

University of Greenwich

The Mehndi Co.

Major Project (MEDS1147) Report

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Phase 1 – Concept

Concept

Twitter Description

“The Mehndi Co. | Where expression meets tradition. | Sharing my passion for henna through tips and resources for henna lovers everywhere.”

Elevator Pitch

Since childhood, I’ve been enthusiastic about henna, a skill I began exploring at just five years old. Over time, this interest evolved into an artistic pursuit deeply connected to my Bangladeshi heritage. Henna is not just an art form—it’s a cultural legacy, and I wanted to share its beauty while making it accessible to others. After experimenting with posting my designs on Instagram and TikTok, I realized many enthusiasts face challenges like a lack of structured resources and guidance. This inspired me to create *The Mehndi Co.*—a comprehensive online platform dedicated to teaching, inspiring, and empowering anyone interested in henna.

The Mehndi Co. goes beyond showcasing designs; it provides tutorials, cultural insights, technique tips, and creative inspiration in one welcoming hub. Whether you're a beginner, hobbyist, or aspiring artist, our mission is to make learning henna art easy, enjoyable, and accessible for everyone. By combining my cultural heritage and modern tools, *The Mehndi Co.* is building a global community for henna lovers.

The Longer Problem

Henna artistry holds profound cultural significance, especially in communities like those of Bangladeshi heritage, where its intricate patterns and practices are steeped in tradition and passed down through generations. Despite its rich cultural roots and growing global appeal, significant barriers exist that hinder individuals—ranging from beginners to aspiring artists—from fully engaging with or mastering this art form. These challenges stem from both personal and structural issues, creating a fragmented and often discouraging experience for those drawn to henna artistry.

For those with a passion for henna, embarking on the journey of sharing their work or growing their skills often begins with hesitation. Even when armed with talent and dedication, questions about how to begin, what to post, and how to connect with an audience create a sense of uncertainty. These doubts are particularly pronounced in a highly competitive space where many talented artists are already established, making it difficult to stand out. Personal commitments can further complicate this process; for example, academic or professional responsibilities may interrupt creative endeavours, as seen when the decision to create an Instagram page for showcasing henna designs was postponed during a bachelor’s degree program.

Structural barriers exacerbate these personal challenges. While social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok provide visibility, they fall short in addressing the deeper educational needs of the henna community. Aspiring artists, particularly those who do not share a cultural background in henna, often struggle to find reliable, structured resources that explain techniques, cultural significance, and creative processes. The information available is scattered, inconsistent, and often lacks depth, forcing learners to navigate a confusing maze of disconnected tutorials and piecemeal advice. For many, this fragmented approach leads to frustration and discouragement, especially for beginners who are eager to learn but unsure where to start.

These challenges are not just individual but symptomatic of a broader gap in the henna community—a lack of a centralized, supportive hub that provides structured guidance, cultural context, and creative inspiration. Recognizing these barriers inspired the creation of *The Mehndi Co.*, a platform designed to address these issues and provide meaningful solutions for enthusiasts at all levels.

The Value Proposition

The Mehndi Co. is more than just a platform for showcasing henna designs or offering a booking system; it is a comprehensive, supportive hub dedicated to empowering individuals to explore, learn, and grow in the art of henna. By combining structured educational resources, cultural insights, and creative inspiration, *The Mehndi Co.* seeks to bridge the gaps that currently exist in the henna community.

The platform is uniquely designed to serve three primary groups:

1. **Beginners:** Providing accessible, step-by-step tutorials that simplify the learning process, making henna artistry approachable and enjoyable.
2. **Hobbyists:** Offering creative tips, advanced techniques, and inspiration to enhance their skills and expand their artistic repertoire.
3. **Budding Professionals:** Equipping aspiring henna artists with resources that not only refine their craft but also help them navigate the challenges of promoting and growing their artistry in a competitive space.

In addition to technical guidance, *The Mehndi Co.* emphasizes the cultural significance of henna, ensuring that learners gain a deeper appreciation of its roots and traditions. This holistic approach fosters not only skill development but also cultural understanding, creating a richer and more meaningful engagement with henna artistry.

What sets *The Mehndi Co.* apart is its commitment to accessibility and inclusivity. The platform brings together everything an enthusiast needs—techniques, cultural insights, and creative guidance—into one cohesive space, eliminating the need to navigate multiple websites or feel overwhelmed by scattered information. This centralized approach ensures that learners can focus on their artistic growth without unnecessary distractions.

Unique Selling Point (USP)

The USP of *The Mehndi Co.* lies in its ability to seamlessly integrate structured education, cultural depth, and creative innovation into a single, accessible platform. While other resources may focus solely on showcasing designs or offering piecemeal tutorials, *The Mehndi Co.* provides a holistic experience that addresses both the technical and cultural aspects of henna artistry.

1. Structured Learning for All Levels:

Unlike other platforms that cater primarily to advanced artists or rely on disorganized tutorials, *The Mehndi Co.* offers a clear, step-by-step learning path tailored to beginners, hobbyists, and budding professionals.

2. Cultural Connection and Appreciation:

Henna artistry is not just a skill but a cultural tradition with deep roots. *The Mehndi Co.* places a strong emphasis on preserving and sharing the cultural significance of henna, ensuring that learners not only master techniques but also gain an understanding of its historical and symbolic importance.

3. Inclusive and Accessible:

Whether users come from a cultural background in henna or are completely new to the art form, *The Mehndi Co.* is designed to be a welcoming and inclusive space. By removing barriers such as fragmented resources and inconsistent guidance, the platform makes henna artistry accessible to everyone.

4. Comprehensive and Centralized:

The Mehndi Co. eliminates the need for users to navigate multiple platforms by providing all the necessary tools, information, and inspiration in one cohesive hub. This convenience ensures a seamless learning experience, saving time and reducing frustration.

5. Focus on Differentiation:

Recognizing the crowded nature of the henna artistry space, *The Mehndi Co.* actively seeks to inspire creativity and innovation, helping users find their unique artistic voice and stand out in the community.

By addressing the personal and structural barriers that hinder the growth of henna enthusiasts, *The Mehndi Co.* offers a transformative experience that empowers individuals to learn, connect, and excel in the art of henna, making it a standout resource in the global henna community.

Manifesto

Henna is more than art; it is a bridge between tradition and self-expression, a cultural heritage that transcends borders. At *The Mehndi Co.*, we believe that everyone, regardless of background or experience, should have the opportunity to learn, create, and flourish in this timeless art form.

We are inspired by the intricate beauty of henna and the stories it carries—stories of celebration, identity, and connection. Yet, we recognize the challenges that hinder access to henna artistry: fragmented resources, scattered knowledge, and a lack of inclusive platforms. These barriers deter not only aspiring artists but also those who simply wish to explore and appreciate this vibrant tradition.

Our mission is clear: to create a centralized, welcoming space where anyone with an interest in henna can find the tools, inspiration, and supportive community they need to succeed. Through structured tutorials, cultural insights, and creative guidance, we empower individuals to navigate the art of henna with confidence and authenticity.

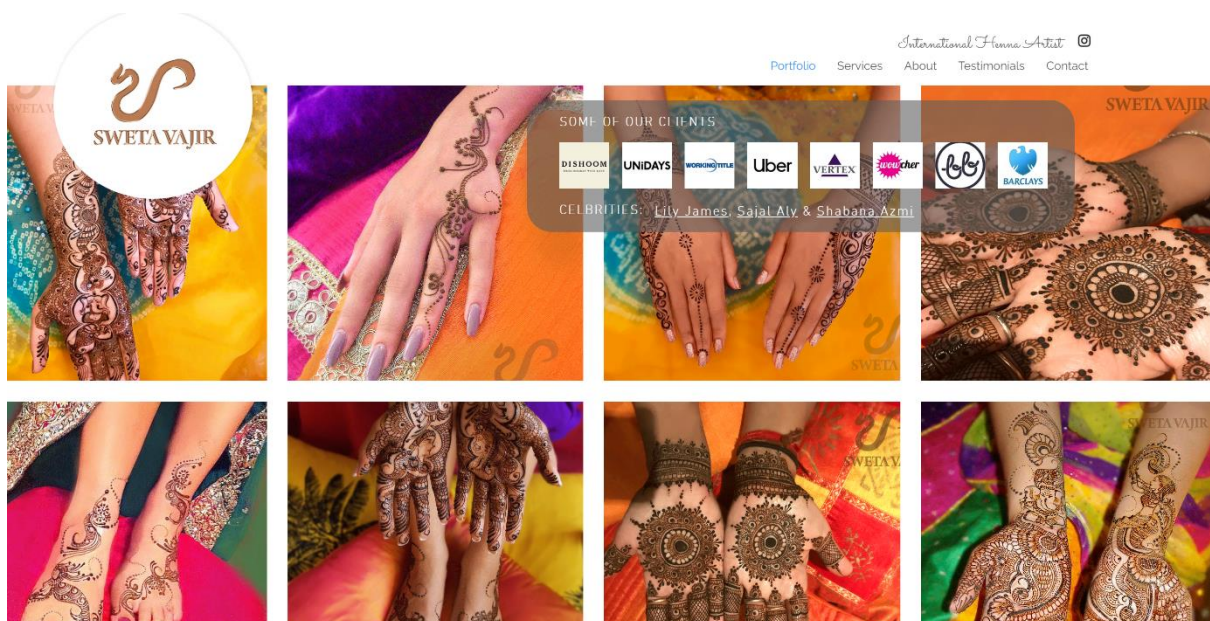
The Mehndi Co. stands as a beacon of accessibility, inclusivity, and innovation. We are here to preserve the cultural depth of henna while inspiring creativity that knows no bounds. Together, we celebrate the art, honour its heritage, and foster a global community of passionate learners and creators.

Research

In this section, I will review competitors' websites to gather insights and inspiration that will shape the design of The Mehndi Co.'s website.

Cognate Websites Analysis

1. Henna by Sweta Vajir (<https://www.swetavajir.com/>)



As someone who has had the privilege of enhancing my henna artistry under Sweta Vajir's mentorship and obtaining certification through her guidance, I deeply value the expertise and perspective she has shared with me. Her mentorship not only helped me refine my technical skills but also provided me with a profound appreciation for the art

form's cultural significance and creative possibilities. As a result, I view her website as more than just a platform showcasing her work—it serves as a benchmark of professionalism, creativity, and dedication to the craft.

Analysing her website allows me to draw inspiration from its strengths, such as the effective use of visuals and clear communication of services, while also identifying opportunities for differentiation in my own project, *The Mehndi Co.* Sweta's website exemplifies how a skilled artist can translate their expertise into a digital presence that resonates with their audience, making it a significant reference point as I work on creating a platform that aligns with my vision. By studying her approach, I can better understand the balance between showcasing artistry and creating an engaging user experience, which is vital for shaping the direction of my own website.

Website Summary

Sweta Vajir's website, particularly the Bridal Henna Designs section, serves as a portfolio for showcasing her expertise in henna artistry. The page highlights Sweta's mastery in bridal henna, featuring a gallery of intricate and elegant designs. Sweta, a renowned artist with over 15 years of experience, emphasizes her dedication to bespoke bridal services and henna artistry that combines traditional roots with contemporary aesthetics. The website is visually appealing, leveraging clean layouts and high-quality imagery to engage potential clients.

Strengths

- a) **Professional Presentation:** The website exudes professionalism, with high-quality visuals and a clean, organized layout that effectively showcases Sweta's artistry.
- b) **Focused Target Audience:** The Bridal Henna Designs section is tailored to bridal clients, clearly addressing their specific needs with an emphasis on bespoke services.
- c) **Testimonial Integration:** Positive client feedback enhances credibility and builds trust with potential customers.
- d) **Streamlined Navigation:** The website is user-friendly, making it easy to find information about services, bookings, and portfolios.

