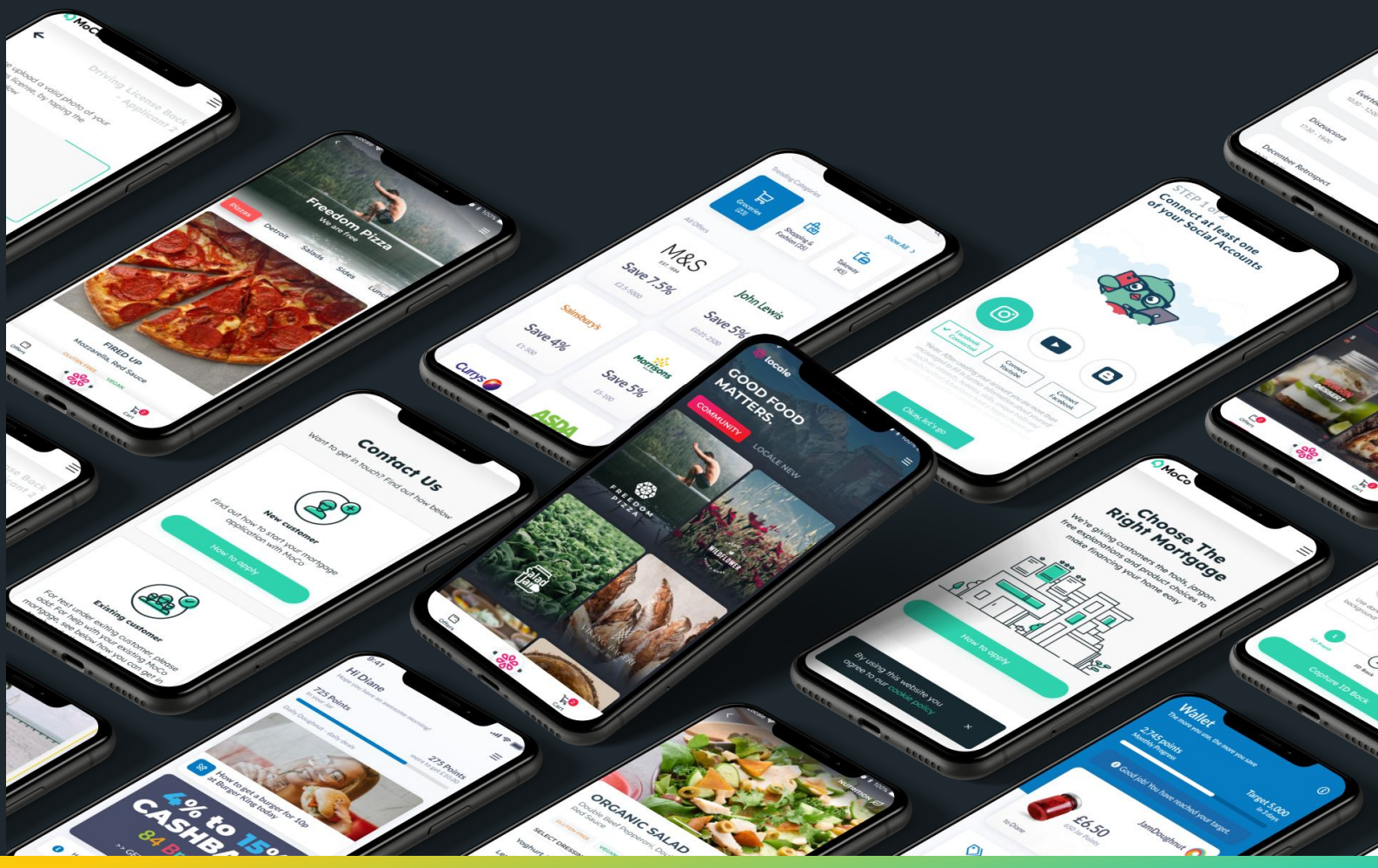
VeryCreatives

THE UI AUDIT CHECKLIST



A thorough evaluation of the visual elements within a digital interface, a UI Audit is assessing various components such as: Design elements, Hierarchy of information, Consistency and Usability.

The goal is to enhance overall aesthetics and functionality of the product, providing suggestions that make it as user-friendly and visually appealing as possible

THE APPROACH

When conducting a UI Audit there is a series of aspects one might consider, from the implementation of already established Brand Guidelines to avoiding Dark Patterns in layouts. Also some aspects overlap with others and even with different areas of Product Design like UX or Copywriting.

In some cases the Audit is over pretty quickly with little to no improvement opportunities, while in others, it is beneficial to broaden the scope, and even rethink structural or business decisions. Also at times the product just needs to improve it's navigation or color palette, while different products require a more wholescale approach.

Lastly, it might be the case that the audit involves one or just a couple of screens from a product. But in other instances there might be need to cross-check an entire design system with multiple journeys and platforms for a single application.

It is hence beneficial to establish in advance, that there is no one 'one and only' 'tried and tested' way of conducting an UI Audit. Rather there are a set of rules that one might apply, and a couple of rules one can check and look out for.

The lists below are based on personal experience and working with digital products and SaaS clients throughout the years. Based on that , we at VeryCreatives differentiate 5+1 groups, such as: Branding, Visuals (Form), Function, Interactions, Accessibility, and Nice to haves.

