Unraveling the Impact of Templates on Visual Trends in Portfolio Web Design

ACADEMIC PROJECT (2022-23)	YUNG CHEN PU	SUPERVISOR- YORAM CHISIK

OVERVIEW

The move from paper portfolios to digital ones has boosted the need for websites, leading to template use. However, templates can limit uniqueness, making portfolios look similar. This study uses triangulation to explore how templates affect the visual trend of portfolio design. It also delves into why users pick templates and how to be unique beyond using templates.

RESEARCH

AESTHETICS AND USABILITY
Extend the definition of portfolio to understand the tension between aesthetics and usability in web design, and review the importance of understanding the aesthetics and usability in portfolio web design.

THE EFFECT OF TEMPLATE
The study reviews the benefits and limitations of templates, as well as the effects of the inherent structure that people encounter after using them in portfolio web design.

PSYCHOLOGY OF HUMAN
Understanding the human habit of using websites and their psychology, it is easy to generate the imitation effect or comparison mentality to follow the trend, and also understand the creative possibilities within the limitations of human beings.

Research

CRITICAL THINKING

- Did not objectively and comprehensively analyse the visual impact of the templates and extend the thinking about the psychology of the use of the templates.

- Most studies have looked at the use of templates from a designer's perspective, but not from a manager's or enterprise's perspective.

- Lack of previous research on understand whether the design of templates continues the standardisation of visual aesthetics and analysing the limitations to bring in more creativity

RESEARCH GAP
Triangulation has not been used in related study before.

Research the impact and application of templates from different perspectives
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Lack of previous research on templates continues the standardisation of visual aesthetics and limitations in creativity

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
RQ1:
HOW DO TEMPLATES SHAPE THE CURRENT VISUAL TRENDS IN PORTFOLIO WEB DESIGN?

RQ2:
HOW CAN USERS STAND OUT AND DIFFERENTIATE THEIR WORK AMIDST THE OVERLOAD OF TEMPLATE DESIGNS?

FINDING & ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS APPROACH

The methodological type of triangulation chosen for this study will analyse the data individually at the analysis stage before grouping the results (Nobel, 2019) and cross-analysing them. This will provide insight into my research from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives and help me to better understand the research questions and the hypotheses proposed. The analysis methods are categorised below according to the research questions:

Q1: How do templates shape the current visual trends in portfolio web design?
Q2: How can users stand out and differentiate their work amidst the overload of template designs?

RQ 1

Survey
The data from the questionnaire survey was first analysed to understand current user motivation and usage. Also, will cross analysis the portfolio the participant provide, to know the affect of the visual trend.

Interview - Designer / Focus Groups
The content from interview and focus groups will use Thematic analysis to profiling the dialogue to reveal common elements, styles and aesthetic directions.

RQ 2

Portfolio Analysis
Analysis the portfolio that didn't use the template and cross analysis to see if the first stage result match the unique point.

Interview - Manager
The content from interview will also use Thematic analysis to profiling the dialogue to ain a deeper understanding of the industry's viewpoints on portfolio websites and how to break away from the inherent structure to achieve greater value.
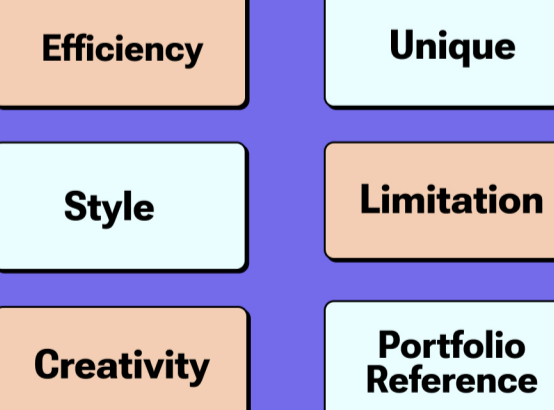
SURVEY

