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An Online Guide for Traveling in Southern Spain using GUI Design and Actionscripting

Yun-Ju Peng

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An Online Guide for Traveling in Southern Spain using GUI Design and Actionscripting

By Yun-Ju Peng

July 22, 2005
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Yun-Ju Peng

*Signature of Author*  
*Date*
Special Thanks To

Here I want to say thank you to some people

To my family
Thanks for supporting me to accomplish this study and your care these years when I’m out of home.

To my advisor committee professors: Jim, Chris and Adam
Thanks for keeping giving me feedback and suggestions so that I know where to tweak.
Jim, thanks for teaching me more of coding. I’ve learned a lot from you in every meeting we had. Thanks for your encouragement.

To Amparro Garrido, Macc, Andre Winter
Thanks for sharing your information with me to make the whole project better. I cannot make this website so complete without your help.

To my friends, coworkers and boss
Thanks for your support and suggestions.
Thesis Guiding Principle

“To design is much more than simply to assemble, to order, or even to edit; it is to add value and meaning, to illuminate, to simplify, to clarify, to modify, to dignify, to dramatize, to persuade, and perhaps even to amuse.”

Paul Rand,
“Design, Form, and Chaos”
Abstract

My project is a personal travel experience website as well as a traveling aid for those who are interested in southern Spain, including Cordoba, Seville and Granada. To differentiate it from the traditional media, I’ve created an online travel book with many movies, flamenco guitar music, attractive Spain photos and other interesting features for users to enjoy. With user-friendly interface and appealing parts, my thesis enables users to experience how and what southern Spain looks like. The users can not only flip the pages, jump to a specific page directly by clicking the part they want, they can also play with other interactivities I’ve provided in this book. I’ve used editorial design principles to design this southern Spain travel book. Good editorial design has to interact harmoniously with photography, illustration, typography and layout design. In my thesis project, these are integrated well to make the whole travel book not only pictorial but with much useful information to fit both pictorial and textual users.
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1. Introduction

1.1. Why make a site for Andalusia, southern Spain?

a. Personal Feeling
I have always loved traveling. In the summer of 2003, two friends of mine and I went to Andalusia, which is the southern part of Spain. I didn’t realize that it’s such a wonderful region until after a two-week stay. I love the lively atmosphere and countryside environment. It surely is a place to get away. Although we found lots of information about sightseeing spots, there was always something new for us to discover. Thus, I want to include some interesting parts which are seldom or not mentioned in other travel books. I will also include my own experience to make the website feel friendlier.

Here are some examples of why I like southern Spain.

Isn’t it so nice to have lunch in such a wonderful decorated restaurant?
It's nice to have free music around you while you are having nice cuisine too.

Street art performed in the open wherever you walk.
b. No Interactive Websites

I did a lot of research on sites for southern Spain; it showed that there are neither many websites introducing Andalusia nor website content with attractive parts such as sound, images, and interactivity. I would like to create an impressive and effective site for southern Spain.

Below is a specific example of text-based website.

Many websites out there are all like this, text-based.
c. Travel Demand

Everyone needs to travel, so the travel demand will never disappear. However, many people may not quite understand the style of traveling they want on their first trip. Also, while choosing travel destinations, often they cannot gather much information or tour arrangements may not suitable for their needs. Even though they can find some useful information from books or the Internet, the information is almost completely textual and with few pictures, making people feel frustrated or not wanting to read anymore. With my website, the users can get a whole lot more information gathered from many books, pictures and personal travel experience. This electronic book is going to be a very useful traveling aid.

d. Appearance of Internet

Unlike traditional media, digital media goes beyond borders of nations, is not restricted to time and space, is inexpensive, and is easy to access and transmit. Travelers can get useful information anywhere as long as they have the access to the internet. Since information can be reached more quickly and widely due to the appearance of the multi-broadcast and unbounded electronic media that is the Internet, this interactive website will promote the tourism industry and present my own travel experience in southern part of Spain by utilizing it.
1.2. Objective
My thesis is about creating an online electronic book for southern Spain with interactive navigation and user-friendly interface design. It is a non-commercial online experimental design and it is also a very useful online travel guide for southern Spain built with Macromedia Flash and Adobe Photoshop.

