



**MA Web Design and Content Planning (24/25)**

## **Major Project**

### **Mauritius Bites**

[mauritiusbites.com](http://mauritiusbites.com)

*'The culinary exploration of Mauritius'*



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## II. Abstract

This project involved the creation of *Mauritius Bites*, a website designed to showcase local eateries across Mauritius. The primary purpose of the website is to provide both tourists and locals with a platform to discover and rediscover the island's culinary offerings, including hidden or lesser-known food spots that are often overlooked in mainstream travel guides. By highlighting these local establishments, the project aims to celebrate Mauritian food culture and promote small businesses, while also enhancing the gastronomic experience of visitors and residents alike.

The website was developed using WordPress as the content management system, with PHP employed for theming and customisation. The design approach focused on creating an easy-to-navigate, visually engaging platform that allows users to explore eateries based on location, cuisine type, and popularity. Content for the website was sourced from personal photography, contributions from friends and family, and collaboration with local influencers, ensuring an authentic and diverse representation of the island's food scene.

Promotion of *Mauritius Bites* was carried out through social media, particularly Instagram, and word-of-mouth strategies, which helped generate early engagement and traffic. The outcomes of the project include a functional, fully built website, an initial audience reach, and positive user feedback highlighting the value of discovering local culinary spots.

Looking forward, the project aims to expand by adding all eateries across Mauritius, further enriching the platform and solidifying it as a comprehensive culinary guide for both tourists and residents.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Project Overview

*Mauritius Bites* is a web platform designed to showcase the authentic foods of Mauritius while offering users an opportunity to explore the scenic beauty of the island. Unlike generic food guides or commercial tourism websites, *Mauritius Bites* focuses specifically on local eateries, providing visibility to smaller

establishments that are often overlooked by tourists. The platform seeks to highlight the diversity of Mauritian cuisine, from traditional street food to family-run restaurants, allowing both locals and visitors to experience the cultural richness of the island through its culinary offerings.

The significance of the project lies in its potential to support local businesses and ensure that the economic benefits of tourism are more equitably distributed. In Mauritius, the tourism sector is a major contributor to the national economy, yet much of the profit is concentrated among large hotels and international chains. By providing exposure to smaller, authentic eateries, *Mauritius Bites* creates opportunities for these businesses to thrive, giving them recognition for selling true Mauritian cuisine. Additionally, the website promotes cultural tourism by encouraging users to explore unique dining locations that are often accompanied by scenic views, blending the culinary experience with the island's natural attractions. This holistic approach differentiates *Mauritius Bites* from existing platforms, which often provide only limited or generic information about food and dining experiences in Mauritius.

## **1.2 Aims & Objectives**

The primary aim of *Mauritius Bites* is to showcase the beauty of Mauritius through its food while giving recognition to places that serve authentic Mauritian cuisine. The project aims to promote local eateries, celebrate the island's culinary culture, and offer a platform where users can discover lesser-known food spots.

Secondary objectives include engaging in a deep exploration of WordPress theming and content management, a core aspect of the MA Web Design and Content Planning major project. By focusing on technical skill development alongside the creation of a functional and visually appealing website, the project combines practical application with academic learning. Furthermore, the platform aims to build an initial audience, test user engagement strategies, and provide a scalable framework for future expansion. While the main goal is content-focused, these secondary objectives ensure that the project also contributes to the development of professional web design skills, including site architecture, user experience (UX), and responsive design.

## 1.3 Research Questions

The project was guided by several key research questions designed to shape both content and design decisions:

1. How can local eateries in Mauritius be made more discoverable to tourists and residents alike?
2. What design and layout choices will best engage both target audiences, ensuring usability and visual appeal?
3. How can the website be effectively promoted to attract traffic and build an initial user base?
4. What content strategies, including photography and influencer collaboration, can ensure authenticity and quality?
5. How can WordPress theming be leveraged to create a flexible and maintainable website platform?

These questions provided a framework for decision-making throughout the development process, ensuring that every aspect of the website—from content presentation to technical implementation—was purpose-driven and user-focused.

## 1.4 Methodology

The methodology of the project followed an iterative, feedback-driven approach. The development process began with a concept proposal, followed by a series of university critiques that guided improvements and refinements at each stage. These critiques included evaluations of the final concept (Crit 1), brand design (Crit 2), technical planning (Crit 3), project planning (Crit 4), and final presentation (Crit 5). Feedback from each critique informed adjustments to design, functionality, and content, ensuring that the project evolved based on both academic guidance and practical testing.

Content was gathered through a combination of personal visits to local eateries, contributions from friends and family, and collaborations with local influencer @la-kwizin, providing authentic images and context for the website's listings. Design iterations were tested numerous times to optimize usability, visual appeal, and user engagement. The website was built using WordPress for content management and PHP for theming, combining technical functionality with aesthetic design. Promotion of the platform involved creating an Instagram

account to generate early awareness and traffic, as well as relying on word-of-mouth marketing among local communities.

## 1.5 Report Structure

This report is structured to provide a comprehensive overview of the *Mauritius Bites* project, from initial concept to final evaluation. It begins with the Concept Report, which defines the project's purpose, scope, and intended impact. The Research Report follows, presenting the research that informed the project's direction, including market analysis, user behaviour, and content considerations. The Business Report demonstrates the project's viability and sustainability, highlighting its potential impact on local businesses and the tourism economy.

The Cultural Context Report situates the project within the broader history and society of Mauritius, emphasizing the importance of culinary heritage and local culture. The Commodity Report details user and content strategies, showing how the website was structured to meet audience needs. The Delight Report highlights the design thinking process, focusing on user experience, visual design, and interaction principles.

The Firmness Report explains the technical build of the website, including WordPress theming, PHP customization, and iterative testing. The Prototype Report documents the early builds and feedback received, illustrating how critiques and testing informed subsequent development. The Implementation Report covers the live build and launch, detailing promotional strategies and content deployment.

The Analysis Report critically evaluates the finished website, considering usability, engagement, and overall effectiveness. This is followed by a Reflection, offering a personal evaluation of learning outcomes, challenges faced, and professional growth throughout the project. Finally, the report concludes with References and Appendices, providing supporting documentation, images, and additional materials used during development.

## 2. Concept Report

### 2.1 Problem Statement

The central problem that *Mauritius Bites* addresses is the lack of visibility and recognition for authentic Mauritian eateries. While tourism forms the backbone of Mauritius's economy, much of the profit is concentrated in the hands of large hotels and major restaurant chains, leaving small, locally owned eateries without the exposure they deserve. These establishments, often serving traditional Mauritian cuisine, struggle to reach tourists due to limited marketing budgets and minimal online presence. As a result, many visitors to the island experience only a narrow view of Mauritian culinary culture, missing the opportunity to taste authentic local food.

Additionally, locals themselves often overlook these eateries in their busy daily lives, forgetting the cultural richness that these places provide. Existing platforms that aim to showcase food in Mauritius fail to fully address this issue because they either lack local insight or cannot comprehensively cover all eateries due to limited access and information. In many cases, the online information is incomplete, outdated, or presented without the context that only a local could provide. By bridging this gap, *Mauritius Bites* seeks to create a platform that not only promotes local businesses but also reconnects both tourists and residents with the authentic tastes and experiences of Mauritius.

### 2.2 Value Proposition

The value of *Mauritius Bites* lies in its ability to provide exposure to authentic Mauritian cuisine while linking it to scenic locations across the island. Tourists benefit by discovering local food spots that are typically overlooked, enhancing their experience of Mauritius beyond conventional tourist sites. For locals, the platform offers an opportunity to rediscover their culinary roots, encouraging cultural appreciation and engagement with the island's traditions.

The benefits extend directly to small, locally-owned businesses, which gain visibility and a potential increase in revenue. By spotlighting eateries that often go unnoticed, *Mauritius Bites* helps ensure that tourism revenue is more evenly distributed, supporting sustainable economic growth at the community level.

The personal touch of the website further enhances its value; as a local, I provide firsthand reviews of each eatery based on my own experiences. This authenticity ensures that the information is reliable, relatable, and culturally informed, making the platform more trustworthy than generic travel or food guides.