Based on the results obtained from the questionnaire, the data was analysed in three directions:
1. The status of template usage
2. Motivation for choosing the templates
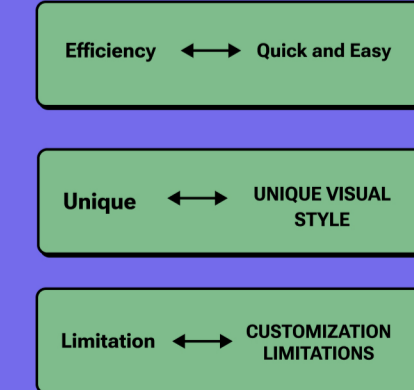3. The visual design impact of the templates
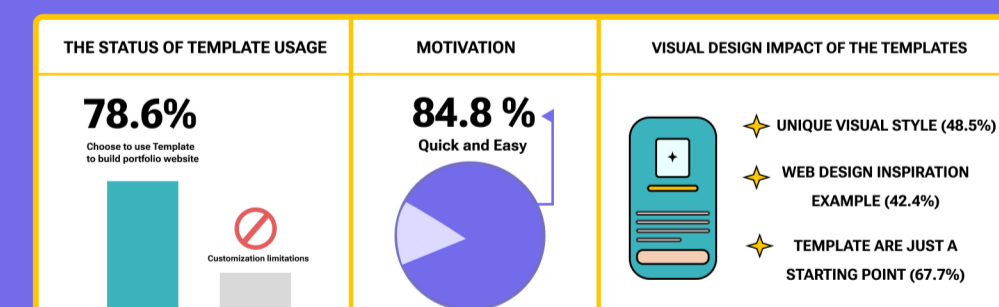
INTERVIEW- DESIGNER / FOCUS GROUPS

Both the content of the interview and the focus group are analysed using thematic analysis. And the following is the theme after organize the insight.

THE STATUS OF TEMPLATE USAGE
78.6%
Choose to use Template to build portfolio website

MOTIVATION
84.8 %
Quick and Easy

VISUAL DESIGN IMPACT OF THE TEMPLATES
- UNIQUE VISUAL STYLE (48.5%)
- WEB DESIGN INSPIRATION EXAMPLE (42.4%)
- TEMPLATE ARE JUST A STARTING POINT (67.7%)

Efficiency | Unique
Style | Limitation
Creativity | Portfolio Reference

RQ1- CROSS ANALYSIS

Efficiency ←→ Quick and Easy
Unique ←→ UNIQUE VISUAL STYLE
Limitation ←→ CUSTOMIZATION LIMITATIONS
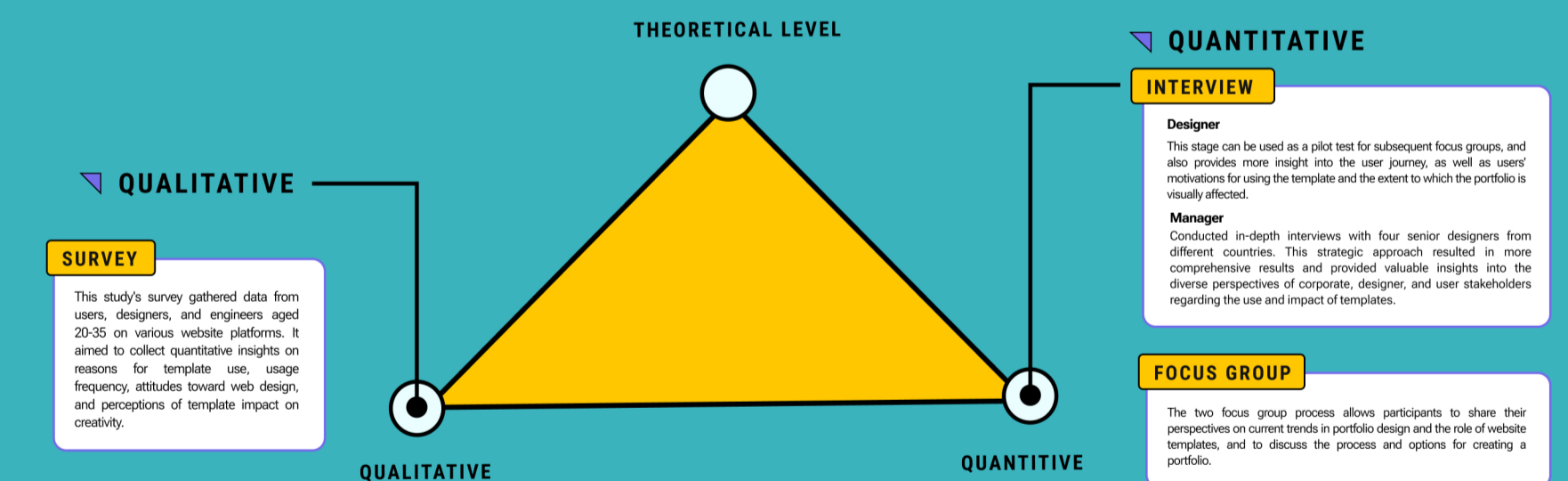
INTERVIEW- MANAGER

Based on interviews with managers and cross-checking results, we consolidated five aspects to make the portfolio website unique: interestingness of the website, interactivity of the website, storytelling of the portfolio as a whole, presentation of personality, and logic of the content. The content of the interview analysed using thematic analysis. And the following is the five theme after organize the insight.

