Website Usability Analysis of Non Profit Organizations: A Case Study of Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Nonprofit organizations are an important pillar of any society, which specifically serve under privileged sections of society. Modern Information and communication technologies have huge potential to benefit the working processes of such organizations but deploying software application in such settings is quite challenging. These challenges emerge due to shortage of skilled employees, limited funds and weak organizational structures. In order to further understand the technological implications in such settings this paper explores the websites of different nonprofit organizations of Pakistan to understand usability problems. In order to gather empirical data, it prepared questionnaire mainly focusing on Jakob Nielson’s heuristics. These questionnaires were distributed to final year undergraduate students taking a Human Computer Interaction module. The findings highlight serious usability issues in these websites. These findings are helpful for the nonprofit organizations to improve these websites for better information access.

Keywords: Advocacy, Digital Divide, Nonprofit Organizations, Technology Adoption, Usability Evaluation

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of nonprofit organizations in supporting public and forming a better society is quite known (cf. Fisher, 1998; Mercer, 2002). As governments are backing out from their traditional role of benefiting citizens, nonprofit organizations have become more pivotal. In order to effectively work these nonprofit organizations rely on donors, governmental agencies, collaborating nonprofits and volunteers. There is a need for effective communication to optimize the activities of these organizations as some may work in field and some only focus on advocacy, while some may indulge in both activities. The application area and operating boundary (field/advocacy) may impose additional constraints on working of these nonprofits.

Modern information and communication technologies have helped in improving organizational processes in different domains (cf. Scherlis & Eisenberg, 2003; Li & Liu, 2008).
Similarly, modern technological setups can benefit nonprofit organizations to improve organizational processes. Tasks like collaboration among stakeholders, communication and feedback can be supported by modern technologies. In order to be successful such systems need to be aligned to the work practices of human. In this paper our focus is limited to usability problems in the websites of nonprofit organizations. In order to gather empirical evidences, we focused on three websites belonging to Pakistani nonprofit organizations.

Remaining of article is structured as follows: section 2 discusses related work and section 3 discusses methodology and results of empirical data and followed by conclusion in section 4.

2. NON PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Nonprofit organizations have been recently an emerging research topic. There are many empirical studies focusing on nonprofit organizations. Many researchers have explored the benefits of information technology applications for nonprofit organizations (cf. O’Donnell, 2001; Cammaerts, & Van Audenhove, 2003; Pini et al., 2004; O’Donnell & Ramaiali, 2004; Cheta, 2004; Edwards, 2004; O’Donnell et al., 2007; Saeed et al., 2008). Many researchers have involved nonprofit actors in the design process to gain technological sustainability (cf. Merkel et al., 2004; Rohde, 2004; Farooq, 2005; Merkel et al., 2005).

In our earlier work we have looked at the knowledge sharing and organizing practices of activists (cf. Saeed et al., 2010; Saeed et al., 2011), use of collaboration space and mailing list by activists (cf. Saeed & Rohde, 2010; Saeed et al., 2011a). Similarly, we have also focused on Pakistani nonprofit sector and looked at ICT usage by different NGOs (Saeed et al., 2008; Saeed et al. 2010). Despite these contributions there is no specific contribution highlighting the usability evaluation of nonprofit websites. Keeping this in view we evaluated websites of three nonprofit settings in Pakistan.

3. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Usability evaluation is an important tool to evaluate the design strengths and weaknesses of any website (Saeed et al., 2013; Saeed & Amjad, 2013). In order to evaluate the usability aspects of nonprofit organizations websites, we carried out a survey. We catered three different nonprofits websites of Pakistan, which were World Wide fund for Nature (WWF), Care, Pakistan and Children First, Pakistan. They are encoded as A, B and C respectively in rest of paper. For this research we had 91 participants, 71 were male and 20 were female. All the subjects were final year undergraduate students who were taking a course of Human Computer Interaction. These students were specifically selected due to their background. There were total seventeen questions and each question had multiple choices like Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Agree. The questions were mainly based on Nielsone’s heuristics (Nielsen, 1994).

Easy navigation and finding required information quickly is an important characteristic of highly usable systems. For the WWF website out of total 91 respondents, 54 agreed that the website is easy to use. Another 27 respondents rated this feature as strongly agree and no one strongly disagreed with it. 8 were neutral about it and 4 disagreed. Users gave response about Care website that it is easy to use, 42 strongly agreed, 34 agreed, 4 were neutral and only 3 respondents disagreed. No one strongly disagreed. For Children First website 38 disagreed, 28 strongly agreed on ease of use, 42 strongly agreed and 44 responses were strongly disagree (see Figure 1).

Another important feature of website is that the content is understandable, content is in simple language which a layman can easily understand. For WWF website 49 agreed on this feature, 18 gave responses of strongly agree, 15 respondents were neutral and only
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