Yet gain, these are meant to be guidelines, and not commandments written in stone. Feel free to fine-tune, remove elements or add some of your own to the list, or to diverge at any point should it seem beneficial to your purposes.

BRAND

When working with an already established brand, the first thing you should check is if the layouts involved, fit and follow the brand guide.

☐ Brand Identity

Existing brands already have a set of rules an interface should follow. It is therefore advised to start with checking if these aspects are met.

☐ Colors

Check if used color palette is in-line with established brand guidelines

☐ Typography

Check if brand fonts and styles are used correctly. Or if there are any possible conflicts when implementing custom fonts choices in code (check for alternates)

VISUALS

The next phase should be to check purely the appearance of the layouts and see if they are visually pleasing and follow a set of rules and design principles.

☐ Aesthetics

Creating a visually appealing interface attracts users, enhancing overall experience. Consistent aesthetics also reinforce brand identity, ensuring that every visual element aligns with your brand's values and messaging.

☐ Clear Hierarchy

Ensures a structured and organized interface, making it easier for users to navigate and understand content. Hierarchy clearly defined styles with a unique purpose, size, and color

☐ Layout and Spacing

Establishing a set of rules of distances to divide and organize layouts establishes a rhythm and keeps you paddings and margins in check.

☐ Alignment

Proper alignment and spacing contribute to a clean, uncluttered design that enhances readability and reduces cognitive load.

☐ Consistency

Consistency across the interface fosters a cohesive user experience, reinforcing familiarity and intuitiveness, which in turn boosts user confidence and satisfaction.

☐ Color System

Error states should not be green, while disclaimer is probably less important than a main headline. Use color consciously to communicate form and function throughout designs

☐ States , Instances

An application is not only it's 'happy flow', things can go bad, users break things, searches come up empty, servers malfunction. Best to be prepared with a design for each of these

FUNCTION

After visuals are in check, it is time to move to function, and see if the product is usable and is able to perform functions as advertised.

☐ Core Functions

Any interface should be designed to prioritize and support the primary tasks users need to accomplish on that specific screen. Making key features easily accessible improves user satisfaction and efficiency.

☐ Elements of Core Function

Clearly identifying the core function, you avoid unnecessary complexity and clutter, creating a streamlined and effective user experience.

☐ Copy, tone, communication

It is useful to check not only if the tone of communication is consistent and aligns with the brand guidelines, but if it fits with the established design language and elements as well

☐ Flow of Navigation

A well-structured flow guides users seamlessly from one task to another, reducing confusion and frustration. Effective navigation design helps users locate information and features quickly, improving overall user satisfaction and engagement

☐ Scalability

You designed a perfect screen. Now what? Well best to make sure that it can handle less than ideal data, empty states, a varied number of screen elements and whatever a user might throw at it. Best to come prepared.

☐ Responsiveness

Also an app or website is never a static thing. There are multiple devices with multiple screen sizes and browsers or operation systems. Not to mention constant updates. It is a constant battle to be able to serve all these requirements.

INTERACTIONS

The next area should be moving from images to motion, and if there is any room for improvement with the flow of the app, or just opportunities to add extra visual flair.

☐ Screen Transitions

Is navigating between screens evident and self explanatory? Is there a clear set of rules defined for the user journey, levels of screens and state changes?

☐ Navigation

The navigation should be always clear and visible. Even when scrolling through a screen, or interacting with it. Consider a sticky header or multiple states based on what happens

☐ Microinteractions

Is there a way to spice up the layouts with small unique elements like pull to refresh, or an interactive swipe element? The devil is in the details.

☐ Animations

Furthermore, is there space and reason to animate certain images or icons in the static designs? Primary focus should be elevating the overall user experience and make things simpler and their functions easier to comprehend

ACCESSIBILITY

Finally it is always useful to check if the designs meet certain accessibility criteria, and if there are any opportunities to suggest any improvement in this regard.

☐ WCAG Principles

The four guiding principles of WCAG are Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, and Robust (POUR)12. These principles ensure that web content is accessible to people with disabilities.

☐ Contrast Ratio

Make sure elements on the screen are clear and legible for the visually impaired as well. Use WebAIM contrast check to validate.

☐ Visibility

Is every functional element visible at all times? Check states, different scroll positions and with sets of different data.

☐ Device/Platform Accessibility

Can the design work across different platforms and devices? Consider mobile apps, web browsers, screen resolutions, accessibility controls for operating systems, and so on.

NICE TO HAVES

As a bonus, you can also check for some nice to have aspects, that will certainly make your and the developer's lives much easier.

☐ Google / Free Fonts

Use Google fonts where available. They are high quality, free and accessible by everyone

☐ Vector Assets

Reduce file size for icons, simpler shapes and illustrations.
Also never worry about resolution and quality with vector assets.
Try out Icon fonts as an alternative.

☐ Optimized Images

A smaller image means faster load time, and less server data, that equals a happier user

☐ Handout Documentation

Considering handover to different designers, teams or developers?
Make sure to prepare a thorough documentation with explainers and helper texts for each screen and function

☐ Avoid Dark Patterns

Should go without saying, but try to limit the usage of dark patterns and unfamiliar solutions throughout the designs and layouts.

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