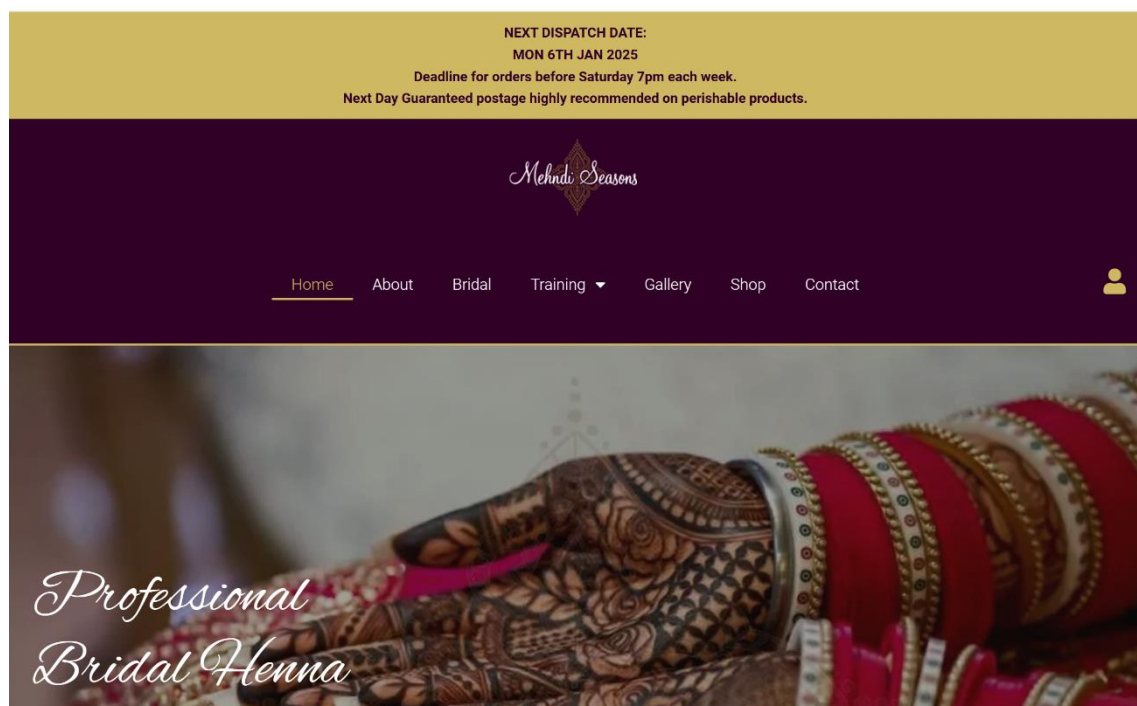
Weaknesses

- a) **Limited Educational Content:** While the designs are visually captivating, there is little information or tutorials for aspiring henna artists, which contrasts with The Mehndi Co.'s aim to provide structured learning resources.
- b) **Narrow Focus on Bridal Henna:** The emphasis on bridal henna may exclude hobbyists or beginners, missing out on a broader audience that The Mehndi Co. seeks to engage.
- c) **Lack of Cultural Insights:** Although the designs reflect cultural artistry, there is minimal context about the cultural significance of henna, which is a key component of The Mehndi Co.'s value proposition.

- d) **Absence of Community Engagement:** The website does not actively foster a sense of community or interaction, an area The Mehndi Co. intends to address by creating a hub for enthusiasts at all levels.

Sweta Vajir's website is an excellent example of how to present professional henna artistry with a focus on high-quality visuals and clear communication. However, its limited scope and lack of emphasis on education, cultural depth, and community engagement present opportunities for differentiation. As someone who values Sweta's mentorship, her work provides not only inspiration but also valuable insights for developing The Mehndi Co. into a unique and inclusive platform that caters to a wider range of needs in the henna community.

2. Mehndi Seasons (<https://mehndiseasons.co.uk/>)



Website Summary

Mehndi Seasons' website is a vibrant platform showcasing a wide range of henna artistry, with a strong focus on bridal designs and other special occasions. The website features an extensive portfolio, testimonials from satisfied clients, and a clear emphasis on delivering bespoke, high-quality henna services. The design is visually engaging, with a focus on the intricate details of the henna designs, aimed at appealing to potential clients seeking elegant and personalized artistry.

Strengths

- a) **Visually Appealing Design:** The use of high-quality images and an elegant colour scheme makes the website aesthetically pleasing and professional, effectively showcasing the artist's expertise.
- b) **Comprehensive Portfolio:** The extensive gallery provides potential clients with a clear sense of the artist's style, range, and ability to create bespoke designs tailored to their preferences.
- c) **Client Testimonials:** Positive reviews add credibility and build trust with prospective clients.
- d) **Focus on Bridal and Special Occasions:** The website caters specifically to a high-value audience looking for premium services for significant life events, reinforcing its niche positioning.

Weaknesses

- a) **No Educational Resources:** Beginners or enthusiasts who want to learn about henna artistry might feel excluded, as the website is solely service-focused. This creates an opportunity for *The Mehndi Co.* to cater to a wider audience.
- b) **Minimal Cultural Context:** While the designs are showcased beautifully, the website lacks content that explains the cultural heritage and significance of henna. In contrast, *The Mehndi Co.* prioritizes cultural education as part of its value proposition.
- c) **Limited Interactivity:** The website lacks dynamic or interactive elements, such as videos, tutorials, or blog content, which could keep users engaged longer and offer more value. *The Mehndi Co.* can differentiate itself by integrating these features to enhance user experience.

Mehndi Seasons' website effectively positions itself as a premium service provider for bridal and bespoke henna artistry. Its polished presentation and extensive portfolio are strong assets. However, the absence of educational and community-focused content limits its appeal to a broader audience. *The Mehndi Co.* can differentiate itself by combining the professionalism of Mehndi Seasons with a comprehensive and inclusive approach, offering resources for learners, cultural insights, and community engagement to create a more well-rounded platform.

3. Henna Stories (<https://www.hennastories.org/>)



MAKE HENNA

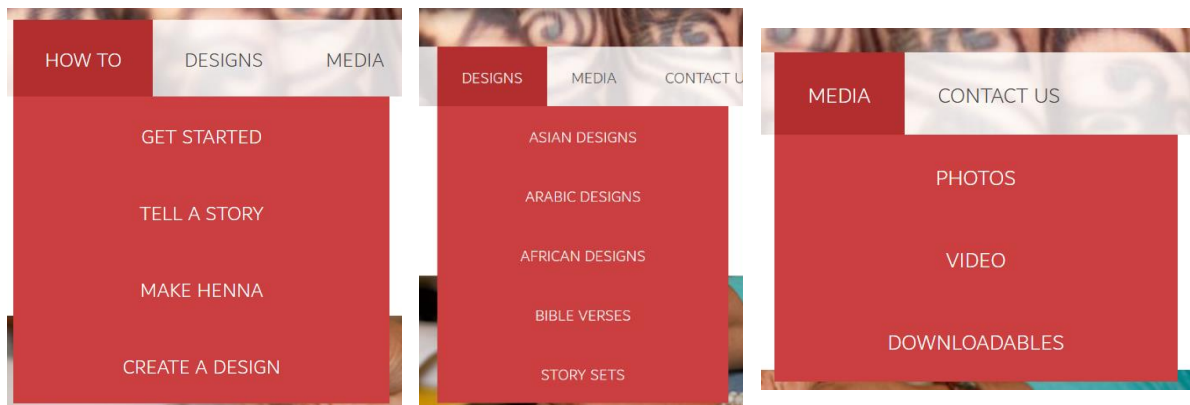


Website Summary

Henna Stories is a website that showcases the artistry of henna through a blend of professional services, cultural storytelling, and educational content. The site aims to inspire and educate visitors while offering bespoke henna services, catering to a diverse audience interested in the craft of henna. From guides on how to make henna paste to downloadable worksheets to practice henna patterns, Henna Stories is more focused on teaching the culture, history and artistry of henna than just being a service.

Strengths

- a) **Educational Content:** Pages like “**How to Make Henna**” and other tutorials serve as practical resources for beginners and hobbyists. These guides are easy to follow and encourage user engagement by demystifying complex aspects of henna artistry. Plus, the site showcases a tab dedicated to the different styles of henna designs and there is a page that has downloadable for users to use to help them with learning henna.



- b) **Cultural and Artistic Focus:** The website reflects an authentic appreciation of henna’s cultural and artistic significance. This connection resonates with users seeking both inspiration and knowledge.
- c) **Diverse Audience Engagement:** By including both service-oriented content and educational material, Henna Stories broadens its appeal to both clients and henna enthusiasts.

Weaknesses

- a) **Limited Interactivity:** Beyond static tutorials and blog posts, there is little effort to engage users interactively, such as through forums or community-driven content.
- b) **Limited Educational Depth:** While the ‘How To’ tab is a valuable addition, its content may lack the depth or breadth necessary to engage learners who seek structured, comprehensive guidance in henna artistry.

In conclusion, Henna Stories effectively blends artistry, education, and cultural storytelling, creating a platform that celebrates the heritage and craft of henna. Its strengths include accessible educational content, authentic cultural focus, and the

ability to engage a diverse audience. However, the site's potential is limited by interactivity and a lack of comprehensive resources to fully support users' learning journeys. Enhancing these areas would elevate Henna Stories as a more impactful resource for the global henna community.

The Mehndi Co. can draw valuable lessons from this. By offering structured, in-depth courses and interactive guides, **The Mehndi Co.** can fill the gap in comprehensive education. Integrating features such as forums, live sessions, and community-driven content will boost engagement and collaboration. Emphasizing cultural significance and inclusivity, **The Mehndi Co.** can appeal to both experienced henna artists and newcomers. Lastly, creating a centralized hub with all essential resources will streamline the user experience and reduce reliance on multiple platforms. By addressing these areas, **The Mehndi Co.** can build a more interactive, educational, and inclusive platform, enhancing the user journey and leveraging Henna Stories' strengths.

Phase 2 – Planning

Business and Cultural Context

Henna, also known as *mehndi* in Hindi and Urdu, or *Bangla* in my native language, is a plant-based dye derived from the *Lawsonia inermis* plant. The process begins with drying the leaves of the plant, which are then ground into a fine powder. This powder is mixed into a paste using liquids such as water, tea, coffee, lemon juice, and essential oils, which help activate the natural dye. Sugar is often added to the mixture to increase its stickiness, allowing it to adhere to the skin.

In terms of cultural context, the use of henna has evolved significantly over time. The use of henna dates back over 5,000 years, with its origins predominantly in India, Africa, and the Middle East. Traditionally, henna was valued for its cooling and medicinal properties, being used to soothe the skin and promote well-being. As a natural ingredient, it was also believed to have healing effects.

In modern times, henna is most commonly recognized for its application as temporary body art. This practice has grown in popularity worldwide, with henna being used for decorative purposes in various cultural and social contexts, including festivals, weddings, and other celebrations.

Henna has transformed into a global phenomenon, extending across various forms of artistic, commercial, and personal expression. Its adaptability and beauty continue to captivate people across different cultures and generations, making it a versatile art form appreciated worldwide.

From a business perspective, this platform adopts a dual-approach model. It serves both as a showcase for my work as a henna artist, allowing me to share my designs, and as a resource for henna enthusiasts seeking to learn the art and book my services for events.

This holistic business model aligns with the evolving landscape of online learning, artistic expression, and cultural appreciation. By catering to diverse audiences within the henna ecosystem, it fosters a space for both personal growth and professional development in the field of henna artistry.



