

The Pioneer Woman

Website UX Analysis & Recommendations

Prepared March 30, 2015 by Voce Platforms



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Heatmap Analysis

*Mouse movement heatmaps, Click heatmaps and
Scrollmaps*

Definitions

Mouse Movement Heatmaps:

The heatmaps show hotter colors in areas that cursors spend more time. Independent research shows that there is an 84% to 88% correlation between mouse and eye movements. This is insightful as it allows us to see, based off mouse movements, what the users are looking at and are drawn to.

Click Heatmaps:

Click heatmaps show heat on areas that are clicked by users. These types of heatmaps are beneficial as you can see where exactly users are clicking and not just what they click. For instance, if there is heat on an item that isn't a link then that shows that it would be beneficial to make it a link since users try to use it as one.

Scrollmaps:

Scrollmaps allow us to see the scroll reach or how far down most visitors are scrolling down a page or abandoning. This allows us to see the true "fold" of a page which typically varies based off the type of content and purpose of the page.

Header

Mouse Movement:

Navigation is a prime focus area as users are actively engaging with the navigation to find content that interests them.



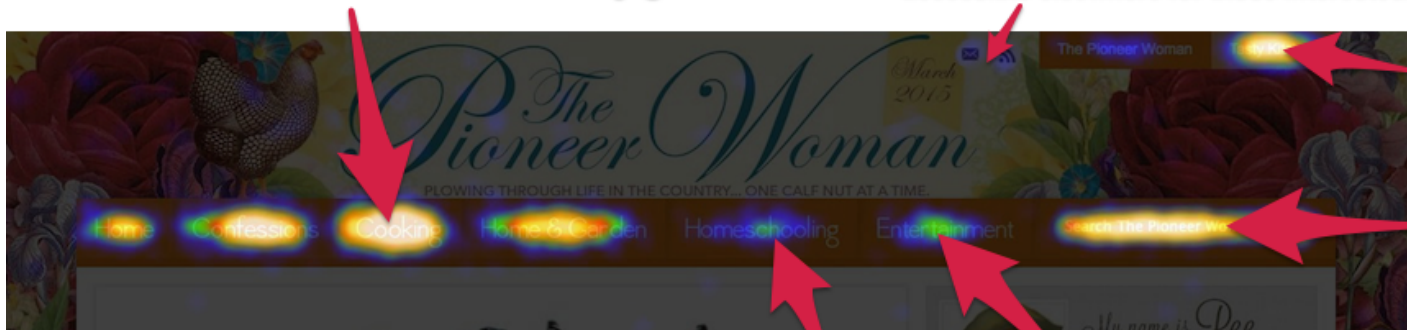
Users are noticing the "Tasty Kitchen" link easily showing good placement.

Search is an area of interest as well.

Clicks:

"Cooking" is the most popular section with 10.2% of clicks on the homepage.

Subscription options don't get much interaction. Maybe these should be relocated out of this prime spot, but still make them accessible elsewhere for those interested.



"Tasty Kitchen" link is 2.4% of clicks on homepage.

Search is very actively used. 6.4% of clicks on homepage.

"Homeschooling" and "Entertainment" sections don't get as much traffic.

Sub-navigation Mouse Movement:

Current usage of horizontal navigation for primary and secondary navigation is working currently. Further evidence of this can be seen through the remainder of the heatmap analysis.



Believe this "heat" is from interaction with "Family" tertiary navigation drop down showing that users do use those drop downs to navigate.

Homepage

Mouse Movement:

As pointed out in header analysis: The primary navigation is actively read and interacted with as users use it to drill down into the website.

Main focus of attention is the carousel. Particularly the post title and icon based slide navigation.

Beyond the carousel and recent posts shows diminished reading.

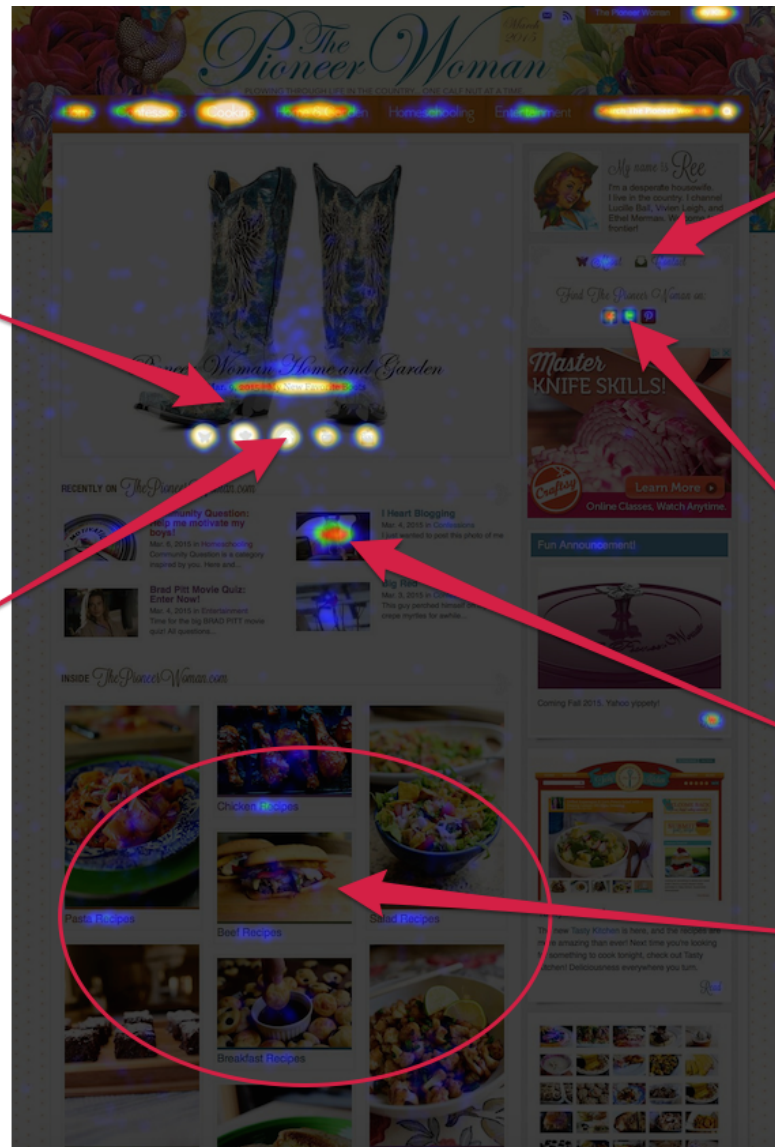


Note that the banner area has a distinct lack of mouse movement indicating that users don't look here or purposely avoid banner interaction. This trend is seen throughout the right column sitewide. Reference the "Right Column" analysis for more details.

Clicks:

Not only are users looking at and reading the carousel they are also interacting with it heavily.

The "Home & Garden" slide navigation icon gets 8.1% of all homepage clicks. In almost all cases the "Cooking" section gets most clicks, so I think there may be some confusion as to what this icon is since the "home" icon usually means "main" or "homepage".



Not many clicks on "About" or "Contact". I think these primary pages are hidden here in the column. I recommend relocating them to the header in some way.

Some interaction with the social network icons, but they could definitely benefit from a more prominent location like the header.

Noticed users like clicking on photos, so we'll want to make sure the images remain clickable in the redesign.

Not a lot of clicking in this section.

Scrollmap:



Most users spend their time at the top of the home page.

25% of users scroll past this point. This shows that most users land on the homepage and immediately start drilling down into content via the carousel, primary navigation and the search. Need to find a way to make homepage content more compelling with other ways to find latest and featured content.

Footer Clicks:

11% of users do make it down to the footer and interact with the links there.

Social network links would benefit from icon usage for easier recognition. I recommend having primary social networks in the header and repeated in the footer for easy access.

Cowboy Food!

PW Links

- Pioneer Woman
- Mag. Prizes and Giveaways
- Details on the FN Show
- Pioneer Woman Photography!
- PW on Facebook
- PW on Food Network
- PW on Land O' Lakes!
- PW on Pinterest
- PW on Twitter
- Tasty Kitchen!
- Ten Important Things I've Learned About Blogging

GREAT Sites

- The Little Kitchen
- Three Many Cooks
- Add a Pinch
- Wendyly
- Tori Avey
- Bake at 350
- Tasty Kitchen Blog!
- Big Mama
- She Wears Many Hats
- Foodie With Family
- Recipe Girl
- Picky Palate
- Fifteen Spatulas
- Two Peas and Their Pod
- A Spicy Perspective
- A Farmgirl's Dabbles
- Reluctant Entertainer

PW Cookbooks

REE DRUMMOND
Pioneer Woman Cooks
A YEAR OF HOLIDAYS

I love writing cookbooks, and I pour my heart and soul into each and every one! They're full of my very favorite recipes, photos of life on the ranch, and lots and lots of love.

