1. Introduction

Usability is a very important aspect of websites. No matter how powerful the website is, it cannot perform well if the interaction between the user and the application is difficult. Usability has four main objectives which include: learnability, efficiency, errors, and user satisfaction [1]. My goal in conducting this usability evaluation of creative photography websites is to learn what users like and dislike about other similar websites.

I created a survey that directed participants to other photography websites where they would answer certain questions concerning the features of that particular site. My goal was to obtain information that would help me to determine what is important to users, and what features they like. This particular usability evaluation concentrates on fulfilling the user satisfaction objective which was mentioned in the previous paragraph. The remainder of the objectives will be more of an issue in the implementation and testing phases.

2. Problem

When developing a creative website there are many unwritten rules and certain website etiquette that doesn't necessary apply to a creative website which can make it difficult to determine what is isn't appropriate. Also, everyone has different opinions and what looks good to one person may look horrible to another. I know that I cannot design a website that 100% of users will like, but I can design a website that the majority of users will like. For this purpose I have conducting this usability evaluation.

3. Results

In order to obtain accurate data from a wide variety of users I asked Cal Poly students, Cuesta students, High School students, and middle aged people to take a survey that I created. This survey contained five main questions that I was the most unsure about how user felt. Based on my own feelings and likes and dislike I assumed that others would share my feelings about some questions, which did occur but on other questions I was completely surprised by the results. The five main questions I asked were: 1) Do like listening to music on the website, 2) What genre of music would you prefer, 3) Do you like pop up menus when hovering over links, 4) Do you like slideshows when viewing an album of photos, and 5) What features of a photography website should be required.
3.1 Music

This is one feature that I did not have a very good idea how the majority of users would feel about, but if a certain user did not enjoy the music they could always turn the speakers off. For this reason I was already leaning toward including music in the website for those who would enjoy it, but I still wanted to get actual data before making my decision. From the results displayed in Figure 1, we can see that the majority of users would like to have music playing while visiting a photography website.

![Figure 1](image1)

83% of participants would like music, while only 17% would not. From these results I feel much more confident with the decision to include music.

3.2 Genre of Music

If the majority of users decided that they would not like music than this section would be completely irrelevant, but this is not the case, so now this data becomes very important. If the wrong genre of music is played than it can have even more negative results than not having music at all. After collecting all of the data from the survey we can see from Figure 2, that the majority of users would prefer Jazz or instrumental music.

![Figure 2](image2)
Instrumental and Jazz are very similar and if we add up their percentages than 79% of users would prefer instrumental or Jazz to be played. I believe that this is a large enough amount of users to make a safe decision. This also does not mean the the remaining 11% of users would not like to hear either instrumental or Jazz, it just was not their first choice.

3.3 Pop-up Menus

This feature is becoming more and more common in photography websites because it looks nice, but personally I felt that the pop-up menus intruded on the main picture or slide show of the website. For this reason I wanted to get the opinion of others which is displayed in Figure 3.

![Pop up menu](image)

**Figure 3**

I was actually surprised by these results. I thought that there would be a much greater percentage of participants that would prefer pop-up menus because they are becoming much more common. 50% of participants said no, that they do not like the pop-up menus and 6% of participants said other. I looked at the other suggestions provided, and discovered that many of them liked the pop-up menu style, but would prefer the menu to run horizontally instead of vertically. I also received many suggestions saying that they would like to have the menu be visible at all times so that the user knows where else they can go or see.

From these results and from the suggestions provided I believe that I will make the menu's visible at all times and in a position that is consistent with the entire website. This would also help in the leanability objective of usability as mentioned in the introduction.

3.4 Slide Shows

Similarly to the pop-up menus, these too are becoming much more popular in photography websites. They have pros and cons. The pros are that they look nice and that the user that relax and easily view many photos with out any effort. The cons are that you can only look at one image at a time. See Figure 4 for the results.
Figure 4 shows that there is a pretty even split with the majority of 61% of participants approving the use of slideshows and 38% disapproving slideshows. There is only a 23% difference here which is not that much.

In order to satisfy both groups of people, I will likely include both slideshows and other types of photo layouts. The slideshow will appear on the homepage displaying some of the best work of the photographer, while the photo layouts will be used in galleries. The reason is to allow users to quickly view the work of the photographer, and since this is the main purpose of viewing galleries I feel that it accomplishes all goals.

3.5 Required Features

I felt the most confident on this section, but I still wanted to verify my assumptions. Too much information, or too much features can be overwhelming to some users so it can be difficult to develop a website that is easy to use, easy to find to find things, and powerful.

Figure 5 reveals what the majority of users to feel to be the most important features of a photography website.

Not surprisingly, galleries, contact information, and pricing were important to 100% of the users. Also important features were pages for finding more information about the photographer, client login, and the ability to order and pay for photos.
Since the percentage of users that thought most of these features were important I will include most of them, if not all. There are nine features, which I believe to be small enough to give both functionality as well as not overwhelming the user with too many options. Once the website is built I most likely will look into this matter again to find out if any features should be removed or added.

4. Conclusion

The survey provided great insight to how actual users might feel about the usability of the website. The website is being built for the users, so obviously the goal is to create something that they can benefit from. Providing a website with this in mind can greatly improve the experience of the client which turns into a stronger and larger client base which is the ultimate goal of any business. I will definitely keep my findings in mind during the implementation and testing phases, which will help me to produce a quality product.

5. References