In conducting a SWOT analysis for the proposed online henna hub, several strengths emerged as defining characteristics that could differentiate this platform within the market. The hub is designed to offer comprehensive learning resources, including tutorials and step-by-step guides that range from beginner to advanced levels. This structure aims to position the hub as a valuable resource for users at any skill level. Additionally, the community aspect of the platform is expected to foster a collaborative and supportive space where members can learn from one another, share insights, and develop their skills in henna art. This community-driven approach will contribute to creating a vibrant, dynamic environment for engagement and growth.

An integrated booking platform is another strength of the hub, allowing customers to easily book professional henna services directly through the site. This feature simplifies the booking process and enhances user convenience by providing a seamless, all-in-one experience. Drawing on personal experience gained over years as a henna artist, I intend to shape this platform from the perspective of both a user and a professional. This enables the hub to address the needs of diverse users, from new henna enthusiasts looking to learn to customers interested in booking services for events. Consequently, the hub is poised to become a versatile, user-centred resource.

However, certain weaknesses also present challenges to the hub's growth potential. As a relatively unknown artist in the field, initial visibility and recognition may be limited. Although the platform's distinct features may eventually attract attention, gaining visibility in a competitive landscape is likely to require targeted efforts over time. Additionally, language barriers may present obstacles to accessibility. Since users from

diverse cultural backgrounds may engage with the hub, there may be cases where language differences hinder effective communication within the community or limit the site's accessibility to non-native speakers.

The online henna hub also offers significant opportunities for expansion and monetization. Revenue streams could include the sale of henna-related products, such as henna powder, henna cones, ready-made paste, and aftercare sealants. Furthermore, collaboration with henna artists specializing in various styles could add credibility and broaden the platform's reach through exclusive tutorials and partnerships. By incorporating diverse traditions and histories of henna from various cultures, the hub could appeal to an international audience, enhancing its cultural inclusivity and global relevance.

Lastly, several potential threats could impact the hub's long-term viability. Competition within the industry is considerable, with many established henna artists who have already built strong followings on social media or other online platforms. Additionally, changing art and cultural trends could shift user interest away from henna, potentially affecting the hub's popularity and relevance. Another notable threat involves the risk of negative interactions within the community. To protect the platform's reputation, strategies must be in place to moderate user interactions and prevent inappropriate content, ensuring a positive and respectful community environment.

Commodity

Mission, Aim and Focus

The mission of the online henna hub is to empower aspiring henna enthusiasts by providing a comprehensive platform that simplifies the learning process. The hub plans to offer detailed tutorials, audio guides, step-by-step word and image instructions, and a community space for users to share their progress and experiences. Additionally, it aims to foster cultural appreciation for henna artistry and its rich heritage.

The goal is to create a one-stop resource where both beginner and advanced henna artists can access all the tools, resources, and inspiration they need. The platform is designed to equip users with the knowledge and motivation to start or continue their henna journey.

In addition to educational content, the hub also facilitates henna bookings, a service I initially began offering. The focus is to create a user-friendly experience that consolidates all aspects of henna artistry, while nurturing a vibrant community where creativity and learning can thrive. The platform also provides a space to showcase my henna designs and manage bookings for henna applications at events such as parties and weddings.

The target audience for this platform is broad, catering to anyone interested in henna artistry. However, the idea originated from reflecting on my own experience as a young individual, navigating between education, part-time jobs, and various hobbies. I recognized that there are likely many others in similar situations—feeling lost,

overwhelmed, and seeking support and guidance in their henna interests and understanding of henna culture.

User personas are fictional profiles that represent a website’s target audience segments, created based on research and insights into users’ demographics, behaviours, and motivations. Each persona is developed to capture key details like age, profession, interests, and specific needs, helping designers and content creators to understand what drives different types of users. For instance, a user persona for a henna art website might include a “New Henna Enthusiast” who values beginner-friendly tutorials and community support, as well as a “Professional Henna Artist” interested in advanced resources and industry networking.

Personas are crucial to the website design process, as they enable a user-centred approach. By focusing on defined user types, designers can create a layout, navigation, and features that intuitively meet user expectations and create a positive experience. This makes the site more engaging, with content and design tailored specifically for each audience segment.

For content creation, personas guide the development of relevant resources. A persona representing a beginner might inspire basic tutorials and FAQs, while an advanced user persona might lead to exclusive tutorials or networking opportunities. This approach ensures the content aligns with actual user needs, making the site more effective at drawing in and retaining its target audience.

I was able to collect information and build 3 user personas, from which I had then created user stories.



AMARA NKOSI

AGE

18

LOCATION

CROYDON, LONDON, UK

OCCUPATION/DESCRIPTION

PAINTER/ARTIST

PERSONALITY TRAITS

- CREATIVE
- FREE-SPIRITED
- ARTISTIC

SKILLS

- PROFICIENT IN FINE MOTOR SKILLS
- ATTENTION TO DETAIL
- CREATIVE EXPRESSION

MOTIVATIONS

EXCITED TO LEARN HENNA AND UNDERSTAND ITS RICH CULTURE.

BEHAVIOURS

- ACTIVELY FOLLOWS HENNA ARTISTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA
- ATTENDS LOCAL & CULTRAL ART EVENTS

PAIN POINTS

- OVERWHELMED BY VARIOUS DIFFERING RESOURCES ONLINE
- WISHES TO FIND A COMMUNITY TO SHARE AND LEARN FROM



NEIL TANAKA

AGE

24

LOCATION

ESSEX, UK

OCCUPATION/DESCRIPTION

HOBBYIST LEARNER

PERSONALITY TRAITS

- PATIENT
- INQUISITIVE
- HOBBYIST

SKILLS

- OPEN TO LEARNING NEW THINGS
- PATIENT WITH FINE DETAILS
- ENJOYS HOBBIES

MOTIVATIONS

- PICK UP A RELAXING & ENJOYABLE HOBBY
- WANTS TO CREATE HENNA ART ON FRIENDS AND THEMSELF

BEHAVIOURS

- WATCHES ONLINE TUTORIALS
- EXPLORES DIY PROJECTS
- PARTICIPATES IN LOCAL HOBBYIST GROUPS

PAIN POINTS

- STRUGGLE WITH FINDING BEGINNER-FRIENDLY RESOURCES
- DESIRES A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY



ARUSHI HASSAN

AGE

25

LOCATION

LONDON, UK

OCCUPATION/DESCRIPTION

MARKETING PROFESSIONAL & BRIDE-TO-BE

PERSONALITY TRAITS

- VALUES CULTURE/TRADITION
- DETAIL-ORIENTED
- SEEKS UNIQUE WEDDING HENNA

SKILLS

- SOCIAL-MEDIA-SAVY
- GOOD COMMUNICATION
- NETWORKING SKILLS

MOTIVATIONS

- DESIRES PERSONALIZED AND TRADITIONAL BRIDAL HENNA DESIGNS THAT REFLECT CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

BEHAVIOURS

- ACTIVELY SEARCHES FOR WEDDING-RELATED INSPIRATION ON PINTEREST AND INSTAGRAM.
- VALUES REVIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER BRIDES.

PAIN POINTS

- CONCERNED ABOUT HENNA'S LONGEVITY AND WANTS DESIGNS THAT PHOTOGRAPH WELL.

The first user story, **“As a creative artist, I want to learn intricate henna designs to showcase my unique style, so I can express my creativity and understand the cultural heritage behind it,”** identifies a clear need for advanced learning resources within the henna hub. This persona represents an individual who is already familiar with basic artistic techniques and is now seeking to refine their skills and explore more complex designs. To meet this need, the hub must offer comprehensive tutorials that go beyond simple patterns, providing detailed, step-by-step guides on intricate henna designs, advanced techniques, and expert-level tutorials. The content should include not only visual instructions but also deeper insights into the artistic principles behind each design, allowing the user to understand the process and cultural context. Additionally, this user is interested in the cultural heritage of henna, so the hub should dedicate sections to the historical and cultural significance of henna art. This can include educational content that explains the symbolism of different designs, the regional variations in henna traditions, and the role of henna in various cultural ceremonies. By offering both technical skill-building resources and cultural education, the hub can provide this creative artist with the tools they need to refine their craft, express their individuality, and enrich their understanding of the art form. This approach will help ensure the user feels supported in their artistic journey and is able to create more meaningful and culturally informed henna designs.

In the second user story, **“As a laid-back individual seeking a relaxing hobby, I want to learn basic henna designs for casual gatherings, so I can enjoy a soothing creative activity without feeling overwhelmed,”** the focus shifts toward providing content that is simple, approachable, and low-pressure. This user is not seeking advanced techniques but instead looks for a creative outlet that is both relaxing and enjoyable. The henna hub can cater to this need by offering a variety of beginner-friendly resources that guide users through the basics of henna art. These could include step-by-step tutorials for simple designs, such as small flowers, geometric shapes, and basic motifs, that are easy to learn and replicate. The key to engaging this user is creating tutorials that feel stress-free and enjoyable, allowing users to explore their creativity without the pressure of perfection. To ensure the content remains accessible, the tutorials should be visually clear, with accompanying instructions that are concise and easy to follow. The hub could also include features like time-saving techniques or tips for creating quick designs, particularly for users who want to enjoy henna in casual settings, such as gatherings or personal relaxation sessions. By focusing on simplicity

and providing a soothing experience, the hub can attract individuals looking for a fun, creative hobby that doesn't require a steep learning curve, thus making henna art accessible to a wider audience who are interested in a calming and rewarding activity.

The third user story, **“As a bride-to-be, I’m searching for a henna artist for my wedding. I want a website that showcases the artist’s bridal expertise, explains henna styles, and provides transparent information on pricing and timelines,”** highlights a practical and informational need for a more structured and professional presentation. This persona seeks a seamless and trustworthy experience when selecting a henna artist for a significant event—her wedding. To meet these needs, the henna hub should offer a dedicated section focused on bridal henna services, showcasing a carefully curated portfolio of intricate bridal designs. This section should feature high-quality images of past work, detailing the artist's unique style and the variety of bridal henna designs available, such as traditional, Arabic, or modern patterns. Additionally, the hub should provide clear and transparent information about pricing, including breakdowns for different types of services (e.g., bridal henna for the bride, bridal party, or henna for pre-wedding events). This ensures the bride-to-be has a complete understanding of the costs involved. Furthermore, timelines should be addressed, explaining the necessary lead time for booking, the length of time required for the application process, and any follow-up services such as touch-ups on the wedding day. To facilitate a smooth user experience, the website should include easy-to-use booking options and a FAQ section that addresses common concerns about the henna application process, such as how far in advance to book, what to expect on the day, and how to care for henna after application. By providing this level of detail and user-friendly guidance, the henna hub can help the bride-to-be make an informed, confident decision when choosing the perfect henna artist for her wedding day.

Delight

This section will provide an in-depth exploration of the visual design aspects of the project, covering key elements such as colour palette, typeface selection, logo design, brand name, and overall layout. These components are essential in defining the project's identity and visual appeal, creating a cohesive and user-friendly design that aligns with the project's objectives.

Colour

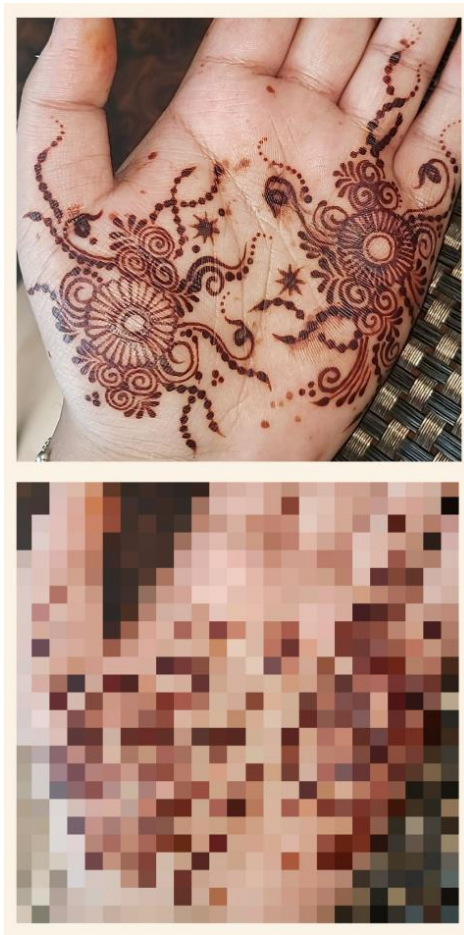
The selection of the colour palette was directly inspired by the core theme of the website: henna. To establish a visually coherent design, I analysed two stages of henna application—the initial paste and the resulting stain. Using these forms as a reference, I extracted and curated a colour palette that reflects the essence of henna artistry. This approach allowed me to evaluate whether the chosen palette would effectively complement the aesthetic and functionality of the website.