OTHER Books

He's sleepy. He's lazy. His ears hang in his food. He's Charlie the Ranch Dog and he's the subject of my series of children's books. Yay, Charles!

There isn't much clicking on the cookbooks from the homepage.

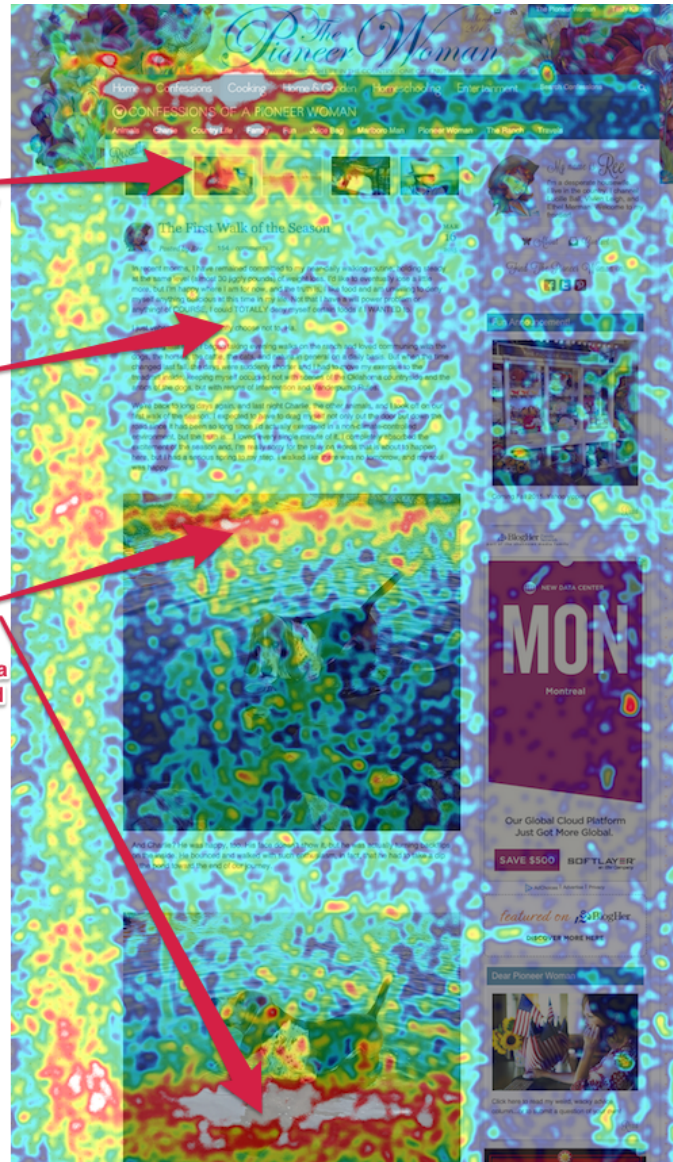
Category Landing

Mouse Movement:

Users are using "Recently" listing to navigate latest category postings.

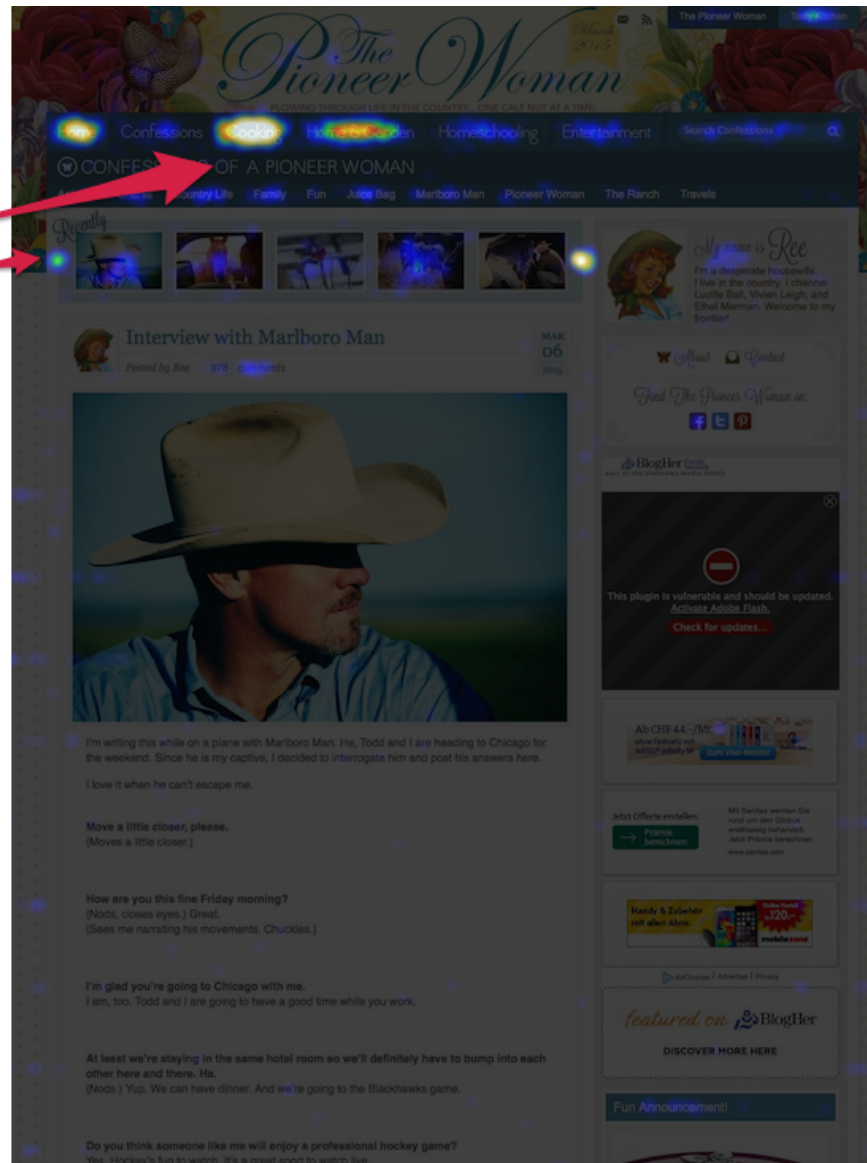
Users aren't reading posts much on the landing pages. (Note: Reference "Post detail" heat maps to see what reading looks like)

Users look to be scanning the content focused on images. This could mean they are looking for more of a listing of posts here and not full posts.



Clicks (Confessions):

Clicks are focused on the navigation and "Recently" listing as users try to find more content.



Clicks (Cooking):

The master recipe listing is one of the hottest links in the "Cooking" sub-navigation.



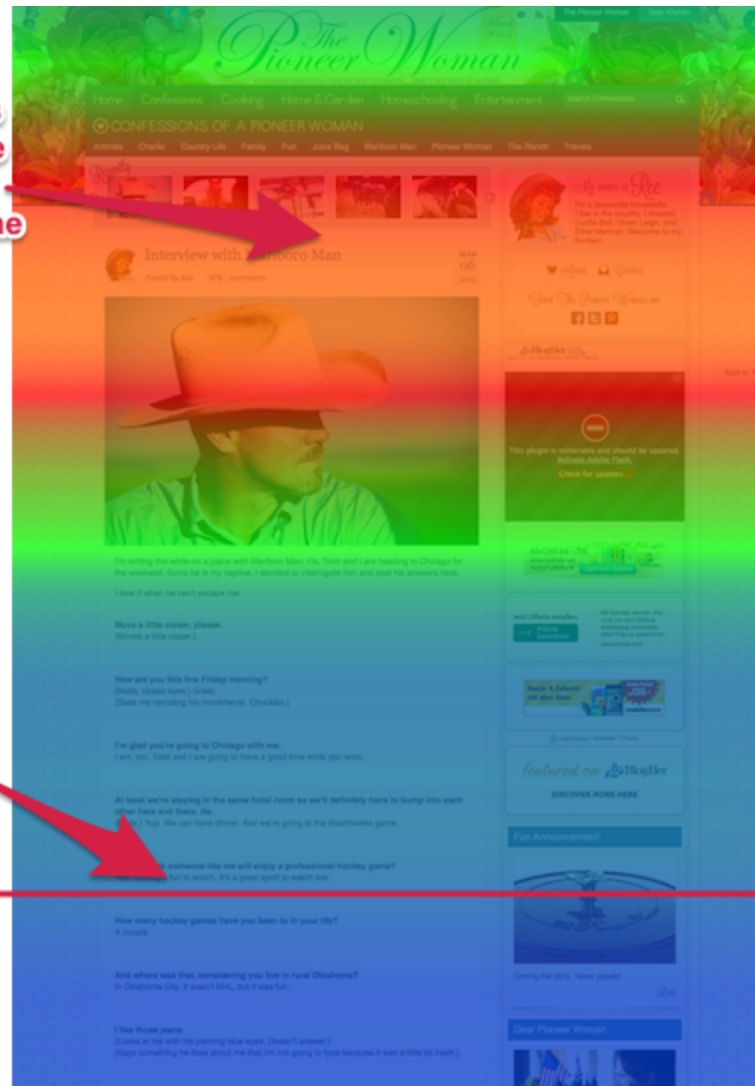
The "Cooking" section landing shows a lot of usage of the search. 10% of users are clicking on search.