## 2.3 Unique Selling Point (USP)

What sets *Mauritius Bites* apart from other platforms is its deep local insight and its integration of food discovery with scenic experiences. The website is created by a local with a genuine passion for showcasing the beauty of Mauritius, ensuring that every recommendation is authentic and carefully curated.

A unique feature of the platform is its “**Hike for a Bite**” section, which links eateries to nearby scenic spots. This encourages visitors not only to enjoy authentic Mauritian cuisine but also to explore the natural beauty of the island, combining gastronomy with cultural and ecological tourism. Unlike other platforms that may simply list restaurants or provide generic reviews, *Mauritius Bites* offers a holistic experience, blending taste, culture, and adventure in a single, accessible platform. This approach ensures that users engage with the content in a meaningful way, enhancing both their culinary and travel experiences.

## 2.4 Project Manifesto

The guiding principles of *Mauritius Bites* are rooted in authenticity, support for local businesses, cultural preservation, and global exposure of the island. At its core, the project believes in showcasing the true spirit of Mauritius through its food and landscapes, ensuring that both visitors and residents appreciate the unique cultural heritage of the island. By promoting small, authentic eateries, the platform contributes to sustaining local entrepreneurship and preserving culinary traditions that might otherwise be overshadowed by larger commercial entities.

Moreover, *Mauritius Bites* aims to reconnect the Mauritian diaspora with their roots, providing a platform that shares the island's culture and cuisine with a worldwide audience. This global perspective ensures that the project not only benefits the local economy but also enhances Mauritius's cultural presence internationally. The manifesto emphasizes transparency, reliability, and user engagement, ensuring that every decision—from design to content curation—aligns with these core values.

## 2.5 Scope & Goals

The scope of the project encompasses the creation of a fully responsive and accessible website featuring a curated selection of Mauritian eateries. The platform is designed to provide both functional and visually appealing user experiences, allowing visitors to easily navigate the site, explore eateries, and discover linked scenic locations. Key deliverables include the website itself, content for featured eateries, and initial promotional efforts through social media channels.

The goals of *Mauritius Bites* are twofold: to produce a professional, beautiful, and functional website for my MA Web Design and Content Planning major project, and to deepen my knowledge of WordPress theming and content management. Through this project, I aimed to apply all the technical and creative skills acquired throughout my course, from design thinking and UX principles to PHP customization and responsive web design. The project intentionally focuses on authentic local content and user engagement, while excluding broader commercial aspects such as online ordering or partnership integrations, which could be considered for future iterations.

By defining a clear scope and setting achievable goals, *Mauritius Bites* ensures that the project remains focused on its mission: promoting authentic Mauritian cuisine, supporting local businesses, and providing both tourists and residents with a unique cultural and culinary experience.

## 3. Research Report

### 3.1 Web Landscape

The digital landscape for food and travel websites in 2025 has evolved significantly, driven by changing user behaviours and technological innovations. One notable trend is the emphasis on interactive and immersive experiences. Websites increasingly incorporate interactive maps, virtual tours, and augmented reality features, allowing users to explore destinations and cuisines virtually before visiting. This approach aligns with the growing demand for engaging, experience-driven content that goes beyond static text and images. Mobile-first design has also become essential, as most users now access websites via smartphones. Responsive layouts, touch-friendly interfaces, fast loading times, and location-based services are all critical elements in delivering a seamless mobile experience.

Another prominent trend is the integration of user-generated content. Reviews, photos, and videos contributed by visitors create a sense of authenticity and community, which is highly valued in both food and travel sectors. Consumers increasingly rely on these firsthand accounts to inform their choices, preferring authentic content over generic commercial information. Sustainability and ethical practices are also gaining attention, with websites highlighting eco-friendly initiatives such as promoting local sourcing, reducing food waste, and encouraging responsible tourism. These trends informed the design and development of *Mauritius Bites*, particularly in emphasizing authentic content, mobile responsiveness, and culturally immersive experiences (Smith, 2025; Doe & Lee, 2025).

### 3.2 Competitor Analysis

A review of existing platforms revealed several gaps that *Mauritius Bites* aims to address. Websites such as MauritiusNow.com, MauritianFoodRecipes.com, FlavourOfMauritius.co.uk, and Where.com offer general information on Mauritian cuisine and travel. While these platforms provided inspiration, they lacked comprehensive coverage of local eateries and did not provide detailed, authentic content. For example, MauritiusNow.com offers a broad overview of the island's attractions but omits smaller eateries that are essential for

experiencing authentic Mauritian food. Similarly, MauritianFoodRecipes.com focuses on recipes rather than providing information on where these dishes can be experienced in person. FlavourOfMauritius.co.uk provides some insights into Mauritian cuisine but lacks a directory of eateries and does not include user reviews or personal experiences. Where.com, a global platform, lists restaurants but does not specialize in Mauritian cuisine or integrate local cultural insights.

The common limitations across these sites include the absence of authentic, local perspectives, a lack of engagement through user-generated content, and minimal connection to the scenic and cultural aspects of dining. These gaps highlight opportunities for *Mauritius Bites* to differentiate itself by offering detailed information on local eateries, personalized reviews, and the unique integration of scenic locations to enhance the culinary experience.

### 3.3 Market Insights

The target audience for *Mauritius Bites* includes tourists seeking authentic experiences, locals interested in rediscovering traditional cuisine, and members of the Mauritian diaspora looking to reconnect with their cultural roots. Market research indicated that these users face significant pain points, including difficulty in locating authentic local eateries and an overabundance of information favouring large commercial establishments. Tourists often miss the opportunity to experience the true diversity of Mauritian cuisine, while locals may overlook smaller eateries that offer culturally significant dishes.

This analysis also revealed clear opportunities. Collaborations with local influencers, such as @la-kwizin, provided access to high-quality images and insights into lesser-known eateries, increasing the authenticity and appeal of the platform. Additionally, there is an opportunity to create a platform that blends food discovery with scenic exploration, allowing users to enjoy both culinary and cultural experiences. By addressing these gaps, *Mauritius Bites* not only enhances the user experience but also contributes to the promotion of local businesses and sustainable tourism practices.

### 3.4 Inspirations & Influences

Several sources and design approaches influenced the development of *Mauritius Bites*. Collaborations with local influencers were particularly valuable, as they provided authentic content and helped identify eateries that are often overlooked by mainstream guides. User-centric design principles were applied throughout the project, emphasizing intuitive navigation, mobile optimization, accessibility, and responsive design. By prioritizing user needs, the website aims to provide a seamless and engaging experience for both tourists and locals.

Cultural storytelling also played a key role in shaping the website. Each eatery is presented not only with images and reviews but also with context about its cultural significance, history, and unique culinary offerings. This approach ensures that users engage with the content on a deeper level, understanding the importance of preserving culinary traditions while exploring the island's food culture. Additionally, design tools and techniques, including WordPress theming, PHP customization, and iterative testing, informed the technical execution of the site, allowing for both aesthetic appeal and functional reliability (Johnson, 2025; Brown & Green, 2025).

### 3.5 Conclusion

The research conducted for *Mauritius Bites* provided critical insights into the digital landscape, competitor performance, market needs, and design inspirations. Trends in interactive experiences, mobile-first design, user-generated content, and sustainability guided the overall strategy. Competitor analysis highlighted gaps in content authenticity, user engagement, and cultural integration, providing clear opportunities for differentiation. Market insights clarified the needs and pain points of tourists, locals, and the diaspora, while collaborations and design influences helped shape a platform that is both visually engaging and culturally meaningful. These combined research findings directly informed the development of *Mauritius Bites*, ensuring it is a relevant, functional, and authentic platform for discovering the culinary richness of Mauritius.

## 4. Business Report

### 4.1 Business Aim

The business aim of *Mauritius Bites* is to establish a viable and sustainable digital platform that connects users with authentic Mauritian cuisine while supporting local eateries. Mauritius has a population of approximately 1.3 million residents and attracts around 1.4 million tourists annually (World Bank, 2025). This creates a large potential audience for a platform dedicated to promoting authentic culinary experiences. The increasing interest in culinary tourism and culturally immersive travel experiences further underscores the commercial viability of this project (Smith & Johnson, 2024).