I utilized an image of raw henna powder as a reference and systematically extracted various green tones from the image. These shades were carefully selected to reflect the organic essence and cultural significance of henna artistry, ensuring that the palette aligns with the theme of the project.



1. **Brownish Green (#5F7210):** This shade was chosen as a primary colour due to its earthy and natural tone, which strongly represents the dried henna powder. It conveys the organic and grounded qualities of henna, highlighting its connection to nature.
2. **Army Green (#45531B):** This deeper, more vibrant green was selected to capture the richness of henna in its powdered form, emphasizing the bold pigmentation that defines henna's character.
3. **Dark Olive (#2C3606):** The darkest shade in the palette, this colour was derived from the shadowed areas of the powder. It adds depth and dimension to the palette, representing the dense and concentrated richness of raw henna.



To further develop the colour scheme, I used an image of henna in its final form, showcasing the stain left after the paste is applied and removed. This image captures the rich, reddish-brown tones that are characteristic of traditional henna stains. By analysing the image, I extracted key colours to incorporate into the palette, ensuring the design reflects the natural progression of henna from its raw form to its final artistic outcome. These extracted shades serve to emphasize the cultural and artistic beauty of henna in its completed state, adding depth and authenticity to the overall colour scheme.

By closely examining the image, I identified three key shades that reflect the natural transition of henna into its reddish-brown hues after application. Using digital tools, I extracted these tones directly from the image, resulting in the shades Burnt Amber (#8A3324), Metallic Copper (#71291D), and Heath (#541012). These colours represent the progression of henna as it oxidizes on the skin, highlighting the rich, earthy warmth associated with traditional henna stains.

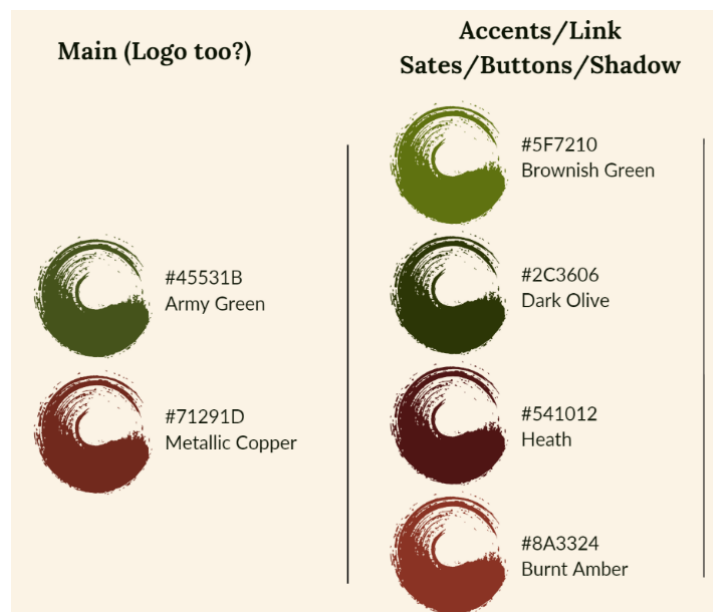
1. **Burnt Amber (#8A3324):** This warm reddish-brown shade reflects the vibrant, initial stage of a henna stain right after the paste is removed. Its brightness symbolizes the fresh beginnings of the henna design, capturing the moment of transformation as the stain first appears on the skin, after the dried henna paste has been removed.
2. **Metallic Copper (#71291D):** Representing the intermediate stage, this rich earthy tone symbolizes the natural progression of the henna stain as it begins to deepen. It conveys the transitional phase when the stain matures, darkening

with time and becoming richer in character. Good henna aftercare also plays a crucial role in the stain development.

3. **Heath (#541012):** This intense reddish-maroon shade represents the fully developed, darkest stage of the henna stain after complete oxidation. It symbolizes the culmination of the henna process, where the stain reaches its final depth and intensity. The progression from Burnt Amber to Heath reflects the natural darkening of the henna stain over time, mirroring the evolution and beauty of henna artistry.

Pure white (#FFFFFF) and pure black (#000000) are often avoided in web design due to readability and visual comfort concerns. Pure white emits maximum light, leading to eye strain, particularly in low-light settings, while pure black creates harsh contrast that can make text difficult to read. This extreme contrast can also cause a “vibrating” effect, which is especially challenging for users with visual impairments. Additionally, pure black can highlight screen imperfections, particularly on OLED displays, and both shades can appear flat, lacking visual depth.

To address these issues, I have chosen Ecru White (#F5F3E5) and Black Forest (#0B1304) for this project. These colours soften the contrast, providing better readability and reducing eye strain. Ecru White offers a warm, off-white tone that is visually comfortable, while Black Forest adds depth without the harshness of pure black. This combination ensures a more polished, user-friendly, and visually harmonious experience for the website.



I had initially planned to use Army Green (#45531B) and Metallic Copper (#71291D) for the site's logo and the main colours on the website. Along with the other shades extracted to be used for any accents, link states, buttons, or shadows, on the website.

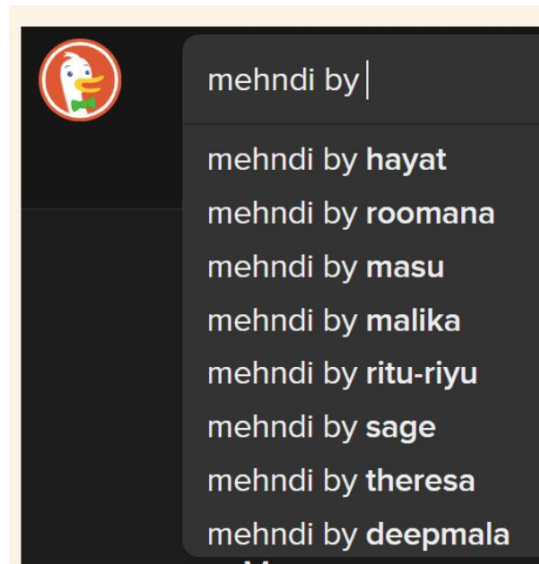
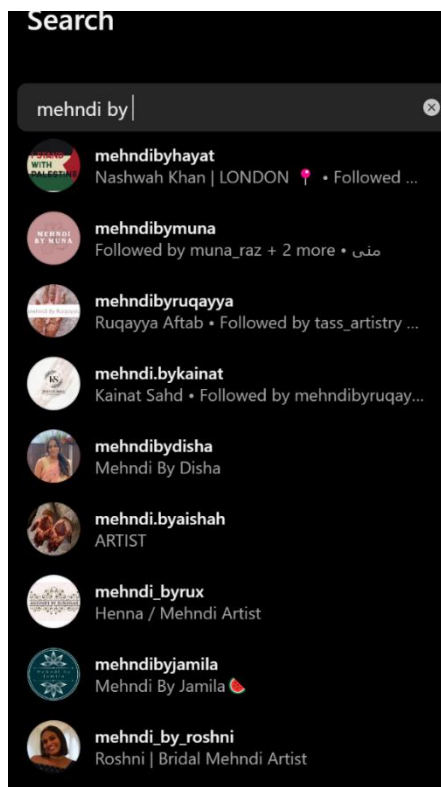
Brand Name and Logo

This project originated prior to the start of my master's degree and was initially conceptualized as a platform that existed behind a "coming soon" screen. At that stage, my primary focus was on launching the project quickly and establishing an initial presence, without dedicating much thought to branding or visual identity. The name and logo were created with simplicity and functionality in mind rather than strategic planning. When I first set up an Instagram account for the project, I chose the name "Mehndi By Tifa," which reflected a personal connection to my work. The logo was similarly straightforward, featuring my nickname, "TIFA." To add a creative touch that linked the design to henna artistry, I incorporated a henna plant motif into the letter 'I' in the logo. While this approach was practical at the time, it lacked the cohesive branding strategy that the project has since evolved to embrace.

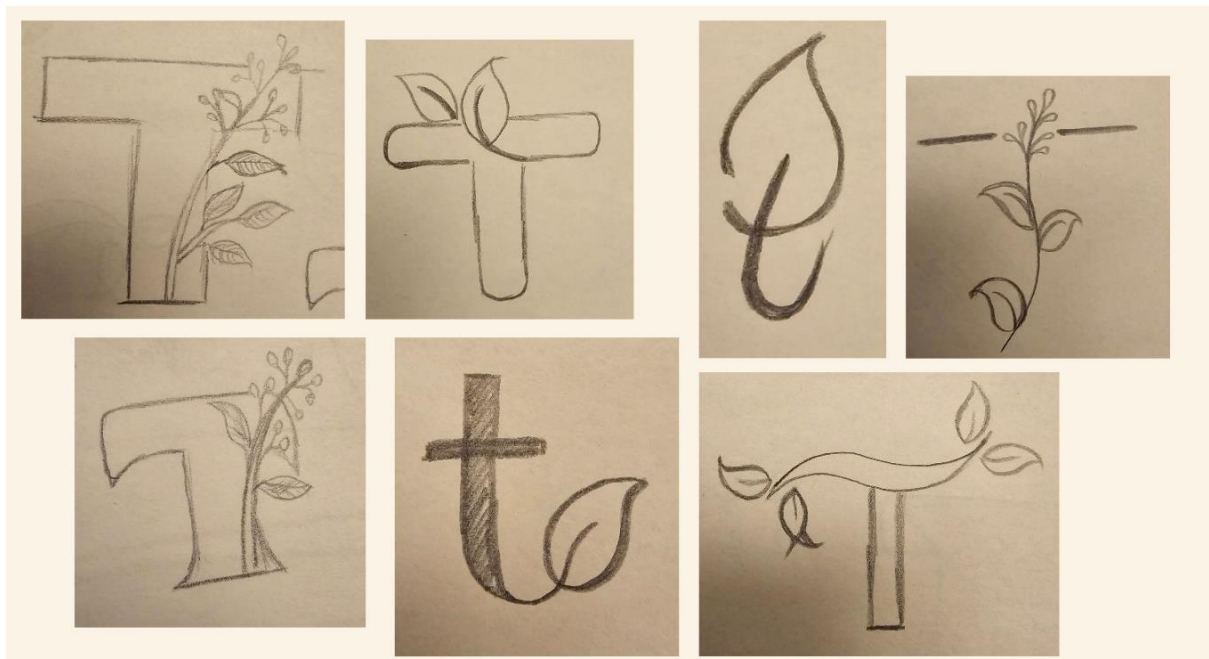


The original logo for this project featured the name "Mehndi by Tifa," with "TIFA" in bold uppercase and a henna plant integrated into the design. The henna plant was placed as the letter "I" in "TIFA," symbolizing the project's core focus. The colour scheme was a simple black-and-white base, with green introduced through the henna plant illustration. While the simplicity of this palette made the design clean and striking, it also presented challenges. As mentioned previously, pure black and white influences readability and disrupts visual comfort, plus, these colours might lack the warmth and personality associated with henna, which often carries earthy, natural tones.

