

Zagat.com Phase 1.2 Creative Brief 4/21/03



Overview

Before initiating efforts to completely overhaul their current site, Zagat.com is looking to refine certain elements of their site. By revising key components to the site, Zagat.com hopes to make their site far more usable and attractive in the short term. Based on a detailed list of components to revise, Iguana Studios, Inc. (ISI) has been asked to spearhead development Zagat.com's online revision. This document serves as the definitive creative guide for Phase 1.2 of the site design process.

Site Objectives

Zagat.com is the premier online destination for well-rounded restaurant reviews, having effectively leveraged their traditional arm's content. Having already amassed an extremely large user base, and with plans for expansion, Zagat.com is partnering with ISI to help users more efficiently access their online content.

Specifically, the 1.2 site revision should meet the following objectives:

- Provide Zagat.com with a stronger prominence of their brand
- Provide users with a refined navigation scheme, including consistent labeling
- Make access to Zagat.com content more accessible by removing registration requirements for perusing reviews
- Recreate Zagat.com entry point to better facilitate searching site content and more effectively handle internal promotions and news
- Implement a consistent method of advertising throughout the site
- Allow for easy expansion as more content and features become available.

With these objectives met, Zagat.com can focus on long-term changes to the site and better servicing their users, while providing their users with a better experience in the short term.

Branding

As recent as two months ago, Zagat.com was branded as "Zagat Survey," reflecting their origins. The switch in the branding of "Zagat.com" has been very subtle, replacing ZAGAT SURVEY images with ZAGAT.COM images, and the site still maintains the original visual structuring and design elements. As the site hasn't *visually* changed, it can be expected that users will not have noticed these minute differences.

Zagat.com is looking to bolster its name recognition independently of Zagat Survey. To help further this goal, ISI proposes that Zagat.com consider graphic standards similar to Zagat Survey, but with distinct twists. The Zagat Survey branding presently uses large expanses of burgundy, red, and grays with black and white typography. To help distinguish Zagat.com, ISI recommends integrating the dark blue and light grey complimentary hues. These colors help enliven the site's pages, and will contrast the Zagat Survey branding in small, but distinct, ways.



Typography in the Zagat Survey is generally not extremely varied. By utilizing more aggressive typographic layouts, while harnessing the classical and clean typefaces, Zagat.com can distinguish itself as an energetic leader in its market. Also, there is currently widespread variation in typographic styles throughout the site, due to several reasons. To assist in the consistency of Zagat.com's type style application, the use of cascading stylesheets (CSS) across the entire site is recommended. This will insure that all future updates to the site, all sections across the site, and even co-branded versions of the site will be able to look consistent with the Zagat.com online branding effort.

Entry Point

Currently, the Zagat.com site has a home page that allows users to choose their city to begin searching, as well as choose from a variety of other site content. Users do not have the option to instantly search in their city upon coming to the site unless they have bookmarked the "locale" page.

Splash page

Upon the 1.2 revision, first time users will experience a splash page to the Zagat.com site. This page will feature only the Zagat.com branding and a pull-down menu allowing users to choose their destination city. If users have cookie technology enabled, they will not have to experience this page again, as their machine will "remember" their destination of choice. (It should be noted that a user will always have the ability to set a new locale by using the pull-down menu always available in the global header.)

Home page

The revised home page will, in essence, be a revised "find a restaurant" page, meaning access to the site content will be placed up front for users. By redeveloping the screen real estate, the home page can focus on searching Zagat.com's content, while still easily featuring promotions and news items.

- *Featured content access methods*
Rather than force users to a lower level page to begin accessing content, Zagat.com will now feature three prominent areas on the home page, allowing users quick access to the top lists, browse, and search functions. Each method will allow users to either access the top-ranked options or jump to a more detailed, method-specific page.
- *Promotions*
As Zagat.com expands its feature set and partnerships, it needs the ability to inform its users of these exciting new announcements. By creating a modular space on the home page, ISI can help promote these items to users without detracting from the site's overarching purpose of content searching.



- *News*
Currently, Zagat.com has little ability to update users of noteworthy items via their home page. With Phase 1.2, the home page will feature an area designated specifically for news items that don't necessarily warrant promotional page status.

New page additions

By retooling the way users peruse the site content, several pages will need to be added to the site. Find-specific pages will need to be created for each method of accessing content: search, lists, and browse. ISI recommends creating individual pages for each of these methods that feature two "callout" areas, allowing users to use the other two methods (similar to the home page method callouts).

Imagery

As Zagat Survey and Zagat.com have together veered away from the use of large imagery in their materials, ISI recommends the continuation of this trend. Zagat's brand is strengthened by its disavowal of cheesy stock imagery of people "enjoying" their general services (like competitor Fodor's). Instead, Zagat.com has an intense focus on its core offering: user-driven reporting statistics. The very graphic imagery, with occasional sparse use of smaller photographic imagery, currently in use, helps lend credence to the integrity of the Zagat.com content.

Global Header and Footer

As Phase 1.2 reorganizes the manner in which users move into the site from the home page, it becomes mandatory to revisit the navigation scheme throughout the remainder of the site. Per Zagat.com's request the Zagat.com branding will be moved to the upper left-hand corner, and locale headers and pull-downs will be designed more intuitively. Graphical page titles will be revisited to better explain a user's hierarchical position in the site.

Conclusion

Phase 1.2 serves as an important step in the development of Zagat.com. By alleviating several problems in usability of the site, as well as several visual revisions, Zagat.com is able to focus on the challenge of overhauling the site from the ground up without the burden of losing users to a faulty interface in the meantime. As a final note, ISI will approach this revision using documents prepared by Zagat.com as a departure point. Any material not covered in this brief (but detailed in the Zagat.com document) will still be addressed in the actual development process.