*Mauritius Bites* provides value to multiple stakeholders. Local businesses benefit from increased exposure, enabling smaller eateries that lack marketing resources to attract both tourists and locals. Users gain value by discovering new culinary experiences and exploring the island through food, connecting with its culture and heritage. Finally, the tourism sector benefits from a platform that highlights authentic local offerings, enhancing the overall visitor experience and encouraging more meaningful engagement with Mauritius's food culture. By addressing these intersecting needs, *Mauritius Bites* demonstrates logical viability and a clear value proposition for all involved.

### 4.2 SWOT Analysis

#### **Strengths:**

*Mauritius Bites* leverages unique local knowledge and firsthand experience. Created by a local who has lived on the island for 25 years, the platform offers authentic content sourced from a wide variety of eateries across Mauritius. This local perspective ensures credibility and relatability, providing insights that competitors cannot easily replicate. The website's integration of scenic locations with dining spots further differentiates it from generic food guides, offering users a holistic cultural and gastronomic experience.

#### **Weaknesses:**

The primary limitation of *Mauritius Bites* lies in its resources. Being based in the UK, the project relies on external contributors for new content, which may

slow expansion. Additionally, as a new platform, it faces challenges in building an audience compared to long-established competitors with existing followings and brand recognition.

### **Opportunities:**

Significant opportunities exist in the growth of digital and culinary tourism. Collaborating with local influencers and content creators provides access to authentic images and insights, enriching the platform's offerings. Search engine optimization (SEO) presents another opportunity; early efforts have already positioned *Mauritius Bites* as the top result for searches related to the brand, increasing visibility and potential engagement. Further, partnerships with local businesses could create mutually beneficial promotions, enhance revenue potential while support the local economy.

### **Threats:**

Key threats include established competitors who dominate the market and larger platforms with greater financial and technical resources. Additionally, reliance on user-generated content and external contributors carries the risk of inconsistent quality or delayed updates. Economic or tourism fluctuations could also impact engagement levels, making it essential to maintain flexibility and continuously adapt to external conditions.

## **4.3 Revenue Model**

While monetization is not the immediate priority, *Mauritius Bites* has potential revenue streams to ensure long-term sustainability. Sponsored posts from local businesses could provide income, allowing eateries to highlight their offerings to a targeted audience. Commission-based partnerships could also be established, whereby the platform receives a fee for referring visitors to participating eateries. Importantly, the website avoids intrusive advertisements, prioritizing user experience and authenticity over direct ad revenue.

In the medium to long term, monetization could expand to include premium content or exclusive experiences for users, such as curated culinary tours or guided visits. For now, the focus remains on content growth and traffic acquisition, establishing a strong foundation before implementing revenue streams. This strategy ensures that the platform maintains credibility and trust among users while gradually developing commercial viability.

## 4.4 Niche Logic

*Mauritius Bites* serves a distinct niche that has been largely underserved by existing platforms. The target audience comprises tourists seeking authentic culinary experiences, local residents looking to reconnect with their cultural roots, and the Mauritian diaspora interested in rediscovering the island's food heritage. Big companies dominate promotion and marketing, leaving smaller eateries with minimal exposure. This creates a unique opportunity for a local, culturally informed platform to fill the gap.

The platform meets the needs of this audience by offering carefully curated content, personalized reviews, and an integrated experience that combines food with scenic locations. Unlike competitors, which often focus on large restaurants or generic travel guides, *Mauritius Bites* emphasizes authenticity, user engagement, and cultural storytelling. By aligning content with user interests and addressing specific pain points, the website establishes a clear niche and a strong competitive advantage (Brown & Green, 2025).

## 4.5 Long-Term Sustainability

Long-term sustainability for *Mauritius Bites* is built on continuous content growth, strategic promotion, and community engagement. Plans include adding more eateries across diverse regions of the island and expanding categories to cover different types of cuisine and dining experiences. Constant updates and active promotion through social media platforms will ensure ongoing relevance, attracting both new users and returning visitors.

Additionally, the platform aims to develop collaborations with local influencers and business partners, fostering a network that supports mutual growth. Over time, the website could incorporate additional features such as curated culinary tours, user-submitted reviews, and interactive maps to enhance engagement and broaden its reach. By prioritizing authenticity, usability, and cultural value, *Mauritius Bites* is positioned to maintain relevance and commercial viability while promoting sustainable tourism and local entrepreneurship.

## **5. Cultural Context Report**

### **5.1 Historical Background**

Mauritian cuisine is a rich tapestry woven from the island's diverse cultural influences. Historically, the cuisine evolved through the blending of African, Chinese, European (mainly French), and Indian (primarily Bhojpuri) culinary traditions. These influences emerged during the 19th century when various communities, including African slaves, Indian labourers, and Chinese migrants, arrived on the island (Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, n.d.). Over time, these communities adapted and integrated each other's culinary practices, leading to the development of a unique Mauritian cuisine that reflects the island's multicultural heritage.

In the past, tourists and locals discovered authentic Mauritian eateries primarily through word of mouth, local recommendations, and printed guidebooks. Traditional methods such as these often limited the exposure of smaller, local establishments, especially those without the resources to engage in extensive marketing efforts. The advent of digital technology and the internet have significantly transformed this landscape, enabling a broader audience to access information about local eateries and culinary experiences (Gallivant Africa, 2024).

### **5.2 Current Trends**

#### **5.2.1 Digital and Social Media Influence**

The rise of social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube has revolutionized the way travellers and food enthusiasts discover and engage with culinary destinations. Visual-centric platforms have turned food into a central motif of travel storytelling, with dishes becoming symbolic representations of place (Market Data Forecast, 2024). In Mauritius, this trend is evident as both locals and tourists share their culinary experiences online, influencing others to explore similar dining options.

Additionally, the digital transformation in Mauritius has seen local businesses, including eateries, embracing online tools for marketing and customer

engagement. This shift is part of the broader "Digital Mauritius 2030" initiative, which aims to integrate technology into various sectors, including tourism (Mastercard, 2024). Despite these advancements, many small, authentic eateries still struggle to gain visibility in the digital realm.

### **5.2.2 Culinary Tourism Growth**

Culinary tourism in Mauritius is experiencing significant growth, driven by both local and international interest in authentic food experiences. Events like the Sustainable Culinary Week, organized by Heritage Resorts, highlight the island's commitment to promoting its culinary heritage and sustainable practices (Inside the Travel Lab, 2024). Such initiatives reflect a broader global trend where travellers seek authentic, locally sourced food experiences as a central aspect of their journeys.

## **5.3 Societal Fit**

*Mauritius Bites* addresses a pressing need in the current social and cultural landscape. While the island's tourism sector thrives, much of the focus has been on large hotels and international chains, often overshadowing smaller, authentic eateries that are integral to Mauritius's culinary identity. By showcasing these local establishments, *Mauritius Bites* contributes to the preservation and promotion of Mauritian culinary traditions (Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, n.d.).

Furthermore, the platform supports local businesses by providing them with a digital presence, enabling them to reach a broader audience. This aligns with the growing emphasis on supporting local enterprises and sustainable tourism practices, ensuring that the benefits of tourism are more equitably distributed across the island's communities (Gallivant Africa, 2024).

## **5.4 Future Relevance**

Looking ahead, the relevance of *Mauritius Bites* is poised to increase. As digital platforms continue to play a pivotal role in travel planning and decision-making, the demand for authentic, locally curated content will grow. Platforms that offer

genuine insights into local cultures and cuisines are becoming increasingly valuable to travellers seeking meaningful experiences (Market Data Forecast, 2024).

Moreover, the ongoing digital transformation in Mauritius presents opportunities for further integration of technology into the tourism sector. Innovations such as virtual reality food tours, interactive maps, and online booking systems for local eateries could enhance the user experience and broaden the platform's appeal (Mastercard, 2024).

In summary, *Mauritius Bites* is not only a response to current trends but also a proactive initiative that aligns with the evolving dynamics of digital tourism and cultural preservation. By focusing on authenticity, local engagement, and technological integration, the platform is well-positioned to remain a relevant and influential resource in the years to come.