1.3. Target Audience
My thesis “An Online Guide for Traveling in Southern Spain” is for everyone but it mainly targets people who are interested in traveling in southern Spain and who are in the interactive design profession. It’s also for students who are interested in designing with a computer.

1.4. End Product

1.5. Software Used
Macromedia Flash; Adobe Photoshop; Illustrator; SoundEdit

1.6. Languages Used
Actionscript; Javascript; HTML
2. Problem Solving:

2.1. Conveying Information

Any kind of media has to face the same problems: How does one make sure the information is effectively presented? How are the users guided to receive the information? Do the users have a pleasant experience when visiting your site? This thesis integrates two primary design methods, editorial design and GUI design, to solve the problems mentioned above.

2.2. Editorial Design

Since my thesis is an online electronic book, I use a number of editorial design principles to design my interface. Editorial design is without doubt one of the most exciting and innovative areas of design nowadays. You need editorial design from exhibition catalogues, online magazines, newspaper supplements, and books around the whole world. Editorial design is not just about the text. A nice editorial design has to interact harmoniously with other elements such as photography, illustration, typography and layout design. In my thesis project, I integrate editorial design, graphic design, interface design and usability. Below are some examples.

Cover:

In order to catch the eye, most book covers use pictures – generally photos, but occasionally also drawings. The covers reflect the huge range of styles and subjects, and the focal point of interest is humanity, whether in the form of portraits and full-length figures. Colored portraits, so long as they are straightforward, are best suited to general audiences. You can see this feature on the cover of my electronic book.
The cover of my electronic book

I use a full-length figure of a flamenco dancer on the cover. Flamenco is actually from southern Spain and that’s why I use this flamenco dancer to be the main character on the cover to catch the viewers’ eyes. Also, it’s a very straightforward idea to represent southern Spain. I put “click here” to make users understand more of how to use my online electronic book.
Inside Layout -- Content Page:

In all cases, the content list should reflect the structure of the book, following its sections and the order of its articles. Generally there are two kinds, one pictorial and one textual. Pictures may be used to emphasize certain themes and they also help to attract the more visually oriented reader to one particular subject. That’s why I put some pictures related to the topics. I made it both pictorial and textual.
In designing the layout of a book feature that’s to cover several pages, you first have to decide what visual elements, like photographs, are to be used to accompany the text. You have to be careful when choosing the picture stem, because the more heterogeneous the pictures, the less harmonious the layout will be. So I’m very careful with the colors of the pictures. I usually put pictures with a similar color scheme to create a good balance.

Although I put a wide variety of picture material in my book, the priority here lies with the information and not with purely aesthetic considerations. Say, if you want to learn more detail of Andalusia history, just click the round navigation and it will have a popup window containing more information.
The History of Spain under Christian rule 1516-1939

Throughout the century, Andalusia’s ports were the base of the discovery and exploitation of the New World. Trade and were planned from Seville. It became the main port for the imports of gold and silver each year from the New World during the 16th and 17th centuries. However, much of the wealth from America was spent on the wars waged by Spain’s Hapsburg monarchy against the Lutheran countries in northern Europe and the Ottoman Turks in the Mediterranean, and Andalucia was rapidly declining from one of the richest provinces of Europe to one of the poorest.

The Spanish Empire is slowly declining.

Click to learn more.

When you click on the round moving navigation, this pop-up window will jump up so that the users can gain more detailed information about southern Spain. It’s all interactive. It’s easy to navigate and user-friendly.

