# THE CONTRIBUTION OF WEBSITE ATTRIBUTE TO STUDENT SATISFACTION. (A CASE STUDY OF KNUST)

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# ABSTRACT

Technology plays a powerful role in the life of today's students, and institutions can no longer satisfy students' needs through classroom-based instruction alone. Facing many rapid changes and challenges brought by new technologies and competitive pressure, higher education institutions are increasingly focusing on determining the right model to integrate technologies in teaching and learning in order to fulfil students' needs and provide education and skills needed for the future society. The study, therefore seeks to establish the contribution of website attributes to student's satisfaction using KNUST website as a case study.

The study was descriptive. Primary data were captured through the use of questionnaires administered to KNUST students. Population of the study was all the students' body of KNUST. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 400 students from the population. Responses were coded using T-Test and Linear Regression for the analysis. Gathered empirical data suggested that Website Attributes contributed to student's satisfaction. Latent variables such as Usability, Credibility and Novelty of the website attribute have contributed to student's satisfaction. The researcher therefore recommended that, Tertiary institutions should measure student's satisfaction on the usage of website to identify areas of weakness since it adds up to total satisfaction of students.

# Key words: Website Attribute, Contribution, Student Satisfaction, Competition, Technology.

# **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

World Wide Web has in the past and a continuous phenomenon, ensured that, access to information and communication is enhanced globally. It does not only pertain to communication but also stretches to encompass activities such as exploration, entertainment, banking, commerce, employment, transportation and human relations as well as learning (Huang, 2003: Quarshie and Ami-Narh, 2012). Efforts geared towards the improvement in the efficacy of this technological medium have no doubt Nielsen (2000), postulates that, the number of web pages have been projected to experience a boost in number in 2005 through to 2007 recording as much as 880 million sites. It is inferred from this fact put forward by Nielsen that, as a result of this fast increasing preference of communication, there has been equivalent rise in interest in the identification of features that enhances user satisfaction. Furthermore, users of the web look out for various web attributes or features before making a choice as this depends on the particular need of the user (Singh and Dalal, 1999). User satisfaction tends to be key as the more user friendly a websites tends to be, equates to the level of patronage of the web type. This claim is supported by Lee and Kim, 2002 as they suggests that, the increase in the development of websites is equally matched with interest in identifying principles and features that can enhance user satisfaction. Furthermore Nanehkaran (2013) argues that, websites are effective and gateway to a corporation business, product and service brand to which much attention must be paid to in order appeal to their clients (students) and can be used as a marketing strategy to widen the profit of the corporation.

With reference to the past decade (1999-2011), internet usage in Ghana has been increasing each year with an annual increase of 2.85% each year (Quarshie and Ami-Narh, 2012). In 2011, 2,085,501 people out of the entire population of 24,791,073 were internet user in Ghana. Out of this figure 45.6% of the internet users were for educational purposes as against 33.75% for new and 6.35% for commerce. One major issue that has emerged in the use of this technology is the privacy, trust and quality of product. User satisfaction in terms of the usage of website applications has been established to be associated with the usability and design features (Peterson and Spreng, 1997). They further identified the attributes or features of the web to be the download delay, content, navigation, interactivity and responsiveness. These signify the relationship that exists between the web attributes and the user satisfaction.

The availability and use of computing devices such as smart phones, computers, tablets, among others and, internet services have necessitated the growth of electronic commerce. Several studies have been conducted in the area of website attributes on student satisfaction, (Quarshie Ami-Narh 2012). In any case, none of them investigated the contribution of website attribute to student satisfaction in Ghana, all the attention was shifted to the website and its advantages and even those who investigated into the role of website attribute did not pay much attention to student satisfaction. It is not enough to know the degree to which students are satisfied, until you investigate some of the factors that contribute to student's satisfaction using KNUST website as a case study. Two key questions framed the research. First, the benefits students derive from the use of school websites and second, the local websites attributes contribution to KNUST student's satisfaction.