For the typeface, "TIFA" used Migra Extra Bold, which provided a strong, authoritative look, complementing the logo's minimalist aesthetic. Meanwhile, "Mehndi by Tifa" was set in Goodfriend, a more playful and casual font. While the contrast between the two typefaces added a sense of balance, it also introduced a mismatch in tone. The bold, formal "TIFA" clashed slightly with the whimsical nature of Goodfriend. As a result, the typographic choices, while visually distinct, didn't fully align with the cohesive and professional brand identity the project aimed to establish.



During the course of my research, I observed that numerous profiles on search engines and Instagram followed a similar naming convention, such as "Mehndi by..." followed by a name. This raised a significant concern regarding the uniqueness and distinctiveness of my own branding. I realized that adopting a similar approach would make it challenging to differentiate myself from others in the same field. This prompted me to reflect on how I could establish a unique identity, stand out from the crowd, and create a brand that would be easily recognizable and memorable for my audience.



I began the process of developing potential logo concepts by sketching ideas that would encapsulate both my identity as the henna artist and the nature of the art form. My intention was to use the letter "T" as a central element to represent myself while incorporating motifs of a leaf or henna stem to symbolize the organic and natural qualities of henna. These plant-inspired elements were meant to evoke the cultural and artistic roots of the craft while visually linking the logo to its purpose.

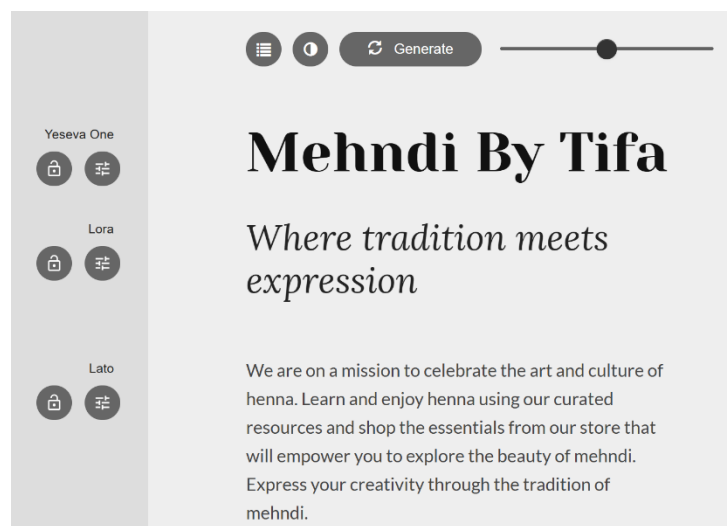
I explored a variety of compositions, experimenting with how the letter "T" could seamlessly interact with the plant motifs. Some designs emphasized the structural form of the letter, while others leaned more heavily on flowing, natural shapes to reflect the elegance of henna designs. Despite my efforts and the variety of options I produced, I struggled to create a design that truly resonated with the identity I wanted for the project. The sketches felt incomplete or lacked the distinctive character I was seeking, leading to a sense of dissatisfaction. This realization prompted me to take a step back and reassess my approach to designing a logo that would effectively represent the brand.

At the time, I decided to leave the logo, name, and colour scheme unchanged, as refining these elements would have required additional time and effort. Instead, I prioritized focusing on creating and developing the website's content, which I viewed as the foundation of the project. This approach allowed me to allocate my resources effectively, ensuring the content was robust and well-developed while postponing any refinements to the branding for a later stage.

Typeface

In the design of the website, I have chosen a combination of three distinct typefaces: **Yseva One**, **Lora**, and **Lato**. Each font has been selected to serve specific roles, ensuring clarity, readability, and enhancing the overall user experience.

I used www.fontjoy.com, which is a free web-based tool that helps designers find font combinations that work well together, and suggests how different typefaces complement one another based on factors like contrast, style and readability.



Below, I outline the rationale behind these font choices, along with their relevance to the context of a henna-themed website, considering visibility, readability, and symbolic significance.

Typeface	Usage	Visibility & Readability	Contextual Relevance
Yeseva One (Serif)	Headings, logo	Yseva One features distinctive letterforms with clear, structured strokes, enhancing legibility for larger text. Its thick serifs and elegant curves ensure strong visibility, especially for titles and section headers. The combination of clean geometry and ornamentation contributes to a sense of hierarchy and sophistication.	In the context of a henna website, Yseva One's ornate and classical serif design evokes traditional craftsmanship, symbolizing the artistry and heritage associated with henna. Its decorative features reflect the detailed, intricate patterns inherent to henna designs, reinforcing the site's cultural and artistic authenticity.
Lora (Serif)	Footer, Menu/Navigation & sub-headings	Lora maintains a balance between thick and thin strokes, providing excellent readability even at smaller sizes. The rounded edges reduce visual harshness, ensuring comfortable reading of short text elements like footers and menus. Its serif structure remains subtle and elegant, ensuring clarity without overwhelming the content.	Lora's refined and classic serif design complements henna's ornamental patterns. Its softer, more approachable character ensures key elements like menus and footers remain legible while enhancing the traditional aesthetic of the site. Lora helps maintain the cultural context by aligning with the heritage of henna art while ensuring usability.
Lato (Sans-Serif)	Body Text	Lato features clean lines and minimalistic design, enhancing readability for extended passages of body text. Its straightforward, sans-serif structure reduces visual clutter, making it highly readable and comfortable for longer content.	Lato's neutral and modern design complements the more decorative serif fonts by ensuring the content remains the focal point. Its simplicity balances the intricate elements of henna designs, providing a clear, contemporary experience while keeping the user focused on the informative content.

Firmness (Technical Planning)

I initially planned to use www.mehndibytifa.com as the primary domain for my project, aligning it with my personal brand as a henna artist. At the time, this seemed fitting for establishing an identity focused on henna artistry. However, since this domain is currently being used as my coursework page, I considered purchasing a new domain for the coursework and retaining www.mehndibytifa.com for the project.

Upon reflection, I observed that many henna artists adopt a similar naming convention, such as "Mehndi by [Name]." This trend made me reconsider the originality and uniqueness of my chosen domain name. To ensure my project stands out and reflects a distinct brand identity, I decided to keep www.mehndibytifa.com for my coursework page and purchase a new domain specifically for the project.

Content or Data-driven? Both?

I'm aiming to keep majority of the website designed as a content-driven platform, a choice that aligns perfectly with its purpose as a portfolio, blog and resource for sharing information about the traditions and artistry of henna. By focusing on curated content, the website can effectively showcase the beauty and cultural significance of henna while providing an engaging and informative experience for visitors.

As a **portfolio**, the website will feature high-quality images of intricate henna designs, organized into galleries that highlight the range of styles and patterns. This format allows visitors to explore the designs easily, reinforcing the website's role as a professional showcase for the artist's work.

The website will also function as a **blog**, sharing posts about the history, traditions, and symbolism of henna. A content-driven approach ensures that these stories are presented in a way that engages readers and provides meaningful insights. This type of storytelling helps build a personal connection with the audience, fostering a deeper appreciation for the cultural heritage of henna.

A content-driven design is ideal for a henna website as it allows for easy updates to reflect the evolving artistry and cultural significance of henna. New designs can be added to the portfolio, keeping the site engaging for visitors. Regular blog posts can share insights into henna traditions, symbolism, and techniques, enriching the audience's knowledge. Additionally, resources like tutorials or downloadable guides can be seamlessly integrated, offering extra value to users. This adaptability ensures the website remains dynamic and relevant, catering to changing audience interests while showcasing the growth and creativity of the henna artist.

However, I do plan to integrate an e-commerce functionality into the website, and this will require the need for a data-driven approach in addition to its content-driven approach. While the website will primarily focus on showcasing portfolio designs, blogs, and educational content, the addition of a product store—featuring items such as henna cones, paste, and resources like worksheets—demands a more dynamic, data-driven framework to support user interactions, product management, and transactional processes.

A **data-driven website** is ideal for managing the e-commerce component efficiently. It facilitates features such as product catalogues, inventory management, shopping carts, and secure payment systems, ensuring that users can easily browse, select, and purchase products. A data-driven approach complements the content-driven aspects

of the website. While the content-driven design ensures that the website remains engaging and informative through blog posts, galleries, and educational resources, the data-driven system enables seamless integration of e-commerce capabilities. This hybrid approach ensures that both content consumption and commerce functionalities are supported, offering a comprehensive user experience that caters to both informative and transactional needs.

Promotional Tools

This project initially begun as an Instagram account, serving as a platform to showcase intricate henna designs and connect with enthusiasts. This visually driven approach allowed the project to gain traction among a younger audience, leveraging the high engagement and popularity of social media. Instagram's emphasis on aesthetics and interactivity provided the perfect foundation to highlight the artistic aspects of henna while establishing an online presence.

As the project grew, the need for a more robust platform became apparent. The idea to shift the main focus to a dedicated website emerged, recognizing its potential to serve as a comprehensive hub. Unlike Instagram, a website could offer a more detailed portfolio, educational content, e-commerce functionalities for selling henna products, and insights into henna traditions. Instagram, however, remains a vital promotional tool, attracting younger generations accustomed to social media and directing them to the website for more in-depth engagement.

Following the success of the Instagram account, a TikTok profile was introduced to further expand the reach of the Henna Project. TikTok's growing popularity and its ability to reach diverse audiences through short, engaging videos made it an ideal platform. By utilizing trending sounds, hashtags, and creative video storytelling, the TikTok account has the potential to capture a wide range of users, from casual viewers to potential clients, in an easily digestible format. This adaptability aligns with the platform's algorithm-driven nature, making it a powerful tool for viral marketing and audience growth.

Personally, there is massive scope for improvement in how I use these promotional platforms for my website. Whether it's understanding advanced features, mastering analytics, or staying on top of trends, this knowledge would allow me to better leverage social media to support the henna project.

Hosting Platform

The most common hosting platforms I have heard of include GoDaddy, Wix, Squarespace, and more recently, Clook. Given the variety of options available, I decided to compare these platforms to evaluate which would be the most suitable for my henna website project. This comparison helps me assess key factors such as performance,

ease of use, scalability, and costs, ultimately guiding my decision on the best platform that aligns with my website's goals and requirements.

Hosting Platform	Pros	Cons	Suitability for Henna Website
Clook 	- Exceptional customer support with 24/7 assistance. - High reliability and uptime. - Advanced security features. - Customizable plans tailored to client needs. - Fully managed hosting reduces technical workload.	- Higher costs compared to mainstream providers. - Limited international presence. - No integrated website builder.	Ideal for a henna website valuing reliability and security. Great for UK-based audiences. However, higher costs and lack of a website builder may require consideration.
Wix 	- Intuitive drag-and-drop website builder. - All-in-one platform with hosting and design tools. - Beautifully designed templates. - Suitable for non-technical users.	- Limited customization and scalability for larger websites. - Ads on the free plan. - Higher costs for premium plans.	Excellent for beginners focusing on aesthetics. Suitable for showcasing henna portfolios and starting e-commerce, but less scalable for larger, complex websites.
Squarespace 	- Stunning templates focused on design. - Strong e-commerce capabilities. - Integrated hosting and analytics. - Ideal for creative professionals.	- Limited flexibility for advanced customizations. - Higher costs than competitors. - Learning curve for new users.	Great for henna portfolios that prioritize aesthetics and e-commerce. Best suited for projects with moderate technical needs and a focus on visuals and branding.
GoDaddy 	- Affordable and user-friendly setup. - Extensive domain registration services. - Decent performance for small to medium websites. - Easy integration with its website builder.	- Mixed reviews on customer support. - Extra fees for features like SSL and backups. - Average speed compared to competitors.	Suitable for small-scale henna websites needing a simple, cost-effective solution. Limited performance and add-on costs might be drawbacks for larger or feature-rich sites.