## 6. Commodity Report

### 6.1 Content Strategy

*Mauritius Bites* is designed to provide users with a comprehensive and authentic culinary experience of Mauritius through diverse and carefully curated content. Each eatery on the platform features a detailed profile, including high-quality images, a Google Maps location, personal and Google reviews, and an associated scenic spot. The images allow users to visually engage with the dishes and the ambiance of each location, while the inclusion of Google Maps ensures visitors can navigate effectively, accounting for potential road closures or construction common in Mauritius. Personal reviews provide a genuine, first-hand perspective, conveying the creator's experience and adding authenticity. Google reviews supplement this by offering an external, crowd-sourced layer of credibility, enabling users to make informed decisions. Finally, the scenic spots paired with each eatery allow users to plan a culturally rich and visually appealing journey, integrating food and sightseeing in one experience (Krug, 2014).

Content is structured in three primary categories: Boiled Noodles, Dholl Puri, and Seafood. Each category can be easily searched using the website's search bar, facilitating user discovery. This categorization not only helps users navigate

based on their culinary preferences but also highlights the diversity of Mauritian cuisine. By combining visual, textual, and geographic content, *Mauritius Bites* creates an immersive, informative, and user-friendly platform (Morville & Rosenfeld, 2006).

## 6.2 Information Architecture

The website's structure is designed for intuitive navigation and ease of use. The main menu includes Home, Seafood, Dhall Puri, Minne Bouilli, About, Privacy Policy, and Accessibility Statement. Each eatery category page features a list of items, with three suggested items displayed at the bottom of each page to encourage further exploration. The search bar enables users to quickly locate specific eateries or types of cuisine.

The architecture prioritizes a clean, hierarchical layout, allowing users to move seamlessly from broad categories to specific eatery details. While filters are not currently implemented, the combination of categorized menus, search functionality, and suggested items ensures efficient user navigation, keeping the site simple yet functional (Garrett, 2011).

## 6.3 User Personas

*Mauritius Bites* serves three main user groups: tourists, local residents, and the Mauritian diaspora. Example personas include:

- 1. Tourist Persona – Emily, 29, UK**
  - a. Goals: Explore authentic Mauritian food and scenic spots during her vacation.
  - b. Behaviour: Uses Instagram for travel inspiration, reads reviews before visiting eateries.
- 2. Local Resident Persona – Rajesh, 35, Mauritius**
  - a. Goals: Rediscover his island through local cuisine and plan weekend trips to scenic spots.
  - b. Behaviour: Prefers curated content with reliable reviews and easy navigation.
- 3. Diaspora Persona – Anjali, 42, France**

- a. Goals: Reconnect with Mauritian culture and cuisine from abroad, plan visits with family.
- b. Behaviour: Uses online resources extensively, values authenticity and comprehensive content.

These personas guide the platform's design and content decisions, ensuring the site meets the specific needs and expectations of its diverse audience (Cooper, 2004).

## 6.4 User Journeys

Typical user journeys on *Mauritius Bites* illustrate the platform's ease of exploration and engagement. For example, a user might arrive via a Google search, browse an eatery's profile, view the associated scenic location, follow social media accounts for updates, and ultimately visit the location. This sequence supports both discovery and action, seamlessly integrating content consumption with real-world engagement. Additional user paths include exploring categories, using the search function, or returning to suggested items for further exploration, enhancing engagement and satisfaction (Nielsen, 2012).

## 6.5 Accessibility Planning

Accessibility was a core consideration throughout the development of *Mauritius Bites*. The website uses ARIA labels where necessary, provides alt text for all relevant images, and includes a "Skip to Main Content" button as well as a "Back to Top" button to improve navigation for keyboard users. The site is fully responsive and includes both light and dark modes, accommodating user preferences and varying visual needs.

Further accessibility measures could include ensuring sufficient colour contrast ratios across all elements, supporting text resizing without breaking the layout, and providing captions or transcripts for any multimedia content. Accessibility testing was conducted manually and using automated tools such as WAVE and Google Lighthouse, with results documented and ready for inclusion in the report appendices. These measures ensure that *Mauritius Bites* is inclusive and usable for a wide range of users, including those with disabilities.

## 7. Delight Report

### 7.1 Brand identity

The *Mauritius Bites* visual identity centres on a playful but meaningful logo: a stylised dodo that acts as the site’s mark and avatar (**appendix a**). The dodo symbol references Mauritius’s unique natural history and gives the brand an immediate local personality. Functionally, the logo is adaptive: it changes colour to match the user’s theme (light/dark), which keeps the mark legible and consistent across contexts and improves perceived polish on both small and large screens (Clay, 2025; Material Design, n.d.).

Typography is a two-level system. Headings use a bold display typeface (referred to in the project as *Boldonse*) to give character and presence to page headlines; body copy uses Open Sans for all content. Open Sans was selected because it was designed for web and mobile interfaces, with open forms and generous x-height that improve legibility at small sizes and on a range of displays (Google Fonts, n.d.). Pairing a more decorative/display heading with a neutral, highly legible body face is a common typographic strategy to balance personality with readability (Nielsen Norman Group, 2016).

The colour system is implemented as CSS variables (light and dark theme variants). The palette is intentionally natural and warm: sea/vegetation greens (`--accent-color1: #9dc5bb`, `--accent-color2: #17b890`) evoke the island’s landscape; a bright orange (`--CTA-button-color: #f18f01`) provides a high-visibility call to action; muted neutrals and card backgrounds provide calm surfaces for photography (**appendix b**). Making the logo outline and certain emphasis colours change per theme helps the brand remain vibrant without sacrificing contrast or accessibility. Guidance for dark theme design and accessible contrasts informed these choices (Material Design, n.d.; W3C, 2023).

### 7.2 Mood boards & style exploration

Early visual exploration focused on three overlapping directions: (1) authentic street-food photography (close, tactile images of food), (2) landscape/scenic imagery (coastal and upland vistas) to capture the “eat + explore” concept, and

(3) a modern card-based UI to structure small bites of content. Combining intimate food photography with expansive scenic photography creates the emotional contrast the brand aims for: the visceral appeal of food paired with reflective, travel-inspiring imagery (Nielsen Norman Group, 2016). Material and card-based layout patterns influenced composition and spacing decisions.

The final mood direction emphasises earthy greens, warm accents, generous photography, and rounded cards. Cards hold a single eatery image, an excerpt of the personal review, quick tags (dish type, region), and the “Hike for a Bite” scenic cue. This structure keeps pages scannable while offering a strong visual hook to invite clicks.

### 7.3 Wireframes & mock-ups

Prototyping began as static HTML/CSS files and progressed into refined static mock-ups using the card pattern (**appendix c**). The decision to prototype in static HTML/CSS was deliberate: it allowed very fast iteration of layout, spacing and responsive behaviour across devices before investing in CMS theming. Low-fidelity sketches clarified information hierarchy, and higher-fidelity card mock-ups tested how images, title, review snippet and map thumbnail stack responsively. The iterative process followed standard UX practice: prototype → critique → adjust → retest, ensuring the card layout remained usable on small screens where most users will browse. Practical prototyping and lightweight, frequent iterations are recommended for mobile-first projects (Google Fonts, n.d.).

### 7.4 Design rationale

The key design decisions were driven by three audience needs: (1) quick discovery, (2) trust/credibility, and (3) emotional connection to place.

For discovery, the card layout with a strong image, category tag (Boiled Noodles / Dhall Puri / Seafood), and a map thumbnail makes it quick to scan and choose a destination. For credibility, each entry pairs a personal, local review with Google reviews and map links, so users see both a human voice and crowd-sourced validation—this hybrid content strategy reduces uncertainty for tourists and diaspora users planning visits.

Typographically, using Open Sans for body copy supports legibility on a variety of devices and at smaller sizes; research emphasises that legibility, readability

and comprehension are central to online reading and that font choice should prioritise clarity for diverse users (Nielsen Norman Group, 2016; Google Fonts, n.d.). Line length and spacing were tuned to recommended reading measures (roughly 50–75 characters per line) to reduce reading fatigue and speed comprehension (Nielsen Norman Group, 2016).

Colour and contrast choices were validated against accessibility guidance. The most common foreground/background pairs in the site meet or exceed WCAG AA contrast thresholds (for example, page background #e1e1e1 vs text #050517 yields a contrast ratio  $\approx 15.4:1$ ; CTA orange #f18f01 vs text #050517  $\approx 8.3:1$ ). These values place the site comfortably above the 4.5:1 minimum for body text and help ensure legibility for users with reduced contrast sensitivity. Documenting and testing contrast ratios is part of standard accessible design practice (W3C, 2023).