Usage of "Back to top" is heavy, especially on longer pages. Important to keep this to allow the user quick access to the top of page no matter where they have scrolled to.

Scrollmap:

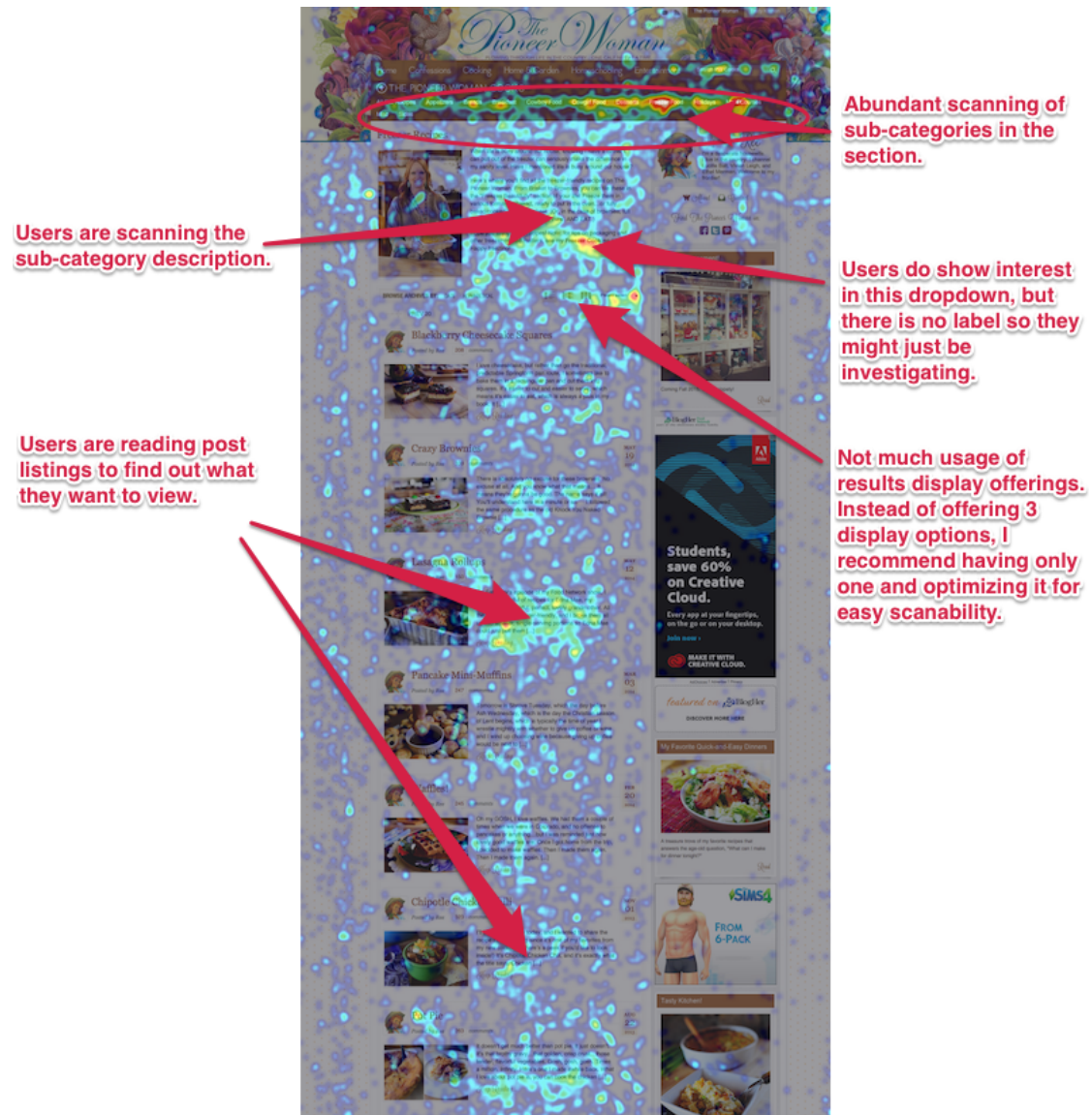
Scroll map also shows most users stick to the top of the page to navigate further into the website.

25% of users scroll beyond this point.

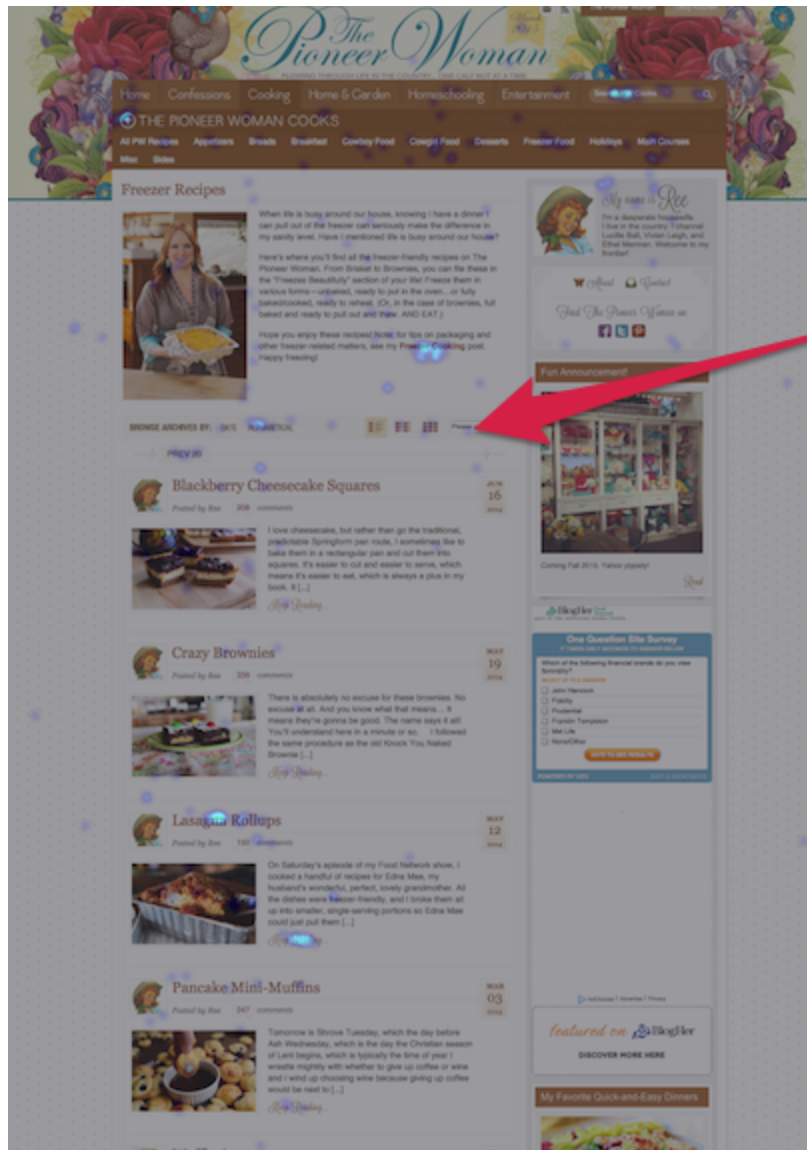


Sub-category Listing

Mouse Movement:



Clicks:

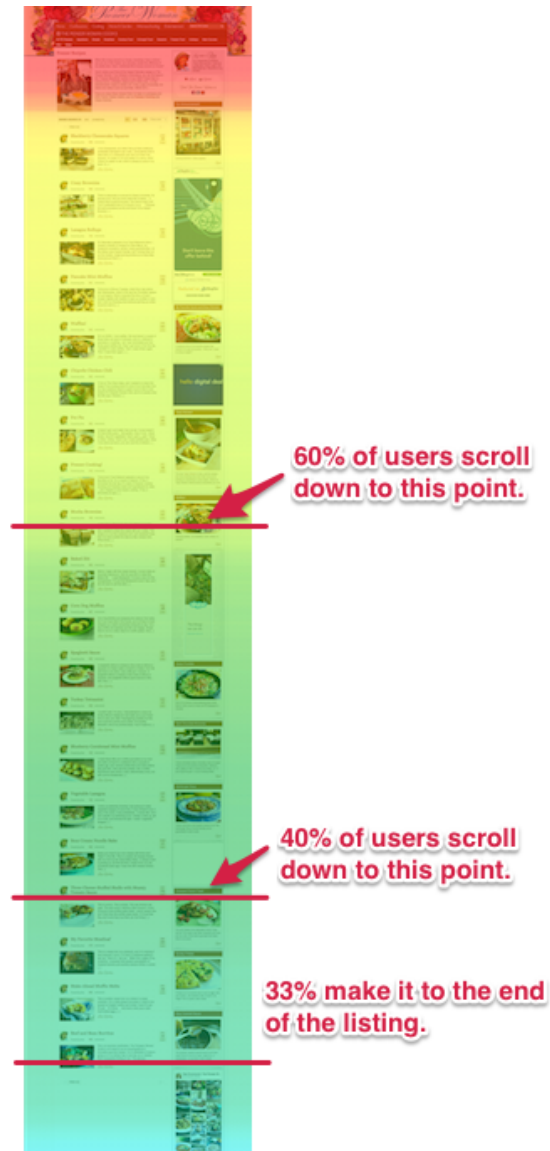


There was some hover interaction with the "Please Select" drop down but only a few clicks. This does confirm users were investigating but didn't increase the quantity of results. Of all filter options I think quantity of results per page is a good one to keep, but I would make the default lower than the current 20.