Based on the comparison table, **Clook Hosting** stands out as the best option for a henna website, particularly if valuing reliability, security, and excellent customer support. Regardless, I would've still opted for Clook, as it is the first hosting platform that I have been introduced to by my programme leaders and they have experience in using it and can aid me as well, plus, it is what many of my peers are also opting to use, hence there is support from peers and teachers.

Throughout the duration of using Clook, I have encountered various issues, both big and small. In every instance, whether technical or otherwise, I have relied on Clook's online chat support. Their customer service has consistently exceeded my expectations by promptly addressing and resolving my concerns. The support team has been courteous, knowledgeable, and efficient, ensuring that any issues are resolved quickly, making the entire process stress-free.

Additionally, these interactions have provided opportunities for me to gain a deeper understanding of how Clook's platform works. Through their guidance, I have learned more about managing my website and maximizing the features offered by Clook, further enhancing my confidence in using their services. Overall, Clook has delivered exceptional support, making my experience seamless and reassuring.

Content Management System

There are several popular Content Management Systems (CMS) available, catering to different website needs, from simple blogs to complex e-commerce platforms.

WordPress is one of the most popular CMS, and this platform was also introduced to me by my programme leaders, hence I will opt to use this, given that there is peer and teacher support.

The reasons why I am using WordPress are listed below.

Feature	Benefit	Use for Henna Website
<i>Custom design options</i>	Drag-and-drop tools like Elementor and themes tailored for portfolios and blogs.	Showcase designs beautifully; create a personalized look and feel.
<i>Portfolio & blog tools</i>	Built-in blog and plugins for galleries or portfolios.	Display henna designs and share tutorials, tips, or cultural stories.
<i>SEO-friendly</i>	Optimized for search engines with plugins like Yoast SEO.	Attract more visitors searching for henna tutorials, designs, or care tips.
<i>Resource sharing</i>	Easy integration of downloadable files and membership areas.	Share stencils, guides, or video tutorials with your audience.
<i>Scalability</i>	Expand to add online stores or booking systems with plugins like WooCommerce.	Sell henna kits, stencils, or offer appointment bookings for workshops.

Although there are some drawbacks to it, such as constant updates being required for plugins, themes and the software, it's an open source platform for hackers, dependency on plugins and more, it combines visual appeal, functionality, and growth potential, making it ideal for a website like mine.

Front-end and Back-end Technologies

I initially planned to use HTML and CSS to lay the foundation of my website, focusing on designing the core layout, structure, and styling. I intended to create custom templates, implement CSS for styling elements such as typography, colour schemes, and layout adjustments, ensuring the website reflected my desired aesthetic. Additionally, I planned to use JavaScript to add interactivity, such as form validations, image sliders, and dynamic content loading, enhancing the user experience. However, as I progressed, I recognized the limitations of static HTML, CSS, and JavaScript, particularly in terms of functionality, responsiveness, and the need for dynamic content. This led me to explore more advanced options, such as utilizing Elementor Pro to enhance the design while maintaining flexibility and ease of use. Elementor Pro has proven to be a valuable tool, allowing me to build and customize my theme on WordPress more efficiently. Its intuitive drag-and-drop interface and pre-built templates have simplified the process of design and layout creation, making it much easier to understand and manage. The extensive library of widgets and customization options offered by Elementor Pro has allowed me to bring my vision to life without the need for in-depth coding knowledge. Overall, Elementor Pro has made it much simpler to edit and build my own theme on

WordPress, ensuring both creativity and ease of management. However, this does not mean that I will abandon my knowledge of HTML, CSS, and JavaScript. I plan to continue learning and expanding my understanding of these technologies, as they remain fundamental to web development. In the future, I may choose to implement more complex customizations or enhancements that require a deeper technical knowledge of these core web technologies. Whether it's for further developing or redeveloping this website or any future projects, I aim to strike a balance between utilizing modern tools like Elementor Pro and leveraging my knowledge of HTML, CSS, and JavaScript to achieve greater functionality and customization.

Learning Requirements

I learned the basics of Elementor Pro by leveraging a combination of their official online guides and tutorials, which provided clear, step-by-step instructions on how to navigate the interface and utilize its features effectively. These resources were incredibly user-friendly, offering detailed explanations and visual demonstrations that helped me understand how to build and customize pages. Additionally, I supplemented this learning with YouTube tutorials created by experienced users and web designers, which offered practical tips, creative ideas, and solutions to common challenges. This blended approach allowed me to quickly grasp the essential tools and techniques needed to create a functional and visually appealing website for The Mehndi Co.

It may take me about 2 to 3 weeks to learn the basics of Elementor Pro. I relied heavily on their official online guides, tutorials, and FAQ page, which provided clear explanations and solutions to common questions. Additionally, I explored various YouTube tutorials to gain insights into practical tips and techniques. Beyond these resources, I took the initiative to explore the Elementor editor myself, experimenting with its features and tools to understand how they work in real-time. This hands-on approach, combined with the structured guidance from tutorials, helped me build the confidence to create a functional and visually appealing website for The Mehndi Co.

Phase 3 – Development

Content Creation

The content of a website is a crucial component, serving as the foundation for engagement, functionality, and overall user experience. As highlighted in "*Content Strategy for the Web*" by Kristina Halvorson and Melissa Rach, content drives the success of a website by addressing the needs of its audience while supporting the site's goals. For a henna-focused website, the content plays an even more significant role in communicating the artistry, expertise, and purpose of the site. The core elements of the content for this project include a gallery of henna images, a blog, and an e-commerce store, each tailored to different aspects of the audience's needs and interests.

The gallery of images is a key feature, showcasing accumulated photos from personal experiences with henna application. These images not only highlight the artist's skill and creativity but also provide potential clients and customers with visual inspiration. Having a pre-existing collection of images before starting the project was advantageous, as it allowed for immediate incorporation into the site without requiring extensive new material. According to *"Content First: Why Designing Around Your Content Matters"* by UX Collective, designing with existing content ensures a more effective and cohesive layout that aligns with the intended message.

The blog is another critical element, designed to cater to two distinct audiences. The educational side will offer valuable insights into the art, history, and techniques of henna, enriching visitors' understanding and appreciation. The personal experiences section, meanwhile, provides a platform to share stories, journeys, and connections related to henna, adding an authentic and relatable touch to the site. This dual approach ensures the blog resonates with a broader audience, fostering both education and personal engagement. As Ann Handley emphasizes in *"Everybody Writes"*, storytelling and authenticity are key to building a connection with readers and enhancing the value of the content.

For the e-commerce component, the initial focus is on launching a manageable selection of three products. This strategy balances practicality and scalability, allowing for a gradual expansion based on observed demand and customer feedback. The approach aligns with insights from Neil Patel's article *"The Role of Content in SEO and Website Success"*, which highlights the importance of starting small and scaling as consumer needs become clearer, ensuring efficient resource use and better responsiveness to market trends.

Having pre-existing content prior to this project contributed significantly to the ability to focus on the design and simultaneously create additional material. However, personal circumstances caused some delays, impacting the project timeline and shifting certain tasks into future development phases. Despite these challenges, the progress achieved thus far lays a strong groundwork for continued growth and completion of the site.

Prototype

As previously mentioned during the delight stage, the brand name, logo, and colour scheme were intentionally left unfinished. This decision was made to prioritize the development of the website's content and layout, ensuring that the structural foundation of the site was well-established before finalizing the visual identity. By adopting this approach, I was able to focus on curating meaningful content and designing an intuitive layout that would enhance user experience and align with the goals of **The Mehndi Co..**

Deferring the completion of the branding elements allowed for a more iterative and thoughtful process, ensuring that the final brand identity was cohesive and reflective of

the overall vision. This step also provided the flexibility to adapt the branding to better suit the website's functionality and aesthetics as they evolved, ultimately resulting in a more polished and harmonious final product.

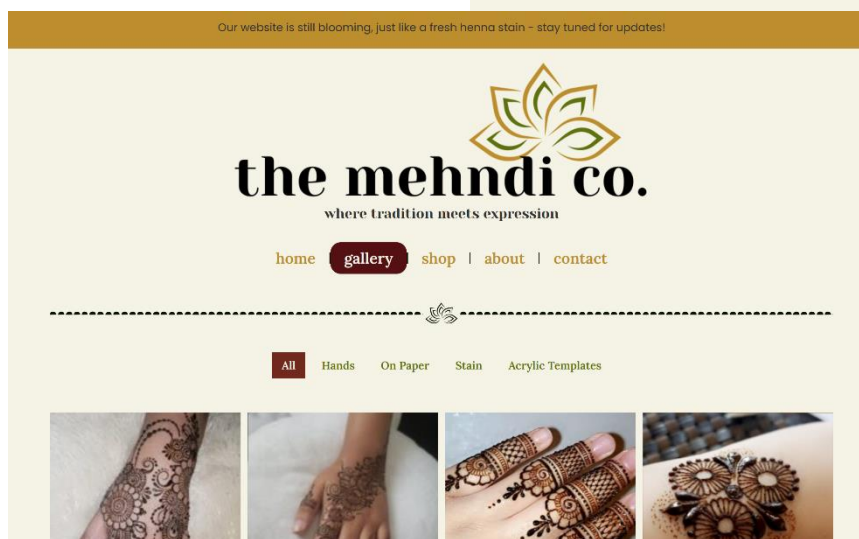
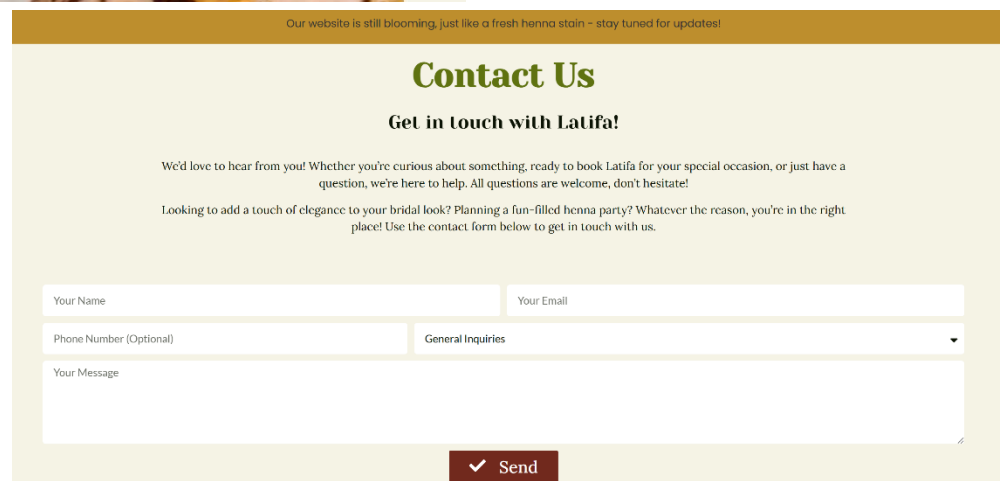
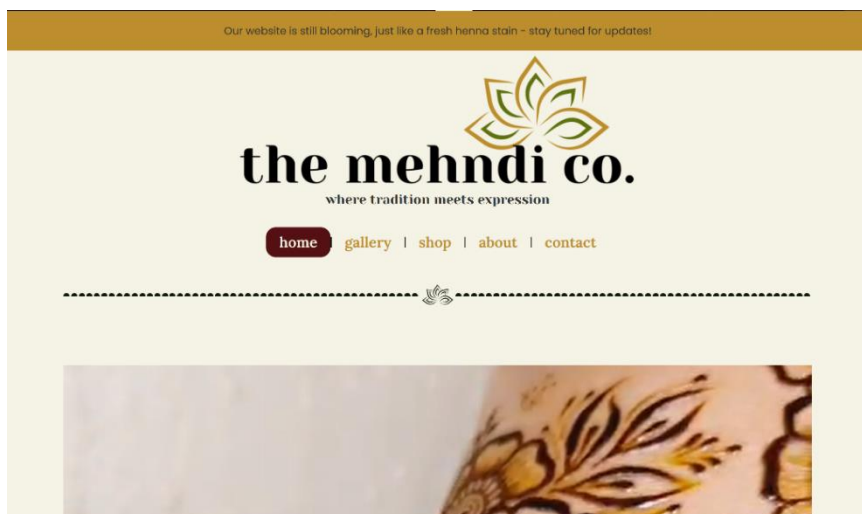


This marks a pivotal stage in the development of the brand's identity, where the integration of all design elements aligns with the vision and values of the business. The logo is central to the branding, featuring a stylized lotus flower that symbolizes purity, creativity, and beauty—values that are deeply rooted in the art of henna. The intricately layered petals evoke the detailed patterns inherent to henna artistry, representing both cultural heritage and the elegance associated with the brand. The lotus also reflects the brand's connection to nature and tradition, positioning The Mehndi Co. as a modern yet authentic representation of this timeless craft. Visualizing this logo in the prototype phase helped solidify its role as a defining feature of the brand, as it demonstrated how seamlessly it integrates into the overall design.