The vital typographical element in any page is the combination of headline and standfirst. Ideally, the headline should be exciting to appeal to users. The standfirst, which forms a link between headline and text, will be more informative, but it must arouse curiosity without telling the whole story. In my history popup window part, I think I present this idea very well. As you can see the standfirst on the bottom (the pink line) with a brief timeline of southern Spain, you can know what important events happened when you rollover that specific year. It can arouse the users’ curiosity to make them want to learn more. And you can know more history details during that period when you click on that specific year on timeline.
Section Headings:

The more informative a book sets out to be, the more essential it is to give it a clear and easily accessible structure. Section headings are extremely helpful in guiding the users around. Normally, the area at the top of the page is the best place for these headings. As you can see, I always put the heading on top of the page in my project.

---

Food - Tapas

What is Tapas?

Tapas are small dishes of food, both hot and cold, served in bars and taverns to accompany with drinks. Tapas (the word means "cover") are invented during 19th century in winemaking regions of Andalusia, where a saucer was customarily placed on top of a glass of wine, reportedly to keep out the flies.

Tapas normally are eaten before the lunch hour (around 1.00pm)
Captions:

Captions are not headings, even if some authors prefer to put them above the picture. In terms of content, a caption should provide a meaningful explanation of the picture, rather than merely describing it. In the layout, the gap between picture and caption must be clear, and the font must also be easily distinguishable from that of the main text. A carefully thought out combination of picture and text can have a definite impact on the style of a book.

11 Architecture

Real Alcazar in Seville

Real Alcazar, the Mudejar Palace built by Pedro I over the old Palace built by the city's Almohad rulers in 1364. Several centuries of architectural activities produced the palace complex and ornamental gardens of the Real Alcazars, with their pavillions, fountains, pools and wide variety of plants.

The font I use for the caption is different from the main text.
2.3. Keep the file size down

When it comes to designing a website, it's really important to keep the file size down so that people all over the world could share the information from your website easily. You have to decrease the loading time to make your website easy to access all over the world and that's also the value of Internet.

There are mainly two ways to keep your file size down. One is using lots of vector graphics instead of using lots of bitmaps and the other is making your website all text-based.

What's the difference between vector graphics and bitmap images? Both of them have their own benefits and drawbacks. Vector graphics are just a form of image that can be displayed on VDTs (Video Display Terminals), which are made up of a set of pixels, with different colors, combining into patterns that make up images. What makes them so distinctive and special? They can compose files that are very small, that can be sized to and in any proportion. They are also flexible because they are easy to be re-rendered at any point.

However, Vector Graphics cannot match the realism of photographs with a line-drawn image. JPEGs still reign supreme for representing the real world. Vector Graphics often only generate comic or cartoon-like drawings.

People ask me why my project holds so much information, including high-definition photographs, useful text-based information and lots of music files, but the speed of loading is still very quick? That's because I've combined photographs and vector graphics together to complete the whole project. Also, I've used the loadMovie function to load lots of information containing photographs and music externally. That's why I can not only keep my file size down, but also have a lot of attractive images, music and interactive parts. For example, in the architecture section, I cannot use Vector Graphics to show how Spanish architecture looks like, so I need to use photographs. However, I also use some Vector Graphics to design and decorate my book layout. In some parts where I can skip photographs, I would use Vector Graphics instead to represent that specific information, like food part and flamenco part. And it works well. Here are some examples.
The Alhambra Complex was developed throughout the 13th and 14th centuries by Ismail I, Yusuf I and Muhammad V. They added walls, towers, mosques, palaces and gardens using modest materials (plaster, timber and tiles) to create an immense military and residential complex. The Alhambra Complex includes the Casas Reales, the 13th-century Alcazaba, the 16th-century Palace of Charles V, and the Generalife.

These are two pages in the architecture section. It's really difficult to show this splendid architecture with Vector Graphics, so I have to use photographs to feature this architecture. But all the text and those three flying birds are done with vector graphics.

What is Tapas?
Tapas are small dishes of food, both hot and cold, served in bars and taverns to accompany with drinks. Tapas (the word means "cover") are invented during 19th century in winemaking regions of Andalusia, where a saucer was customarily placed on top of a glass of wine, reportedly to keep out the flies.