Scrollmap:

The category listings are long, recommend reducing quantity per page.

Also recommend introduction of traditional pagination to navigate the listings or possible an infinite load.



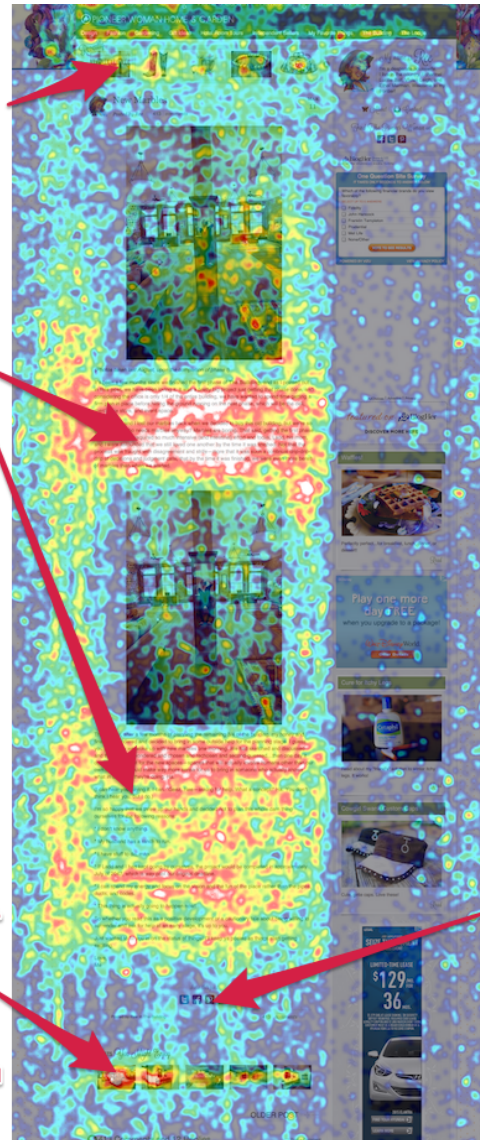
Post Detail

Mouse Movement:

"Recently" post listing shows interest as it does elsewhere, though I recommend it not being above the post content. Users could confuse this as being part of the actual post, as it does look like a gallery.

Users are engaged and reading the post content.

Even more interest in the "Other posts" listing. This is a better placement of other listings as you can display related content and encourage more engagement from the user after they have read the post they were interested in.

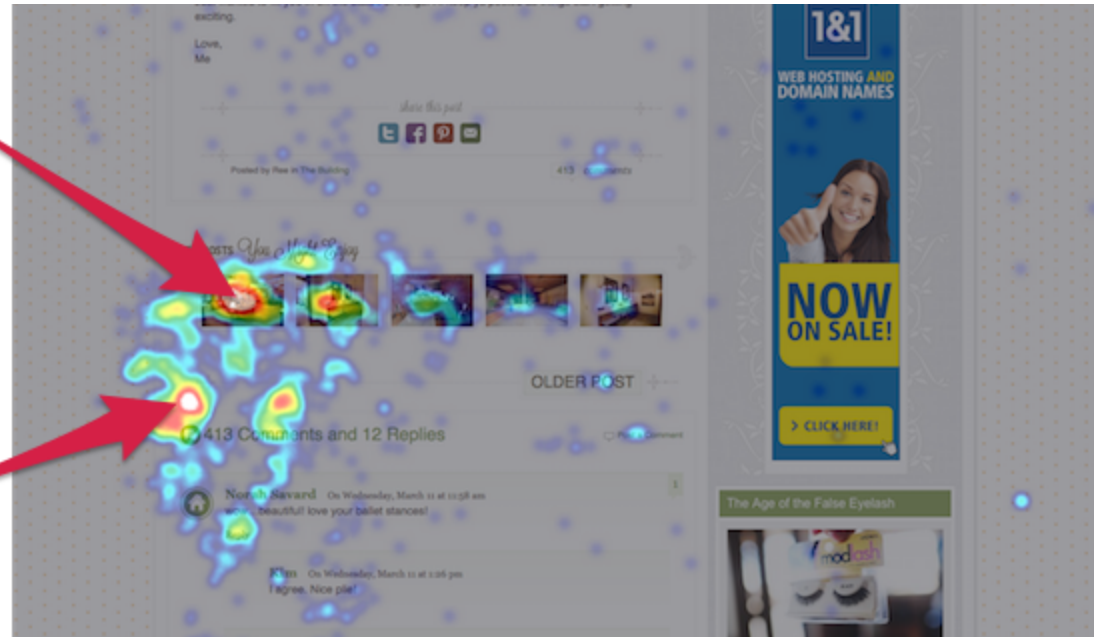


Little interest in social network sharing options. I recommend offering these sharing options above and below the post to provide easy access to those who want to use them. Alternatively we could have the social sharing buttons follow the user as they scroll.

Clicks:

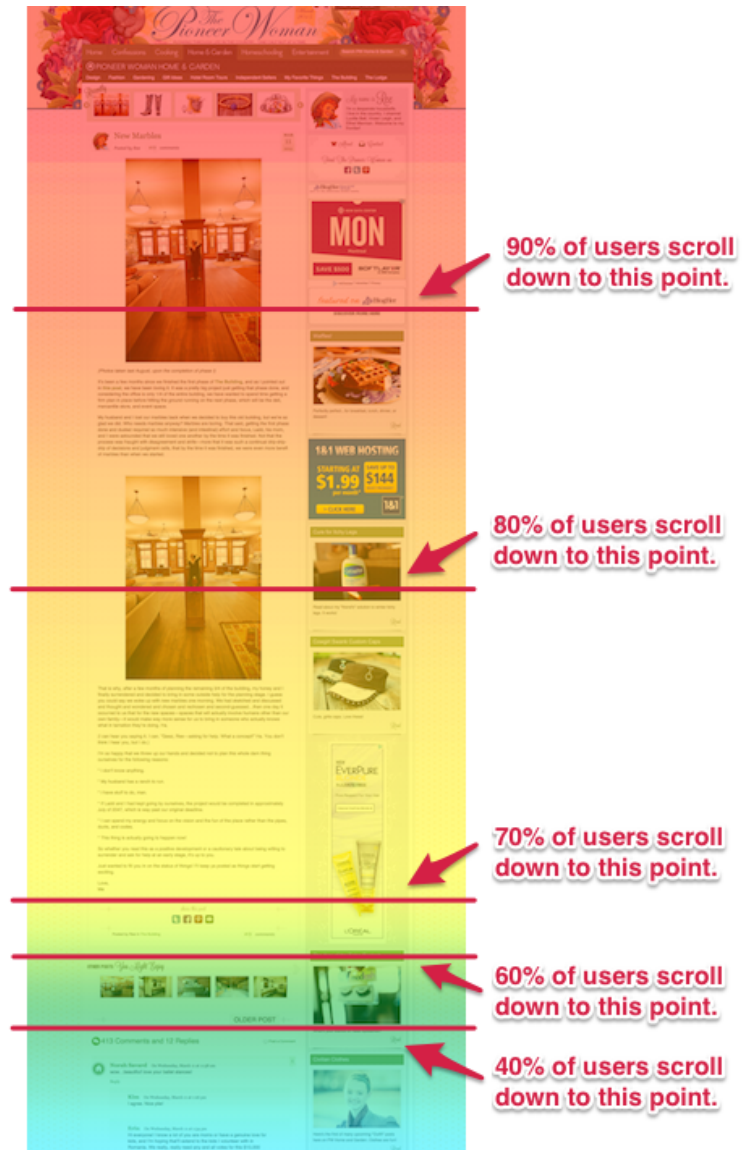
Users are clicking on the "Other posts" listings

Users are clicking on the "Newer Post" button showing they have interest in browser laterally through content.