The finalized colour scheme further enhances the cohesive identity of **The Mehndi Co.**. The luxurious gold (#BD8E2D) embodies tradition and elegance, tying directly to the cultural heritage of henna artistry. The deep green (#5F7210) represents creativity and the natural origins of henna, reflecting the plant-based foundation of the craft. The neutral background tone (#F4F2E4) offers a clean and sophisticated canvas, allowing the logo and typography to stand out prominently. Complementing this, the bold black (#0B1304) used in the typography ensures clarity and timelessness for the brand name, projecting authority and professionalism. As highlighted in *"The Elements of Colour"* by Johannes Itten, colours hold the power to evoke specific emotional and cultural associations. This principle guided the selection of the primary shades for the logo and typography, ensuring a balance between tradition and modernity.

In comparison, the earlier colour scheme showcased three deep shades of maroon and red—Heath (#541012), Metallic Copper (#71291D), and Burnt Amber (#8A3324). While these shades carried warmth and vibrancy, they ultimately did not harmonize well within the context of the logo design. However, as noted in *"Designing Brand Identity"* by Alina Wheeler, adapting initial design concepts without abandoning them entirely allows for a more refined and consistent brand identity. These colours will be thoughtfully integrated into other elements of the website, such as headers, borders, or accent details. This balanced approach retains the character of the original scheme while enhancing the overall visual consistency of the brand.

The prototype for the website was developed without utilizing external design platforms such as Canva or Figma. Instead, the development process began directly within the WordPress environment. Utilizing Elementor's comprehensive suite of tools, including widgets and pre-built templates, a foundational theme and layout were created for the initial set of pages. Elementor's drag-and-drop functionality facilitated the seamless arrangement of various elements, such as headers, footers, and content sections, ensuring a cohesive and structured layout. This approach allowed for a streamlined workflow, minimizing the need for external design tools and enabling a more firsthand development process directly within WordPress. The focus was on building a functional prototype that reflects the desired structure and design principles from the ground up, ensuring greater control over the layout and design elements.



Creating the prototype directly on WordPress using Elementor offers several key benefits, especially when the website will be monitored and edited within the same platform. First, it ensures seamless integration and consistency between the design and the content management system (CMS). By building within WordPress, there are no compatibility issues, as the layout and structure remain fully aligned with the environment where future updates will occur.

Another advantage is real-time feedback and iteration. Elementor's visual editor allows for immediate adjustments, making it easier to refine the design based on user feedback. This reduces the need for exporting assets from external tools, accelerating the design process.

Additionally, this approach leads to cost and time efficiency. By avoiding the use of third-party design tools like Canva or Figma, the process becomes more streamlined, reducing the time spent on exporting and importing files.

The direct method also fosters better collaboration and control. Since Elementor operates within WordPress, teams, or stakeholders familiar with the platform can contribute to design changes, ensuring more effective teamwork and greater flexibility.

Lastly, building on WordPress ensures future scalability. Expanding the site or making ongoing design updates becomes easier, as there's no need for external tools or processes, making the website more adaptable over time.

Testing

Evaluating a website is a critical step in ensuring its functionality, responsiveness, and compatibility across various devices and browsers. As highlighted in *"Don't Make Me Think"* by Steve Krug, user experience can be significantly affected by inconsistencies in design and functionality, making rigorous testing an essential part of the development process. For this project, comprehensive testing was conducted to identify and address potential issues.

One of the primary focuses of the testing process was to ensure compatibility across multiple browsers, including Chrome, Firefox, Safari, and Edge. This step was necessary to identify any differentiation in how the website rendered or performed on each platform. While most browsers displayed the site consistently, minor issues, such as font scaling and element alignment, were observed on older browser versions. These discrepancies were resolved by editing the styling of text in the WordPress editor as well as ensuring compliance with universal web standards.

Additionally, the website was evaluated by a diverse group of individuals, including friends and people unfamiliar with the project. This approach provided valuable, unbiased feedback from users operating on different devices and browsers. The feedback revealed areas where navigation could be streamlined, and highlighted issues

that may not have been apparent during internal testing, such as button placements or loading times on specific devices.

Incorporating feedback from real users proved to be instrumental in improving the website's overall performance and usability. As suggested in the article *"The Importance of Usability Testing"* by Smashing Magazine, involving real users in the testing phase allows developers to observe how people interact with the site and address practical usability issues before the final launch.

Marketing

Marketing is a vital component for promoting any business or project, and for this initiative, a combination of word-of-mouth strategies and social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok has been employed. Both social media accounts were established prior to this project but had only been actively utilized once the project commenced. This focused effort has contributed to raising awareness and engaging with a broader audience.

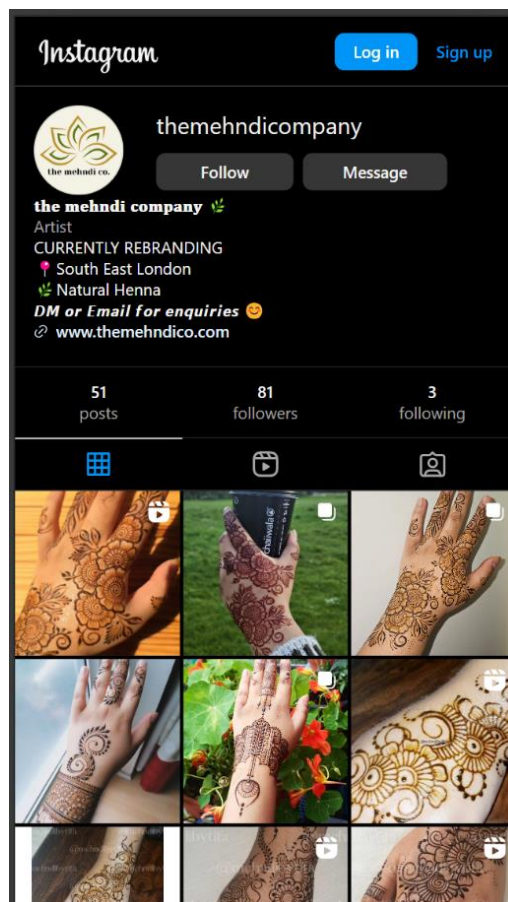
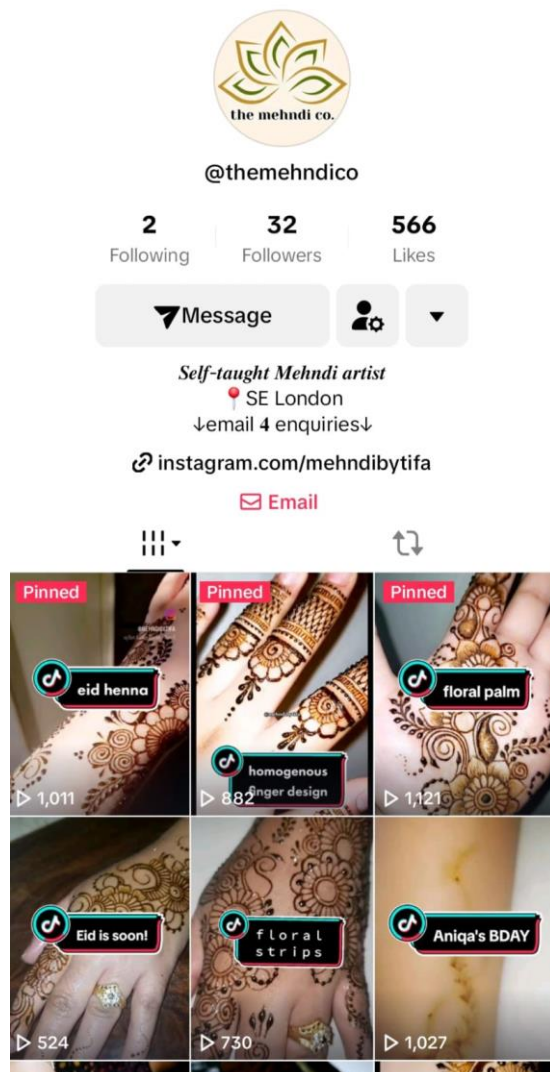
Word-of-mouth marketing has proven to be an effective and personal method of promotion. By informing family and friends about the project and encouraging them to extend the message to their own networks, the reach has naturally expanded. Additionally, I took the initiative to print business cards to further promote the business. These were distributed during family gatherings, at the local community hall, and in other social settings. Working in the hospitality sector also provided an opportunity to leverage my daily interactions with customers. With the support of my manager, who actively promoted the business and distributed business cards, word-of-mouth marketing was further amplified within the workplace and local community.

Social media has played a pivotal role in the marketing strategy. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok are particularly effective for visual content and engaging storytelling, as noted in *"Jab, Jab, Jab, Right Hook"* by Gary Vaynerchuk. This book emphasizes the importance of creating platform-specific content that resonates with users, a strategy employed by sharing visually appealing henna designs, process videos, and behind-the-scenes content on these platforms. TikTok's algorithm, which prioritizes engaging short-form videos, and Instagram's reach through reels and stories have helped to showcase the work and connect with a wider audience.

Further supporting this approach is the article *"The Power of Social Media for Small Businesses"* by HubSpot, which highlights the cost-effectiveness of social media marketing and its ability to target specific audiences. By utilizing hashtags, geotags, and interactive features such as polls and Q&A sessions, I have been able to build engagement and attract potential clients who are genuinely interested in henna artistry.

The marketing strategy combines the personal touch of word-of-mouth marketing with the expansive reach of social media. By utilizing networks of family, friends, and colleagues, and leveraging platforms like Instagram and TikTok to showcase content,

the project has gained significant visibility. The integration of physical business cards has further supported these efforts, creating a multi-channel approach that ensures both personal and digital outreach.