Tapas normally are eaten before the lunch hour (around 1:00 pm).

In the food page, I've used 12 moving circles to represent 12 dishes. In the flamenco page, these 6 different length strips are interactive, when you rollover those strips, they are gonna move up and down. It's just like dancing. So I use this kind of idea to represent the abstract dancing feeling. And it works.
Flamenco

what's flamenco?

The soul of Andalusia. Flamenco is a tripartite art, involving singing, dance, and the guitar simultaneously with rhythmic punctuation (by hand-claps and other methods). More than just a dance, flamenco is a forceful artistic expression of the sorrows and joys of life.

Gypsies may have been the main creators of the art.

This is the detail page of the flamenco section. It contains photographs and music. Normally it would make the whole project file size larger but actually it didn’t. It’s because this movie is loaded externally to the main movie.

Diary - My Stories

Useful Information

The “useful information” page is all Vector Graphics.
2.4. Music

Music plays an important role in most presentations. Everyone agrees that a television commercial means something quite different when the music is taken away. Also, numerous studies have shown that music can affect a person’s mood. If the music you choose suits the mood and concept of your project, then you can definitely grab the viewer’s attention and leave a big impression. For example, people sometimes go around all day humming a jingle from a particular commercial. The same idea here, music can be a strong element in a viewer’s mind when browsing your website. Thus, the contribution of music is not inconsequential. It creates coherence, making connections that are not there in the words or pictures. So that’s why I use different music of southern Spain to match the specific topic.

a.) Background Music
   Paco de Lucia - Antologia

The background music is from two CDs titled “Paco de Lucia - Antologia”. There are so many great Spanish guitar songs in it. Spain is famous for their guitar music and that’s why I use lots of guitar music in my project.

b.) Music for Flamenco part

1.) Gypsy Flamenco from the Camargue – Narvalo
2.) Cantes del Pueblo
3.) Jose Antonio - Rodriguez

There are six different little sections in the Flamenco part, including “what’s flamenco”, “flamenco singing”, “flamenco dancing”, “flamenco guitar”, “flamenco dress”, and “flamenco rhythm”. I use different music clips in each part to represent different feelings. Hopefully these music clips can catch user’s attention and leave them with a positive impression.
2.5. Flowchart

![Flowchart Image](image-url)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History</th>
<th>Architecture</th>
<th>Food-Tapas</th>
<th>Culture-Flamenco</th>
<th>Diary</th>
<th>Useful Info</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brief</td>
<td>Cordoba</td>
<td>What’s Tapas</td>
<td>What’s Flamenco</td>
<td>Snack Time</td>
<td>Map</td>
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<td>History</td>
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<td>Flamenco Singing</td>
<td>Fun Time</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flamenco Dancing</td>
<td>Nice Scene</td>
<td>Seville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flamenco Dress</td>
<td>Memories</td>
<td>Granada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flamenco Guitar</td>
<td>No Name</td>
<td>Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flamenco Rhythm</td>
<td></td>
<td>Credit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Background Music Control
2.6. Programming Problems

You will find many different and appealing effects while reading through my “Travel in Southern Spain” travel guide. Most of them are done by Actionscript, the programming language of Flash. Among all the effects, the page-flipping code took me the most time to figure out. Although this is open source code from the author, Macc (http://www.iparigrafika.hu/), it took me a lot of time to figure out how to make it work by resizing the whole book. The original size of the open source book is 600x450; however, I wanted to enlarge it to 930x800. But it didn’t work out well by just changing the width and height on my first try. I have tried various different ways, ask my friends and my chief advisor, Jim Ver Hague. Finally we figured it out by not just changing the size, but putting the whole book in the center to make it at the right place as it is supposed to be. After solving the page flipping code, most of the project started to move smoothly.