Interestingness | Storytelling
Interactivity | Personality
Logic
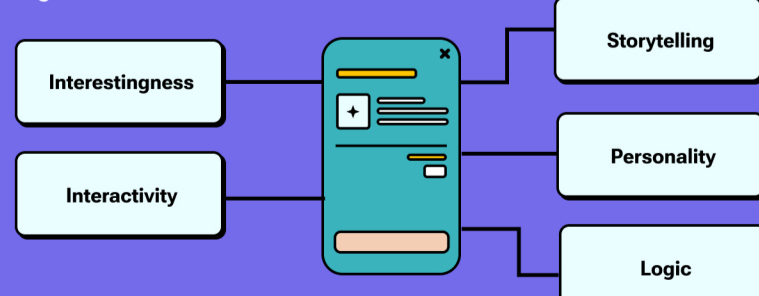
METHODOLOGY

In this study, I have adopted the triangulation method of mixed research to collect data and analyse the results, which will cover both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the hypotheses and answer the research questions mentioned above. Triangulation in mixed research was first broadly defined by Denzin (1978) as "a combination of methodological approaches to the study of the same phenomenon".

Based on this broad definition, Jick (1979) discussed triangulation in more depth and suggested that this mixed research methodology is based on the theory of geometric shapes and that by combining qualitative and quantitative research, multiple perspectives can be cross-checked to improve the accuracy of the research. Triangulation is the practice of analysing data using multiple sources of data or multiple methods, and methodological triangulation is one type (Figure _Triangulation Method Structure) that combines more than one method in a single study (Whitenton, 2021), blending qualitative and quantitative strengths seamlessly.

THEORETICAL LEVEL

QUALITATIVE

QUANTITATIVE

SURVEY
This study's survey gathered data from users, designers, and engineers aged 20-35 on various website platforms. It aimed to collect quantitative insights on reasons for template use, usage frequency, attitudes toward web design, and perceptions of template impact on creativity.

INTERVIEW
Designer
This stage can be used as a pilot test for subsequent focus groups, and also provides more insight into the user journey, as well as users' motivations for using the template and the extent to which the portfolio is visually affected.
Manager
Conducted in-depth interviews with four senior designers from different countries. This strategic approach resulted in more comprehensive results and provided valuable insights into the diverse perspectives of corporate, designer, and user stakeholders regarding the use and impact of templates.

FOCUS GROUP
The two focus group process allows participants to share their perspectives on current trends in portfolio design and the role of website templates, and to discuss the process and options for creating a portfolio.

QUALITATIVE | QUANTITIVE

TEMPLATE →

DISCUSSION

RQ1: HOW DO TEMPLATES SHAPE THE CURRENT VISUAL TRENDS IN PORTFOLIO WEB DESIGN?

TEMPLATES PRIORITIZE EFFICIENCY AND USABILITY
Templates streamline portfolio design, serving as frameworks that balance aesthetics and efficiency. Users need to comprehend portfolio positioning to gauge the template's impact on both aspects.

TEMPLATE LIMITATIONS: STANDARDIZATION AND UNIQUENESS TRADE-OFF
Templates restrict visual uniqueness in favor of standardized aesthetics, but their impact on overall portfolio trends is limited. They serve as starting points for portfolio design, primarily influencing framing and structure rather than serving as direct visual references.

USER CONFLICT: UNIQUENESS VS. TREND CONFORMITY
Users face a conflict between their desire for appealing uniqueness in portfolios and the inclination to conform to visual trends seen in other portfolios, leading to greater restrictions within template frameworks.

RQ2: HOW CAN USERS STAND OUT AND DIFFERENTIATE THEIR WORK AMIDST THE OVERLOAD OF TEMPLATE DESIGNS?

COUNTERPRODUCTIVE IMPACT OF VISUAL TRENDS
Human psychology will get bored when seeing repetitive images or designs all the time. The main purpose of a portfolio is to attract people to look at it, so following visual trends may be counterproductive.

THE FIVE ASPECTS OF PORTFOLIO WEBSITE UNIQUENESS
Based on interviews with managers and cross-checking results, we consolidated five aspects to make the portfolio website unique: interestingness of the website, interactivity of the website, storytelling of the portfolio as a whole, presentation of personality, and logic of the content.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to understand the influence of website-building platform templates on visual trends in contemporary portfolio web design through triangulation. To investigate the extent to which portfolios are influenced by templates. In addition, qualitative and quantitative research methods are also used to understand user psychology and to consider how to think outside the template framework to create unique value.

LIMITATION
- Sample Bias
- Subjective Interpretations
- Limited Generalizability

FUTURE SCOPE
- Cross-Cultural Study
- Comparison with Custom Designs
- Using other research method