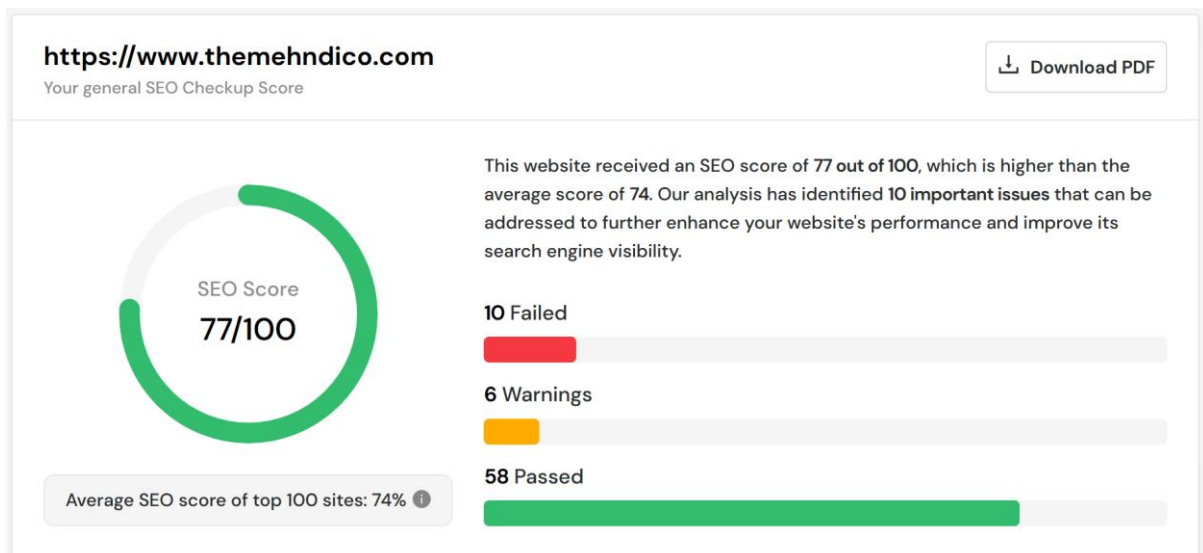
Phase 4 – Analysis

SEO

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a critical aspect of any website's success, ensuring visibility, discoverability, and engagement. By optimizing a site for search engines, businesses can increase their online presence, drive organic traffic, and connect with a broader audience. As described in "The Art of SEO" by Eric Enge et al., SEO serves as the foundation for attracting quality traffic by aligning website content and technical aspects with search engine algorithms. For this project, implementing effective SEO practices has been a priority, and tools like seositecheckup.com have been used to evaluate performance and identify areas for improvement.

Using seositecheckup.com, the website achieved a score of 77 out of 100, indicating that a strong foundation is in place with room for further optimization. The analysis highlighted several positive aspects, such as proper use of meta tags, mobile responsiveness, and image optimization, which contribute to improved user experience and search engine rankings. These elements align with recommendations in *"SEO for Dummies"* by Peter Kent, which emphasizes the importance of technical SEO components such as page speed, structured data, and mobile compatibility.

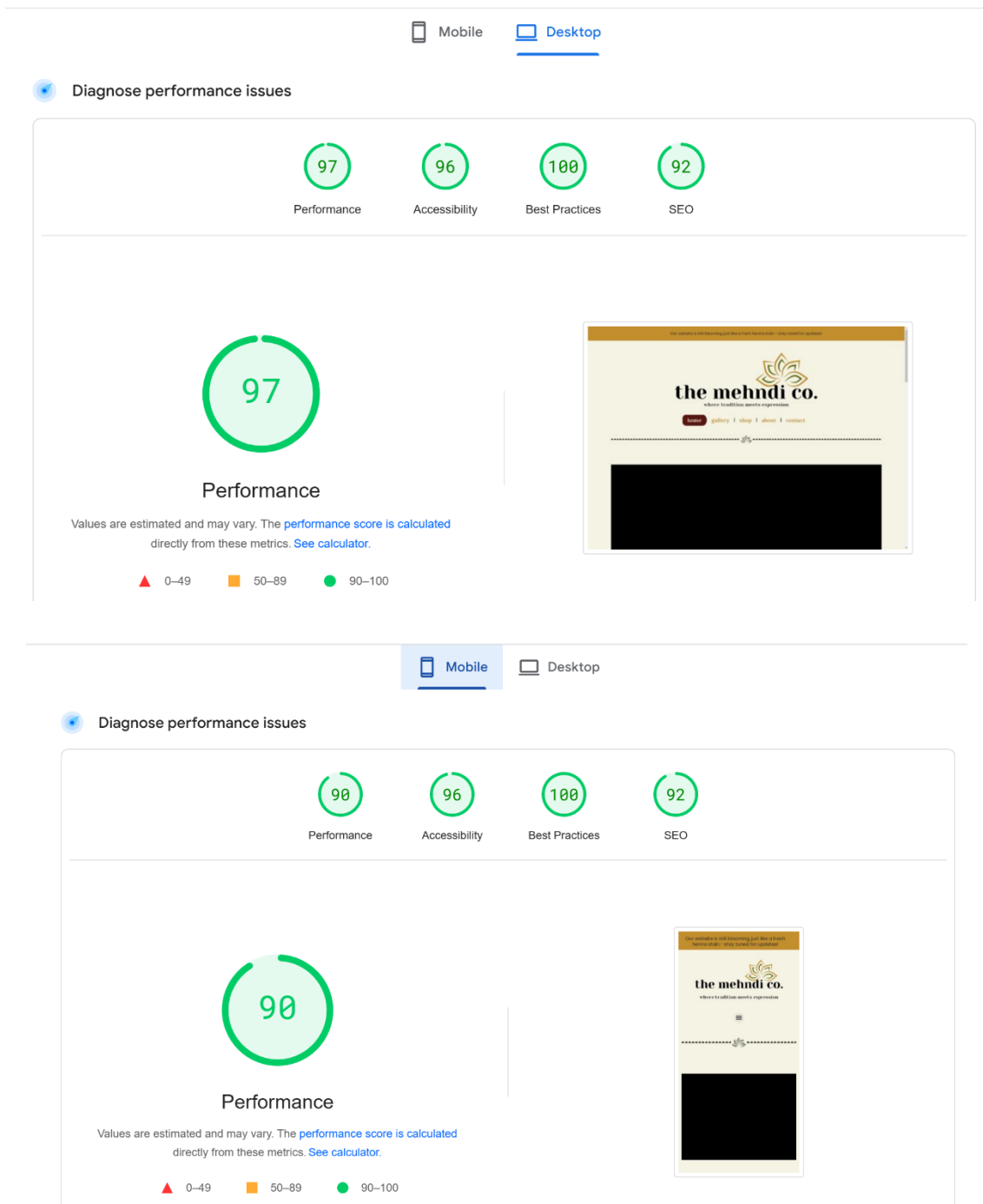
SEO is particularly crucial for a niche website like this one, as it helps establish authority within the domain of henna artistry. By targeting specific keywords related to henna designs, tutorials, and products, the site can attract users who are actively searching for this content. Incorporating relevant keywords in blog posts, product descriptions, and image alt tags aligns with best practices highlighted in Neil Patel's article *"The Beginner's Guide to SEO"*, which underscores the importance of content relevancy and keyword optimization.



The analysis also provided actionable feedback, such as enhancing the use of heading tags and improving server response times. Addressing these aspects will further strengthen the site's performance and user engagement. While some areas, such as browser caching and leveraging content delivery networks, remain as opportunities for improvement, these adjustments are manageable and will contribute to the long-term success of the site.

Site Performance

The performance of a website significantly impacts user experience, engagement, and retention, making it an essential aspect of development and optimization. Performance analysis for this project was conducted using Google's PageSpeed Insights tool, focusing on both mobile and desktop versions of the site. The results provide a comprehensive understanding of the site's current strengths and areas for improvement.



On the desktop version, the site performs admirably, showcasing faster loading times and well-optimized rendering. The layout stability and quick server response contribute to a smooth experience, which is essential for retaining desktop users. According to *"Speed Up Your Website"* by Patrick Sexton, desktop performance remains a key consideration for businesses targeting professional or high-resource users who rely on larger screens.

For the mobile version, the analysis highlights several positive aspects. The site demonstrates strong core web vitals, particularly in terms of mobile responsiveness and adaptability. This ensures that users can access the site seamlessly across various devices, a critical factor given the increasing reliance on mobile browsing. Additionally, the page benefits from optimized image sizes and a mobile-friendly layout, which contributes to better user interaction and reduced bounce rates. As discussed in

"Mobile-First Design: Why it's Critical for Website Success" by Smashing Magazine, mobile performance is pivotal in today's web ecosystem, where the majority of users browse on mobile devices.

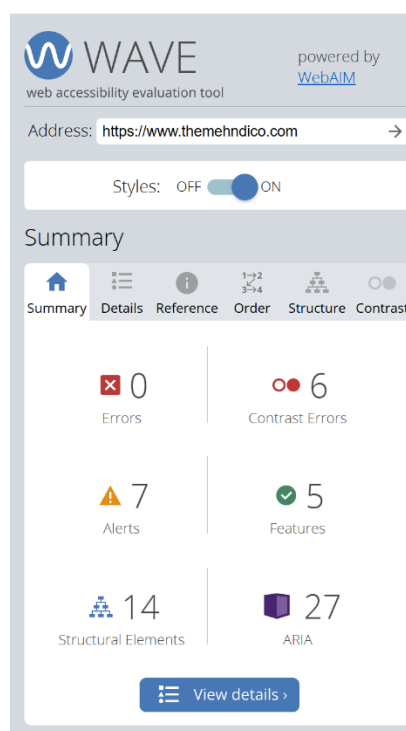
The site's performance on both mobile and desktop platforms reflects a strong foundation, particularly in delivering a user-friendly experience and optimized content rendering. While there is room for technical enhancements, the current state already meets the needs of most users effectively. Continued efforts to address minor issues will only strengthen the site's ability to perform consistently across all devices and platforms, ensuring a competitive edge in the online space.

Site Performance

Website accessibility is essential for ensuring that the site can be used by everyone, including people with disabilities. Using the WAVE tool to evaluate the website's accessibility revealed several strengths and some areas for improvement.

The website is well-structured, with headings organized in a way that makes navigation easier for users with screen readers. Most images include alternative text, which helps visually impaired users understand visual content. Additionally, the site uses proper colour contrasts, making the text readable for people with visual impairments or colour blindness. Its mobile-friendly design also supports users who rely on mobile devices with assistive technologies.

The analysis showed a few issues that need attention. Some forms and interactive elements do not have proper labels, which can make them hard to use for people relying on screen readers or other assistive tools. A few images either lack alternative text or are not correctly marked as decorative. Additionally, certain interactive elements need better support for keyboard-only navigation to assist users who cannot use a mouse.



Conclusion

The Mehndi Co. project represents more than just a website; it is the embodiment of a dream that was born well before embarking on the Master's in Web Design and Content Management course. This platform was envisioned as a hub for henna enthusiasts to access resources, engage with educational content, and connect with others in the community. Although the project is still a work in progress, the journey thus far has been both enriching and enlightening, laying a strong foundation for future growth.

Being part of this Master's program has equipped me with invaluable skills and knowledge, ranging from technical proficiencies in web design to a deeper understanding of content strategy. These learnings have given me the confidence and ability to continue improving the site beyond this course. While the progress was slowed due to personal circumstances, this experience has highlighted the importance of effective time management and adhering to schedules to meet set objectives.

Using WordPress and Elementor for the first time was a significant learning curve. There were moments of frustration and challenges in understanding the tools, but overcoming these hurdles was a rewarding experience that showcased the value of perseverance and problem-solving. Despite these obstacles, I successfully created a foundation for the website, and the process has deepened my passion for henna and strengthened my commitment to this project.

The ultimate goal of The Mehndi Co. is to become a comprehensive platform for henna enthusiasts—a space where they can begin their journey, access resources, and grow their knowledge and skills. While this vision has yet to be fully realized, the site will continue to evolve in phases. My immediate plan is to focus on establishing key elements such as a well-organized gallery, a blog, and a functional contact system to engage the target audience. Once these aspects are solidified, I will gradually expand into e-commerce and introduce additional resources, such as worksheets and educational tools.

Overall, working on this project has been a deeply rewarding experience. It allowed me to combine my passion for henna with my newly acquired skills in web design. I am excited to continue building and refining The Mehndi Co. to create a platform that truly serves its audience and grows into the hub I have envisioned. This is just the beginning, and I am motivated to see where this journey takes me.

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