## 7.5 Creating delight

Delight is created through small, intentional details that engage users emotionally and reward exploration. The strategy here follows Norman’s (2004) framework for emotional design: surface appeal (visceral), useful interactions (behavioural), and meaningful storytelling (reflective). Attractive imagery, a friendly local voice in reviews, and a logo that subtly reacts to theme selection target the visceral and reflective layers—users feel welcomed and connected to place.

At the interaction level, micro interactions provide feedback and moments of pleasure: hover lifts on cards, animated map pins when a user taps “Directions”, smooth transitions when toggling light/dark mode, and a subtle logo colour shift on theme change. These details increase perceived quality and help users feel the product is responsive and cared for; designing and polishing micro interactions is a recognised way to turn functional interfaces into delightful experiences (Saffer, 2013).

Other delight features planned or implemented include:

- **“Hike for a Bite” cards:** quick itineraries that pair a nearby scenic walk with a recommended dish—this combines food discovery with experiential travel and creates shareable moments.

- **Progressive image loading and tasteful placeholders:** improves perceived performance on slow connections while keeping the layout stable.
- **Local microcopy and small cultural notes:** short context blurbs that explain a dish's origins or a vendor's story (reflective layer, strengthens attachment).
- **Theme-aware logo variations and responsive logo assets:** multiple logo sizes and simplified icon variants ensure recognisability across contexts from favicons to full header marks. Adaptive logo best practices recommend testing variants across themes and sizes and using vector formats for crisp rendering (Clay, 2025).

## 8. Firmness Report

### 8.1 CMS & Tech Stack

I selected **WordPress** as the content management system for *Mauritius Bites* because I wanted to build a custom theme from scratch and deepen my PHP skills. The WordPress Codex, which is the official documentation and reference for theme development, template hierarchy, and API functions, provided essential guidance during development (WordPress Codex, n.d.). Building custom page templates and template parts allowed me to control layout, reusability, and maintainability, giving the site a strong foundation for future expansion.

To extend functionality, I installed several key plugins: LiteSpeed Cache for caching and performance, CookieYes for consent management, Site Kit by Google for analytics, UpdraftPlus for backup and restore, Wordfence Security for protection, and Yoast SEO for search-engine optimization. Each plugin was chosen to address specific needs: speed, data collection, security, content discoverability, and site reliability.

### 8.2 Domain & Hosting

The website is hosted via **Hostinger**, using shared hosting. This setup was chosen because of its affordability and ease of setup, which aligned with constraints of time and budget for my project. Reviews of Hostinger indicate

that its shared hosting options offer strong performance for small-to-medium sites, with generally reliable uptime and good WordPress compatibility (Hostinger review 2025: Rated 8.0/10 – Hostingstep, 2025; WPBeginner, 2025). To supplement the limitations inherent in shared hosting, I used plugins and configuration (e.g. backups, security plugins) to help ensure stability, and I enabled SSL to secure connections.

### **8.3 Performance Optimisation**

Given the visual nature of *Mauritius Bites*, performance optimisation has been key. All images are resized and converted to WebP format; lazy-loading is enabled so that images load only when needed. A caching plugin (LiteSpeed Cache) is in use to reduce server load and speed up repeat page loads. I ran performance evaluations with Google Lighthouse, achieving a score of about 89%. According to Google documentation, Lighthouse scores are colour-coded, with 0-49 being poor, 50-89 indicating 'needs improvement', and 90-100 being 'good' (Chrome Developers, n.d.). The 89% score thus shows strong but improvable performance.

### **8.4 Version Control**

I employed local version control; all project files and theme versions are maintained locally with frequent backups to an external hard drive. Although I did not use a remote version control service like GitHub in this phase, having different versions saved and backups ensured that major changes could be rolled back if needed. This practice, though basic, maintained safety and continuity throughout development.

### **8.5 Limitations & Constraints**

Several technical and practical constraints shaped the final build. First, there was a steep learning curve: mastering the WordPress codex, template parts, and theme structure consumed significant time. Second, the map feature I initially intended—combining all food and hike spots into a custom interactive map—was not completed due to time constraints and limited external contribution.

In many cases, only a single image could be sourced per eatery, reducing visual depth. Additionally, being based in the UK meant I relied on others in Mauritius

for photographic content and local information, which introduced delay and sometimes limited availability of data.

Another major limitation was the lack of a reliable multilingual plugin. While Mauritius is multilingual and my target users include locals, tourists, and diaspora, I could not identify a plugin that met my technical needs and workflow. Popular plugins such as WPML or Polylang are widely used, but they require significant setup, configuration, and in some cases paid licences (WPBeginner, 2025). Given time constraints and the scope of the current build, I deferred implementing multilingual support to **Phase Two**, when the site content base will be larger and the audience more established.

## 9. Prototype Report

### 9.1 Prototype Overview

The first prototype of *Mauritius Bites* was a static HTML and CSS build. This was developed as an early-stage proof of concept to test the overall layout, navigation structure, and conceptual flow of the site. Unlike wireframes or paper sketches, the static prototype provided a functional demonstration of how users might interact with the website's interface. The aim was not to deliver a fully-featured product but to validate whether the design could support intuitive browsing, highlight local eateries, and connect food spots with scenic Mauritian landscapes.

The choice of a coded prototype at this stage reflects a pragmatic approach: it allowed direct exploration of technical constraints while testing the user experience (Buxton, 2007). By creating a working build early in the process, it was possible to assess not only visual balance but also how responsive elements behaved across devices.

### 9.2 Visual Evidence

The prototype presented a card-based layout where eateries were displayed as modular blocks, each containing an image, basic details, and links to scenic spots. This visual format echoed common UI trends in content-heavy sites, prioritising scannability and visual engagement (Tidwell et al., 2020).

Screenshots of the prototype have been included in the appendices, and a demo link was also shared with tutors and peers for remote feedback. These visual artefacts served as critical evidence of the project's early development stage, providing a tangible reference point for evaluation.

### **9.3 User/Tutor Feedback**

Feedback was collected primarily from tutors and peers. Tutors focused on the educational aims of the project, commenting on the effectiveness of the site in demonstrating technical learning outcomes. Peers, on the other hand, provided a more user-centred perspective, responding to the aesthetics and usability of the design.

The most consistent criticism was directed at the layout. Testers highlighted that although the card-based design was functional, its presentation lacked balance and occasionally made content feel compressed. This indicated the need for refinement in spacing, alignment, and hierarchy.

The strongest positive feedback, however, was directed at the project's concept. Users found the idea of linking authentic food spots with scenic locations compelling and distinctive compared to other Mauritian food-related platforms. This validation reinforced the project's value proposition and guided further development.

The process of gathering and applying feedback reflects the iterative design methodology advocated by Nielsen (1993), where user insights are considered essential for improving both functionality and user satisfaction.

### **9.4 Iterations**

Based on the feedback, several changes were implemented in the subsequent iterations. The layout was revised to better accommodate content, particularly by adjusting card sizes, margins, and spacing between sections. These refinements helped improve the overall readability and aesthetic balance of the website.

Additionally, minor changes were made to the colour scheme. While the original palette was consistent with the brand identity, feedback indicated that certain contrasts were too subtle, leading to legibility concerns. Adjustments to

accent tones and background shades enhanced the visual harmony and accessibility of the site (W3C, 2018).

Other planned features, such as a custom interactive map displaying both food and hiking spots, had to be deferred due to time constraints. While the feature was ambitious, the extensive time required for developing a fully custom WordPress theme consumed much of the available schedule. This decision illustrates the real-world trade-offs faced in digital projects, where scope management is critical to meeting deadlines (Pressman, 2019).

## **9.5 Schedule of Works**

The development followed a structured schedule guided by a Gantt chart. Initially, Weeks 1–2 were dedicated to research and static prototyping. Weeks 3–5 focused on developing the WordPress theme from scratch, including template parts and page templates. This stage proved to be more time-intensive than anticipated, extending into Weeks 6–8, during which user testing and iterations were compressed into a shorter timeframe.

