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# WebQUAL Audit Coding Instructions

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## 1. URL Guessability

If the user can guess the universal resource locator (URL) (e.g., <http://www.sony.com>) in one attempt, then the maximum rating of three is awarded. Success on subsequent guesses reduces the rating, until a zero rating is achieved if more than three tries are needed to guess the URL correctly.

## 2. Coding

The following criteria are put forward, with each gaining a zero or one.

*Not browser restricted:* If the user is advised 'Best used with' a brand of browser, then a zero is awarded, otherwise a rating of one is awarded.

*ALT tags:* If no text appears when the cursor is placed over the graphics on the home page, then a zero is awarded, otherwise a rating of one is awarded.

*Menu/TABS:* If the website provides a selection menu on the home page, sometimes in

the form of TABS, then award a rating of one, otherwise a rating of zero is awarded.

*Navigation:* Move at least two pages deep into the website. If no means of navigating elsewhere from this point are provided (other than by forward and backwards using the browsers' inbuilt navigation buttons), award a rating of zero, otherwise a rating of one.

*Disability catered for:* While there are many forms of disability, this criterion relates to a manual visual scan of the website to establish whether or not it is likely that voice recognition software might be unable to easily and logically convert text into speech. If, in the view of the one person rating all sites (so as not to introduce inter-rater errors), the site is too cluttered, or in other ways is very 'busy', then a zero is awarded. If unsure, the person rating the site might resort to using a specialist site such as the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web access initiative (W3C, 2002) and Bobby (Watchfire, 2003), to determine the rating (Adam and Clark, 2001, p. 64). This is an important issue, as the Sydney Olympics organisers and their Web hosting service found to their chagrin when they were successfully prosecuted for not providing the level of Web accessibility sought by a visually impaired person (Arch, 2003).

### **3. Brochureware**

The term is a negative description applied to websites that fail to fully use the interactivity of the Web, and simply provide a linear use of the Web much as reading a book does. It has to be said, however, that there may be productivity reasons for using the Web that may override the use of interactivity. An explanation for each of the criteria used follows.

*Media releases:* Media releases, and other news items found on a website rate a one, whereas if the site does not enable the user to learn about the organisation behind the site, it rates a zero.

*FAQs*: Frequently asked questions also indicate that the organisation wants to help users learn about it, and the provision of this resource, even under other guises, earns a rating of one.

**Table 1. Online Marketing Communication (OMC) Criteria**

<b>New media communication</b>		<b>Rating</b>
		<b>26</b>
<b>URL</b>	URL Guessability	
<b>Guessability</b>	(Guess 1 = 3; Guess 3 = 1)	3
<b>Coding</b>	Not browser restricted	1
	ALT tags	1
	Menu/tabs	1
	Navigation	1
	Disability catered for	1
<b>Brochureware</b>	Media releases	1
	FAQs	1
	Related product links	1
	Search tags	1
	In-site search	1
	Product images and text	1
<b>Design</b>	Add-ons/plugin linked	1
	Graphics	1
	Layout	1
	Image	1
	Aesthetics	1
	Administrative details	1
<b>Global</b>	Multilingual display/information	1
	Multisite office online directory	1
	Multisite office offline details	1
	Multisite vendor details	1
<b>Update</b>	Webmaster details	1
	Links updated date	1

*Source*: Adam and Deans 1998.

*Related product links*: Where a site provides hyperlinks to related products, ancillary services, government regulations and the like, it also rates a one. The

organisation behind the site is assisting the user to learn about its brands and uses of the products on offer. No such provision rates zero.

*Search tags:* Metatags are vital if search engines and directories are to catalogue a website. To establish their use or otherwise, the researcher must use the browser to VIEW the source HTML file. Metatags such as the following must be used for a rating of one to be given: 'Meta name' = 'description' and/or 'keywords' and/or 'creator' and/or 'date' (Clark, 2001).

*In-site search:* If the organisation allows the user to learn more by providing an in-site search facility, then it rates a one. Small organisations are not discriminated against by this criterion because small sites can use the free services of such providers as Atomz.com, whereas larger websites pay for such a service.