#### **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### 2.1 History of Website

The World Wide Web has become the medium of choice for the distribution and use of information by individuals, teams, organizations, and communities. Web sites, the collection of web pages that make up the World Wide Web are the fundamental means by which that information is retrieved and distributed. Inevitably, the evolution of technology and information technology has impacted the business world and human endeavours as the technology is used in industries, institutions/ organizations and corporate bodies. In the 1970s website emerged as an innovative technology to transfer funds; however this technology was only known to the large corporate bodies and few small businesses. The kind of transaction and participation increased through the introduction of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) that made the technology accessible to all industries (Tian and Stewart, 2008). EDI facilitated the exchange of business documents such as exchange information, purchase orders/ place orders from one computer to another (Nanehkaran, 2013; Tian and Stewart, 2008)

According to Nanehkaran (2013), there are various frameworks that can be used to classify the types of website but for the purpose of this paper it is classified into five; Business-to-Business (B2B), Business-to-Consumer (B2C), Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C), Consumer-to-business (C2B) and Mobile Commerce (M-Commerce).

# 2.2 Benefits of website

Website has been and continuous to be of great importance and advantage to current business and transactions operation. Benefits of websites have been identified to be of advantage to three categories of stakeholders; organizations, the society and individual consumers (Introduction to e- commerce website, 1996).

# 2.2.1 Benefits to Organization

### - Expansion in market horizon

With the help of website, the scope of the market place has been increased locally and continues to increase. Website also expands the horizon of the market to the international levels and standards. This signifies a market with no geographical boundaries. Website ensures that with the limited influx of capital, a company is able to reach a lot more students, the best suppliers and the business partners over the world very easily and quickly (Introduction to e-commerce website, 1996: Benefits and challenges of website, 2013).

- Mass Customization

The use of Website has unearthed a more convenient satisfaction to the user in terms of securing goods and services on a large scale. Introduction to e-commerce website (1996) identifies that, the pull-type processing ensures convenience as there is the possibility for goods and services to be customized according to the consumer's preference.

Lower telecommunication cost

The adoption of Website for business activities has the benefit of a lower cost of telecommunication as it involves the use of the internet which is relatively cheaper as compared to value added network. The value added network (VAN) basically refers to leased telephone lines that are solely reserved for the use for an organization and its authorized partners. The use of the fax also signifies how cheaper it is than direct calls (Introduction to e-commerce website, 1996)

• A 24-hour service

Website provides an all-round 24hour platform where business is transacted. With this, there is constant interaction between partners, students and suppliers at any time (Introduction to website, 1996).

- Ability for creating highly specialized businesses

Website makes provision for dealing in specialized business activities. For instance, female jewelleries can be purchased in jewellery shop in the physical world. With such transaction, female's jewellery can be ordered from <u>www.jewelry.com</u> (Benefits and Challenges of website, 2013).

### 2.2.2 Benefits to the Consumer

Another stakeholder that benefits from website is the consumer and those advantages have been enumerated below;

Opportunity to make affordable choices

Electronic commerce makes available a lot of choices to the consumer. There are a variety of shops and platforms from where orders can be placed. This gives an advantage of having the luxury of comparing prices and qualities of products and services within the shortest possible time.

- Ensures quick delivery of products

Website ensures the quick delivery of products. This is most suitable when the product in question is a digitized product.

- Easy access and exchange of detailed information

Consumers are also privileged to the easy and fast access to detailed and concise information. This is mostly received within seconds rather than the traditional days or weeks delivery period. Electronic commerce also allows students to interact with other students, partners and suppliers.

- Electronic commerce facilitates competition

The increase in website platforms ensures the availability of numerous products of similar prices and qualities. The wide range and variety of suppliers and products result in competition among these platforms and subsequently, significant discount. These discounts benefit the consumers and ensures in the affordability of prices of products and services.

- Electronic commerce makes it possible to participate in virtual auctions.

# 2.2.3 Benefits to the Society

This makes reference to the aggregate advantages derived by the collection of individuals. In Benefits and Limitations of website, (2013), the following societal benefits have been highlighted below;

- Results in less movement

Electronic commerce allows its users (individuals) to surf the internet and transact businesses from the comfort of the homes. With this, there is less human movement and travelling for the purposes of shopping and conducting business transactions. This results in less traffic on the roads and reduction in pollution from such phenomenon.

- Allows merchandise to be sold at lower prices

Electronic commerce ensures that some merchandise to be sold at rather lower prices. This ensures financial accessibility for less affluent people to secure goods and services. This results in increase in the standard of living.

- Electric commerce makes available product and services to third world countries

With the emergence of electronic commerce, products and services that hitherto, were available only in the developed countries have now flooded the developing countries as well.

