Chapter 6
The Influence of User Experience and Traffic in Higher Education Websites

Esther Gani
Kaduna State University, Nigeria

Foluso Ayeni
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0989-7056
Metro State University, USA

Victor Mbarika
East Carolina University, USA

Abdullahi Musa
Kaduna State University, Nigeria

Oneurine Ngwa
ICT University, Cameroon

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the influence of users' experience and traffic in promoting the visibility of higher education institution websites in low- and middle-income settings. The authors adopted a cross-sectional survey design with quantitative approaches. Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire. A sample of 10 was drawn from a population of 46 higher education institutions. Website traffic is moderated in the relationship between users' experience features and website visibility. Users' experience features had positive and significant effects on website visibility. The study confirms website visibility as an underpinning outflow in the relationship between user experience features and visibility of higher education institution websites in low- and middle-income settings.

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital world, having a high-quality website (Król & Zdonek, 2020) has become essential for organizations globally. An organization's website is the virtual storefront (Pantano, 2016) and key interaction (Castro, 2019) between consumers, clients, investors, and the general public needs to be well-designed and managed. A well-designed website (Hasbullah et al., 2016) is more than just an online presence (Strzelecki, 2020); it is an extension of an organization's credibility, facilitating open communication and information sharing (Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2019).

A high-quality website exhibiting goods, services, and company identity, greatly enhancing the visibility and familiarity (Vállez & Ventura, 2020) with an organization. Furthermore, it promotes online platforms for engagement and research (Wahba & Barhoom, 2019); by connecting organizations with a worldwide audience. As a result, strategic ownership of a high-quality website is essential to an organization's success in the digital era and is also a modern need.

Despite the efficacy of websites, the consequences of poor website quality are increasing and are felt on a global scale spanning billions of online platforms. Globally there are over 1.13 billion websites out of which only 1.5 billion are visible (Haan, 2023), and 82% are inactive meaning that 200,121.724 are not visible none draw traffic (Siteefy, 2023). Also, about 71% of organizations now have website in 2023 (NJ, 2023), while 21% of them report low traffic and visibility (Gunnell, 2023) on their websites. More so, of over 100 people that visit a (Tandoc & Maitra, 2018) a website only 4.23% would interact or complete a task (Lewis & Sauro, 2021). In spite of this prediction of poor visibility and low traffic (Haan, 2023), the cost of developing and maintaining website by institutions globally still remain a nightmare.

Although studies were conducted aimed at improving the quality of websites to drive traffic such as website optimization (Vyas, 2019), commercialization of websites, website data mining (Ziakis et al., 2019), and website trading (Hodge et al., 2020) yet the problem still remains globally with educational institutions suffering more. Educational institutions suffer more because most studies on website quality to promote user experience and visibility have largely been in on a general perspective. This leaves a dire knowledge gap in this investigation of Educational Institutions. Improving the quality of websites for optimal visibility and traffic in educational institutions calls for a fresh perspective. This study in aims to investigate these issues on higher education institution websites using the quantitative methodology.

The development of the website is rooted in the World Wide Web (WWW), which is an incarnation of the Internet. The internet was established by a group of scientists led by Paul Baran, Lawrence Robert, Leonard Kleinrock, Donald Davies, Bob Khan, Paul Mockapetris, Tim Berners-Lee, and Marc Andreessen. The Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET) was created by the group to provide network switching, initially for military usage during conflicts. By the year 1965, military computers could interact with one another. In 1970, Vinton Cerf developed the Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) to facilitate smooth communication between several computers.

The World Wide Web was created in 1989 by Tim Berners-Lee at CERN to facilitate automated information exchange among scientists worldwide. In 1990, he made the code available, and in 1993, the first website devoted to WWW was launched. In 2013, CERN upgraded the website. In 1990, Berners-Lee and Robert Cailliau formalized a hypertext internet project supporting so many websites.

Website publicity increased when Marc Andreessen and his colleagues at the University of Illinois released the Mosaic browser in 1993. In 1994, China launched its first internet connection and original website content. Internet browsers such as Yahoo and Amazon.com joined the White House in launching www.whitehouse.gov. In 1996, Nokia released the first mobile phones with internet access. After

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