Scrollmap:

Users are staying engaged and reading the entire post but the majority stop scrolling once they reach the end of the article content.



Search Results

Mouse Movement:

Again, heavy focus on the "Recently" post listing. Users may be confused and think these are part of the results.

Primary focus is on the first view listings. This may show that users are more interested in the latest postings when searching.

Lots of scanning as users scroll down the results listing.



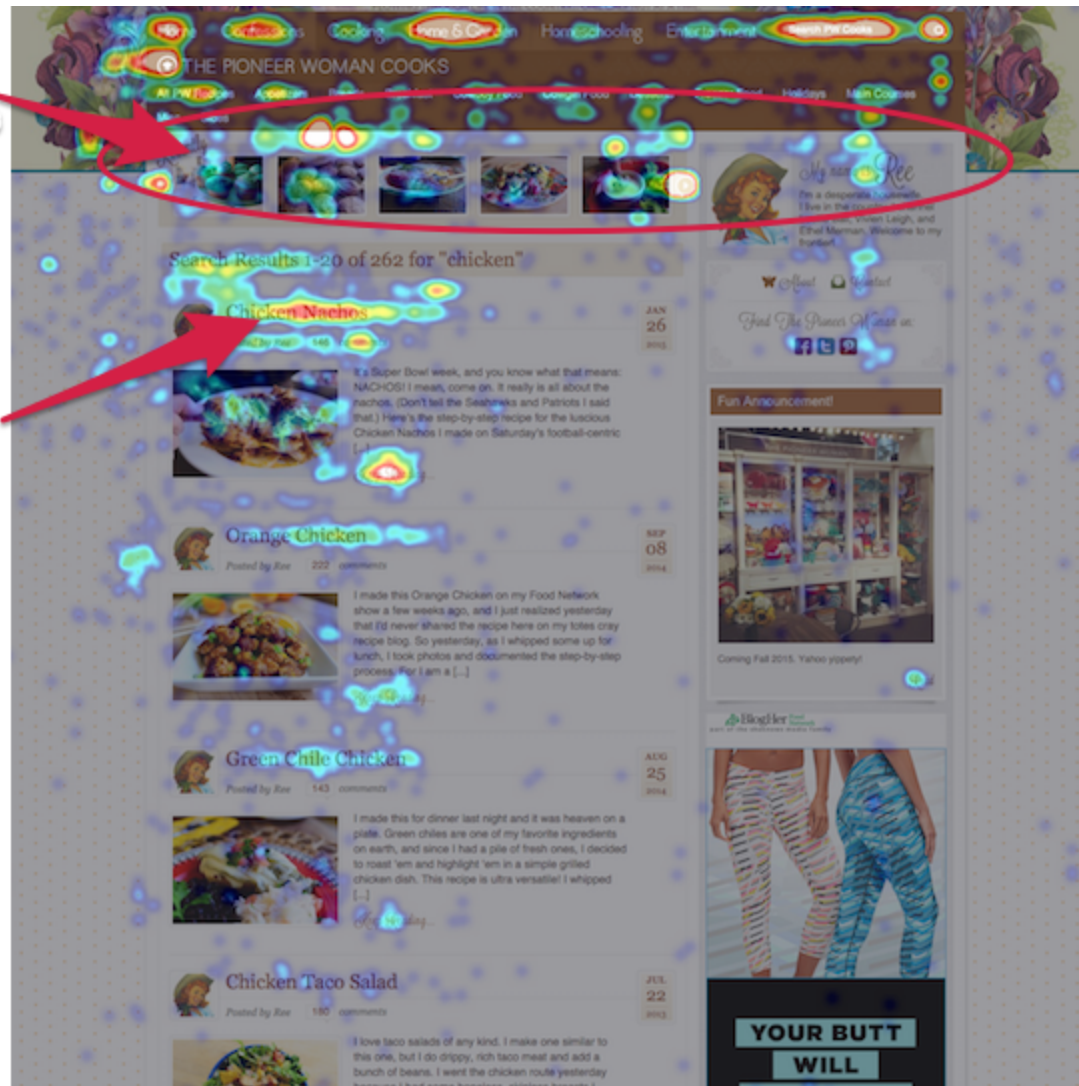
Users are engaging search to search new terms or refine the results.

This is a prime example of "heat" from users using the third tier navigation drop down.

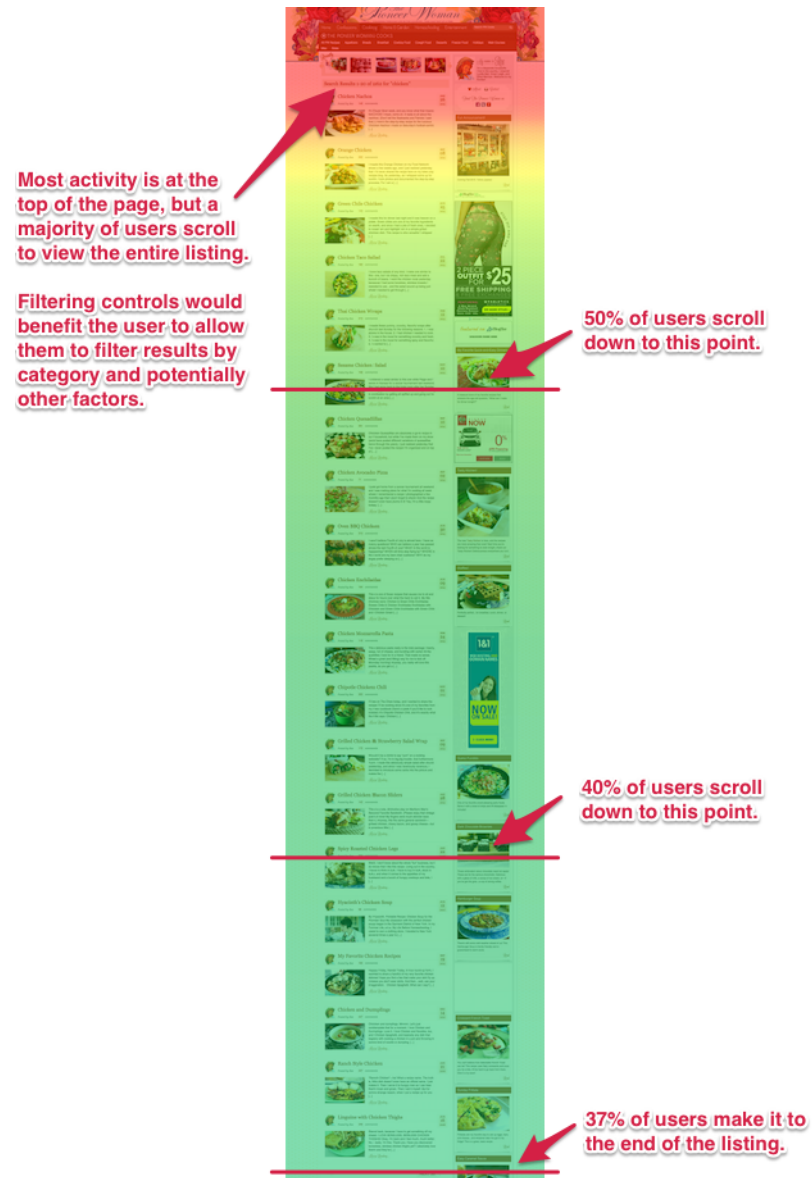
Clicks:

Lots of clicks on sub-navigation drop downs as users use the navigation system to find what they want.

Most clicks are on the latest postings.



