

Building a Multi-Purpose Mental Health Website for College Students

J.P. Blasi

Introduction

This research report was conducted as an assignment for my Advanced Professional & Technical writing course. I conducted my report on mental health resources in students, with my focus mainly on collegiate students (though other data including student-athletes is presented).

Why I Chose Mental Health

Mental health is an increasingly important topic in today's world, and my personal struggles with anxiety and depression were a motivating factor to pursue this topic. Additionally, I also chose this topic based on an article written back in early 2018 by NBA star Kevin Love. Love, using a website modeled for athletes to write op-ed pieces called "The Players' Tribune", opened up about his panic attacks and mental health issues. This in turn has inspired me to create resources for others to benefit from being open about mental health.

Objectives

The objective of the assignment was to research the state of online mental health resources, and to dissect 15 unique websites or web pages on said topic that provided me with both quantitative and qualitative data. In analyzing these sites, missing information was recorded that would help shape my site. From here, a website would be built that is unique from other mental health resources online.

Preliminary Research and Results

Rhetorical Research

For the assignment, rhetorical research of 15 unique websites was done. In visiting each site, different questions needed to be answered:

- What search terms did you use and how high was this website in your search results?
- Who is the audience for this website?
- What colors are used?
- Are there advertisements present?

Results

- In site design research, color schemes were analyzed. As presented in **Figure 1**, the top two colors were blue (11/15 sites) and white (9/15 sites). In researching, lighter shades of purple were also found to evoke calm and soothing emotions.
- Both qualitative & quantitative data in this research indicated that mental health websites often used advertisements or pop-ups too frequently, distracting users from the information. As shown in **Figure 2**, 6/15 sites used ads.

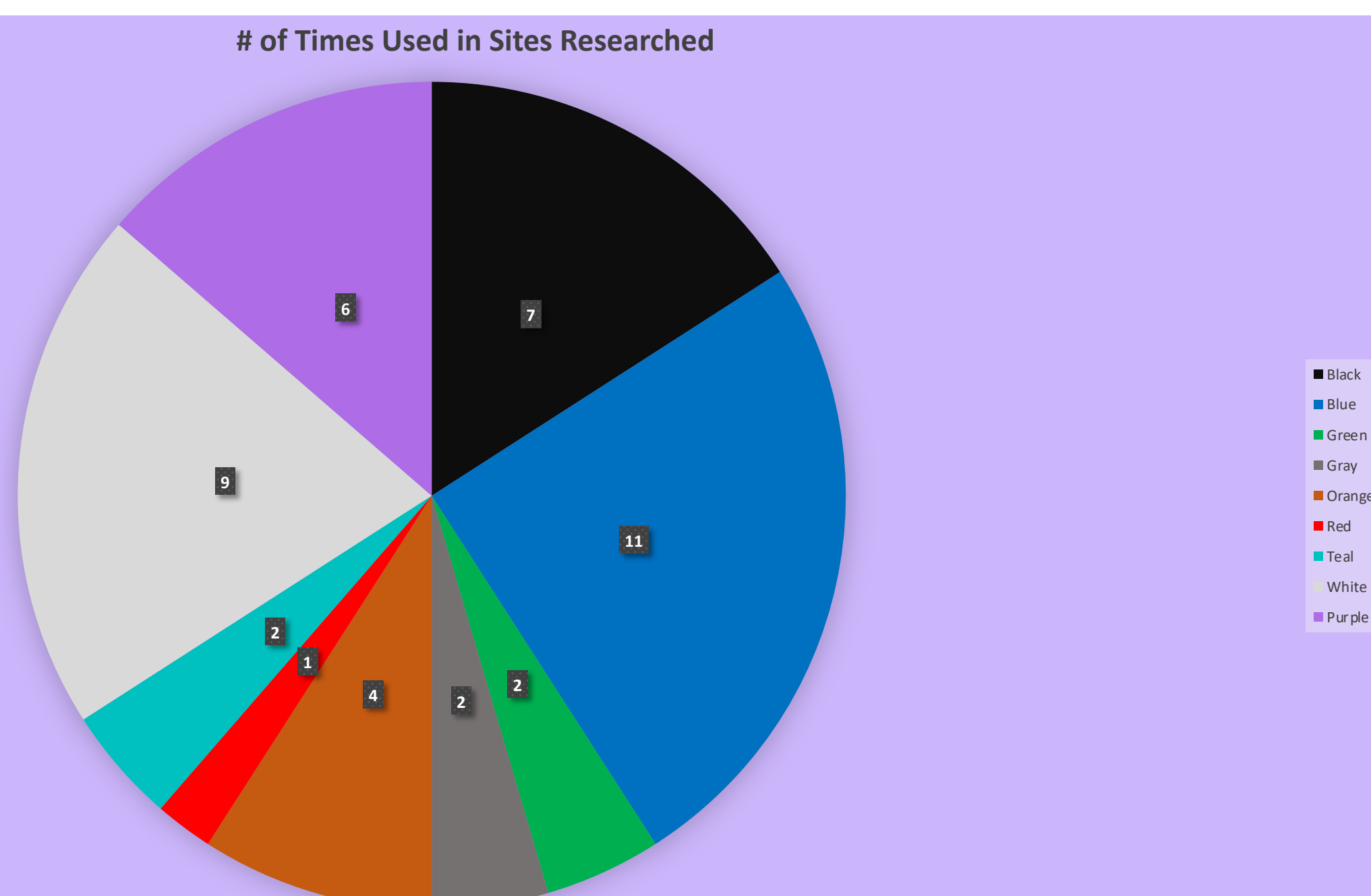


Figure 1: Pie chart represents the # of times specific colors were used on mental health websites

