International Burch University

E-business web sites designing
Research Essay

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There are many web sites that reached success because of a good web design. When we say a web design is good, it doesn't mean that the web design has to have too much decorative such as too much colors or graphics. A web design is good when it is naturally pleasing to the eye of the online users, and, more importantly, when it is able to satisfy and provide the needs of the users. A good web design must be convenient to use, providing users with systematic approaches to do what they need (Twist). Systematic approaches mean that the web design must provide the users with functions and buttons that will help them do what they need to do and go where they need to go (online speaking of course). This characteristics lead to usability features that must always be a part of a good web design. Some examples of successful web sites because of a good web design are Yahoo, Google, E-bay, and Amazon. These web sites can be basically characterized to have simple, manageable, and usable web designs.

Academics have similar opinions when it comes to the importance of website usability and accessibility. Nielson (2000) argues that website usability isn't a luxury anymore but a necessity. They outline how easy it is for customers to leave your site and go to another; they discuss how "low switching costs" make it easy for users to go from one site to another. Similarly Rosenfeld and Morville (2000) write about how short the "attention span" of internet users is, how users often decide they don't like a website before the page even has a chance to fully load. Krugg (2005) in his book agrees with the idea that web users have an incredibly short attention span. He further develops the argument by outlining how research has shown that users often scan the web page rather than spending time reading it. He even entitled his book "Don't make me think" Krugg (2005) to describe the mindset of the average internet user. It is clear from both the work of academics and our own individual experience that we as website users are notoriously fickle and that we will not put up with slow loading pages, badly designed navigation, overly complicated pages or other design errors.

When we are designing a website we must firstly consider what it will be used for. Rosenfeld and Morville (2000) liken the work of a web designer to that of an architect. They stress the importance of considering the use of the web site just like an architect must consider the use of the building. Architects would design a home differently from a hospital just like a web designer would design an e-store differently from a small business website. Hence in order to discuss the importance of the factors that affect the usability of website we must firstly try to classify the uses of various types of websites. There are many different types of websites that were built with different aims and objectives in mind. Some examples include forums such as boards.ie, social networks like facebook.com and classified advertising websites like craigslist. There are hundreds of categories and sub categories of websites, covering all of them would be impossible. For this reason I will focus on three broad categories; they are corporate websites, community websites and e-stores.
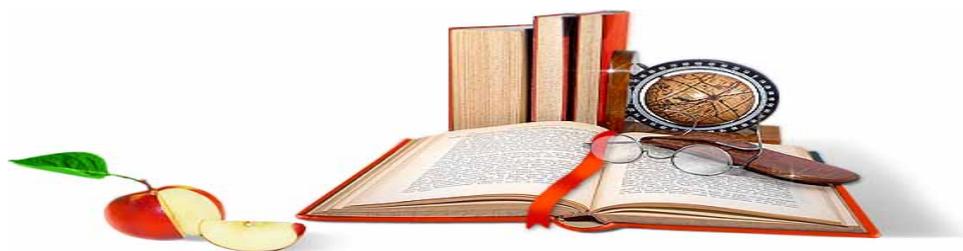
Corporations are constantly working to maintain an image of trust worthiness and quality. They use various marketing tools to impact upon consumers. Kuzic and Dawson (2004) in their paper discuss how the quality of a company's website impacts on the overall image of the company especially among those who were studying or working in the area of information systems. They investigated which features of a website most impact upon the user experience and image of the corporation. They sampled a large number of students and concluded that factors such as "the ability to enter the site without having to download software; quick to download web pages; as well as easily readable, clear and easy to understand web pages" were among the highest ranked features. It is obvious that the downloading of software to view a website has a significant impact on the user experience.

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