Scrollmap:



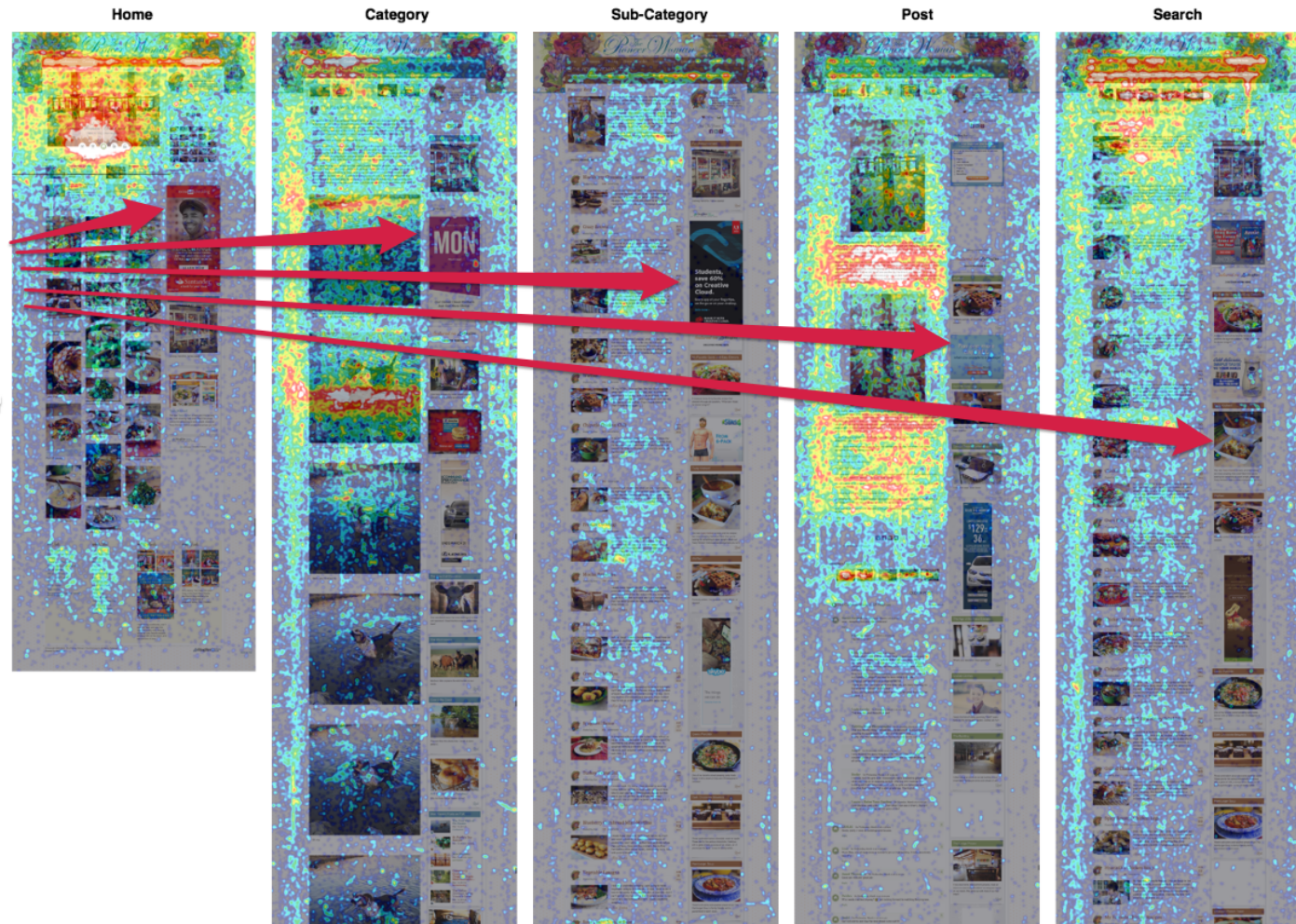
Right Column

Mouse Movement:

Reminder there is an 84%-88% correlation between cursor location and where the user is looking.

Notice cursors do not enter the right column indicating that users don't look here to find content.

I fear the introduction of a left column for sub-navigation may have similar issue.

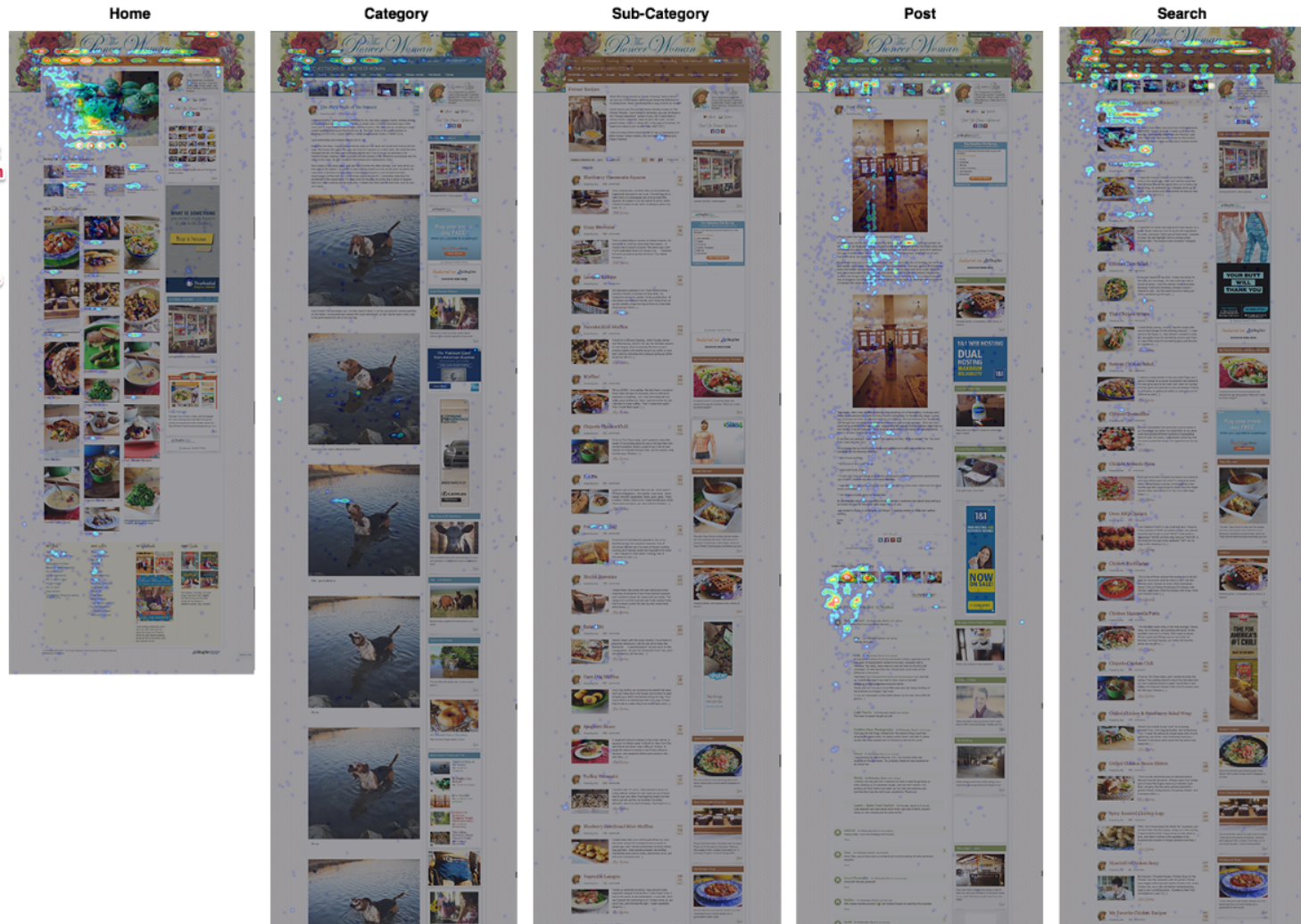


Clicks:

Overall the current right column is not good at encouraging engagement as people avoid looking in this area as seen in the mouse movement heat maps.

Cross promotional tactics with widgets is not working.

Banners are not seeing a lot of interaction.



Right Column Height:



The length of the right column is also too long specifically on sub-category pages.

Recommend reducing quantity of widgets, condensing widgets by making them mini carousels or adding tabs potentially.

We have other ideas of integrating ads and featuring content that will increase interaction and take them out of this blind zone.