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*Product images and text:* If the graphics files support the textual context of the website (e.g., digital photographs of a product, or an installation video), then a rating of one is earned. If there are graphics used that are unrelated to the product (e.g., scantily clad people), then a zero rating is given.

#### **4. Design**

Criteria are suggested for the evaluation of the website design. Unfortunately, a degree of subjectivity arises in this category.

*Add-ons/Plug-ins:* If the site calls for a Flash -enabled client computer, or calls for Adobe Acrobat Reader to be installed, or some other third-party software, then the site should feature a hyperlinked icon to download the required software. No such provision earns a zero rating.

*Graphics:* If a website features bandwidth-intensive and/or moving graphics files that do not appear to be needed, then this is a design flaw, and a zero rating is warranted.

*Layout:* Is the layout clean and crisp rather than cluttered. If not a zero rating is awarded.

*Image:* If the site concerns a period in time such as the distant past (e.g., Ye Olde Sworde Shoppe), or the future, or is trying to present a modern image, then the design should be in keeping with the organisation's trading name, brand or symbols such as logos. If not, a zero rating is given.

*Aesthetics:* While a rating for this criterion is in the eyes of the beholder, very poorly designed and overly colourful sites should be quite obvious, and earn a zero rating. The researcher must be careful to avoid bias because of dislike of a colour for cultural or other reasons. However, if the site is targeting a national group that

avoids particular numbers, or believes that flowers of a certain colour portend death, then these are points to take into account in website design.

*Administrative details:* The website designer should have provided information on who to contact for more information, or in the event that information is incorrect or for some other reason. If this is kept a secret, then a zero rating is given.

## **5. Global**

The following are items that a website targeting a global audience should include.

*Multilingual display/information:* It may not be obvious whether a website is indeed targeting a global audience, and the use of a global brand name is not an indicator. Any website that provides multilingual display rates a one, even though a national group in the local country may be the target.

*Multisite office online directory:* Provision of this information rates a one, and indicates a website is targeting a global audience.

*Multisite office offline directory:* Provision of this information on physical office locations and contact details rates a one, and indicates a website is targeting a global audience.

*Multisite vendor details:* Provision of this information on physical locations for vendors in other countries rates a one, and indicates a website is targeting a global audience.

## **6. Update**

It is important that websites \_\_\_\_\_ indicate how current the content is.

Moreover, it is a good practice to provide contact details for those wishing to advise of website problems and other issues.

*Webmaster details:* Provision of this information, usually in a small font at the bottom of the home page or parent frame, rates a one.

*Links update date:* Text advising when the site was last updated earns a rating of one.

## **7. Online Marketing Channels**

This role for the Web involves more than just physical delivery. Marketing channels are seen more broadly today, and while they are “a set of interdependent organisations involved in the process of making a product or service available to users” (Kotler et al., 2001, p. 475), they are concerned with bi-directional flows of promotional and customer feedback information, goods and ancillary services, as well as payment and credit. The criteria suggested for evaluating this marketing role for the Web are set out under the categories of *order processing*, *service*, *payment* and *global* in Table 2.3.

## **8. Order processing**

There are six discrete categories indicated for this criterion. Fully online means that the entire transaction, including payment, is made online, and security is indicated by the browser (with a key on the Netscape browser status bar, and in words in the case of Internet Explorer), and/or by reference to the security system provided by the site to protect user credit card details and the like. In this event, a rating of five is gained. The other categories are self-explanatory. Note that a site that is not processing orders is given a zero rating. There are, however, many methods of making payment and a variety of security systems that may be employed. These are examined in detail in chapter four when discussing marketing logistics networks.

## **9. Service**

Where a website transacts, by allowing online order processing or provides a form for sending by fax, or even provides the details of the location of intermediaries (wholesalers and retailers), and it allows tracking of orders, or will handle online enquiries as to the progress of an order, then the site rates a one. No such service, rates a zero.

## **10. Payment**

If a website lists its prices, then it rates a one. However, there are difficulties in that an Extranet that provides secure access to subscribers may also provide prices, yet the researcher is unable to ascertain whether or not this is the case via content analysis, and would need to resort to asking the organisation behind the website.