The other main coding problem through all the projects I’ve done is the music control, especially when there are more than two music clips going on in one movie. I want my users to have the best experience while browsing my website. I hope when they click on the flamenco part along with flamenco singing/guitar music, the background Spanish guitar music will stop playing. I didn’t make it when I did my portfolio; however, I found a solution to it when I did my thesis. I used sound object to control the music clips. By far it is the best way to solve the sound control problem. Here is the object code.

```javascript
// initialize sound
mySound = new Sound();
mySound.attachSound("RioAncho.mp3");
mySound.setVolume(100);
mySound.start();

this.onEnterFrame = function() {
    mySound.onSoundComplete = function() {
        mySound.start();
    }
}

soundOn = true;
soundStatus_txt.text = "ON";
```
// define slider drag parameters and location
left  = bar_mc._x;
//right  = left + bar_mc._width; (used for horiz. scroll)
right = left;
bottom = bar_mc._y;
top   = bottom - bar_mc._height;
mySlider_mc._x = left;
mySlider_mc._y = top + bar_mc._height/2;
stop();
trace(left);trace(right);trace(top);trace(bottom);

// sound ON/OFF button script
sound_btn.onRelease = function(){
    if (soundOn == false){
        mySound.start();
        soundOn = true;
        soundStatus_txt.text = "ON";
        mySound.onSoundComplete = function(){
            mySound.start();
        }
    }else{
        mySound.stop();
        soundOn = false;
        soundStatus_txt.text = "OFF";
    }
}

Another coding problem solved is the moving recipe circles in Tapas page. There is a number in each circle. When the circle is moving, the number within it needs to move along with it. When people first looked at this effect, they would think I’ve done it by trigonometry. However, my professor, Jim Ver Hague has provided another easier yet effective way to solve this problem.

stop();
startup  = function() {
    dial_mc._rotation += 0.2;
dial_mc.bone_btn.onRollOver= function() {

    names_mc.gotoAndPlay("sangria");
    dial_mc.bone_btn._xscale = dial_mc.bone_btn._xscale + 10;
    dial_mc.bone_btn._yscale = dial_mc.bone_btn._yscale + 10;

    dial_mc.bone_btn.onRollOut= function() {
        names_mc.gotoAndStop(1);
        dial_mc.bone_btn._xscale = dial_mc.bone_btn._xscale - 10;
        dial_mc.bone_btn._yscale = dial_mc.bone_btn._yscale - 10;
    }

    In order to make the circles stop moving, I added another line to make it work.
    dial_mc.onEnterFrame = function() {startup(); } 
and to make the whole thing to start from the beginning.

As to other effects, such as window effect, bubble effect, experimental buttons in flamenco part, I really need to thank to my chief advisor, Jim Ver Hague, who helped me a lot on the coding part.

I’ve learned a lot of Actionscript through my thesis. It means a lot to me since I didn’t have a programming background before. I really appreciated the chance through my past two years to learn the basic idea of programming. I took IT classes and I kept asking when I encountered problems. I’ve realized that the best way to learn things well is to ask. My thesis is the record of my learning process. I value this experience a lot.
3. Conclusion:
I have realized that I have improved a lot through the past whole year by doing this thesis. I improved not only in layout design, typography, color using but also Actionscripting and English conversation skills because I had to have a regular meeting with my chief advisor every week to show him my progress.

I am so glad that I have finished this online travel book for southern Spain. When I published this site published online, many people emailed me inquiries about southern Spain. Also, they would ask my opinion about their travel itineraries. I believe it’s because they viewed this site as a really useful resource for traveling in southern Spain and they also assumed that this author must be familiar with information about southern Spain. I am glad I could make people around the world more interested in southern Spain and know more details from my site. It’s also an interesting experience to communicate with people all over the world by creating a travel site. That’s the result I hoped to get. It turns out that I did a good job. Some people even told me “This site reserves an award”.

I also got some helpful comments, such as it’s better to avoid the pop-up window in my website. Because some people view pop-up windows as dangerous stuff, when they hopped onto sites that need to turn off their pop-up blocker, they would probably skip those websites. It would decrease the population to my site. I think I will take it into consideration when I do other sites in the future.

