

# Memorandum

To: Dr. Nicole St. Germaine  
From: Esteban Gerena-Marcano  
Subject: Website critique report  
Date: February 13, 2026

## **Introduction:**

The purpose of this memo is to provide critique for a website and to test my knowledge of web publishing. The website that I have chosen for this is the game *Stardew Valley*, a popular farming simulator game. The domain name <https://www.stardewvalley.net/> very appropriately shows the name of the game. The reason I chose this website was due to the fact that I myself enjoy the game, and as the game has only one creator I thought the website may be interesting to critique as it should be the work of one man. Because of that, I had the thought that it may not hold up to the standards of web design. Regardless of my enjoyment of the game, this critique of the website will be without bias, as a game being good doesn't make a website good.

## **Website purpose:**

The purpose of the website is to appeal to the fans of the game by giving information on what may be coming to the game, merchandise, and forums to chat with others that play the game as well. It can also be seen as a way to advertise the game itself. It has a wide variety of things to offer to the average fan, as well as things that may intrigue others to purchase and play the game themselves. It has links to the wiki as well, another facet that aids the purpose of appealing to the fans and aiding them. Overall, the content that the website contains is very helpful to current players, and does a good job of enticing others to play the game. It has little shortcoming, but shortcomings nonetheless, which will be addressed.

## **Audience:**

As stated in the website purpose section, the audience of the website is people that play the game or may be interested in the game/genre of the game. That's a very surface level way of describing it. The game is an E10+ game, which means that it's suitable for the ages of 10 and up, of course there's no way of telling if anyone younger plays the game, but its audience is for 10 and up players. It also appeals to the audience of gamers that enjoy the farming simulator genre. All of this creates the intended audience of the website, which would be 10 and older people that may already play the game, or are visiting the website because they like the genre and are interested in the game. It can be inferred that the age of the audience would be more on the young and young adult area, as the design of the website and the game itself are very vibrant and hold onto a more pixel style, appealing to those born between the 90s to early 2000s. The forum for the game also holds polls for the age of players, but that can be less trustworthy. However, it showed that around 50% of the voters were within the age range of 20-30 years, which is around the demographic assumed for the game and website. On top of that, Stardew

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Valley itself was able to fit a niche genre at a very specific time, which allowed for the game and site to garner such a large audience, “By filling this niche, Stardew Valley appealed to players looking for a relaxing, community-oriented gaming experience.” (Pedras et al. 2024). Because of the filling of this niche the audience for the game, and in turn the site, is very large and growing every day, with no way to truly measure it.

## Design criteria:

The website's design does a good job of being very connected to the game itself. It does a good job of being minimalistic on all pages, only showing necessary information. It does struggle with the freedom that the user has, as a few of the pages on the site take you to different URLs and require backtracking, which can be seen as tedious. Other than that the website's design is very in line with what it's advertising, and the colors also do a good job of grabbing the attention of its intended audience. It has different tabs for whatever someone may be on the site for, be it the forum, the blog, the merchandise, the FAQ or the wiki. It's a very streamlined experience with no extra fluff. It does a very good job of following the guidelines set by Nielsen's Web Writing, it's very easy to follow and very concise.

The colors used in the website are as previously mentioned, very vibrant and earthy, which are in line with the tone of the game. They use a consistent color scheme of greens, blues, yellows, and browns. The usage of colors are very in line with the genre of the game, using earth tones for a farming based game, allowing for a pleasant experience while visiting the site, while also alluding to the idea of what the game may be about. The colors, while vibrant, aren't in your face, or difficult to look at, they're very simple and soft, giving a homely feeling while also being colorful enough to appeal to the demographic of the game. It keeps the same background throughout all of the pages on the site, aside from the wiki as it's a different site altogether, which may aid in the streamlined experience that the site provides with little to no loading times. The merchandise shop shares the same aesthetic. With the tabs up top being white they don't necessarily offer enough contrast to garner attention, as they blend in nicely with the blue. It's an understandable choice as it keeps the earthy tones in line. However, the tab may change to yellow if that's the page you are currently on. However, regardless of the lack of color for the tabs, it does a good job highlighting what is and isn't clickable as only the white tabs up top respond to being clicked, which makes the site very scannable. This is inline with what's written in Nielsen's online published *Writing for the Web*, it recommends to highlight liberally and to highlight key information (Nielsen et al. 1995) All in all the website does a very good job with its color scheme.