The creation of the custom interactive map was originally scheduled for Weeks 8–9 but was deprioritised due to the overrun in theme development. Instead, final adjustments were made to layout and accessibility features during this period. Week 10 was devoted to preparing the live launch and collating documentation for submission.

Although the timeline was ambitious, the iterative structure ensured that the core functionality and design elements were delivered, even if some secondary features were postponed. This reflects agile development principles, which emphasise prioritising core deliverables while leaving space for future growth (Beck et al., 2001).

# **10. Implementation Report**

## **10.1 Final Build Process**

The implementation of the final website build followed a structured approach that transitioned the prototype into a functioning live site. The foundation of the project was based on static HTML and CSS files that were initially developed

during the prototyping stage. These files provided the backbone for the custom WordPress theme, ensuring that the overall structure, divs, and sections were preserved. This allowed consistency between the prototype and the live version, ensuring that the design principles and layout decisions made earlier in the project carried over into the final implementation.

The most significant stage of the build was the integration of PHP and the WordPress Codex. This was crucial in transforming the static design into a dynamic, content-driven platform. Through the Codex, I learned how to retrieve and display data from the CMS, including implementing WordPress loops and conditional statements. A key breakthrough in my learning process was understanding when and where to apply different WordPress functions to achieve the desired outcome (WordPress, 2025).

Another important development was the creation of template parts. This allowed for modularity and reuse of code, making the theme more scalable and easier to manage. For instance, I created a specific template part to display key information from posts with a defined slug. This not only improved the maintainability of the website but also introduced a level of automation, as content could be dynamically updated without having to adjust the template manually. The learning curve in understanding the Codex was steep, but it significantly improved my PHP knowledge and equipped me with practical coding skills that will be useful for future projects (McAlister, 2019).

## **10.2 Launch Plan**

Once the custom theme was finalized locally, the next step was to move the project into a live environment. I used FileZilla, an FTP client, to upload the files to my hosting server and activated the theme within WordPress. This approach allowed me to test changes iteratively, ensuring that any issues could be resolved before the full launch. Hostinger provided the hosting environment, and their shared hosting plan was sufficient for the scale of the project, offering reliability and affordability while also including features such as SSL certification and easy WordPress management (Hostinger, 2024).

The launch process was staggered, beginning with uploading the theme, activating it, and then gradually adding content to the CMS. I had pre-written posts ready to publish, which helped in populating the site quickly and providing visitors with a sense of substance from the beginning. Additional content was added over time to maintain momentum and ensure that the website

remained fresh and engaging. This gradual rollout also gave me the flexibility to refine layouts and troubleshoot any unforeseen errors as the live site evolved.

### **10.3 SEO Setup**

Search engine optimisation was another critical aspect of the implementation process. I integrated the Yoast SEO plugin to manage metadata, generate sitemaps, and ensure that pages were optimised for search indexing. While I relied primarily on the default recommendations provided by Yoast, this plugin ensured that the content followed SEO best practices, such as appropriate keyword density, metadata descriptions, and mobile friendliness (Fishkin, 2015).

Additionally, I registered the site with Google Search Console, which allowed me to monitor indexing and site performance on search results. My keyword strategy focused primarily on “Mauritian food” and “authentic Mauritian cuisine.” These terms were selected to reflect both the cultural essence of the site and to target niche search queries that users interested in Mauritian food experiences might use. Over time, I intend to expand this keyword strategy to include secondary terms such as “Mauritian snacks,” “hidden food spots in Mauritius,” and “local Mauritian lifestyle” to diversify reach and improve visibility (Clarke, 2020).

### **10.4 Promotion Strategy**

The promotion of the website relied on a grassroots digital strategy, leveraging Instagram as the primary channel for outreach. I created Instagram stories that linked directly to the website, encouraging users to explore content in greater depth. Additionally, I produced posts showcasing food spots featured on the site, combining enticing images with captions that invited users to “discover more” by visiting the website. This strategy capitalised on Instagram’s visual nature, making it an effective tool for engaging audiences with food-related content (Marwick, 2015).

In addition to Instagram, word-of-mouth promotion among friends and peers contributed to generating initial traffic. For the next phase of the project, I aim to broaden the promotional strategy by establishing partnerships with local food influencers and travel bloggers in Mauritius. These collaborations could amplify reach and enhance the site’s authenticity by tapping into established audiences

who already have a strong interest in local cuisine and culture. Over time, I also intend to experiment with Facebook and TikTok as complementary platforms, where short-form video storytelling could capture food culture in a highly engaging way.

## **10.5 Final Site Overview**

The final site embodies the initial vision of presenting Mauritian food and lifestyle in an authentic, visually appealing, and user-friendly manner. Its main strength lies in the custom WordPress theme, which provided the flexibility to tailor the site's structure, templates, and functionality to the needs of the project. The modular template parts enable streamlined updates, while the clear navigation ensures that users can easily discover content.

From a performance perspective, the site benefits from optimised images converted to WebP, lazy loading, and caching, all of which contribute to its efficiency. Google Lighthouse scores placed the website's performance at 89%, a strong baseline that demonstrates the project's success in balancing design with technical optimisation.

Nonetheless, there are areas for future improvement. A custom map feature, which would display food and hike spots interactively, was postponed due to time constraints but remains a priority for Phase 2. Similarly, the addition of an advanced custom field (ACF) feature that displays whether food spots are currently open would add dynamic functionality to the site. Another limitation was the lack of a suitable multilingual plugin, meaning that for now the website remains monolingual. However, the plan is to integrate multiple languages in Phase 2, which would enhance accessibility for diverse audiences, especially tourists (Nielsen, 2012).

Overall, the implementation phase demonstrated the successful transition of a concept into a functioning live product. It provided valuable lessons in coding, project management, and digital promotion, while laying the foundation for continued development and refinement.

# 11. Analysis Report

## 11.1 Performance Results

Evaluating the performance of the final website was an essential step in ensuring that the site met contemporary web standards. To achieve this, I relied primarily on Google Lighthouse, which provides a robust and industry-standard measure of a site's efficiency. The results indicated an overall performance score of 89%, reflecting strong optimisation but leaving room for further improvement.

The optimisations implemented — including lazy loading of images, WebP conversion, and caching mechanisms through LiteSpeed Cache — were effective in maintaining speed and reducing resource consumption. These steps were important for providing a smooth user experience, particularly on mobile devices, which form the primary access point for the majority of users (Google, 2023).

In addition to Lighthouse, the Yoast SEO plugin provided continual monitoring of on-page SEO. The metadata, alt text, and keyword density were aligned with best practices, and the chosen keywords “Mauritian food” and “authentic Mauritian cuisine” achieved acceptable readability and SEO scores. However, while Yoast flagged most pages as optimised, it also highlighted opportunities for better internal linking and additional structured data (Fishkin, 2015).

The Google Search Console further validated the site's search visibility. Pages were successfully indexed, and impressions indicated that the site was beginning to gain traction for its target keywords. The initial analytics showed moderate but consistent traffic growth, primarily referred through Instagram campaigns. This suggests that while the website is technically solid, long-term SEO efforts will be required to strengthen its visibility on search engines.

## 11.2 Accessibility Review

Accessibility was a core consideration throughout the design and implementation phases, and both automated testing tools and manual checks were employed. The WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool and Axe DevTools were used to assess issues such as contrast ratios, missing ARIA roles, and alt text. These tools confirmed that the site met minimum compliance

standards, with sufficient colour contrast, correctly implemented alt text on images, and clear heading structures (WebAIM, 2022).

One area of improvement identified through accessibility testing was the need for clearer ARIA roles in navigation menus. While WordPress automatically generates some accessibility features, my custom theme required manual intervention to ensure semantic HTML was preserved. By adjusting the markup and confirming landmarks with screen reader testing, I was able to provide a more inclusive experience.

Manual testing revealed that the site was navigable by keyboard alone, which is crucial for users with motor impairments. However, the absence of a high-contrast mode or a text-size adjustment feature highlighted a limitation. While the site is functional within accessibility guidelines, implementing optional features for customisation would enhance inclusivity (Nielsen, 2012).

### **11.3 User Feedback**

User feedback was gathered through informal testing sessions with peers, tutors, and friends in Mauritius. Their feedback offered valuable insights into the usability and reception of the site.