# - It facilitates delivery of public services

Public services such as health care, education and social services with the involvement of websites facilitate the distribution of such services at reduced prices and improved quality. Health care services have now reached in the remote areas. Also, answers to medical questions can be obtained with a simple click on the internet. The opportunity to learn over the internet and acquire college degrees, masters and PhDs is also possible (Introduction to website, 1996).

# 2.3 Web Attributes

Huang, 2003 defines web attributes as the features or the aspects of a websites. He further explains that users of the web regard it as a bundle of features that comes along with different capacities to satisfy users. Web attributes is very crucial as it has a direct bearing on a user's choice of web. Huang, 2003 further identifies complexity, novelty and interactivity as the three broad attribute of websites;

- Complexity

This refers to the amount of information that a site is seen to offer taking into consideration aspects such as the number of attributes, the number of alternatives as well as the variation in the provided information (Huang, 2003; Campbell, 1988).

- Novelty

Novelty refers to the feature of web attributes that users find unexpected and unfamiliar. Novelty is often conceptualized as the direct opposite of familiarity and it is clearly associated with the lack of experience with the use of the website. Novelty can as well be created by the freshness of the content and innovation in information technology (Huang, 2003),

- Interactivity

This particular web attribute is described by Huang, 2003 as that attribute which generally shows the extent of exchange of information between a website and its user. This attribute is however identified as that attribute that distinguishes websites from other media. However, the following attributes are related to the interactivity of a website (Burgoon, Bonito, Bengsten & Ramirez, 1999/2000);

- Responsiveness;

This refers to the degree with which a website responds to the needs of its users. An example can be sited in an e-mail management system

- Navigability;

This shows how well a website is seen to have limitless connectedness and is able to establish links with other sites. This is also accompanied with minimal effort to move through to other relevant sites.

- Individualization

This establishes the extent to a site is considered to provide information that can be personalized to the unique needs of the website user.

- Synchronicity;

Synchronicity signifies the rate at which information is made available to users. Online student services make synchronicity possible.

- Reciprocity

This shows the extent to which there exist a two way exchange of information between the website and the user.

- Participation

This technological attribute tells the degree with which there is interaction between the site and its users. This may be the situation where students are given the opportunity to modify the site to their satisfaction.

- Demonstrability

This explains the extent to which a site is perceived to incorporate human features to a site. In other words, it reflects the media richness of a site.

# 2.4 Student Satisfaction

Student satisfaction has been extensively debated as organizations gradually attempt to measure it. As per Gustafsson (2005), "student satisfaction is a student's overall evaluation of the performance of an offering to date". This overall satisfaction has strong positive impact on student loyalty intentions across a wide range of product and service categories. Student satisfaction can be experienced in a variety of situations and connected to both goods and services. It is a highly personal assessment that is greatly affected by student expectations. Satisfaction also is based on the student's experience of both contacts with the organization and personal outcomes.

# 2.5 Online student satisfaction

Academic research has typically showed the evaluation of student satisfaction as disconfirmation of expectations (Oliver 1997). In the multi-attribute model of student satisfaction (Oliver 1997, Ch.2–4; Mittal, Ross and Baldasare 1998), a consumer compares the perceived performance on an attribute with a pre-consumption standard or expectation, formed from prior purchase experience and external

information. Overall satisfaction is a function of the extent of the multiple attribute disconfirmations, and mediates their effects on behavioral intentions. The determinants of online consumer satisfaction could be different from those for offline consumer satisfaction (Shankar, Smith and Rangaswarmy 2003), as the online consumer is both a shopper and a computer user (Koufaris2002). Consumers cannot use all five senses to make online purchase decisions; instead, they are confronted by limited representations such as photographs and text descriptions. Therefore, online decisions are also responsive to well-designed web pages and powerful web features, such as recommender systems and one-click checkouts (Koufaris 2002). The dual identity of the online consumer as a traditional shopper and a computer user means that attracting and forming emotional connectional with students not only depends on marketing appeal, but also on the technical support provided (Straub and Watson 2001). The online student not only has expectations about the marketing mix (e.g., prices, product assortment), but also has expectations about system issues, such as loading speed.

### **3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research design adopted for the study was the descriptive, this involves the description of the variables web attributes and what entails user satisfaction. The study also included a diagnostic aspect as it also seeks to establish the association or relationship between variables. Both primary and secondary data sources were used, the primary data was obtained directly from the field by the use of questionnaires and interviews and the secondary data obtained were from text books, academic journals, records and databases. The population for the study was all the students' body in KNUST. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 400 students from the population. Responses were coded using T-Test and Linear Regression for the analysis.

