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WWMT News Channel 3 is a commercial television station with a focus on local and national news while also featuring local weather, sports, and entertainment. As featured in *Michguide.com* the station is owned by the Sinclair Broadcast Group and is the west Michigan affiliate for CBS for its analog broadcast, as well as a CW affiliate for its digital broadcast. WWMT's community of license is Kalamazoo – located in the Midwest quarter of Michigan. The station is advertised as serving both Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids, along with surrounding townships. Between its urban and metro sections, Kalamazoo's combined population is approximately 500,000 and according to the 2010 U.S. census, the city's population is approximately 68.1% White, 22.2% African American, 0.5% Native American, 1.7% Asian, with the 7.4% identified as multiracial or other.

The WWMT website is a clear addendum to the broadcast material, offering recaps of previously aired news stories as well as information about the news team. It also acts as a host for the various post broadcast activities of the station, such as the sports and weather blogs section created by members of the news team. A prominent and unique feature of the website is the "breaking news" icon that provides a user quick access to new and noteworthy material shortly after it has occurred. The website is also a method for WWMT to conduct constructive community outreach, via information sections on local contests held by the station and a dedicated page for hosting quick links to the websites of several other prominent west Michigan businesses. Based on the construction and navigation of the site, the content is not made to overtake the actual broadcast channel but is instead a clear substitute for those in search of west Michigan local news that are outside of WWMT's broadcast range.

WWMT's site has a stern tone and is largely centered on information. This feeling is communicated upon a users first visit to the home page where the style is informative and

serious, as defined by the content that fills the news carousel; local and national news stories regarding chemical leaks, fallen soldiers, and notices of a local funeral. There is a minor balance between the serious content and the lighthearted news, with some sports stories and ‘feel-good’ pieces sprinkled in throughout the site. WWMT also features an ‘Entertainment’ tab in the navigation bar where the more lighthearted stories can be found. Generally speaking, the majority of the site’s tone remains more informative and serious among the written articles from both their local and national news affiliates.

In many aspects, the page strives to be largely self-explanatory in its presentation and does not have any overt help for user navigation. All section tabs on the website are prominently displayed, clearly labeled, and feature a dynamic sub-menu of navigation items when hovered over. Although these are not explicit instructions in the navigation, it does help the user a great deal in quickly traversing the site with increased accuracy. Many of the pages themselves are organized into large clickable items that feature descriptive text about the section. This approach can help a less tech-savvy user understand the nature of each page before navigating to it and back tracking. A courteous and well-integrated traversal tool is also included via the breadcrumbs at the top of each subsequent page. While some other sites around the web seem to force this type of navigation, WWMT’s approach to breadcrumbs is very well done and looks very natural. There are also overt instructions for web forms provided by WWMT that clearly state the submission process. If all else fails, a site search field is visible on every page that allows a user to quickly define the content they are interested in.

There does not appear to be any intentional visual symbols present on the site, however one could draw a metaphor from the header image. The image depicts an iconic Michigan lighthouse with the light shining over the state. One could unravel this metaphor as the site

being a beacon that shines light on the state, being that WWMT's site provides the residents information on topics relevant to them and their local areas. The color scheme could be regarded as an intentional design idea in the usage of their color palette – blue, white, and black – as their choice of theme that is carried throughout the site. This also provides the user with continuity, ensuring that they are on the same website, no matter where they navigate to.

There are multi-media elements present on the home page in the form of a video carousel as well as within any story that has a video camera image attached to it. This video camera image helps the user identify where the multimedia elements are. Additionally, there is a unique section on the site exclusively dedicated to video media that offers unedited raw footage of the station's newscasts. This is a very nice feature of the site as it gives frequent users comfort that they can access missed broadcasts. The footage also gives an intimate look into the station's recordings and material, as well as full-length interviews and footage that might otherwise be edited down for time constraint purposes.

WWMT's site presents itself as dynamic and static as some of the elements have both characteristics. The most significant dynamic component is the navigation hover-over feature. It's designed to reveal subsections if a navigation section is hovered over, allowing ease of use to the visitors and eliminating unnecessary steps in traversal. Outside of this, the website remains relatively static with no other moving pieces, requiring little unique interaction with the user, and keeps a consistent structure throughout the site.

The WWMT website retains a nonlinear structure at the core of its design, revealing the well thought-out preparation that took place in the construction of their site. This site provides numerous ways to find your way through the content effortlessly as seen with the prominent persistent navigation bar, the breadcrumbs at the top of the page, the links at the top of the page

within the site image, and the “house” icon displayed next to the breadcrumbs feature. Furthermore, the hierarchical structure delivers the same user-friendly design that limits confusing or misleading parts that can be seen in a non-hierarchical website. This structure is denoted in the overtly labeled story headings in larger print with the more detailed explanations of any given story in a smaller font size. The developers also use boldness and color to indicate and emphasize important information, such as breaking news stories. These breaking news stories are consistently displayed at the top of every relevant section with an image, bold font for the general information, and smaller font size of detail information. The section itself is wrapped in a light red background to convey urgency. This feature is very useful to a user as it is presented in a convenient and non-obstructive way.