The most consistent positive feedback focused on the concept of the website. Users appreciated that it provided an authentic look at Mauritian food and culture, with a clean and approachable layout. The ability to browse food spots in a structured way was seen as a strength, especially for those unfamiliar with local options.

However, several users commented on the layout. While functional, some felt that the initial design lacked dynamism in how content was presented. This criticism echoed earlier feedback received during prototyping and prompted minor adjustments in colour balance and layout structure.

Another limitation highlighted by users was the lack of multilingual support. Given that Mauritius is a multicultural and multilingual society, users expressed a desire for French and Creole options in addition to English. This feedback validated my decision to postpone multilingual functionality to Phase 2 of the project.

Finally, the absence of a map-based navigation system for food and hiking spots was noted as a gap. Many users stated that this would enhance the experience

by providing a visual and geographic layer to the listings. This reinforced my future plan to implement a custom interactive map in the next development cycle.

## 11.4 Critical Reflection

Reflecting on the finished website, several strengths are apparent. The first is the custom WordPress theme, which demonstrated technical competence in PHP and the WordPress Codex. By building the theme from scratch, I achieved full control over templates and content structures, which is not always possible with pre-built themes (McAlister, 2019). This decision was time-consuming but ultimately gave the project a solid foundation.

Another strength is the performance optimisation. The use of WebP images, caching, and lazy loading significantly improved load times, making the site fast and responsive even on lower bandwidth connections. This aligns well with the user base, as many Mauritian users access websites primarily through mobile data.

However, there are also notable weaknesses. The absence of a custom map feature and multilingual support limited the site's scope. While these omissions were largely due to time constraints, they nonetheless reduced the website's immediate impact. In addition, while accessibility was addressed, more advanced features could have been implemented to further enhance inclusivity.

The learning curve of WordPress theme development posed another limitation. Much of the implementation process was consumed by researching Codex functions and experimenting with template hierarchies. This slowed down development, meaning that not all planned features were delivered on time. However, this challenge also significantly developed my technical abilities, making it a valuable long-term outcome despite the short-term trade-offs.

## 11.5 Future upgrade

The analysis of the current site, combined with user feedback and self-reflection, provides a clear roadmap for Phase 2 of the project. The following priorities have been identified:

1. **Interactive Custom Map** – An integrated map displaying food and hike spots would enhance user experience by providing a spatial dimension to

the listings. This feature would allow filtering by location and category, supporting both locals and tourists.

2. **Multilingual Functionality** – Introducing French and Creole alongside English would make the website accessible to a broader audience in Mauritius and beyond. A multilingual plugin will be tested and implemented, with the goal of ensuring seamless navigation across languages (Clarke, 2020).
3. **Advanced Custom Fields (ACF)** – Implementing a feature that displays whether food spots are currently open would add a practical and dynamic layer to the content. This would be especially useful for users planning their visits.
4. **Expanded Promotion Strategy** – Building on Instagram promotion, I plan to collaborate with Mauritian food influencers and use TikTok for short video storytelling. This will enhance visibility and engagement.
5. **Accessibility Enhancements** – Adding features such as a high-contrast toggle and text resizing options will make the site more inclusive for users with visual impairments.

Looking forward, scalability will also be considered. As content grows, the site structure may need to be expanded into categories such as street food, fine dining, and hiking trails. Similarly, hosting may need to evolve from shared hosting to a VPS or cloud hosting solution to accommodate increased traffic.

## 12. Reflection

### 12.1 Learning Journey

The development of my project represented one of the most intensive learning experiences of my academic and professional journey so far. Coming into the project, I had a foundational knowledge of HTML, CSS, and some exposure to WordPress. However, I had never created a custom WordPress theme from scratch. This became both the biggest challenge and the most rewarding aspect of the learning process.

Learning how to use the WordPress Codex to pull and push data between the CMS and the custom theme significantly expanded my technical skill set. I gained an understanding of template hierarchies, template parts, and page

templates, which gave me control over how content was structured and displayed. Although the process was frustrating at times, particularly when functions did not behave as expected, it forced me to troubleshoot, research, and problem-solve independently (McAlister, 2019).

Another key skill was performance optimisation. I learned to resize and compress images, use WebP formats, and implement lazy loading. These improvements were not simply technical but also conceptual, as I came to appreciate how performance directly impacts user experience and SEO rankings (Google, 2023).

Accessibility was another major area of growth. I became familiar with ARIA roles, alt text, and semantic HTML, as well as the use of testing tools such as WAVE and Axe DevTools. Initially, I underestimated accessibility, thinking of it as an afterthought. However, through testing and reading guidelines, I realised its importance in making a site usable for everyone, not just the average user (WebAIM, 2022).

The greatest challenge, however, was time management. Learning and implementing new skills in PHP and WordPress consumed much of my development schedule. This meant I had to postpone features like the custom interactive map and multilingual functionality. At first, I saw these delays as failures, but on reflection, I recognise that prioritising the build of a solid, functioning theme was the right decision.

Overall, the project was not just about coding or design — it was about building resilience, patience, and the ability to work with constraints.

## **12.2 What Worked Well**

Several aspects of the project worked particularly well. The first was the concept itself: a website showcasing authentic Mauritian food spots, including smaller local eateries that are often overshadowed by larger restaurants and resorts. Both tutors and peers consistently praised the originality and authenticity of the idea. This validation confirmed that the project addressed a genuine gap in existing platforms, which tend to focus on mainstream dining rather than grassroots culinary culture.

The second strength was the performance optimisation. By implementing caching, lazy loading, and image compression, I managed to achieve a

Lighthouse performance score of 89%, which is strong for a site with multiple images and dynamic content. This proved that I was able to apply best practices effectively, even while learning them.

Another success was the design identity. The decision to use the dodo bird as the logo was widely appreciated, as it connected directly to Mauritius's cultural identity and history. The use of a card-based layout for presenting eateries also worked well in practice, making the site visually organised and intuitive. The typography — Boldonse for headings and Open Sans for body text — provided good readability while supporting a modern but approachable aesthetic (Bringhurst, 2013).

Additionally, the decision to run user feedback sessions with tutors, peers, and Mauritian contacts helped validate design and usability choices. The feedback was constructive and enabled me to make targeted improvements, such as balancing the colour palette and adjusting layouts for clarity.

Finally, my promotion strategy on Instagram worked effectively. By posting stories and content linked to the website, I was able to generate traffic and build initial engagement. This proved the project was not just a theoretical exercise but one with real-world application and reach.

### **12.3 What You'd Do Differently**

Despite the successes, there are several areas I would approach differently if given the chance.

The first is project planning and time allocation. While I did use a Gantt chart, I underestimated how long it would take to learn and implement WordPress theme development. As a result, key features such as the interactive custom map and multilingual functionality had to be postponed. In future projects, I would build in more flexibility and buffer time for learning curves, ensuring that ambitious features could be tested earlier in the process.

Another area I would improve is the information-gathering process. Because I was in the UK during the project, I had to rely on friends and a local influencer to provide images and information about eateries. While this collaboration was useful, it limited the consistency and depth of my content. If I had the opportunity, I would invest more time in building a structured network of local

contributors to provide regular updates, ensuring the website grows more dynamically.

From a technical perspective, I would focus earlier on version control using GitHub rather than relying solely on local backups. While I did maintain backups on my external hard drive, GitHub would have provided a more professional workflow with version tracking, collaboration potential, and cloud accessibility (Chacon & Straub, 2014).

I would also pay more attention to advanced accessibility features, such as providing a high-contrast mode and text-size adjusters. While my site met basic accessibility standards, I now see that more proactive design choices could make it genuinely inclusive rather than merely compliant.

Finally, I would broaden my SEO strategy. While Yoast SEO provided a strong foundation, I relied too heavily on its defaults. More in-depth keyword research, backlink strategies, and content marketing could significantly improve the site's reach.

## **12.4 Impact on Personal Development**

This project had a profound impact on my development as both a designer and a digital practitioner. It required me to merge creative and technical skills, balancing visual design, content strategy, and technical build in a way I had not done before.

On a personal level, the project boosted my confidence in tackling unfamiliar challenges. Before starting, I found the idea of building a WordPress theme intimidating. By the end, not only had I built a functioning theme, but I had also integrated optimisations, accessibility features, and SEO strategies. This experience has reinforced my belief that I can take on complex projects, break them down, and learn through practice.