## **11. Global**

Once again, there are criteria that are indicators of the extent to which a website is dealing with a global, or international market space (Rayport and Svoikla, 1994). There are five categories that fall into this classification.

*Multilingual online ordering (multisites):* Where a website offers multilingual support and order processing from multiple international sites, it rates a one.

*Payment and delivery online (multisites):* Where a site does not necessarily offer multilingual support, but will process orders and payments from various international sites, it rates a one, otherwise zero.



*Multisite offices/agents with contacts via email/Web form:* Where a site does not necessarily offer multilingual support, nor process orders online but provides details of how to order using either email and/or a HTML form from multiple international locations using other means, it rates two, otherwise zero.

*Links only to third parties in other countries:* Where a site does not necessarily offer multilingual support, or process orders online, but provides links to third parties, such as distributors and retailers, from whom product may be ordered in other countries, it rates a one, otherwise zero.

**Table 2. Online Marketing Channel (OMCH) criteria**

	<b>Marketing channel</b>	<b>Rating</b>
		<b>14</b>
<b>Order processing</b>	Fully online with security (5)	5
	Fully online, no security (4)	
	Form print and send (3)	
	Instructions of paper based (2)	
	Offline orders (1)	
	No order processing (0)	
<b>Service</b>	Tracking or customer service enquiry online	1
<b>Payment</b>	Online pricing details	1
	Price in foreign currency or converter provided	1
<b>Global</b>	Multilingual online ordering (multisites)	1
	Payment and delivery online (multisites)	1
	Multisite offices/agents contacts by email/form	2
	Links only to third parties on other countries	1
	Multisite details non-electronic	1

*Source:* Adam and Deans, 1998.

*Multisite details (non-electronic):* Where a site does not necessarily offer multilingual support, nor process orders online, but provides details as to where and from whom product may be ordered in other countries using non-electronic means, it rates a one, otherwise zero.

## **12. Online Relationship Management (ORM)**

The third and last marketing role ascribed to the Web is that of online relationship management. The criteria are summarised in Table 2.4.

*Product complaints or difficulties (e-mail, form, online conference, web camera):* If the website permits users to advise of complaints or service difficulties online, then a rating of one is given, otherwise zero.

*Communication:* Where the website enables electronic communication either by email or HTML form, a rating of one is given, otherwise zero.

*Opt in/opt-out adaptive messaging on company or product:* Where such messaging is permitted, then a rating of one is given. One alternative that rates a zero rating is a textbox asking for the user's email details, but no statement concerning privacy. Another alternative, that also rates a zero, is where a website does not request such information nor mention how any private information that is provided elsewhere (such as at the checkout) is dealt with.

*Web community (creation or maintenance) or guestbook:* Where a website is interested in the community of users, and particularly where it provides the means for these users to contact or communicate one another, then a rating of one is given, otherwise zero.

**Table 3. Online Relationship Management (ORM) Criteria**

<b>Online Relationship Management</b>	<b>Rating</b>
	<b>10</b>
Product complaints or difficulties (e-mail, form, online conference, web camera)	1
Communication (form, e-mail or both)	1
Opt in/opt-out adaptive messaging on company or product support services	1
Web community (creation or maintenance) or guestbook	1
Financial status of the firm	1
'About the company or site/products/people/customers or projects'	1
'People' phone/email details	1
'What is new'	1
'Multilingual choice'	1
'Helpdesk'	1

*Source:* Adam and Deans 1998.

*Financial status of the firm:* An organisation, such as a large public company, may provide information concerning its financial status online. A smaller firm is more likely to talk of the number of years it has been operating and how many happy people work for the company. Either way, such a site is then given a rating of one, otherwise zero.

*'About the company or site/products/people/customers or projects':* Where a website provides such information, then a rating of one is given, otherwise zero.

*'People' phone/email details:* Where a website provides contact details for its officers and frontline people, then it is given a rating of one.

*'What is new':* Where a website provides contact details of new processes, locations,

products, services, people, and the like, it is given a rating of one.

*'Multilingual choice'*: Where a website provides multilingual choice for users wishing to contact its officers and frontline people, then it is given a rating of one.

*'Helpdesk'*: Where a website provides a helpdesk for any part of its online operation, then it is given a rating of one.