Also, they suggested that I could put more indication on the inside pages to tell the users that they could use their mouse to click or drag to turn the page. Some users did not know they could click the menu on the content page and it would jump to the specific page directly on their first try. After they know how to use it, they think maybe it’s a good idea to let the users play with the book by themselves so that it’s more interesting. So at the end, I decided not to add more indication on the inside pages. After all, I’ve put indication on the cover page. I think it’s more fun for people to try on themselves.

Because it is a really big site, I gained the experience of breaking down a big project to small pieces and I’ve realized that when you take one task at a time, any big project could be mastered. I also know how to manage the time well, set work priority and organize well. I know I’ve grown up a lot through the past whole year. I know I deserve my Master’s degree.
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Appendix.

Travel in Southern Spain Feedback Survey:

By Yun-Ju Peng

Section A: Please select a degree between 1 to 5:
1- Strongly Disagree; 2- Disagree; 3- Neutral; 4- Agree; 5- Strongly Agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>20/20</th>
<th>18/20</th>
<th>16/20</th>
<th>20/20</th>
<th>15/20</th>
<th>14/20</th>
<th>20/20</th>
<th>15/20</th>
<th>17/20</th>
<th>16/20</th>
<th>15/20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q01: The text is easy to read and understand.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q02: I have no problem viewing this site.</td>
<td>2/20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18/20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q03: The buttons are easy to locate and use.</td>
<td>4/20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16/20</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q04: I know where to turn on/off the sound.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>20/20</td>
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<td>Q05: I have no difficulty locating pop-up windows.</td>
<td>5/20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>15/20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q06: I have no difficulty finding where to click.</td>
<td>5/20</td>
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<td>Q07: It is easy to explain and understand.</td>
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<td>Q08: I like the interface design.</td>
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<td>Q09: I like the colors.</td>
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<td>Q10: This site has great editorial design.</td>
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<td>Q11: The sound effects fit the subject matter.</td>
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<td>Q12: This site makes you more interested in Spain.</td>
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<td>Q13: The interactivity are very creative.</td>
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<td>Q14: I would recommend this site to my friends.</td>
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<td>Q15: We could have more similar sites in the future.</td>
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</table>
Section B. (Please circle all applicable answers)

Q16: Which part(s) of this site do you like the most?
   A. Graphics  B. Animation  C. Interactivity  D. Color  E. All

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graphics</th>
<th>Animation</th>
<th>Interactivity</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q17: Which part(s) should be improved? And why?
   A. Graphics
   B. Animation
   C. Interactivity
   D. Color
   E. All

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graphics</th>
<th>Animation</th>
<th>Interactivity</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>All</th>
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<td>0/20</td>
<td>2/20</td>
<td>5/20</td>
<td>0/20</td>
<td>0/20</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Some people think I need to make some parts of the interactivities more intuitive. Some people just not selecting anything.

Q18: Which subject do you like the most?
   A. History
   B. Architecture
   C. Food – Tapas
   D. Culture – Flamenco
   E. Diary – My stories
   F. Useful Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History</th>
<th>Architecture</th>
<th>Tapas</th>
<th>Flamenco</th>
<th>Diary</th>
<th>Useful Info</th>
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</thead>
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<td>1/20</td>
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<td>8/20</td>
<td>8/20</td>
<td>1/20</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q19: Which interactivity do you like the most?
A. Round Moving Navigation in history and architecture page  
B. Page Flipping  
C. Moving Circles for Recipe  
D. Up and Down strips for Flamenco  
E. Window Effect in Diary part

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Round Nav</th>
<th>Page Flip</th>
<th>Move Circle</th>
<th>Up/Down Strip</th>
<th>Window Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q20: Other Feedback and Comments?

Most of the people recommended to me that it is better to have more indication on how to use the page flipping in the inside pages. They found out although they know how to do it on the first page, they still need more indication for the inside pages. Since most of the users are not expert for interactive websites, so I would add more indication in the future.