The process offered by the website within almost every page for user interactivity is easy and forgiving. It can be seen at the bottom of any given story as a comment section, where one can log into their favorite social media medium or, if not applicable, they can create an account through the site. Other examples of encourage interactivity is the links to “Like”, “Tweet” or “Share” a story. There are many other ways a visitor could interact with the site and station, including the search function and the social media links (*Facebook, Twitter, YouTube* just to name a few) next to it. The promotion is also present in the “Contact Us” section, where a visitor can submit feedback, questions or other inquiries for the station members to review. Despite the developers’ valiant and lovely implementation to encourage communication with the users, there doesn’t appear to be much interaction occurring. Regardless, the execution in this respect is rather impressive and the implementation is worth noting and could possibly be used as a standard for other TV station websites to emulate.

Considering the nature of the content and the regional demographics, the perceived target audiences for WWMT's website are a multiracial group of equally male and female interests. This group is predominantly White and African American, with ages ranging from 26 to 34. The age range is derivative of the site construction, which implies an audience whom is marginally fluent in technology and website navigation. Many sections reveal additional information when hovered over, most notably the "home" button featured on the top left of every page body. This, along with the dynamic navigation menu, implies an audience that is comfortable with site operations that do not exclusively provide static links for navigation. As the perceived target audience for WWMT is somewhat of a catch all, the website also appeals to a wide gamete of interests. This includes stories ranging from celebrity gossip, to sports highlights, to national disasters. Many of the prominently reported stories involve charity work and local events implying that the target audience has traditional family-oriented or community based values. Given the featured reports involving awareness events for rape victims and legality of gay marriage, it would be safe to infer that a WWMT audience member is more liberal in their personal beliefs. The average user most likely uses the web quite frequently for newsgathering and other methods of social interaction or community outreach. The inclusion of the tag cloud for popular topics is a notably new attempt for social navigation. Viewing the website on Firefox lacks any connections via social media sites such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, or *Google +*. Although, when viewed in Google Chrome, the website is depicted in full form with social media links. The average user is likely to frequent the aforementioned social media sites as they match the demographic of WWMT's target audience. The user may also frequent more prominent websites for national news and entertainment such as *CNN.com* and *TMZ.com*.

While offline the average site user likely spends the majority of their free time with family affairs or growing their home life. This is evident from the sections under the community tab that emphasize local real estate, pet adoption, school closings, and a community calendar.

WWMT's website is well tailored for its target audience, by successfully becoming a focal point for the community on the web. The site is fully functional to operate as a news hub for noteworthy Kalamazoo happenings or community events, as well as handle transitions into national news and celebrity gossip. The site is constructed in a manner that is both friendly to new users and rewarding for frequent ones. The inclusion of a mobile friendly version of the site is also a benefit for its target audience, as many users are migrating to mobile devices as their primary source for viewing the web. While some news websites operate as a gateway to other organizations by navigating the user to other locations on the web, WWMT's website allows all of the information to be contained in a unified environment.

When considering the use of usability guidelines presented by Steve Krug, the station's website fits well within his laws of design. A major guideline that must first be addressed is the "Don't Make Me Think" law, which was well defined by the site as every page was easily traversed and labeled. Secondly, when presented with specific information to find, the time spent locating any exact article was not terribly long. The layout could have been a bit more tailored in terms of the "F scan" test in its execution, as some of the space is wasted and not within the boundaries of the typical viewing pattern. There is also a great deal of help pertaining to the persistent "sticky" navigation bar, which sticks at the top of the browser window while scrolling down the page. WWMT's website also features a persistent display of the search function. This allows the user at any given time to search for any items of interest without extensive navigation. As mentioned earlier, a major setback in the sites usability is compatibility

between browsers. When viewed in Firefox, the search bar section is missing crucial elements for social media links as well as the home image. These lost elements make the page appear sloppy and can hinder user navigation on the site. Lastly, the site does not reinvent the wheel. The structure stays well within the standard layout of most well designed websites in terms of navigation, usability, and other development conventions.

Overall, the site design is well implemented and the execution is considerate of usability and navigation. There are only two things that may be advantageous to improve in order to capture a wider audience and better utilize screen space. As mentioned, the layout favors the right side of the browser, which leaves unused real estate on the left-hand side that could otherwise expand on existing content. For instance, the top stories section on the home page could be expanded to fit the width of the video carousel. Changing that not only allows for more space for article descriptions but is also more pleasing to the eye and in compliance with the “F scan.” Although this is not necessary, it would definitely improve the layout of the website. An essential improvement that must be addressed, however, is undoubtedly the cross-platform issue as it is critical for ease of user traversal. Improving this not only would expand on the user base and allow for a larger audience, but it would also minimize confusion in site navigation and overall appearance. These setbacks aside, the site is very well realized in terms of development, design, and functionality and was impressive to see from a local news organization.