The site also does a very good job with the images and graphics shown on the pages, as shown below the home page shows the title of the game and a background of the



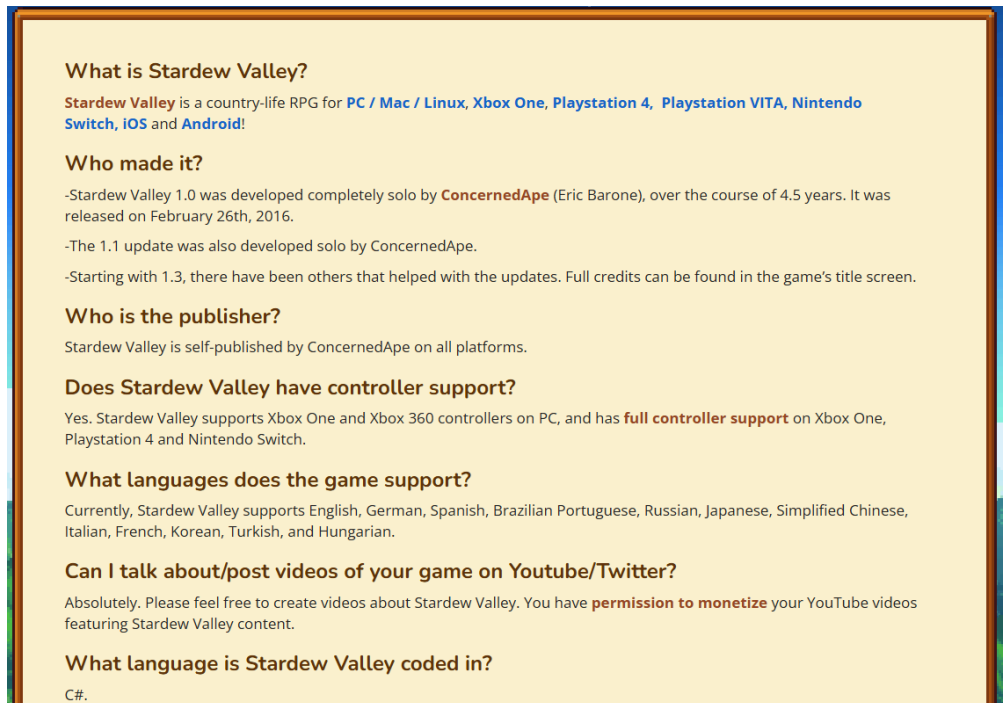
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game's landscape. It shows exactly what you can expect from the site, and shows exactly what you'd get from the game, if you scroll down it provides a slideshow of many different areas and looks to the game, allowing for new viewers to see what the game area looks like, and what it may be about. The site does a good job with the images being welcoming and showing what to expect.

## Writing and grammar:

The site has a very small amount of writing that can truly be critiqued, as I won't be critiquing the writing in the blog, as I feel that isn't really something that would be critiqued when speaking about the site as a whole.

However, the writing on the home page and the very small amount used in the merchandise are very well written and follow the theme of the game extremely well. They don't use any complicated grammar or language that would be confusing to anyone in general. It has very minimalistic writing, even in the FAQ it is very direct and to the point. Making it very easy to understand, the site does a good job of using language that anyone, not just the target audience, can understand.

A screenshot of the Stardew Valley FAQ page, enclosed in a yellow border. The page contains several sections with bolded headers and corresponding text. The sections are: 'What is Stardew Valley?' (describing the game as a country-life RPG for various platforms), 'Who made it?' (listing Eric Barone as the sole developer), 'Who is the publisher?' (stating it is self-published), 'Does Stardew Valley have controller support?' (confirming support for Xbox One, PS4, and Switch), 'What languages does the game support?' (listing 11 languages), 'Can I talk about/post videos of your game on Youtube/Twitter?' (encouraging user-generated content), and 'What language is Stardew Valley coded in?' (listing C#).

## Navigation and Organization:

The site uses a very streamlined layout, with tabs at the top showing the different areas that the site provides. It is a very simple experience, with no difficulty navigating the site. It doesn't have any prerequisites and is modular, it allows for people to move within the links of the site very easily. As stated before it follows a lot of Nielsen's heuristics, with very minimal fluff on the site, very secure, and no errors from what I've gathered. It does have the issue previously mentioned, that the links to the forum and wiki are links to different sites with different URLs, with no button back to the main site, forcing the user to backtab or just go to a new tab and reopen the site. The merchandise section does a similar thing, but it links to different sites that sell the merchandise. Aside from the issue with user freedom, the navigation and organization are very well done.

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## Conclusion:

The website does what it intends very well, it has very little shortcomings, while simultaneously doing everything that it needs to do at a very solid level. It has great imaging, colors, navigation, and appeals to its audience at first glance of the site. Of course the issue with the links taking you to different sites can be a bit of an annoyance, but other than that issue, it is a very solid site.

## Citations:

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