SUBTLETIES ON THE WEB – Part 1

Internet users are being exposed to subtle changes on the websites we visit. Since the late 1990s, website design and functionality have evolved in tandem with new tools, new gadgets and consumer demand. Looking back to the first sites we ever visited, we see some dramatic and innovative changes. With the advent and popularity of 3D, smartphones, tablets, and increased user knowledge levels has also come back-of-the-house change in the way websites are presented. For now, here are some things you'll be seeing more of:

1. **Headers**: With screen sizes becoming smaller (mobile devices) and larger (monitors), designers know the importance of putting site headers to good use. This is the first impression of the site so more companies are using that top section of their page to make special offers, promotions, calls to action. You could liken it to giant signage in a retail store when important Sales or events occur.

2. **Single page**: Since touchscreens, smartphone apps, etc. are ever-increasing in popularity, sites need to get their information out in a quicker way so you will find more single page rather than long, endlessly scrolling ones. User interaction is major in making sites more user friendly. Like it or not, internet users want their information quickly and to-the-point. The age of a website can often be discerned by the way its content is presented.

3. **Quick Response (QR):**

Those funky abstract squares that are appearing more often in commercials, advertising and print media are rapidly gaining popularity. These barcodes can be used to quickly link to a website, a phone number, or contact information. Once again, information today needs to be accessed instantly and easily from any device.

4. **Fixed-position Navigation:**

One of the most frustrating things on a site is difficulty in finding menus and navigating thru the pages. In the past, classic menus were either straight across the top of the page or along the left or right margins. Website owners know that keeping the surfing community on their site for a long time is vital to their success so the inability to find your way around the site is a definite no-no. Fixed-point navigation means that key information, such as menus, is visible at all times and simply provides links to vital pages. Life becomes easier on mobile devices and the user can access what they need simply and quickly. Period.

5. **Circular Shapes**

Updated coding systems has helped designers by the use of circular shapes as icons, "windows," image holders and so on where in the past square and rectangular shapes were the norm. Granted this is not a necessity for everyone but in some cases, from a design perspective and aesthetic, it can be a good option for navigation links, footer icons, or focusing on important works. Think of it as a round, rather than square, frame on a piece of artwork.

There is much more to tell you but it has to wait until the next issue which will be on graphics, vector art, and design layout.