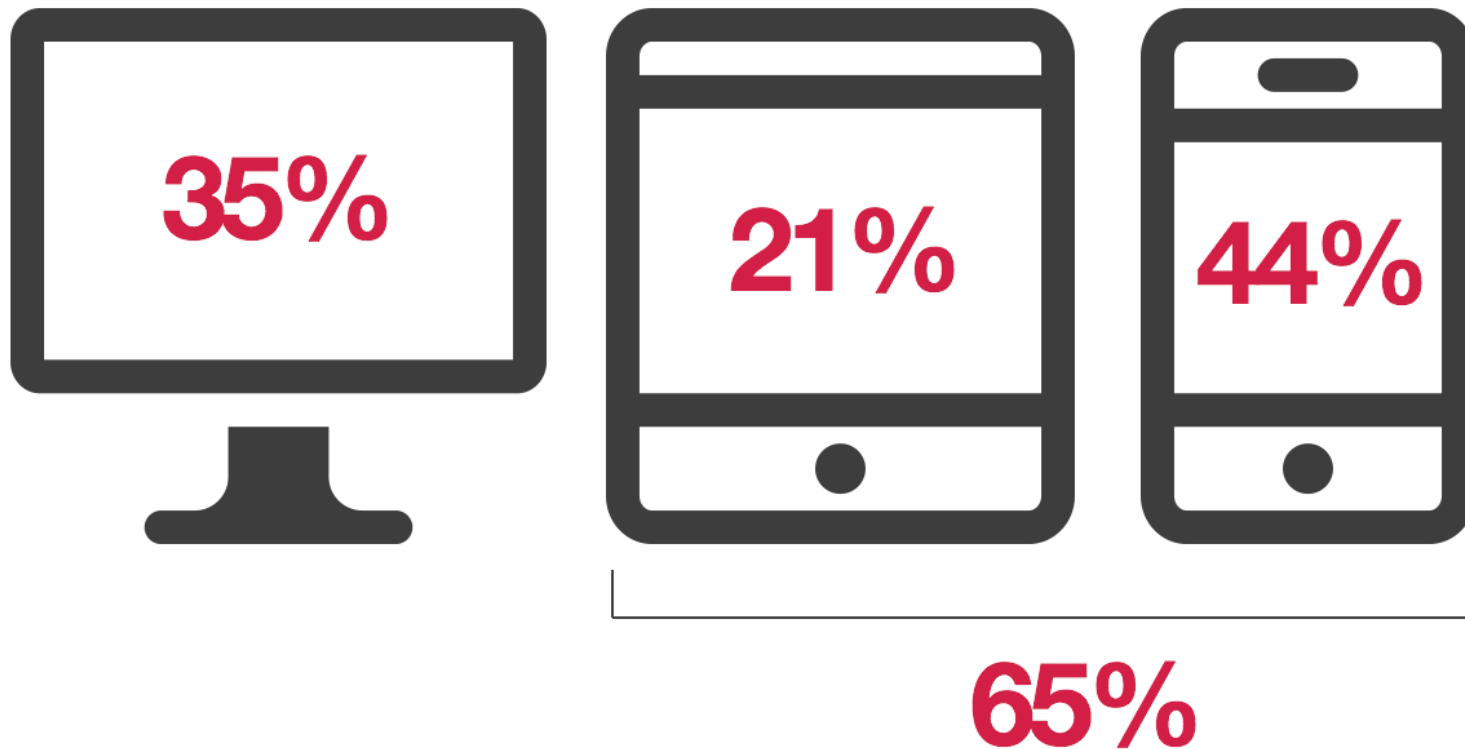
Obvious ways to reduce height would be to hide advertising areas that aren't being used.

General Analytics Insights

Key user experience takeaways looking through Google Analytics data.

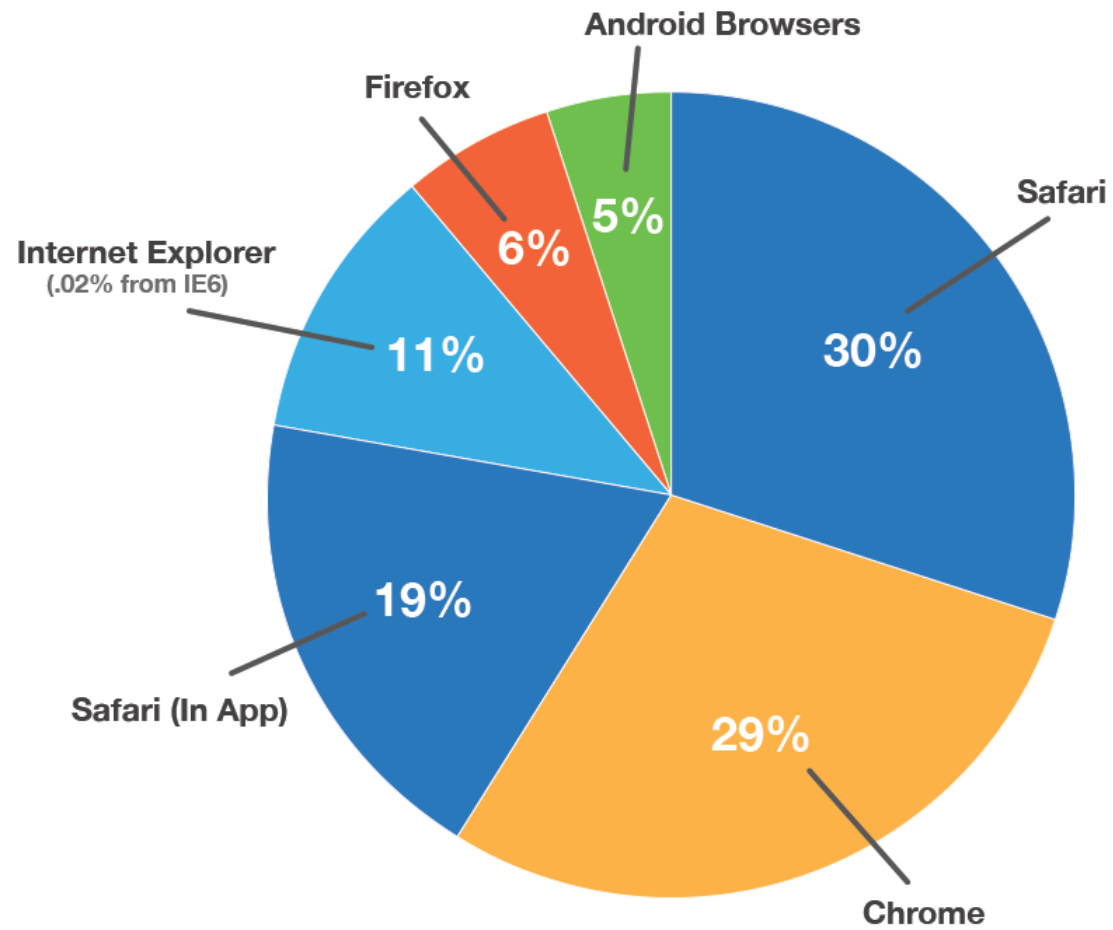
Users Are Mobile:

The majority (65%) of users are not at a computer while browsing the website. This is a trend starting several years back which gave rise to responsive websites. Your website has the highest mobile and tablet usage I have seen yet. It is very important that have a mobile first mentality for the redesign. This means we optimize and make the mobile and tablet experience a prime focus and not make it an afterthought.



Up To Date Users:

Desktop/Laptop users are up to date using modern browsers and using the latest versions. This allows us to take full advantage of the latest web interaction techniques without major concern of backward compatibility.



Bounce Rates Are Average:

Key pages (category and sub-category pages) are on par with an average bounce rate which is 49%. Some pages like the homepage have a 27% bounce rate which is considered excellent. This shows users that land on the homepage are engaged and dig deeper into the website. There are tactics we can use to improve bounce rates even more, like the use of “sticky” headers allowing users to quickly access the navigation wherever they are on the page. This would especially be helpful on mobile and tablet devices as the bounce rates are slightly higher on them. Other tactics include condensing listings and optimizing placement of prime content so that users find what they want fast.

Repeat Visitors:

Over half of visitors are returning visitors (55.9%). You also have a healthy amount of new visitors too which shows you are doing well driving traffic to your website.

Wide Resolutions Low Overall:

Wider browser resolutions do not make up a huge percentage of the userbase. This isn't surprising given that most are mobile and tablet users. Currently 31% of users are over 1200 pixels wide, so 89% desktop users have that resolution or higher (this is high for desktop users). This data in conjunction with the column blindness we are seeing with the mouse movement heatmaps indicates that adding a third column on the left isn't the best route to go for navigation. Instead we should focus on a navigation system that is optimized for mobile and tablet devices but also works well for desktop. This insures a great navigational experience for all users.

Analysis Summary

*Key insights from user experience discovery
and analysis*

General (Header and Footer):

- Current navigation system is actively read and interacted with, including the 2nd and 3rd level navigation. Shows the current navigation system is working, but could benefit from improvements and augmentation.
- Users are heavily using search, especially on the homepage and “Cooking” section.
- Users are finding the “Tasty Kitchen” link and using it, so it has an effective placement.
- Subscription buttons do not get much interaction. Could be getting lost or possibly low interest.
- Footer links are being found, especially on shorter pages like the homepage. Users are also clicking these links.
- Little activity on the books within the footer.

Homepage:

- Carousel gets the majority of the users attention and users are interacting with it. Users are actively switching slides and clicking through to content.
- Most users do not scroll beyond the carousel and recent posts listing. This shows that users, once landing upon the homepage, are eager to dive into content.

Main sections (Category Landing):

- Most activity is in the header navigation as users are drilling down trying to find content that is of interest to them.
- Users do not scroll much on these pages.
- Users look to be scanning the blog posts focusing on imagery. We speculate that this shows that users are trying to find listings of content versus full blog posts.
- Users are using the “Recently” listing as a way to get to content quickly.