#### **4.0 RESULTS**

The analysis was conducted using mean, standard deviation, and one sample t-test. The mean represents the average of the responses, and the standard deviation represents how dispersed the results are about the mean score. The one sample t-test was used to ascertain the relative significance of the observed variables measuring the latent variables. For a single sample test, the hypothesis was set as: Ho: U $\geq$ Uo and Ha: U < Uo. With Ho representing the null hypothesis, Ha representing the alternative hypothesis and Uo representing the test value (in this case 2.5). The mean ranking of each item was compiled to in order to articulate the decisions that the respondents expressed.

The Likert scale was, 1=strongly agree, 2=Agree, 3= Neutral, 4=Disagree and 5=strongly disagree. Under this section, the higher ratings of 1 and 2 were chosen for the rating scale as strongly agree and agree respectively while the Uo was set at 2.5, with 95% as the confidence level in accordance with the antecedent. This is premised on the five point Likert scale rating where a success variable is deemed important if its mean was less than 2.5 (Field, 2005).

### 4.1 Benefits of KNUST Websites to Students.

A statistical test of the mean was done to decide whether the students have benefited in using the KNUST website.

 Table 1. Benefits students derive from the use of KNUST websites

Benefits students derive from the use of Test Value = 2.5

KNUST websites	Mean	Т	Sig.(2- tailed)	Mean Difference
The website provides 24x7 service and support	1.3500	20.634	.000	1.15000
The website act as a potent promotional tool of the schools services and facilities	1.3800	17.718	.000	1.12000
The website has the benefit of a lower cost of telecommunication as it involves the use of internet	1.4500	17.234	.000	1.05000
The website ensures quick delivery of information	1.4700	15.645	.000	1.03000
The website is essential for building good relationship between school and students	1.6100	13.086	.000	.89000
Readily available information. Students can see the relevant detailed information within seconds rather than waiting for days or weeks	1.6200	13.921	.000	.88000
Create value to students by adding to their knowledge	1.6300	13.154	.000	.87000

Source: Researcher's Field Work, August 2015

Using the mean score, all the items would be accepted as positive. Also, considering the level of significance of the variables used for the one-sample t-test, all of the items would be accepted in table 1 KNUST websites for students provides 24x7 service and support, Moreover, the respondents also agreed that, the website act as a potent promotional tool of the schools services and facilities. Furthermore, the respondents agreed that, website has the benefit of a lower cost of telecommunication and is essential for building good relationship between KNUST and students this is because website creates an interface where KNUST interacts with theirs students. The students also agreed that the use of the website create value for students by adding to their knowledge.

# 4.2 KNUST Website Attributes contribution to student's satisfaction

Table 2. KNUST	Website Attributes	contribution to	o student's satisfaction
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KNUST Website Attributes	Test Value = 2.5			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig.(2- tailed)
Usability				
KNUST website is easy to use	1.3300	.56951	20.544	.000
I am able to find what I need quickly on this website	1.4200	.55377	19.503	.000
I enjoy using the website	1.5500	.59246	16.035	.000
It is easy to navigate within the website	1.4700	.59382	17.345	.000

Credibility (Trust, Value & Comfort)				
I feel comfortable using the website	1.5500	.62563	15.185	.000
This website keeps the promises it makes to me	1.5700	.68542	13.568	.000
I can count on the information I get on this website	1.5100	.54114	18.295	.000
I feel confident conducting business with this website	1.5100	.55949	17.695	.000
The information on this website is valuable	1.4600	.50091	20.762	.000
Novelty				
I find the website to be attractive	1.4100	.58767	18.548	.000
The website has a clean and simple presentation	1.4000	.56854	19.348	.000

# Source: Researcher's Field Work, August 2015

The study identified three latent variables of KNUST Websites Attributes that contributes to student's satisfaction. The first was Usability. This had four observed variables measuring it. All the four observed variables had mean score less than the test value of 2.5 and they were statistically significant at 0.05. On usability of KNUST websites, respondents agreed that the website is easy to use. This had a mean score of 1.3300, approximately 1 (strongly agree). The respondents therefore agreed on this dimension. The t-value was 20.544, with a p-value of .000.

The respondents are able to find what they need quickly. This had a mean score of 1.4200, approximately 1 (strongly agree). The respondents therefore agreed on this dimension. The t-value was 19.503, with a p-value of .000.