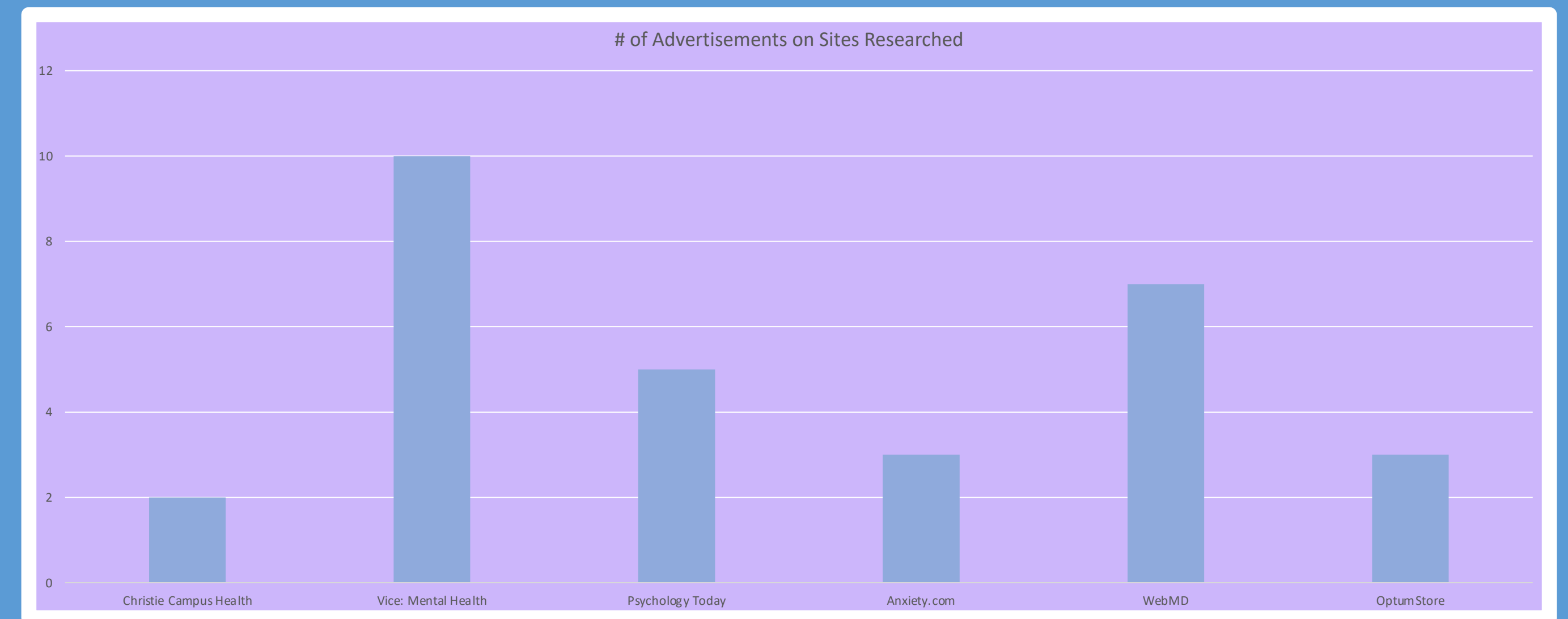


Figure 2: # of advertisements that were used on home page of mental health sites researched

Research and Production for Design

After completing research on other websites, it was time to implement the findings into my own. Based on my findings, I decided I would:

- Not feature advertisements on my site. The best sites in research were not monetized, and it sends the wrong message when working with mental health
- Use a blue, white, and purple color scheme. These colors appeared most frequently in research
- Feature stories and videos of celebrities and public figures discussing mental health. If Love's video had such an impact on myself, I felt as though other stories from notable figures would inspire others to take care of their mental well-being.
- Include a tab that allows those in need to determine what type of therapy/care they need. "Psychology Today" was important to include, as it connects patients to local providers based on their specific needs.



Figure 3: Site design of my mental health website "BrainLove"

Conclusions

- In my research, the most important aspect that remained consistent was that mental health resources with personal stories and blogs were most effective because it allows the user to develop connections with others in similar positions.
- Advertisements distracted users from the source material. Websites free of ads presented stronger focus & scientific research on mental illness.
- More than half the websites researched did NOT feature a direct link to mental health providers. It was important in creating my site for this feature to be a focal point.



BrainLove