Sub-category Listing:

- Abundant scanning and interaction with navigation as the users sift through the website.
- Users do scan through the sub-category intro text, but aren't intensely reading it.
- Users are scanning post excerpts to find content they want to view.
- Not much usage of the listing display options. Recommend having only one display option and optimizing it to maximize it for scannability making it easier for users to find what they want to view.
- Users seem interested the results quantity drop down in the filter options, but don't interact with it much. This item is missing a label, so they may just be trying to figure out what it is.
- Users are scrolling far on these pages as they review the listings. This is a good sign, but results listings are too long.

Post Detail:

- "Recently" post listing grabbing a lot of attention, though I think this could be confusing the user that this is part of the posting as it does look like a gallery. Better to cross-promote content at the bottom of the blog article to allow the user to get to the relevant content faster.
- Users are very engaged reading content which is very good.
- Users are scrolling to the bottom of the blog posts. They drop off quickly at the end of the blog article.
- The "Other posts" listing gets more interaction below the blog article vs. above, this shows that this is where users prefer to interact with these offerings.
- Users are using the "Next Post" button to laterally move through posts.
- Currently little interest in social network sharing options. These could be getting lost.

Search:

- Navigation used pretty intensely as users find additional ways to find content outside of search results.

- Search is very active as user refine search terms or start new searches.
- Again, heavy focus on “Recently” listing. Users most likely think these are relevant to their search results. Not as much click through on these after they find they aren’t part of the results listing.
- Users focus on the initial results and this is where most click throughs happen though they are scrolling down the results scanning excerpts as they do on sub-category pages.

Right Column:

- Right columns are a dead zone as far as users looking at content there and interacting with them.
- Right columns are not a good place to cross-promote content or for ad placement.
- Right columns are too long, especially on sub-category pages.

General Analytics:

- 65% of users are using mobile and tablet devices.
- Most users are up to date using modern browsers and barely any are using old deprecated browsers like Internet Explorer 8.
- Bounce rates are average to excellent. The homepage has an excellent bounce rate and is good at driving users deeper into the website.
- Mobile bounce rates are a bit higher.
- Over half of users are repeat visitors, but healthy amount of new visitors as well. This shows that you are doing well at driving traffic to your website.
- Only 31% of users have a resolution of 1200 pixels or wider. This is due to the very high mobile and tablet usage.
- Due high mobile and tablet usage it is important to use a mobile first approach for the redesign. This means we focus to optimize the website for these devices and not make them secondary thoughts.

Recommendations

*User experience enhancements and
recommendations for the website redesign*

General:

- Content listings should fully utilize great photography in a larger format to increase user interaction.
- Find new way to feature the monthly imagery to give the website a fresh look but keep it true to its roots.
- Move away from color coded sections and keep section icons. Use icons prominently to show where content is from as visual indicators resonate well with users. Instead, we could potentially make the colors customizable on a global scale allowing you to tie into your monthly images or even holidays if you wish.
- Increase exposure of social networks by featuring them in multiple locations and using the social network icons so they are easily identifiable.
- Focus on improving typography to enhance the user experience.
- Utilize whitespace to make browsing and reading easy and pleasurable.
- Retreatment of “Recently” listing at the top of categories and post pages, as this looks to be confusing for users in its current format.
- Keep “Back to top” button as this is a helpful quick link back to the top of the page.

Right Column:

- Relocate majority of content from right column and thus reduce height of overall right column.
- Feature content in other ways to cross-promote more effectively.
- Integrate ads in other areas to increase interaction.
- Potentially use sticky ads that stop scrolling on desktop for more visibility.

Navigation:

- General goal: Adding auxiliary navigation providing users with multiple ways to navigate the website.
- Sticky header, which means the header remains in place as you scroll. This allows quick access to the menu no matter where you are on the page and decreases bounce rates especially on mobile.

- Optimized mobile and tablet navigation via the use of an off-canvas menu.
 - Includes:
 - Primary, second level and potentially third level navigation.
 - Utility links
 - Social navigation
 - Potentially includes: Mini bio and other important links
 - For desktop: Keep the off-canvas menu for uniformity while also providing more traditional methods of navigation (horizontal primary navigation in header, etc).
- Introduction of breadcrumb navigation. In addition to providing an alternate means to navigate up the hierarchy, these links also ground the user and indicate where they are within the website.
- Recommend keeping some form of navigation in the header for desktop users due to the fact that they are effectively using the current header navigation system. Instead of horizontal menus used for 2nd level navigation we could use a drop down mega menu that would make drilling down to sub-categories more streamlined.
- Based off the evidence that users are column blind and that only 31% of users have a 1200 pixel or more width available in resolution, I don't recommend the addition of a third column on the left for sub-navigation. The proposed off-canvas/drawer menu will act as a user activated third column allowing quick access to navigation and other content while anywhere on the website. Using the off-canvas menu instead of a third column will also prevent us from sacrificing space from the other content as well.
- Make "About" and "Contact" easier to find by moving into header. Currently these are getting lost in the right column.
- Ability for you to manually organize the order for navigation. Currently it is alphabetized for 2nd and 3rd level navigation. This would give you the ability to order sections by importance.

Homepage:

- Keep the carousel, but improve upon it to increase its effectiveness.
 - Take full advantage of great photography by making it full width and taller for more prominent presence.
 - Have each slide dedicated to the sections/categories you'd like to feature as it is now, but include more

than one post (potentially 4 posts or more per slide).

- Have the ability to have multiple sections below the carousel devoted listing content. Listing options could be themed based, category based, based on popularity or even manually curated creating a gallery of posts.
 - Themed based listings would be powered by the use of tags. You would tag content by “virtual categorization” outside of physical hierarchical categorization. This allows you to relate content based on these themes.
 - You can control at any given time how many and what sections are present on the homepage via the backend admin.
 - No manual curation needed (for themed, category or popularity based listing) within the sections as the content would surface on its own keeping the homepage fresh and not stale automatically.
- Relocate books from footer to a listing on the homepage.

Categories:

- Feature posts prominently at the top in some way on the category landing. These could be featured based on age, popularity or we could introduce a way for you to manually feature posts here. This is just one way of featuring content outside the right column that would provide increased visibility.
- Find a new location more inline with content to display ads for increased visibility and interaction. Do it in a smart way that isn't annoying or intrusive to the user.
- Recommend listing of posts and not display full posts to allow users to find the content that interests them.
- Treat sub-categories as filters at least visually on the website. This would allow users to fine tune the listings to find what they are looking for.
- Remove the ability for users to choose listing style as this isn't being used currently.
- Fine tune listing style so they are optimized for space, feature the photography prominently and are easy to scan.
- Introduce either pagination or the ability to “load more” results versus using “Older” and “Newer” buttons.

Posts:

- Featuring a feed above post content in a way that doesn't look like it is part of the post.
 - Feed could be carousel based so users can change categories or maybe change between latest to popular posts within the category they are in.
 - Ability to expand feed to see more items in the feed.
 - Potentially display ads in the feed to increase exposure.
- Introduce additional formatting options to enhance posts and help keep post length reasonable.
 - Large blockquotes: Used to highlight quotes from the post copy and make them stand out.
 - Side stories: Have a independently scrollable area next to a particular photo allowing you to tell a story about that photo without making the page longer.
 - Galleries (with full screen mode): Many posts are long due to the quantity of photos. Could display photos in a gallery with captions. Users could navigate through the gallery viewing each photo and following the story with captions. The gallery would have a full screen mode so the user could enjoy the great photos in a larger format.
- Enhanced commenting system.
 - Options:
 - Inline/side comments: Ability for users to add comments next to paragraphs in the article so there is context for the comment. (Like seen on Medium)
 - Disqus: A third party commenting system that is very robust.
 - Has the ability to cross promote other content on your site by active discussions.
 - Users can “star” discussions and they will get emailed a digest with comment activity drawing them back into the website.
 - Users can promote and demote comments so that popular comments surface to the top.
 - Powerful moderation.
 - Automatically responsive, so it works well on mobile and tablet out of the box.
- More prevalent social sharing options. Display at top and bottom of posts for easy access.
- Enhanced “Next” and “Previous” post buttons. Display titles so user knows what articles are about.

- Enhancing the “Related” post listing below the blog post to encourage other cross-promotional engagement. (larger photo, titles present without hover, etc)

Search:

- Introduce the ability to filter content by category and even other factors as well.
- Format search listing the same as category listings for consistency.

Giveaways:

- Due to quantity of entries, find alternate ways for users to enter versus using commenting system.
- Potentially use a third party service to manage giveaways.
 - Options:
 - Rafflecopter: <http://www.rafflecopter.com>
 - PromoSimple: <https://promosimple.com/>
 - Could still include comments on the post where you have the contest entry widget. Just direct users to the widget to enter, but they can still engage and comment via commenting system.
 - Make it much easier to manage the giveaways and choose a winner.
 - Users have the potential to enter multiple times by sharing the giveaway on social networks, thus promoting your website and driving more traffic to it.