In addition respondents agreed that it is easy to navigate within the website. As a result of this navigation friendliness, it had reduced anxiety of students when on the site and had aid in smooth decision making (Davis, 1989; Gefen & Straub, 2000). These were all statistically significant at 0.05.

The second of website attribute was Credibility. This had five observed variables measuring it. All the five observed variables had mean score less than the test value of 2.5 and they were statistically significant at 0.05. In terms of the credibility of KNUST websites, respondents agreed that they feel comfortable using information from the website. This is due to Clearly Visible Contact Details and clearly visible rules and policies regulating the site. This had a mean score of 1.5500, approximately 2 (agree). The respondents therefore agreed on this dimension. The t-value was 15.185, with a p-value of .000.

Moreover in terms of credibility, respondents agreed that the KNUST website keep the promise it makes to them and also they could count on the information they get on the website.

Clearly Visible Contact Details, found physical address, contact phone number and email address as the top three credibility signals, followed by photos of the organization's members,,,, reassure visitors that you will help them in case they have a problem or simply aren't happy with the website services.

With the large number of possible attributes on the website as well as the changing nature of technology, website administrators are concerned about the attributes which will have a positive impact on their

operations and student satisfaction. Some of these attributes are "must have" and "optional". From the interview conducted together with the questionnaires, it was realised that, most of the respondents, about 85% perceived that the local website attributes for KNUST are academic (such as research, programs and courses offered, registrations), general information and transactions. Lastly on Novelty, respondents found the website attractive, and having a clean and simple presentation, with a mean score of 1.4100 and 1.4000 respectively.

Students who participated in the research admitted that it was easy to navigate on the KNUST website. They confirmed that the website is user friendly and user interface is simple to circumnavigate. This arguably sustains their interest and gives a reason for them to visit the website again. Again they agreed that the design of the website is attractive and the text format background colour gives a youthful and vibrant feel and look.

Moreover, the students in addition acknowledge not only the ease in assessing the website but also the simplicity in signing out from the website. Additionally, it is also easy check out the various items on the menu of the website as affirmed by the respondents. The act or an instance of inspecting or testing something, as for accuracy or quality is easy on KNUST. There is standard for inspecting or evaluating items on website.

Some respondents also commended the self-help service on website which eliminated people and other associated cost when seeking for information. They also added that with the self- help service they don't have to wait for any support and information can be assessed instantly.

### **5.0 DISCUSSIONS**

Gathered empirical data suggested that Website Attributes contributes to student's satisfaction. Data from the analysis shows that students derived benefits from using KNUST website. Using the mean score all the items was positive. Respondents agreed that the KNUST website has provided these benefits, 24x7 services, potent promotional tool, and also ascertained that it builds relationships between KNUST and the students as well as providing value by adding knowledge. The study identified these latent variables as attributes of a website that contributes to student's satisfaction, Usability, Credibility and Novelty. All the three observed variables had a mean score less than the test value 2.5 and they were statisfically significant at 0.05. Respondents were satisfied with all the attributes and found the website satisfactory. On usability students found web attributes easy to use and enjoyable, on credibility, students trust communications on the web and lastly on the third attribute which was Novelty, respondents found the website attractive, and having a clean and simple presentation, with a mean score of 1.4100 and 1.4000 respectively.

#### 5.1 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has covered the contribution of website attributes on student's satisfaction, the measurement of student satisfaction can be useful to post-secondary institutions, to help pinpoint strengths and identify areas for improvement. Satisfaction ratings go beyond teaching assessments, which have a narrow focus, to include broader aspects of the student learning experience. Student satisfaction is based on a bundle of factors which website attribute need to be given serious attention in the country. There is no doubt website attributes contributes to students satisfaction based on the empirical evidence obtained, as it was evident that KNUST website attribute has provided many benefits such as 24x7 hour service, potent

commercial tool, quick delivery of information and many more. Students were also satisfied with it usability, credibility and Novelty.

Based on the founding's these recommendations were made.

- Tertiary institutions should measure student's satisfaction on the usage of their website to identify the areas of weakness since it adds up to total satisfaction of students.
- The contribution of website attribute to student's satisfaction should be considered an important element in measuring student's satisfaction.
- Tertiary institutions should appreciate the emotional connection that satisfactory website attribute can create between the school and students.

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