Creatively, the project allowed me to explore how design can communicate cultural identity. Using the dodo bird logo and highlighting authentic Mauritian food spots gave me an opportunity to reflect on my own cultural heritage and share it with a global audience. In this way, the project was both professional and personal.

The project also improved my problem-solving mindset. Instead of seeing obstacles as failures, I began to see them as part of the learning process. For

example, postponing the custom map feature initially felt like a setback, but it also gave me a clear roadmap for future development. This mindset shift will serve me well in both academic and professional contexts.

Finally, the experience has given me a new awareness of sustainability and inclusivity in digital design. Considering performance, energy use, and accessibility made me more conscious of how design decisions affect real users and the wider environment (Boellstorff, 2021).

## **12.5 Future Career/Project Pathways**

Looking forward, this project has opened several pathways for my career and future projects.

First, the skills I developed in WordPress theme development, PHP, and accessibility are highly transferable to freelance or agency work. Many small businesses require customised websites, and my ability to build themes from scratch could become a valuable service offering.

Second, the project has positioned me to continue developing the Mauritius Bites website as a live platform. Phase 2 of the project will focus on introducing multilingual functionality, a custom interactive map, and expanded categories. This will transform the site from a small portfolio piece into a resource with commercial and cultural value.

Third, the project has strengthened my interest in UX/UI design and content strategy. I enjoyed designing the user journeys, creating personas, and structuring content. These skills align well with careers in UX research, product design, or digital content planning.

The experience has also given me confidence in pursuing opportunities within the tourism and cultural sectors. Mauritius Bites could expand beyond food to include hiking trails, cultural landmarks, and experiences, making it a broader lifestyle and tourism platform.

Finally, this project has inspired me to think about the intersection of design, culture, and technology in my future work. By blending storytelling, authenticity, and digital tools, I see opportunities to create meaningful projects that celebrate identity while serving practical needs.

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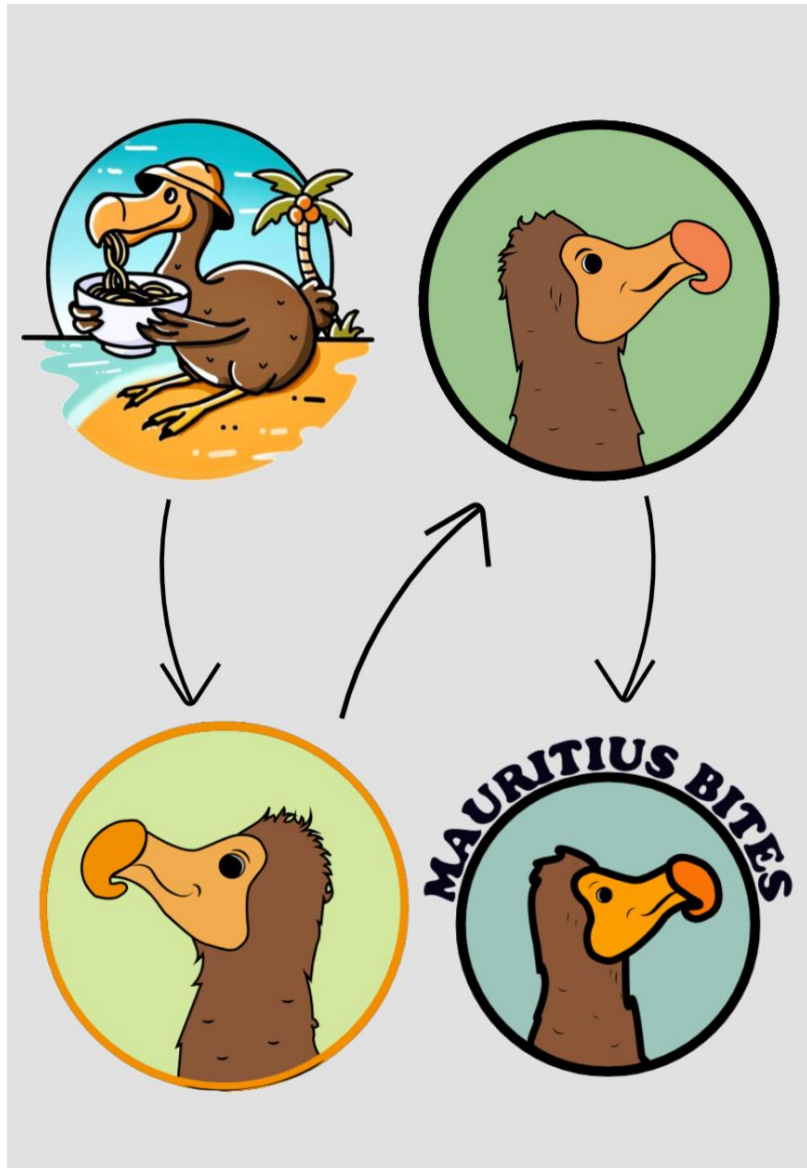
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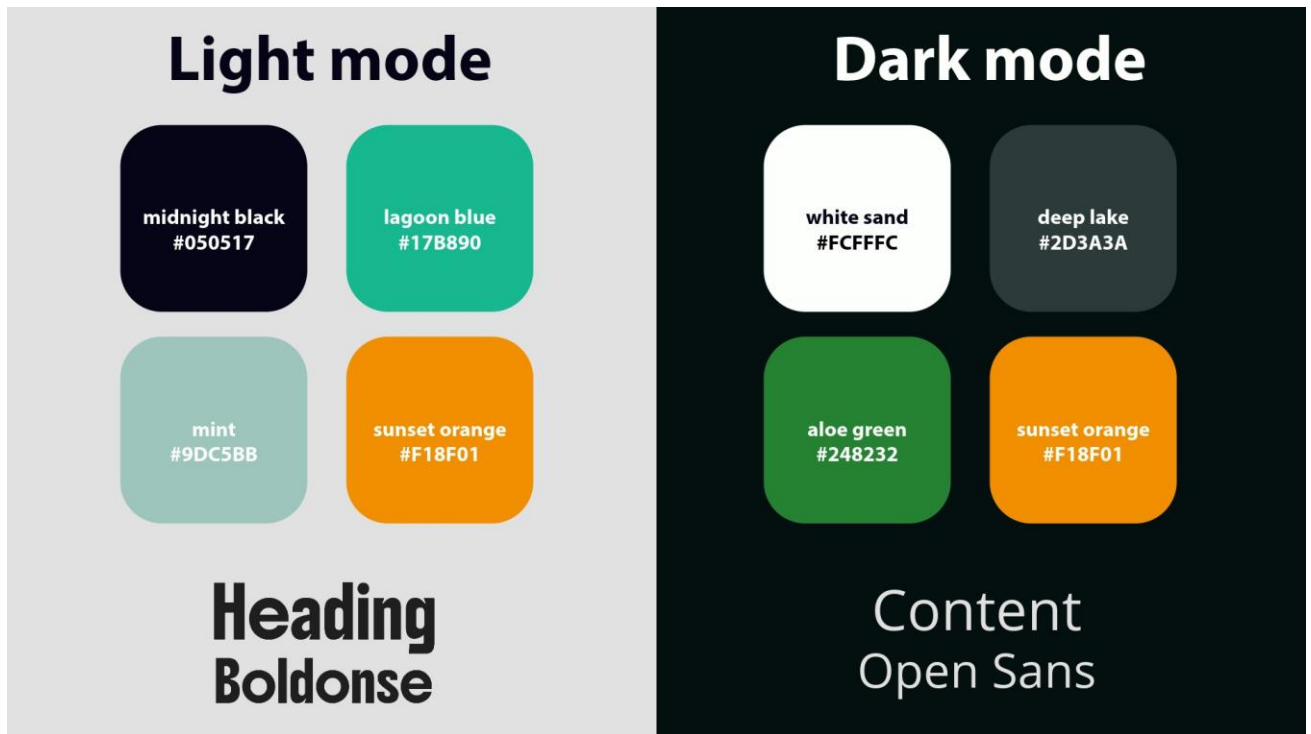
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## 14. Appendix

### **Appendix a**



Appendix b



Appendix c

